TRANSIER: SPACE, MOVEMENT, AND TRANSIENCE

A Master's Thesis

by

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Ankara
October 2023

To my family,

both *biological* and *chosen*

TRANSIER: SPACE, MOVEMENT, AND TRANSIENCE

The Graduate School of Economics and Social Sciences

of

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by

MÜGE İREM BEYAZIT

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By Müge İrem Beyazıt

I certify that I have read this thesis and have found that it is fully adequate, in scope and in quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Fine Arts in Media and Design.

Didem Özkul McGeoch
Advisor

I certify that I have read this thesis and have found that it is fully adequate, in scope and in quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Fine Arts in Media and Design.

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ABSTRACT

TRANSIER: SPACE, MOVEMENT, AND TRANSIENCE

Beyazıt, Müge İrem

M.F.A. in Media and Design

Supervisor: Asst. Prof. Dr. Didem Özkul McGeoch

October 2023

Transier is both the title of a growing series of interactive kinetic sculptures made of recycled plastic strips and electro-mechanical components aka. *specimens*, and their defined framework. These specimens are taking the source of their movement from their viewer regarded as the passer-by. They aim to disrupt their transient state as they pass-by and affect their consciousness with their being. This dynamic as the interaction between the specimen and its viewer is integral to both this artwork and this research while the nature of being is investigated.

Taking the first two specimens of Transier consisting my current thesis project as its considered body of work, this thesis aims to provide an in-depth theoretical exploration within the complex web of relations between space, movement, being, and materiality with a particular existential emphasis on transience within the context of my artistic practice. Throughout this theoretical exploration, an inherent interconnectedness between the notions of space, movement, and being is revealed and emphasized; an existential philosophical standpoint where a dynamic, ever-changing nature of being that is related to a constant state of flux is established; and eventually the transience of being is argued.

Keywords: Being, Space, Spatiality, Kinetic Sculpture, Motility, Transience, Plastic, Waste.

ÖZET

TRANSIER: MEKAN, HAREKET, VE GEÇİCİLİK

Beyazıt, Müge İrem

Yüksek Lisans, Medya ve Tasarım

Tez Danışmanı: Dr. Öğretim Üyesi Didem Özkul McGeoch

Ekim 2023

Transier, hem büyümekte olan interaktif kinetik heykeller serisinin hem de bu seriye mensup *specimen* adı verilen geri dönüştürülmüş plastik şeritler ve elektro-mekanik bileşenlerden yapılma kinetik heykellerin tanımlanmış çerçevesinin ismidir. Heykeller, hareketlerinin kaynağını gelip geçmekte olan izleyicisinden alırken bu geçici gelip geçme halini sekteye uğratmayı ve varlıklarıyla bilinç düzeyinde bir etkiyi amaçlar. Heykel ve izleyici arasındaki bu dinamik, varlığın doğasını incelerken hem bu sanat eserinin hem de bu araştırmanın ayrılmaz bir parçasıdır.

Transier'in ilk iki örneklemini mevcut tez projemi oluşturan eserler bütünü olarak ele alan bu tez, sanatsal pratiğim bağlamında, geçicilik kavramına hususi bir varoluşsal vurgu yaparak mekân, hareket, varlık ve maddesellik arasındaki karmaşık ilişkiler ağı arasında kapsamlı bir teorik keşfi amaçlar. Bu teorik keşif ve inceleme sürecinde, mekân, hareket ve varlık kavramları arasındaki içkin bağlantılar ortaya çıkarılıp vurgulanır; bu esnada varoluşun dinamik, her daim değişen doğasının sürekli bir akış durumuyla ilişkilendirildiği varoluşsal bir felsefi bakış açısı tesis edilir ve en nihayetinde varlığın geçiciliği ileri sürülür.

Anahtar kelimeler: Varlık, Mekân, Mekânsallık, Kinetik Heykel, Devinim, Geçicilik, Plastik, Atık.

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Approximately two years later than when this started cooking, that is if we count the starting point as my first official presentation of this project, and one year later than the first exhibition, the first phase of the literary plastiglomerate (pp.101-106) formation of my work is finally complete. This was a personally thorny road that hosted this exceptionally long journey, and there are many thanks due to some of the most influential individuals along the way.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT i

ÖZET ii

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS iii

TABLE OF CONTENTS vi

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION 1

CHAPTER II

ON SPATIAL CONCERNS 5

II.I. From Space to Place 5

II.II. From Place to Non-Place 12

II.III. Specimen_b and the Subtle Reminder of Transition 20

II.IV. Specimen_a and the Non-Placeness of the Exhibition Space 28

II.V. Basho: Place of Being 35

II.VI. Transier and Space: Final Note on Spatiality 38

CHAPTER III

ON MOVEMENT: BETWEEN STABILITY AND MOTILITY 40

III.I. Foundations: Kinetic Sculpture and Kineticism 40

III.II. Technical Specifications Overview 53

III.III. Specimen_a and its Social Anxiety 54

III.IV. Specimen_b and the Soft Wind 60

III.V. Kinetic Philosophy: Kinesthetic Being 66

III.VI. Transier and Spatial Movement 68

CHAPTER IV

ON MATERIALITY: THE SIGNIFICANCE OF RECYCLED PLASTIC 72

IV.I. Personal Remarks: In Retrospect 72

IV.II. Constructing The Fabric of the Sculptures 73

IV.III. Working with Trash: Socio-Political Connotations and Sustainable Implications . 85

IV.IV. The Problem with Plastic 96

IV.V. Transier and Recycled Plastic 111

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION 114

V.I. Limitations, Future Work and Further Research 117

REFERENCES 120

APPENDICES 130

Appendix A. Artist's Statement 130

Appendix B. Artist's Biography 132

Appendix C. Exhibition Wall Text 133

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 2.1: Example of a strip mall 15

Figure 2.2: Shopping mall interior 16

Figure 2.3: "Danny riding his tricycle along the corridors of the Overlook Hotel."

Stanley Kubrick, *The Shining* (1980) 22

Figure 2.4: The first image of the Backrooms. Anonymous user, 2019 23

Figure 2.5: Hotel corridor photograph that could easily be posted in r/LiminalSpace. 2023 . 24

Figure 2.6: FADA Exhibition Hall main entrances diagram on FD Building

First Floor Plan 25

Figure 2.7: Exhibition Layout. Floor Plan, Digital Sketch 26

Figure 2.8: View from one of the visits to the exhibition hall before the exhibition 27

Figure 2.9: Specimen_b, view from the exhibition 28

Figure 2.10: Daniel Buren. *Peinture-Sculpture (Painting-Sculpture)* (1971) 30

Figure 2.11: Specimen_a, view from the exhibition 31

Figure 2.12: Specimen_a, view from the exhibition 34

Figure 3.1: Donald Judd. *Untitled* (1968) 42

Figure 3.2: Donald Judd. *Untitled* (1969) 43

Figure 3.3: Calder in. Movement in Art, Moderna Museet, 1961 44

Figure 3.4: Alexander Calder. *Sumac with Gong* (1954) 45

Figure 3.5: Alexander Calder. *Mobile* (about 1935) 46

Figures 3.6 & 3.7: Installation view of the exhibition, *Homage to New York*..... 47-48

Figure 3.8: Jean Tinguely. *Meta-matic No. 1 (Méta-matic n° 1)* (1959) 49

Figure 3.9: Tinguely in. Movement in Art, Moderna Museet, 1961..... 50

Figure 3.10: Diagram Visualizing the Conceptual Spectrum Between Stability and Motility, Digital Sketch. 51

Figure 3.11 & 3.12: First prototype 55

Figure 3.13 & 3.14: Specimen_a in the making: inside the top and bottom enclosures..... 57

Figure 3.15: Detail from Specimen_a: shown insides through the middle enclosure..... 59

Figure 3.16: Detail from Specimen_a: below 59

Figure 3.17: "The wheatfield." Ridley Scott, *Gladiator* (2000) 60

Figure 3.18: Specimen_b in the making: on paper. 62

Figure 3.19 & 3.20: Details from Specimen_b: by means of detection..... 63

Figure 3.21: Detail from Specimen_b: below..... 64

Figure 3.22: Specimen_b, view from the exhibition..... 65

Figure 3.23 & 3.24: Views from the exhibition..... 71

Figure 4.1: Selected smaller *leftover pieces of the material*, view from the exhibition 76

Figure 4.2: *Recycled plastic sheet made of the scraps of older sheets* left after cutting them into pieces, ironed onto themselves, view from the exhibition. 76

Figure 4.3: 'specimen_x and a half', five sheets of recycled plastic displaying the fabric of the sculptures, view from the exhibition. 77

Figure 4.4 & 4.5: Excerpts from the process of constructing the fabric of these sculptures:

multiple sheets of my material stacked on top of each other. 77

Figure 4.6 & 4.7: Details from specimen_b as seen in the exhibition 78

Figure 4.8 & 4.9: Details from specimen_a as seen in the exhibition 79

Figure 4.10: Kurt Schwitters. *Mz199* (1921) 80

Figure 4.11: Kurt Schwitters. *Radiating World (Merzbild 31B),* (1920). 82

Figure 4.12: Kurt Schwitters. *Merzz. 53. Red Bonbon (Merzz. 53. rotes bonbon)* (1920) 83

Figure 4.13: Kurt Schwitters. *Mz 163 with Woman, Spraying (Mz 163 mit Frau, spritzend)* (1920) 84

Figure 4.14: Luke Hayes. View from the Introductory Room, 15th Venice Architecture Biennale, (2016). 85

Figure 4.15: Italo Rondinella. View from the Introductory Room, *The Making of*, 15th Venice Architecture Biennale, (2016) 86

Figure 4.16: Adam Dean for The New York Times. *Trash pickers scouring the Bantar Gabang landfill in Indonesia for recyclable plastic,* (2020) 88

Figure 4.17: Marcel Duchamp. *Fountain,* (1917) 93

Figure 4.18: John Cage. *4'33" (In Proportional Notation)* 94

Figure 4.19: Robert Rauschenberg. *Automobile Tire Print,* (1953) 95

Figure 4.20: Kelly Jazvac. *Plastiglomerate Sample,* (2013) 101

Figure 4.21: Kelly Jazvac. *Plastiglomerate Sample,* (2013) 101

Figure 4.22: Kelly Jazvac. *Plastiglomerate Sample,* (2013) 102

Figure 4.23: Kelly Jazvac. *Plastiglomerate Sample,* (2013) 103

Figure 4.24: Kelly Jazvac. *Plastiglomerate,* (2018-19) Installation view 103

Figure 4.25: Kelly Jazvac. *Plastiglomerate Sample,* (2013)..... 104

Figure 4.26: *The 'fabric' and me*, view from the exhibition..... 111

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

transient /ˈtranzɪənt/ adjective:

1: lasting only for a short time; impermanent. (n.d.-a)

2: passing especially quickly into and out of existence: transitory. (n.d.-b)

: passing through or by a place with only a brief stay or sojourn. (n.d.-b)

3: affecting something or producing results beyond itself. (n.d.-b)

Derived from the word transient, Transier is the main title of a growing series of kinetic sculptures called specimens. Currently, these specimens are interactive kinetic sculptures made of recycled plastic strips and electro-mechanical components. Transier is also envisioned to be a framework for individual specimens and their respective theoretical exploration to operate within. With this framework, I am concerned with space; movement; recycled plastic as their material and recycling plastic for my sculptures as a process; being; and transience. I consequently engage with related theoretical and philosophical fields through respectively chosen apertures with respect to my artistic practice. These concerns are explored through the individual specimens, both as their practical and theoretical implementations, invigorating both the artwork and the research.

I position these specimens within the dichotomous contradictions of place and non-place; stability and motility; transience and permanence. From there they constantly delineate, compose, inhabit, and evocate a way of being within the thresholds of constant liminalities. I identify their being as transient: in a constant state of flux; dynamic and ever-changing by nature. The research question then reveals itself with this respect. In their transient way of being, what understandings do my specimens inhold and can aim to invoke regarding being itself? What is revealed as the outcome of this theoretical exploration? With this respect, I first and foremost argue that if one is on the path of self-awareness or understanding the nature of being, places where we lose our—selves or our identities in this day and age is an ideal starting point for a deeper inquisition by virtue of my particular emphasis on and frequent employment of Marc Augé's (2009) notion, non-place.

To put in different words, this thesis explores the complex web of relations between space, movement, being, and materiality in the context of my artistic practice with a particular existential emphasis on transience. In doing so, it provides a complex theoretical discussion and exploration that reveals the interconnectedness of the concerned notions within this frame of reference. This artistic research is taking the first two specimens (specimen_a and specimen_b) of Transier as it's considered body of work consisting my current thesis project. It is both a practice-based and practice-led research since my research finds its base in my practice and my practice leads my research simultaneously.

The narrative flow and structure of the thesis is built around the overarching concepts and concerns that are expressed with Transier. Throughout the thesis, descriptions and explanations of the first two individual specimens with respect to the specific concern expressed

in the main titles are included in their respective chapters. The existential philosophical standpoint for answering the research question is established layer-by-layer with each chapter, as interwoven with other discussions throughout the thesis. This research in terms of its contribution to the fields it is related to, offers transdisciplinary associations between different thinkers, concepts, and processes through these specimens.

Chapter II, On Spatial Concerns, establishes an understanding of its key concepts in terms of spatiality. Some of the more prominent understandings of space and spatiality for this framework is provided as a theoretical background, and the necessary distinction between the notions of space and place are made in terms of understanding my foundational points of view when I utilize the notion of non-place. Through each specimen's expression a detailed description of their specific placements, modes of display, and their spatial statements; the relationship Transier has with space is opened up. Through the theoretical background provided in this chapter, Transier's spatial presuppositions can be understood as they lay the foundational understandings regarding the topic.

Chapter III, On Movement, lays out the foundations in kineticism and locates Transier's in-betweenness amidst stability and motility in an art historical context with this respect. Through each specimen's mode of achieving motion, mode of detecting the passer-by, mode of reacting to the passer-by, technical specifications and details of the individual sculptures at hand are explained and the relationship it has with movement is laid out. Through Transier's further elaborations of its relationship with spatial movement, its spatiality and motility are bridged together all the while its spatiality further opened up.

As its subtitle suggests, Chapter IV on Materiality demonstrates the significance of recycled plastic as a chosen main material of the sculptures within this context. It includes personal remarks on my relationship with recycled plastic; explanations on the production process of the material, formal and intentional explanations regarding this process; theoretical background of working with recycled plastic through concepts of trash, sustainability, plastic, and environmental problematic.

Chapter V concludes on an existential note through the significance of transience in this context and by arguing that the established existential philosophical standpoint for answering the research question, namely the dynamic and ever-changing nature of being that is in a constant state of flux explored throughout the thesis is inherently related to the concept of transience and therefore a transient one.

CHAPTER II

ON SPATIAL CONCERNS

II.I. From Space to Place

> "Entrapped in being, we shall always have to come out of it. And when we are hardly outside of being, we always have to go back into it Thus, in being, everything is circuitous, roundabout, recurrent, so much talk; a chaplet of sojoumings, a refrain with endless verses. … The phenomenology of the poetic imagination allows us to explore the being of [hu]man considered as the being of a *surface*, of the surface that separates the region of the same from the region of the other. It should not be forgotten that in this zone of sensitized surface, before being, one must speak, if not to others, at least to oneself" (Bachelard, 2014, p.229-237).

Gaston Bachelard's *The Poetics of Space*, is a remarkably poetic journey from spaces of poetry to poetics of space. It translates almost as a 'philosophical meditation on oneiric space' as Joan Ockman (n.d.) described. As Richard Kearny simply put it as an introduction, "it is a book that talks at length about homes through their imaginary dimensions as underground cellars and dusty garrets, unlocked drawers and secret wardrobes, winding stairways and shadowy thresholds" (ibid., p.xvii). With his dreamy phenomenological reading of the intimate domestic space through poetic images of spatiality, a vision of the oneiric house appears, filled with its inhabitants not just with physical objects but with imagination, emotions, experiences, and dreams. Inside the book, there is a chapter called '*The Dialectics of Inside and Outside*' which starts by pointing out the dialectic division among the two; the blindness this duality causes by the obvious geometric opposition they propose as soon as we use it in metaphorical

contexts; and continues revealing throughout the chapter that the interplay between inside and outside is much more complex than the typical physical spatial divide would suggest. The lazy certainties of geometrical intuitions are demolished. Amid reading, his words, ideas, and imaginations protrude in and out, here and there, being and non-being. As they transcend physicality by "rejecting of all organic causality" (ibid., p.240), "the opposition of outside and inside ceases to have as coefficient its geometrical evidence" (ibid., p.245). Afterwards, the chapter is no longer just inside the book, it is also simultaneously outside of it, with me and within me, everywhere and somewhere along the reverie—the half-dreaming human consciousness of Bachelard. I sometimes wonder, since it was first published in French in 1958 and later in English in 1964, how many times it transcended in and out of other minds, as they realized their house oneiric? For Bachelard space, initially, is not a mere vessel of objects; rather "it is the 'abode' of human consciousness —or the half-dreaming consciousness Bachelard calls reverie" (Ockman, n.d.). Surely, "inhabited space transcends geometric space" (ibid., p.67).

> "There is naturally no question of a relationship of container to content, since this relationship exists only between objects, nor even a relationship of logical inclusion, like the one existing between the individual and the class, since space is anterior to its alleged parts, which are always carved out of it. Space is not the setting (real or logical) in which things are arranged, but the means whereby the position of things becomes possible" (Merleau-Ponty, 2005, p.283-84).

Maurice Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception* is a comprehensive existential inquiry that finds its foothold and some of its most compelling arguments by bringing the lived body to its center of attention. For Merleau-Ponty, "The theory of the body image is implicitly, a theory of perception" (ibid., p.233). As the investigation on the experiences of this phenomenal body in and with space turns into evidence, bodily intentionality becomes a key

concept in locating the roots of awareness and consciousness in this quest towards sensing and grasping their essences. In other words, with the help of phenomenological approach and its ability to unite extreme subjectivism and extreme objectivism, “traditional conception of objectivity is overturned by “bringing our attention to the phenomenal body as 'a natural self' and as 'the subject of perception’ (Langer, 1989)” and thus, the dichotomy of subject and object is traversed. In terms of space and spatiality, he distinguished two traditional conceptions of space as purely physical and purely geometrical; subsequently challenged and rejected them in claiming that “the experience of space provides a basis for its unity by means of an entirely different kind of synthesis” (ibid., p.284). Physical space is regarded as “spatialized space” and concerned with “its variously qualified regions” where it appears as “an irreducibly manifold variety” whereas geometric space is regarded as “spatializing space” where it is discovered to be “a single and indivisible ability to trace out space” having “interchangeable dimensions, homogeneous and isotropic” (ibid., p.284). Whether its traditional conception as “a transcendental form generated by the subject as the condition of there being any objects at all” (Langer, 1989) or an infinitesimal container in which things are located, through rejecting and challenging them, Merleau-Ponty uncovers “the genesis of space in a dynamic pre-objective, pre-logical interaction of body-subject and world” (Langer, 1989). Within this interaction, an understanding of the embodied space appears. Merleau-Ponty’s embodied space offers and utilizes a shift in perspective to the perception of the world from a third-person view to a first-person view. This shift can be exemplified in technical drawings of designed architectural spaces and their forms of visual expression in the third-person view resembling that of floor plans, sections, elevations and the first-person view resembling that of an architectural render aspiring to simulate the visual experience of the said space as best as it could with often a single two-dimensional image. From where I stand, perhaps one of the most influential arguments of Merleau-Ponty about space and spatiality are that of the spatiality of the body itself. As Langer

(1989) neatly sums up, for Merleau-Ponty, “the experience of the body itself is inseparably the outlining and perceiving of a certain sort of world in which each bodily sense has a spatial realm which overlaps, but does not coincide, with the others.” Furthermore, “The body is a potentiality of movement, and the perceptual field is an invitation to action; by responding to this invitation, the incarnate subject experiences what Merleau-Ponty refers to as "the enjoyment of space" through the existential constitution of "a spatial level" (Langer, 1989). In other words, mobility is the body’s own spatiality as it is manifested in motion in Merleau-Ponty’s “anthropological space”. With the inherent embodiment of human existence, and intrinsic spatiality of the lived body, “we have said that space is existential; we might just as well have said that existence is spatial” (ibid., p.342).

If we were to take a couple of steps away from the existential space of the oneiric house that is the inhabited and embodied, we arrive at a neighborhood; from there the city. As our steps bring us closer towards the built environment that we live in as societies where spaces of almost any kind are made into places or non-places, a necessary change of scale is implied. If we are to pull this understanding away from individual scale and towards societal scale we arrive at the built environment. In other words, by taking a step away from existential spaces of Bachelard and Merleau-Ponty we are arriving at social spaces of Lefebvre and socially constructed places of Harvey. *The Production of Space*, (1992) is regarded as Henri Lefebvre’s pursuit for a ‘unitary theory of space’ that thoroughly “unfolds both critically and flamboyantly” by Merrifield (2006). As Lefebvre conducts his interrogative project what he calls “spatiology”, a rapprochement between different ‘fields’ and ‘modalities’ of space such as physical space (nature), mental space (formal abstractions about space), and social space (the space of human interaction) is established among other things (Merrifield, 2006). The initial proposition that “(social) space is a (social) product” inherently implies that “physical (natural)

space is disappearing"; that "every society - and hence every mode of production with its subvariants … produces a space, its own space"; that "if space is a product, our knowledge of it must be expected to reproduce and expound the process of production"; and that "if space is produced, if there is a productive process, then we are dealing with history" (ibid., pp.30-46). Space, for Lefebvre is not a mere empty container that is dead and outside of us but because it is argued to "embrace a multitude of intersections" it is rather a living, changing, fluid, hyper-complex entity that is constantly being formed and forming those it is formed by. With an emphasis on its perception, it has a foundationally phenomenological approach and by its investigation regarding its reflection on the realm of social life of societies this understanding of space is placed on more of a Marxist platform. As Merrifield (2006) points out, through "vivid demonstrations of his 'regressive-progressive' method" and "spatialized rendering of Marx's famous analysis on 'the fetishism of commodities'", "Lefebvre's epistemological shift, from conceiving 'things in space' to that of the actual 'production of space' itself, is the same quantum leap Marx made in his colossal, all-incorporating analysis of the capitalist mode of production". Lefebvre's conception of social space as in the space of human interaction is threefold and unfolds with the ever-fluid relationships between the "conceptual triad" of spatial practice (perceived space), representations of space (conceived space), and representational space (actual lived space). His emphasis when opening up this conception of social space is that in the everyday lives of humans living in societies, these divisions does not happen physically or mentally but conceptually; that they are not isolated parts; and that they are rather severely intertwined with each other as "three specific moments" of a totality that "blur into each other" therefore, because "relations between conceived–perceived–lived spaces aren't ever stable", they should not be grasped "artificially or linearly" (Merrifield, 2006). His exposition of the production of space ends with "an analysis of rhythms" since "the whole of social space proceeds from the body" (ibid., p.404). In other words, for Lefebvre, "Bodies — deployments

of energy — produce space and produce themselves, along with their motions, according to the laws of space" (ibid., p. 171). In the complex state-based societies of which cities are a crucial component, the built environments of urbanism and their social spaces that are both a product to be used, consumed and a means of production where we rhythmically experience space and find out which rhythms are more permanent and which are not.

The still-curious notion of space is capable of being all of its complexions all at once. For example, my sculptures were exhibited on campus ground, which is a socially produced space, and I intuitively know approximately how far away my computer screen or my coffee mug from me right now. we constantly embody, inhabit, produce it all the while utilizing its emptiness as a container and referring to its physical aspects. In other words, among the vast discourse of its dealings, it nestles each and every perspective it is regarded as within the vastness of its macro and micro. Attempts of grasping it happens on various levels and scales ranging from oneiric to economic. I've identified it as still-curious due to constantly being perceived and conceived differently on both an individual and collective level at any given time. It is worthy to note the current lack of a single, unambiguous, and widely accepted definition of space despite philosophers, physicists, geographers, architects, and sociologists being just a few of the many academics who have long debated the significance of space in human existence (Duarte, 2017).

Although they are regarded as "conceptual twins" (Agnew as cited in Duarte, 2017) and together as interdependent concepts they form a "dynamic matrix in which one term coexists and affects another" (Duarte, 2017), it is useful to distinguish between the notions of space and place to explain the spatial contexture of Transier more clearly. "They are in fact, forged

together in a dialectical unity" (Merrifield, 1993), but certainly and most definitely not interchangeable. David Harvey (1996) states that "places, like space and time, are social constructs and have to be read and understood as such". He identifies a double meaning that can be attested to place as first a "mere position or location within a map of space-time constituted within some social process", and second "an entity or 'permanence' occurring within and transformative of the construction of space-time" where the latter includes the "environmental transformation through which permanences (places) get built" (ibid., p.294). In other words, place is a portion of space without precise boundaries or dimensions to which a person or a group of people attribute particular values through which they identify themselves, and identify this portion of space as constituent of their shared values according to Duarte (2017). In terms of attribution of meanings and the perceptual production of it, there are strong associations between place, memory, and identity both on the personal and cultural levels. On top of these, there is another strong association between place, ideology, and politics in terms of its Lefebvrian social production as they are "constructed and experienced as material ecological artefacts and intricate networks of social relations" (Harvey, 1996). "They are the focus of the imaginary, of beliefs, longings, and desires … They are an intense focus of discursive activity, filled with symbolic and representational meanings, and they are a distinctive product of institutionalized social and political economic power" (Harvey, 1996).

> "Place is space which has historical meanings, where some things have happened which are now remembered and which provide continuity and identity across generations. Place is space in which important words have been spoken which have established identity, defined vocation, and envisioned destiny. Place is space in which vows have been exchanged, promises have been made, and demands have been issued" ("Brueggemann. cited in Lilbume" Harvey, 1996).

In summation, spaces are of being in their constant state of becoming, whereas places are spaces of memories and ideologies of the same being. This summation might seem like it resides in an opposing duality between flux and fixity. However, this distinction of place from space subsumes a similar state of constant flux affiliated with space within the presumed fixity of place. The shift from space to place, then, is extremely political on a societal scale and particularly intimate on an individual/personal scale. From where I stand, starting from one's own body, the multiple sensations and perceptions of space is somehow coded in humanity. Although some individuals are not fully unaware of it consciously, therefore do not act on it deliberately, spatiality is woven into the fabric of our very existence. On one hand, my approach to the understanding of space and spatiality when constructing this framework relies heavily upon phenomenology, thereby some of the major phenomenological conceptions of it. On the other hand, the differentiation of space from place is crucial to lay the necessary groundwork for arriving at non-places since the opposition between places and non-places derive from the distinction between space and place as Augé (2009) himself declared their distinctive analysis an essential preliminary. Rather than solely physical or geometrical understanding of it, my engagement with space through Transier, at its core, occurs and unfolds through its perception on both the individual, personal scale and the social, societal scale. In other words, my sculptures are both situated and exist at the interplay between their spatial perceptions changing and extending with the particular placement of each individual sculpture.

II.II. From Place to Non-Place

> "Then he came across an advertisement for a car with the same name as his seat, the Renault Espace: 'One day, the need for space makes itself felt . . . It comes to us without warning. And never goes away. The irresistible wish for a space of our own. A mobile space which can take us anywhere. A space where

> everything is to hand and nothing is lacking ... ' Just like the aircraft really. 'Already, space is inside you .... You've never been so firmly on the ground as you are in (the E)space,' the advertisement ended pleasingly (Augé, 2009, p.4)"

In the quest to grasp the reality of it, there have been many names attested to the times we are currently living in that is the extended antecedent of modernity. Throughout this text, I purposefully avoided to use the word contemporary in ways that it is consignificative of an era that is longer in nature for the contemporaneity of the contemporary itself is debatable in this respect. I stand closer to Augé's (2009) notion of "supermodernity" as emblematic of the continuing era following modernity, reaching the current contemporary lives and societies of today, and extending towards an unknown yet foreseeable future. Rather, contemporary is used to refer to a shorter period of time as in 'current'. Abandoning the popular 'post's and 'neo's, in favor of 'super' in terms of prefixes is suggestive of both the nature and the reality of supermodernity with respect to modernity itself. Augé identifies "a need to give meaning to the present, if not the past", as "the price we pay for the overabundance of events corresponding to a situation we would call 'supermodern' to express its essential quality: excess" (ibid., p.29). To define the situation of supermodernity, he also identifies three major excess' that are related to time, space, and ego. The excess of time implies a factual overabundance stemming from an excess of contemporary events accelerating historical time. With the excess of space, there appears to be a paradoxical connection between the planet's shrinking and the abundance of space as the world becomes more and more accessible through rapid modes of connectivity by means of technology, and transportation. The addition of virtual spaces that reached through screens with the click of a button does not help but amplify this "overabundance of space". It seems like new modes of mobility are making the world more open and accessible for humanity and yet current "experience of the remote" renders it somehow truly unreachable. The excess

of ego implies an overabundance of introspective individuality caused by pumped egocentric individualities to fill the gaps left by purposefully erased collectivities that once oversaw daily lives of societies. This rapid “individualization of approaches seems less surprising” since “never before have individual histories been so explicitly affected by collective history, but never before, either, have the reference points for collective identification been so unstable” (ibid., p.37). Currently, it could be argued that there is a need for a fourth major excess that is related to trash which is indicative of an overabundance of material, waste, and debris. Augé notes that “beyond the heavy emphasis placed today on the individual reference, or the individualization of references, the singularities of all sorts that constitute a paradoxical counterpoint to the procedures of interrelation, acceleration and de-localization sometimes carelessly reduced and summarized in expressions like 'homogenization of culture' or 'world culture' demands more attention (ibid., p.39-40).

Augé’s understanding of anthropological places are “places of identity, relations, and of history” (ibid., p.52). “If a place can be defined as relational, historical and concerned with identity, then a space which cannot be defined as relational, or historical, or concerned with identity will be a non-place” (ibid., p.77-78). In other words, spaces that do not conjure identity, do not foster relations, and do not evoke history cannot be regarded as places in their anthropological definition they are therefore non-places. Augé argues that supermodernity produces non-places emerging from an accelerated need to move capital and people and continues examining the non-places of supermodernity in detail by stating:

> “Clearly the word 'non-place' designates two complementary but distinct realities: spaces formed in relation to certain ends (transport, transit, commerce, leisure), and the relations that individuals have with these spaces. Although the two sets of relations overlap to a large extent, and in any case officially (individuals travel, make purchases, relax), they are still not confused with one another; for non-places

mediate a whole mass of relations, with the self and with others, which are only indirectly connected with their purposes. As anthropological places create the organically social, so non-places create solitary contractuality" (ibid., p.94).

Furthermore, non-places produce and promote the extreme individuality of capitalism devoid of consciousness of their non-placeness at the expense of identities of the same individuals since they are reduced to mere users in these non-places: passengers of airports or train stations; consumers of supermarkets or shopping malls; drivers of highways and motorways. Non-places are of departures and arrivals, and essentially of transience since they are there to be passed through. "The space of non-place creates neither singular identity nor relations; only solitude, and similitude. There is no room there for history unless it has been transformed into an element of spectacle, usually in allusive texts" (ibid., p.103-104). This is particularly apparent in the inability of distinguishing between photographs of formerly



Image courtesy of Matt H. Wade via Wikimedia Commons. **Figure 2.1:** An example of a strip mall. CC3.0

unrecognized shopping malls of the world (Figure 2.2), and strip malls of America (Figure 2.1) that might just as well be located anywhere due to removal of local references and similitude. All of these non-places resemble each other, not differentiating in a way that matters in their dehumanized and dehumanizing; shared global language; identity crushing similitude.



Image courtesy of Magda Ehlers via Pexels. **Figure 2.2:** Shopping mall interior.

By virtue of the words and texts they offer and partially defined by that may be prescriptive (take the right-hand lane), prohibitive (no-smoking), or informative (next station: Zincirlikuyu); and the explicit and codified ideograms (on road signs, maps, and tourist guides) they dictate certain behaviors all the while giving the illusory sense of being in control when navigating them. Their language and structure imply an ideal public body of a non-self in an attempt to invade the said bodies from the outside in alignment with Augé's understanding of the body as "a composite and hierarchized space" (ibid., p.61). With this manipulation, when in non-places individuals perform their best version of social self according to the norms of a temporary shared identity that disguises the non-identity they are accustomed to which is the aforementioned social roles they are reduced to. I've always been conscious of and wondered about the reasons to why during a first-time journey to a previously unknown place, the way

back always seems to be shorter than the way there especially when using the same means of transportation with an exactly same route. This is partially because of the illusory comfort in familiarity and shared identity in non-places that further reinforces the individual's unconsciousness of it as the distinctive details are erased during this state of transience in an auto-pilot mode, further establishing the non-placeness of the non-place. Augé identifies a paradox of non-place as follows:

> "This has at least two results. On the one hand, these images tend to make a system; they outline a world of consumption that every individual can make his own because it buttonholes him incessantly. The temptation to narcissism is all the more seductive here in that it seems to express the common law: do as others do to be yourself. On the other hand, like all cosmologies, this new cosmology produces effects of recognition. A paradox of non-place: a foreigner lost. in a country he does not know (a 'passing stranger') can feel at home there only in the anonymity of motorways, service stations, big stores or hotel chains. For him, an oil company logo is a reassuring landmark; among the supermarket shelves he falls with relief on sanitary, household or food products vali dated by multinational brand names." (p.106-107).

Augé's conception of non-place is extensively related to the aforementioned social production of spaces and places. However, in their relation with individual place attachment through distinctive memories and the real power of consciousness it is inherently and extremely subjective. For anyone drifting from the intended use of these places, resisting to its oppressiveness and reduction, they might not be regarded as freely as non-places as the masses they were intended for at any given time. For anyone works there, the airport is a workplace; for the couple that said their last goodbyes to each other there, the railway station is the place of farewell, anticipation, melancholy, and hope; for the fare dodger jumping over the barriers without beeping their card, it is a place of boycott and disobedience, and so on. Lastly, by defining non-places and their societal implications a possibility towards abolishment of their inherent manipulation is created, since a distinctive awareness of it subsumes a particular

consciousness of it as well. Either way, in terms of social production of spaces and places, without a doubt, "the stumbling block to the coexistence of places and non-places will always be political" (ibid., p.115). In other words, following the political shift from space to place on a societal scale, the shift from place to non-place is even more political since it occurs within places of and for specifically capitalist needs. Especially considering the spaces we produce, including the ones produced specifically to live in, increasingly attempt to erase our identities. Furthermore, architect Rem Koolhaas (2013) argues that "if space-junk is the human debris that litters the universe, Junk-Space is the residue mankind leaves on the planet" (p.13). Foster (2013a) identifies a note of desperation in Koolhaas' critique that lends the text an energy that renders it "more a jeremiad than a manifesto—a lamentation that veers into denunciation and back again almost sentence by sentence".

> "Junkspace is the sum total of our current achievement; we have built more than did all previous generations put together, but somehow we do not register on the same scales. We do not leave pyramids. According to a new gospel of ugliness, there is already more Junkspace under construction in the twenty-first century than has survived from the twentieth … It was a mistake to invent modern architecture for the twentieth century… "Earthlings now live in a kindergarten grotesque … Junkspace thrives on design, but design dies in Junkspace. There is no form, only proliferation … Regurgitation is the new creativity; instead of creation, we honor, cherish, and embrace manipulation …" (Koolhaas, 2013).

As Koolhaas unfolds the notion of Junkspace with endless examples and statements rapidly lined up throughout this retroactive manifesto, it is clear to me that Junkspace is the sum of all excess that Augé defines supermodernity with, further extending the excesses it is previously defined by. Junkspace is at times referring to some non-places of supermodernity but since "it is beyond measure, beyond code"; "cannot be grasped, cannot be remembered"; "flamboyant yet unmemorable"; so immersive to an extent that supermodernity itself is

Junkspace as excess. Within the pessimistic desperation Foster (2013b) sounds the optimistic notes of a simple call for resistance as follows: "…in Junkspace we have passed beyond distraction to immersion. There seems to be no choice but to seek running room inside its world."

Even though I find Koolhaas' urgent rant about the society itself through the built environment rather dismissive of, for the lack of a better word, better examples and attempts among the heaps of trash, it is useful for its relationship with trash itself. I too see Junkspaces dominating the cityscapes in their rapid proliferation, dictating certain lifestyles that are increasingly individualistic in their disregard for community-building practices, leaving no room for the reverie in their hostility towards anything unprofitable, dictating certain behaviors, almost everywhere I look in various cities that I have set my eyes on. So, I agree to a certain extent that we are almost wholly swallowed up by Junkspace, yet I also see some hopeful attempts to produce better spaces that have important premises to offer not just for the sake of lubricating the capitalist system, or feeding the cycle of excess. Most importantly, I see bodies resembling resistance to their oppressive and hostile environments. This is apparent in the individual applications of Bachelard's oneiric house within the mere "superimposed boxes" that 21st century urban environment has to offer us, the intimate worlds we are capable of creating even in stagnant superimposed boxes, the homes we can build in them. When all else fails, I find a chaotic yet tranquil safety in recognizing the spatiality of my own body. When the majority of the spaces produced are inherently oppressive and manipulative, the bodies that inhabit them are the epitome of resistance. In their spatial intersections and overlappings with other bodies I find this resistance particularly flourishing. For the ones that dream of a better world, it is important to remember that our very existence is insurgent. Indeed, "even if there is no outside to Junkspace, there is still running room to be made in its cracks" (Foster, 2013b).

As soon as the dreamers live, past and present, their dreams can never be truly quenched as dreams have a tendency to transcend time and space.

II.III. Specimen_b and the Subtle Reminder of Transition

> "Four corridors lead from the four doors, dominating, as it were, the four cardinal points of an underground horizon. … There are traces of labyrinthine dreams in these pages. But associated with the labyrinths of the corridor, in which the air is 'heavy,' are rotundas and chapels that are the sanctuaries of the secret. Thus, the cellar in L'Antiquaire is oneirically complex. The reader must explore it through dreams, certain of which refer to the suffering in the corridors, and others to the marvelous nature of underground palaces. He [they] may become quite lost (actually as well as figuratively). … To go upstairs in the word house is to withdraw, step by step; while to go down to the cellar is to dream, it is losing oneself in the distant corridors of an obscure etymology, looking for treasures that cannot be found in words" (Bachelard, 2014, pp.42 & 166).

The notions of Junkspace and non-place interpreted/implemented on a building scale in terms of transience and the passing function, we get corridors on the horizontal plane and stairs, stairwells on the vertical plane: transitionary spaces of the individual buildings. Despite being extremely important architectural elements, they are almost always treated as an afterthought in the lived experience: overlooked, if not, disregarded as the trash of a building so to speak. Luckhurst (2019) draws attention to the disappearing act of corridors from the built environment, literature and history, from our immediate surrounding and collective imagination. Indeed, the above excerpt from *The Poetics of Space* is one of the few times the corridor was mentioned. Luckhurst (2019) refers to corridors as "merely passages, volumes to pass through on the way to somewhere else. These are the parts of the journey most likely to be done on autopilot, the minutes and hours vanishing into routine habit. Dead time and dead

space" (pp.10-11). As the "underpinning service elements of the world that are too big, or buried, or boring, to deserve comment", corridors are reduced to the underground realm of infrastructure: "seldom sustains mindful attention, manifesting instead the stuff of an unremarked substrate simply servicing the basics of everyday life'" (Angélil and Siress as cited in Luckhurst, 2019, pp.12-13). They are at the same time the spatial embodiment of transition, liminality, a transitory state of being that is transience, and even as literal as well as conceptual thresholds at times. As passages, corridors are the epitome of in-betweenness on this scale. The esoteric thresholds they subsume may not be as apparent as in the case of doorways and the obvious thresholds appearing as them between the dichotomy of inside and outside. However, are particularly important from where I stand since it could be argued that the non-places of supermodernity are actually urban scale corridors when they are distilled down to their passability: literally in the case of spaces formed in relation to transport and transit, and metaphorically in the case of spaces formed in relation to commerce and leisure.

Corridors are, in its simplest term, liminal spaces. Preston-Whyte (2008) identifies liminal spaces as intangible, elusive, and obscure; "lying in a limbo-like space often beyond normal social and cultural constraints" where "brief moments of freedom and an escape from the daily grind of social responsibilities can be found". "As a place of desire, they offer a 'dreamtime' that resonates with spiritual rebirth, transformation, and recuperation. However, transitional states are also places of anxiety replete with darker images of threat and danger" (Preston-Whyte, 2008). Films of horror genre frequently utilized corridors as a means of building suspense, unease, dread and introducing the unknown horrific forces at play. *The Shining* (1980) immediately comes to mind with this respect as it does so remarkably. Along with Stanley Kubrick's masterful visual style, the horrific tension of the film manifests itself and gradually intensifies with the shots following Danny riding his tricycle through the

corridors of Overlook Hotel and crescendos at the corridors of the labyrinth in the garden. I find *The Shining* (1980)'s horror, along with madness, violence, solitude, the supernatural, and the paranormal, is one that of corridors and in-betweenness.



Figure 2.3: "Danny riding his tricycle along the corridors of the Overlook Hotel", Film Still. Stanley Kubrick, *The Shining* (1980).

At this point, I find it important to briefly mention the beloved semi-viral internet trope that is the 'liminal spaces' which is the act of sharing and speculating about altered and generated images and actual architectural photographs of liminal spaces across a variety of social media platforms including reddit and twitter. The majority of the images shared by thousands of internet users under this lucrative topic frequently feature blank hallways and barren corridors, as well as dead shopping malls, empty swimming pools, lifeless retail buildings without the heaps of consumers, dystopic looking cubicle farms, emptied office buildings without the workers or any equipment, abandoned playgrounds or strange roads at night, desolate parking areas, hotels etc. where reality feels altered as the places look, eerie yet familiar, warmly nostalgic yet bone-chilling. Lloyd (2022) traces the beginning of the trend's popularity and the origins of an imagined alternate reality related to this trend as follows: "In

May 2019, an anonymous 4chan user asked members of the /x/ paranormal board to post "disquieting images that just feel 'off'" - one of the replies was a photo of a bleak office space with dingy, yellow walls and fluorescent lighting." (Figure 1.4) "A later comment posted by an anonymous account named it 'the Backrooms', going on to describe it as an area with six hundred-million square miles of old, moist carpet, and a badly wallpapered maze. There's only the constant hum of cheap bulbs for company and the vague threat of something lurking in the distance" (Lloyd, 2022). Maybe it is that the stark emptiness of those non-places depicted in the photographs of 'liminal spaces' that we usually associate with anonymous crowds rapidly passing-by creates an ambiguity and in turn, anxiety and nostalgia. In any case, something about seeing, sharing these images of empty non-places, in-between liminal spaces as they "transcend time and place" (Koch, 2020), triggered unanimously strong feelings regardless of whether they are on the positive or negative side; and a "cult-like following" (Koch, 2020) where stories written accompanying those images led to the construction of an imagined alternate reality that is 'the Backrooms'.



Image courtesy of Andrew Lloyd via Vice.

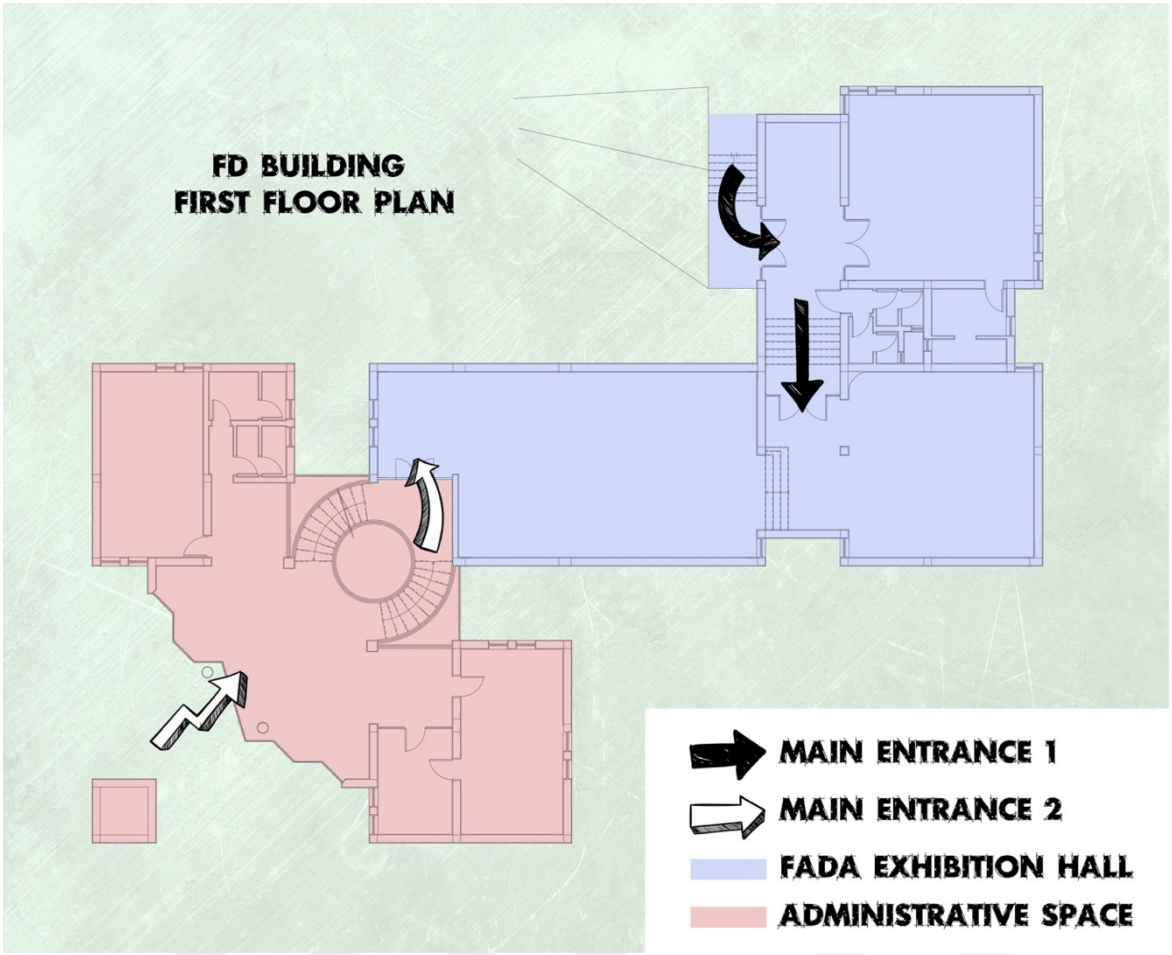
Figure 2.4: The first image of the Backrooms. Anonymous user, 2019.

Much like after *The Shining* (1980) in horror films as Luckhurst (2019) notices, "dread lurked in the un-historied horizontal horror of corridors, in the anonymous modernity of hotel vistas and the bland hallways of public institutions" with the images of 'liminal spaces' as the fabricated stories accompanying them increasingly demonstrated. Along with *The Shining* (1980) and with many other films and media featuring corridors, 'liminal spaces' as an internet trope reveal "something about the emotional latency of corridors: a simple lesson in the social construction of space" (Luckhurst, 2019) as well as their liminality, their in-betweenness. Luckhurst (2019) ends their book with the following sentences:

> "The trajectory of this history of the corridor might appear to lead from life to death, utopia to dystopia, the sacred light ahead to the dark dot of the vanishing point. … This might have seemed like one of those irritating, quirky histories to start with, but the doors along this passage have, I hope, constantly opened into some of the major experiences of modernity itself: the readjustment of the very concept of the private life; the fate of the public sphere; the commodification of everyday life; the possibility of collective living; the chances that built space might reform or rationalize character; bureaucratization and our life as constituted through institutions; the affective tonality of modern feelings of anomie, unease or dread; and our latter-day visions of life after death. 'History,' as T. S. Eliot said in 'Gerontion', 'has many cunning passages, contrived corridors / And issues.' If you press your ear to the door, the void of the corridor beyond is whispering some significant stories about the transformation of our sensibility in the modern world" (pp. 499-501).



Figure 2.5: Hotel corridor photograph that could easily be posted in r/LiminalSpace. Digital Photograph, 2023.



Official plans of the building provided by Funda Şenova Tunalı. **Figure 2.6:** FADA Exhibition Hall main entrances diagram on FD Building First Floor Plan.

FADA Exhibition Hall is located within FD building, adjacent to an administrative space housing dean's office and the Faculty of Fine Arts, Design, and Architecture secretaries. It has two main entrances one of which directly from outside and the other through FD building requiring access to the administrative space it is adjacent to. Which one to consider the main entrance varies depending on the visitor's approach and familiarity to the campus and this particular area of the campus. My tendency is to instinctively perceiving the former to be the main main-entrance among the two, my perception of the latter is discerned more towards a shortcut. Although this is a highly subjective issue, the inability to use the latter after business hours due to FD building being locked reinforces this perception for any visitor of any exhibition in the exhibition hall since main entrance is solely the former in these scenarios in terms of accessibility.

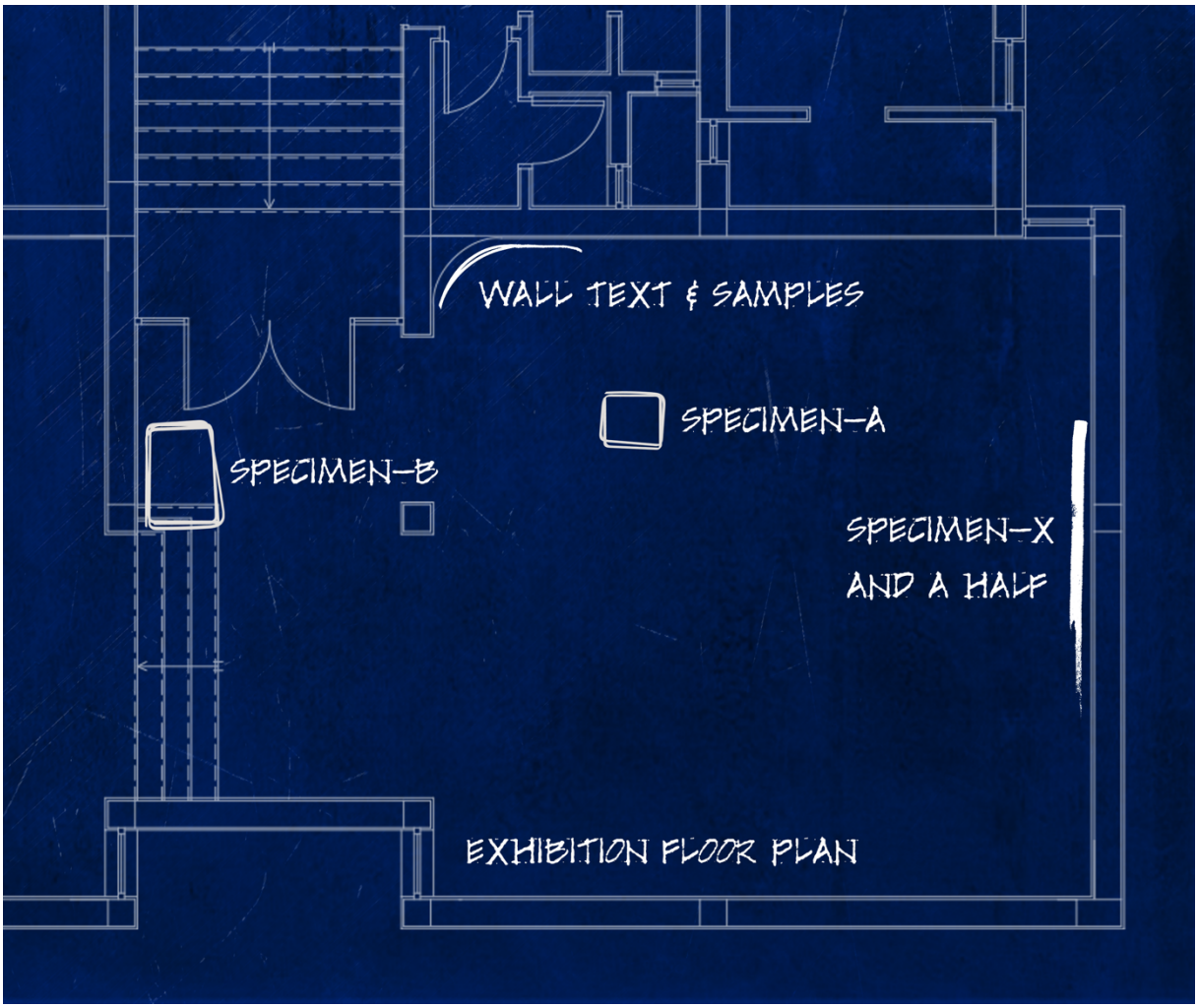


Figure 2.7: Exhibition Layout. Floor Plan, Digital Sketch.

The corner of FADA Exhibition Hall specimen_b inhabits is an interesting one. Although it is located on one of the main entrances of the exhibition hall in theory, mainly because of the huge column on the left upon entrance when juxtaposed with the wall across and stairs that the eye hits, along with their proximity, dictating that particular corner to be perceived and act more like a small corridor. Despite the notable effort against it applied on the stairs connecting the two sub-halls, the effort falls short of altering this feeling and in real life the floor plan almost forces this perception, leaving that particular corner idle. Upon my visits before the exhibition, I recognized that this idleness was unignorable as the corner was utilized to store an unused table and the trashcan underneath it, blocking the tiny turn that the flight of

stairs takes there, rendering it obsolete and further enhancing the corridorness of this main entrance-turned little corridor. This particular placement of specimen_b is important because identifying one of the main entrances of the exhibition hall being perceived as an extension of the corridor that it is reached through is actually a near-perfect real-life example of the aforementioned constant flux between the spatial triad of Lefebvre's conception of social space in practice with an emphasis on perception.



Figure 2.8: View from one of the visits to the exhibition hall before the exhibition.

Keeping in mind the theoretical background behind this decision, again, if we were to apply the aforementioned terminology and conceptions coined by Augé and Koolhaas on a building scale this corner-corridor was just a great spot for specimen_b to inhabit: a non-place, junk portion of the exhibition hall that its passing is one that most likely to be done on autopilot. Figuratively by placing the refuse, and literally by placing the trash, there, it is both refused and trashed limiting and denying most possibilities of its perceptual formation as a place. By deliberately placing specimen_b to inhabit this particularly selected space, my intention is to disrupt, challenge, and play with this existing perception, to provoke a previously untried pattern of thought through a previously inexperienced moment. An irritant for the unconsciously aforethought perception around transience so to speak. Both of these specimens'

sonic aspects are utilized as tools to reinforce their disruptiveness and further enhances their irritant state. Specimen_b's disruption occurs with its sudden loud humming sound as well as its movement which will be explained in the upcoming chapter on movement within its respective sub-chapter. In other words, instead of a major theorizing point like space or movement, I utilize their sound as accompaniments to them.



Figure 2.9: Specimen_b, view from the exhibition.

II.IV. Specimen_a and the Non-Placeness of the Exhibition Space

> "The museum wants and needs an informed, enthusiastic audience whose . . . knowledge of the collections and programming continue to grow. The museum says: Here you will find 'satisfaction,' you will find

> ‘contentment,’ you will find ‘pleasure,’ here you will find "the finer things that make life worth living," here you will be liberated ‘from the struggle imposed by material needs,’ here you will find your ‘ideal beauty,’ you will find ‘inspiration,’ here you will find ‘a place apart,’ you will find ‘standards,’ here you will find ‘civilization’… *Jane stops just outside the cafeteria*: Oh, I've known happiness; intense happiness, exquisite happiness, here in the museum, beside these tiles, or across the room from those or, or over there, between these two. It's nice to feel alive. I'd like to live like an art object. Wouldn't it be nice to live like an art object…” (Fraser, 1991, pp.120-121).

Daniel Buren (1985) defines the museum as a ‘privileged place’ with three main functions, which are aesthetic since it is both the frame and support upon which the work is inscribed; economic since it instantly promotes the work socially and economically simply by assuring its exposure and consumption giving what it labeled as ‘selected’ a sales value; and mystical since it instantly promotes ‘art’ status to what it exhibits with belief, eliminating any attempt to question the foundations of art. As they differ in intensity depending on the specific museum or galleries considered, for socio-political reasons relating to the greater art-system, these three points are useful in conceptualizing Buren’s general idea of a museum’s triple role as preservation, collection, and refuge in terms of its institutional framework. The museum preserves therefore perpetuates; collects better to isolate; acts as a refuge without which no work can exist. With its systems, mechanisms, and function, through the exhibition framework, “the Museum makes its ‘mark’, imposes its ‘frame’ (physical and moral) on everything that is exhibited in it, in a deep and indelible way” since “everything that the Museum shows is only considered and produced in view of being set in it” (ibid., p.190). For Buren, the museum is “an enclosure where art is born and buried, crushed by the very frame which represents and constitutes it” since the museum “becomes the single cultural and visual viewpoint” that art is seen and validated through (ibid., p.190). “What we have here is a careful camouflage undertaken by the prevalent bourgeois ideology, assisted by the artists themselves, which has

until now made it possible to transform the reality of the world into an image of the world and History into Nature" (ibid., p.192).



Image courtesy of © Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation New York.

Figure 2.10: Daniel Buren. *Peinture-Sculpture (Painting-Sculpture)* (1971). Work in situ. in. Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York. Photo: Robert E. Mates and Paul Katz. © Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, New York.

As one of the many ways Buren investigated the museum's imposed frame from its specific spatial and institutional settings through his artworks, a Painting-Sculpture (Peinture-Sculpture) briefly appeared but widely reverberated. In 1971, Buren installed a humongous piece of his infamous striped fabrics down the skylight of the Guggenheim Museum across its whole height almost to the floor for the sixth Guggenheim International Exhibition as a critical intervention to the museum's unique, powerful and dominant architectural space in terms of its spatial framing. The 66 x 32 ft. canvas entirely divided the building's rotunda and transformed the way it was functioning since at times, as the audience ascended the circular ramps, they would be enveloped by a flat expanse of the canvas similar to a large painting but as they

continued around, the banner would also be experienced as a sculptural object. The piece startled a major controversy and was removed before the opening due to demands and complaints from some of the artists included in the exhibition stating the piece is blocking their works' view (The Guggenheim Museums and Foundation, n.d.).



Figure 2.11: Specimen_a, view from the exhibition.

Specimen_a is placed on a pedestal and towards the middle of the portion of FADA exhibition hall designated to my work with respect to its relation with the overall layout of my portion of the MFA graduate theses exhibition. I paid attention to all my material being in each other's affinity enough so that they are perceived a coherent body of work under the same research. If we were to apply the aforementioned terminology and conceptions coined by Augé and Koolhaas on an institutional scale, specimen_a raises questions on the state of the exhibition spaces in this respect and offers a possibility for critique of the said institutions governing exhibition spaces through it. In other words, with its selected mode of exhibition, by being put

on a pedestal, specimen_a questions the non-place qualities of the 'place' of display within the framework it operates. By disrupting the whitewashed silence with its distinct squeak-like sound, it criticizes the status quo of the broader artworld through the 'white cube' it inhabits. By way of explanation, specimen_a begets a critical disruption of the exhibition space similar to that of Buren's 1971 Painting-Sculpture and while Buren's critical disruption was a visual one, Specimen_a's is rather audible and on the sonic field among the perceptual field of senses. A sonic intervention to the exhibition space in particular, among various aspects and parties of the complex institutional problematic of the art world so to speak. I sometimes wonder if they could, would any one of my peers demand its removal? If the white cube is acting as a shopping mall for the elite to collect art pieces just for the sake of owning them later to brag about in brunches, or, a high-speed highway of an over-saturated art world isn't it also a non-place at certain angles and times? With the rapid increase in the number of galleries of varying scales among big cities along with the rapid shortening of the durations of the exhibitions they host makes me wonder: do contemporary galleries (not as in 'contemporary art gallery' but as in contemporary galleries of the times we are currently in) act like some sort of highway that artistic visions only pass through rapidly nowadays?

Encountering with art and its potential radical effect on an individual is indisputable. The placeness of the exhibition space may not be open to discussion with this respect but its non-placeness is open to discussion precisely because of its economic function, the heightened level of importance placed on the same function and the problematic situations emerging due to the same reason. Even though I am relatively new to this so-called art world in terms of my developing relationship with its prestigious —or notorious institutions, time and time again, I have heard complaints from friends and family as well as visitors regarding the short duration of some group exhibition my work was part of. I have complained myself for some exhibitions

I wanted to see but by the time I was informed about it I would have already missed it by a day or two. Time and time again, I have witnessed the heightened importance placed on the opening night of an exhibition where certain influential names would be deliberately invited and pampered; while the regular museum goers of the regular days would be regarded almost as mere freeloaders as they would supposedly 'finish up' the pamphlets. How on earth can this be a concern of a well-established modern art museum? Both in terms of the artworks it displays and the resources of the institution, are the museum-goers' identities reduced down to that of the consumer as they rapidly pass-by, often anonymously? If so, as an institution doesn't this put the museum right next to the airport in terms of the non-places analogy and one of its cornerstone definitions? What does the artists' identities reduce down to then? What about the artworks, ideas, critical voices, dreams and creations? The act of criticizing an institution within the confines of the said institution is a double-edged sword. Andrea Fraser (2005) have observed the shift "from the critique of institutions to an institution of critique" and suggested a reevaluation regarding the perception of the 'institution' as the object of critique as follows:

> "Nearly forty years after their first appearance, the practices now associated with 'institutional critique' have for many come to seem, well, institutionalized. … the institution of art is not only 'institutionalized' in organizations like museums and objectified in art objects. It is also internalized and embodied in people. It is internalized in the competencies, conceptual models, and modes of perception that allow us to produce, write about, and understand art, or simply to recognize art as art, whether as artists, critics, curators, art historians, dealers, collectors, or museum visitors. And above all, it exists in the interests, aspirations, and criteria of value that orient our actions and define our sense of worth. These competencies and dispositions determine our own institutionalization as members of the field of art. They make up what Pierre Bourdieu called *habitus*: the "social made body," the institution made mind. … Institutional critique has *always* been institutionalized. It could only have emerged *within* and, like all art, can only function *within* the institution art" (Fraser, 2005).

I find Fraser's (2005) text a powerful guide for self-critique, and for discerning my own internalized institution in my unconscious tendencies mostly revealing themselves to me during my creation process. As Fraser (2005) paints an all-encompassing immersive understanding of institutionalization in the broader field of art, it seems to me that the "white cube" as a socially produced space, much like non-places of supermodernism and Junkspace as supermodernity itself, have a tendency to absorb and internalize, chew, swallow and throw back up, whatever is thrown at it even if it is the very radical acts of its own critique. The question is then, again, how can we create running room in its cracks?



Figure 2.12: Specimen_a, view from the exhibition.

II.V. Basho: Place of Being

> "When we think of thing-events there must be a basho wherein they are mirrored. Initially we may think of this as the field of consciousness. To be conscious of something one must mirror it upon the field of consciousness. … The oppositional relationship between form and matter is established in [this] basho of lived experience" (Nishida, 2012).

Basho is one of the most important notions of Nishida Kitaro's philosophy perhaps even the most important one according to many scholars. The Japanese word basho is commonly translated to English as "place". With as simply as this respect, it implies place in its meaning but it would be a misinterpretation to use it synonymously with an understanding of place in the sense we have previously discussed. From where I stand, the nuance bringing the deeper philosophical significance it holds is that it also implies context rather than solely place, especially considering a physical and everyday understanding of place. However, to refer to it as the perspective (tachiba) in relation to reality may be an oversimplification as well (Krummel, 2012). For, according to Krummel (2012), "it points to a dynamism that precedes any intellectual dichotomization between experience and reality" and it indicates "the most concrete situatedness at the base of our being", therefore "entailing a non-distinction between experience and reality", as well as giving "the subject-object dichotomy or the distinction between ideal and real" a priority. "It would be the 'place' enveloping and encompassing all mental acts and their objects, all perspectival horizons of intentionality that constitute the world of objects" (Krummel, 2012). As Heleno (n.d.) points out, according to Jacynthe Tremblay, matryoshkas, which are traditional Russian dolls, are comparable to basho. "The dolls enchase in one another, which signifies that there are dolls that involve others in the same way there is the continent and the tenor, but also, a set of concepts like relation, place, space and others"

(Heleno, n.d.). In this sense, *Basho* is similar to "the greatest doll which involves and enchases others" and in the context of this doll, "everything is in relation with everything" (Heleno, n.d.). Basho also signifies *zettai m*u, the *absolute nothingness* which Heleno (n.d.) states that is precisely what is less grasped by the intellect.

It could be argued that chronologically its preceding notions among Nishida's thought like pure experience and Jikaku (self-awareness), some loose ends—that Nishida himself perceived as problematic since he tried to overcome them— are present until basho. It is the realization, recognition, and declaration that those preliminary concepts presupposed a meaningful context, a metaphorical place to occur in, or "a basho wherein thing-events are mirrored onto themselves" (Nishida, 2012), that made them possible to finally make more sense as a whole within Nishida's philosophy as well as eliminating the need for somewhat problematic involuntary stances Nishida aimed to overcome. This tendency to follow Nishida's notions chronologically when explaining the concept of basho can be observed both in Fujita (2013) and Ishihara (2019)'s writing. Basho is commonly referred to as a turning point in Nishida's philosophy and usually articulated with the notion of Jikaku. Jikaku is often translated as self-awareness or self-consciousness in English, but as Ishihara (2019) indicates jikaku as self-awareness also includes a sense of self-transformation, determination, and openness to the world in the sense that one must understand what others are in the world and one's relation to them in addition to its ordinary understanding as a set of transfers.

In basho, Nishida demonstrates that "all our knowledge, including that of objects and subjects, presupposes 'the self-mirroring structure of 'jikaku (or self-awareness)', namely the structure of self-awareness whereby the self mirrors (or reflects) itself within itself" in a twofold

argument (Ishihara, 2019). One one hand, “knowledge of objects presupposes consciousness qua place of nothingness insofar as whatever is determinable in judgments presupposes the ground of determination, predication and objectification, i.e. consciousness (Nishida called this the place of ‘nothingness’ because the ground of determination is itself undetermined in the sense that it cannot be objectified, i.e. it is no-thing)” and on the other “such consciousness qua ground of judgment itself presupposes a further place”(Ishihara, 2019). As Ishihara (2019) neatly sums up, basho in terms of its levels has the following basic structure: “The *place of being*(s) (namely, the place of determined things) is implaced in the *place of relative nothingness* (self-aware consciousness or consciousness that has become aware of itself in relation to beings), which is subsequently implaced in the *place of absolute nothingness* (or the intelligible world, which is then implaced in absolute nothingness)”.

> “True consciousness must be that which mirrors even consciousness in the above sense. So-called consciousness [by contrast] is nothing but that which has been further objectified. … The basho of true nothing [shin no mu no basho] must be that which transcends the opposition of being and nothing in every sense and enables them to be established within. It is at the place where we thoroughly break through species concepts, that we see true consciousness” (Nishida, 2012).

In summation, Nishida’s concept of basho inholds a kinetic process or field that represents a dynamic, ever-changing and constantly evolving understanding of reality rather than a static place or point in space. In being so, basho emphasizes the interconnectivity of every-thing qua no-thing, with a particular significance of jikaku or self-awareness as not separate but an integral part of itself, and declare the unity of subject and object where their distinctions are also preserved and thus, the contradictory aspects of this duality qua the subject-object dichotomy are also part of this unity. To me, one of the most intriguing nuances of this

thought is the consideration of consciousness qua place [basho] wherein it mirrors itself upon itself to reach further depths of itself. “Yet, it is precisely due to this basho reflecting itself within itself, that the opposition between being and nothingness arise … ‘basho’ is characterized by this dual feature” (Fujita, 2013) all the while uniting the two.

II.VI. Transier and Space: Final Note on Spatiality

> "The space-medium is objects mapped onto space ... We have seen the inseparability of Things and space, and the impossibility of representing Things and space by themselves" (Pavel Florensky as cited in Efimova & Manovich, 1993, p. xxvi).

As I have briefly mentioned before, Transier is a conceptual umbrella term for the individual specimens and their shared concerns. As a concept, it defines the framework of this research that each individual sculpture operates with. When mentioning Transier, it is either referred to the defined framework itself in terms of the shared concerns, or every individual specimen ever brought alive as a totality in terms of the body of work depending on the context of the reference. With Transier, since it is interwoven with the space it inhabits through a particular emphasis on transience, in terms of spatial concerns, what is defined and outlined is a “space-medium” for each individual specimen to work with as they embody a spatial mode of expression they are imbued with. This framework is what allows specimen_a to ask the questions it is raising, specimen_b to touch its passer-by’s consciousness; it is going to be a guide and reference point for both future specimens and future me while creating and theorizing them; these sculptures, past, present, and future, are what allow me to explore these conceptions deeply. Within this framework, I frequently employ Marc Auge’s notion non-place for Transier’s space-medium. In its current state, they either inhabit self-established non-places, or

they question the non-placeness of the space they inhabit varying in scales. I identify the transient state of the passers-by a likely unconscious one within the context of non-places and supermodernity. What I aimed with these sculptures is a disruption of this transient state of the passer-by in non-places corresponding with the transient act of passing-by. This disruption and its greater meaning are found and explained through further unfolding of its theoretical background in the upcoming chapters. Their movement and so how they realize this disruption enhances its relationship with space.

> "Awareness of our self can't take place in an I closed in itself. Consciousness is only possible when the self, surpassing [them]self, faces another I. When we say that we are conscious is because the self have surpassed [them]self" (Nishida as cited in Heleno, n.d.)

The emphasis on non-places is particularly significant from a philosophical standpoint that is concerned with being and nothingness. I argue that if one is on the path of understanding the nature of being and self-awareness as jikaku, looking into places where we lose our-selves or our identities frequently in our day-to-day lives is an ideal starting point for a deeper inquisition towards jikaku (self-awareness). The initial disruption of an unconscious transient state of the passer-by aims to act on a conscious level with respect to Nishida's philosophy in the sense that the 'I' that is the passer-by is closed in itself within this transient state where according to Nishida awareness of our self can't take place. By the encounter of another 'I' that is the specimen, consciousness regarding the self is possible within this context. With the other I that is faced with that is the specimen, as per its reflective nature, claiming to be mirroring the I that passes-by, *if* a process similar to that of the consciousness mirroring itself onto itself is triggered, a possibility of jikaku as self-awareness arises for the passer-by.

CHAPTER III

ON MOVEMENT: BETWEEN STABILITY AND MOTILITY

III.I. Foundations: Kinetic Sculpture and Kineticism

> "This is a shift from being to becoming. Kinetic works reflect this shift since kinetic works refute static space. They destroy lineal time. Kinetic works do not occupy space, they create space. Kinetic works do not contain time, they create time. Kinetic works so not interpret reality, they are reality" (Willoughby Sharp as cited in Chau, 2017, p.57).

"Rörelse I konsten (Movement in Art, 1961) was Moderna Museet's first truly ambitious undertaking*"* as Lundström (2017) stated. Curated by Pontus Hultén, the exhibition is widely considered for its pivotal position in art history as "its broader understanding of the theme of movement", its contribution to art history "remains relevant to this day" (Lundström, 2017). Examining the exhibition in its halls; in Europe; in its notes; in theory; and in its institutional relevance Lundström (2017) observes that "movement as a concept was placed above abstraction", and furthermore, from its "exceedingly concrete interaction between visitors and works ultimately activating the space between the works", to its "appearance like a more comprehensive situation" rather than a common linear narrative about the history of art, it seems to me that it must've been an exceptional experience to visit this exhibition as it is described almost as an embodiment of kineticism in the form of an unconventional exhibition. According to Galayev (1996), Koleychuk defines kineticism as follows:

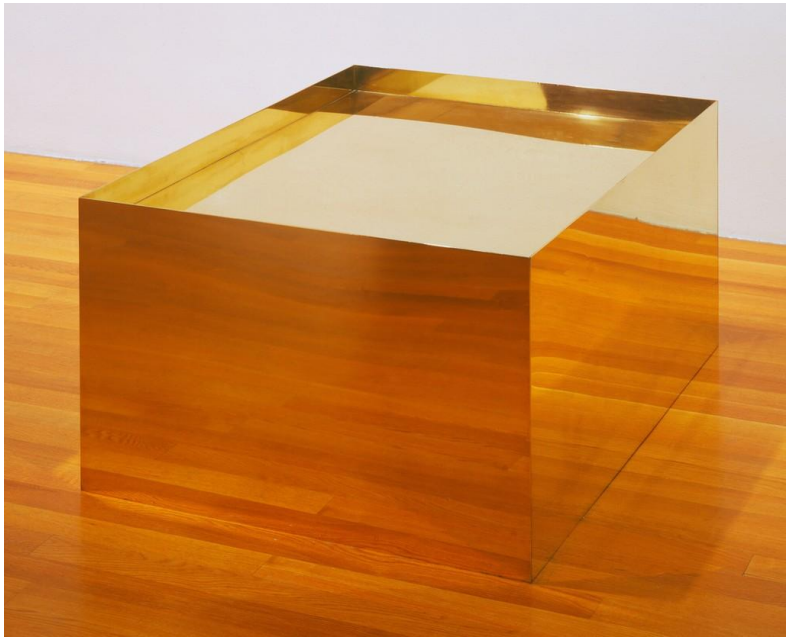
> "Kinetic art, or kineticism, encompasses artistic creative works based on the idea of the moving form-this idea includes not only the mere physical displacement of an object, but also all of its changes and transformations; the idea includes as well any kind of object that comes to life during the moment a spectator contemplates it" (Koleychuk as cited in Galayev, 1996).

Furthermore, The Editors of Encyclopedia Britannica (1998) defines kinetic sculpture as sculpture in which movement (as of a motor-driven part or a changing electronic image) is an integral component; and according to Tate, (n.d.) kinetic art is "art that depends on motion for its effects". With this respect, I argue that specimens of Transier are non-sculptures for the non-places they inhabit for anyone at any given time so long as they are not passing-by. In other words, when there is no one passing-by, they fail to realize themselves by the very definition of a kinetic sculpture as they depend on their passers-by for their movement. At this point, I would like to conceptualize an artistic spectrum between stability and motility through three influential artists and their works' characteristics in order to locate and discuss Transier's in-betweenness among the vast artistic discourse with this respect.

Donald Judd's purposefully untitled works that usually consist of rectangular and repetitive installations of identical boxes made out of industrially produced materials that almost blur the lines between painting and sculpture. Their commonly-referred informal name can be located in his 1964 essay titled *'Specific Objects'*. Judd's conception of artworks, in general, as specific objects along with his substantial justification of the object's integral power as an artwork in its presence in physical space –which he found this said power being more profound as it is denied of any implied symbolism or meaning in its most simple forms– both stresses the art-object's physical, formal and material specificities as their identities, and renders his words almost as a minimalist manifesto. For Judd, "materials vary greatly and are simply

materials; they are specific; and if they are used directly, they are more specific" (ibid, 1964). Judd also claims that "actual space is intrinsically more powerful and specific than paint on a flat surface" (ibid, 1964). Without a doubt, Judd's works and their relationship with space as per the works' reliance on their simple existence in space as purely 'specific' objects; found strength and effectiveness as pieces of art in their singularity and extremely simplistic physical existence in the physical space, it is clear that his view of 'actual space' is no further than a mere container of objects. Nonetheless, Judd's work constructs, finds, and justifies its extremely simplistic minimalism in this very understanding of physical space alone. Judd's plain prisms are correctly considered as "specific objects" with "uncanny materiality" (Mignoni, 2023) simply because they are 'objects' that procure ultimate specificity according to his conception. As Robert Hughes narrates:

> "Judd's work was hard to like because the purity he sought was of a kind that most people don't want in sculpture. No figure, no parts, no relationships, no movement, no metaphors, no secrets, just the thing in itself and a completely inexpressive thing at that. None of which excluded the fact that it could be beautiful, in an anxious utopian way. It's in the world but it tells nothing about the world" (Hughes in *Age of Anxiety,* 1997).



ARTstor image and original data courtesy of MoMA, The Museum of Modern Art. http://www.moma.org

Figure 3.1: Donald Judd. *Untitled* (1968). Brass Sculpture. 22 x 48 1/4 x 36" (55.9 x 122.6 x 91.4 cm) in. The Museum of Modern Art Painting and Sculpture Collection, Gift, Philip Johnson. Accession 687.1980, Local Identifier 81787.

© Judd Foundation / Licensed by VAGA, New York, NY.



ARTstor image and original data courtesy of © Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation New York.

Figure 3.2: Donald Judd. *Untitled* (1969). Copper, ten units with 9-inch intervals. 9 x 40 x 31 inches (22.9 x 101.6 x 78.7 cm) each; 180 x 40 x 31 inches (457.2 x 101.6 x 78.7 cm) overall in. Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, Panza Collection, 1991. Accession 91.3713. © 2012 Judd Foundation / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.

The term, 'kinesis' is often used interchangeably with 'actual motion' (Chau, 2017, p.1) maybe because of its direct translation from Greek as simple as 'motion' that is apparent in its etymological roots as "New Latin, from Greek *kinēsis*, from *kinein* to move; akin to Latin *ciēre* to move" (Kinesis, n.d.). It is most probable that biology adapted kinesis as 'movement' in New Latin in a more specifically detailed description of a biological movement defined for the field as a term for itself. I would like to re-adapt its biological definition in terms of a more nuanced understanding of it for kineticism. The biological definition of kinesis can be found in the *Oxford Dictionary of Biology* as "the movement of a cell or organism in response to a stimulus in which the rate of movement depends on the intensity (rather than the direction) of the stimulus. For example, a woodlouse (pillbug) moves slowly in a damp atmosphere and

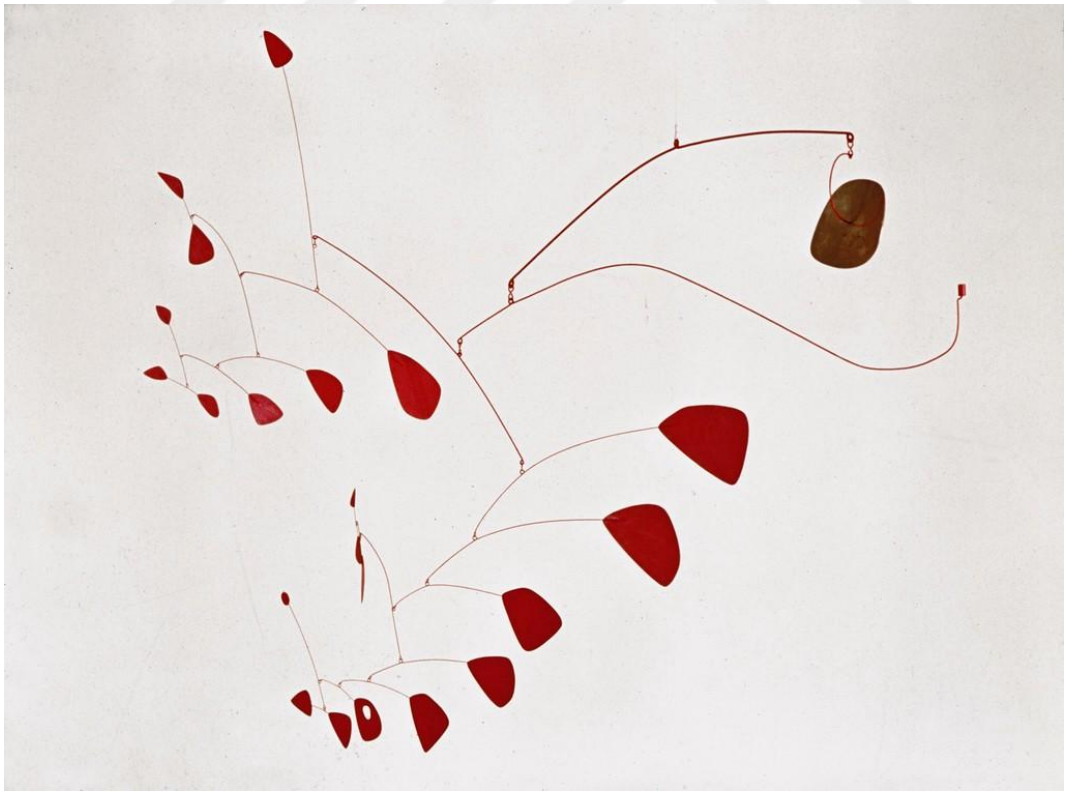
quickly in a dry one" (Hine, 2019). Merriam-Webster dictionary provides us with a generalized version of this definition as "a movement that lacks directional orientation and depends upon the intensity of stimulation" (Kinesis, n.d.) Therefore, a more nuanced definition of kinesis for kineticism can be understood as the sculpture's inherent bodily possibility of movement depending on external stimuli regardless of the direction of the said stimuli. Or, in other words, the kinetic sculpture and its structural enmeshment with dependance on external stimuli with external stimuli being an uncontrollable variable such as the unplanned, undetermined viewer interaction or naturally occurring forces like air-flow.



Image courtesy of Moderna Museet. **Figure 3.3:** Calder in. Movement in Art, Moderna Museet, 1961. Photo: Moderna Museet. © Alexander Calder / Bildupphovsrätt 2017.

"When Marcel Duchamp suggested to Alexander Calder the name "*mobiles*" for his suspended sculptures, Calder was apparently pleased with its dual meaning—referring, in

French, to both motion and motive" writes Taylor (2012). In their simplest description, Calder's *Mobiles*, are a series of suspended kinetic sculptures in their final form but also can be found standing in their earlier examples. Calder's simple geometric forms are carefully arranged and delicately attached together along their respective 'spines' almost as modernist abstractions of natural elements like petals, leaves, or fish scales. Their delicate, meticulously formulated structures allow for each component to move freely without interrupting each other in their harmoniously balanced unison, and their source of movement vary as they can mostly move either by naturally occurring air-flows, by a visitor's pushing hand or by their intentional insufflation of air, or electric-motors in some. From where I stand, Calder's *Mobiles*, helps us introduce and understand kinesis as a conception for kineticism as its aforementioned understanding as re-adapted from its biological definition as their intrinsic dynamism stems from their kinesis with this respect.



ArtStor image and original data courtesy of University of California, San Diego.

Figure 3.4: Alexander Calder. *Sumac with Gong* (1954). Metal Sculpture. 50x61" in. Artstor Slide Gallery. © 2004 Estate of Alexander Calder / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.

"Calder provides the kind of modern art one is prepared for. There is novelty—even if it is only mechanical—and an abstractness that seems racy and chic. This is modern the way it looked when it was modern" Clement Greenberg as cited in Taylor, 2012).

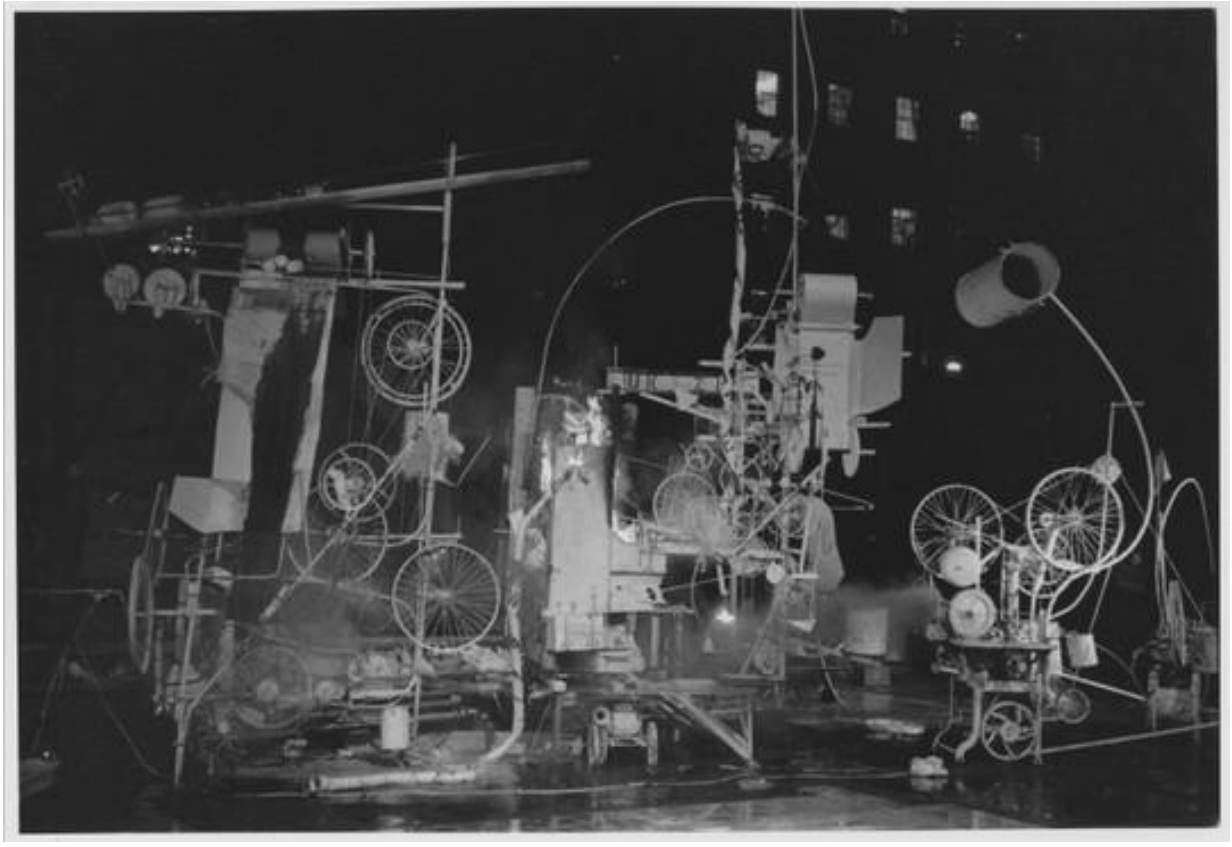


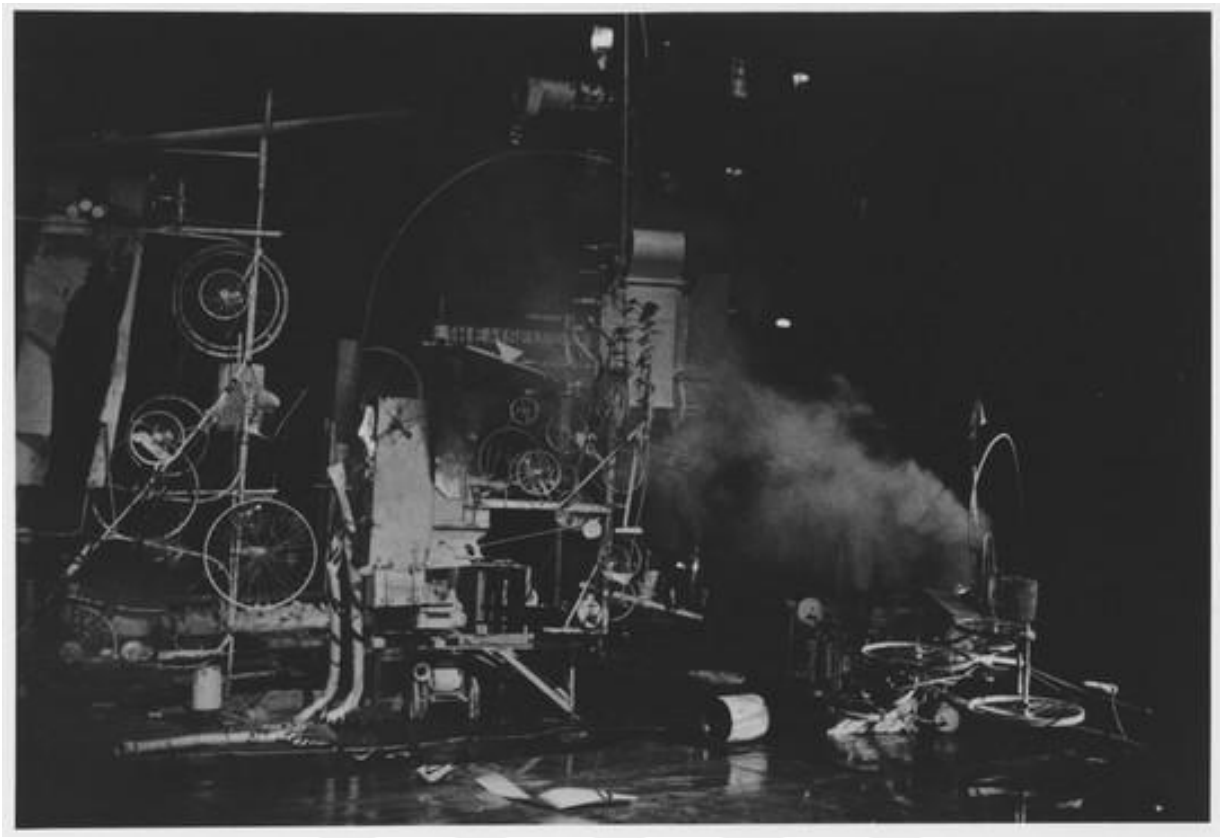
ArtStor image and original data courtesy of Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. http://www.mfa.org/

Figure 3.5: Alexander Calder. *Mobile* (about 1935). Metal; Steel, Sculpture. 173.36 cm (68 ¼ in.) in. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston Boston, Massachusetts, USA Decorative Arts Special Fund 60.241. Local Identifier BMFA.60.241. © 2007 Estate of Alexander Calder / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.

"In March 1960, Tinguely presented his first auto-destructive artwork *Homage to New York* in the sculpture garden at MoMA. The sculpture was engineered to slowly erupt into flames and disintegrate before the audience" (Tate, 2015). It only existed for twenty-seven minutes until the New York Fire Department famously extinguished and axed it down. Tinguely describes it as "a machine that is extreme, it makes spectacle, it's a sculpture, it's a picture, maybe a picture that makes sound, it's a composer, an accompanist, it's a poet, it's a declaration:

this machine is a situation" (in. ARTtube, 2018). Repeating Dori Ashton's spoken description, it was "sufficiently iconoclastic" (in. Tate, 2015) as it was a declaration of an imminent protest against the white cube, museums, sterility, and purity, which is mostly present in his works that celebrated the commonly perceived ugliness of machinery in a playful manner and rejected the idea of ever being 'finished'. During a talk on his homage to *Homage to New York,* Michael Landy refers to it as "the self-destructing self-constructing machine" (in. ARTtube, 2018) which is an accurate description of the situation since Tinguely's machine constructs itself by its self-destruction, both literally and figuratively. This was the first of a series of self-destructing machines Tinguely created between 1960-70. Creating by means of destruction was also imminently questioning the status of works of art as collectibles since it is so temporary that it is an event; a situation as a machine spectacle; a performance where the machine performs its self-destruction, a happening, all of which co-created by the artist and his machine. The way I see it, a very obvious message to an industrial society veils itself among their cacophonic songs and can be heard if paid close attention (see. MoMA, n.d.).





ARTstor image and original data courtesy of the Museum of Modern Art http://www.moma.org/

Figures 3.6 & 3.7: Installation view of the exhibition, "*Homage to New York:* A self-constructing and self-destroying work of art conceived and built by Jean Tinguely.", (March 17, 1960). Photograph: David Gahr. in. The Museum of Modern Art: Exhibition Installation Photograph Collection (Photographic Archive). Local Identifier IN661.8. © David Gahr. David Gahr, 49 Eighth Avenue, Brooklyn, New York 11217, Phone: 212-675-7585; © 2008 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / ADAGP, Paris.

One of the predecessors of these self-destructing self-constructing machines were *Méta-matic's,* a series of kinetic sculptures, machines usually made out of scrap metal, that were activated by their audience usually with the push of a button, for the machines to scribble abstract drawings on whatever pieces of paper that were put in front of them with whatever drawing agent was attached to them again by the audience (see. Museum Tinguely, 2020 & VernissageTV, 2008). As machinic constructions that are producing artworks, the *Méta-matic* could be considered meta-machines in the sense that they are machines of a machine. With the latter being the artist-machine where the artist is conceptualized as a machine producing artworks, construction of the former can be considered as a meta-commentary on the situation of the artworld at the time, the very nature of artistic production in the machine age so to speak.

In other words, “with his do-it-yourself drawing machines, Tinguely critiqued the role of the artist and the elitist position of art in society” while renouncing “the unicity of ‘the artist’s hand’ by encouraging visitors to produce work themselves” through his machines (Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam, n.d.).



ARTstor image and original data courtesy of Réunion des Musées Nationaux / Art Resource, N.Y.

Figure 3.8: Jean Tinguely. *Meta-matic No. 1 (Méta-matic n° 1)* (1959). Metal, Paper, Motor, Sculpture. 96 x 85 x 44 cm. in. Musée National d'Art Moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, France, Réunion des Musées Nationaux (RMN). Accession ART167307. © 2014 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / ADAGP, Paris.

Tinguely is usually considered a pioneer of kineticism and rightfully so. His own experience with never managing to ‘finish’ a painting, finding himself in a paralyzed state any time he attempted trying to do so, and the artistic freedom he found in movement as expressed by Tinguely (in Siegal, 2016), is highly influential for me personally and paradoxical at the same time. In his words: “Movement allowed me a way out of this paralysis. Movement allowed me to say, ‘OK, now it’s done” (Tinguely as cited in Siegal, 2016). This doneness is not

implying a doneness in a sense of being ‘finished’. These machines are ‘done’ by never needing to be ‘finished’ and never being able to be ‘finished’, in fact, by finding their definition, strength, and power in their own constant flux, through their polyphonic clangs and bangs, Tinguely’s machines are freeing and liberating both themselves, their maker and the artist. Tinguely’s clamor indeed, still echoes today (Siegal, 2016) and maybe it echoes in my world a little lauder as per their statement “that the only thing in life that’s sure is that everything is in constant flux” (Margriet Schavemaker as cited in Siegal, 2016).

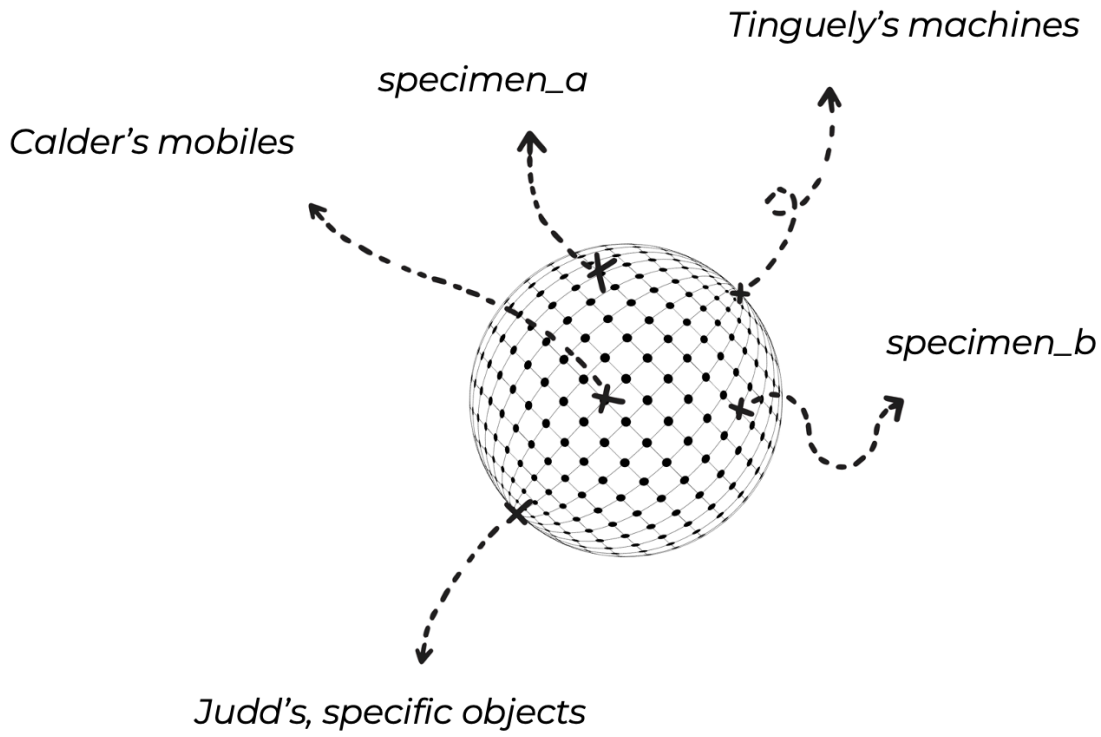


Image courtesy of Moderna Museet. **Figure 3.9:** Tinguely in. Movement in Art, Moderna Museet, 1961. Photo: Moderna Museet. © Jean Tinguely / Bildupphovsrätt 2017.

> “Everything is in motion, nothing ever stands still. Don’t let yourselves be ruled by outdated concepts of time. Get rid of hours, seconds, minutes. Stop resisting mutability. BE ONE WITH TIME – BE STATIC, BE STATIC – WITH MOVEMENT. For stasis in the NOW that is happening now. Resist the anxious loss of nerve about stopping what is in motion, turning instants to stone and killing what is alive. Stop constantly setting up “values” that then fall in on themselves. Be free, live!

> Stop ‘painting’ time. Leave off building cathedrals and pyramids that crumble away like confectionery. Breathe deeply. Live in the now. Live on and in time. For a beautiful and absolute reality!” (Tinguely’s *Für Statik*, March 1959, see. Museum Tinguely, n.d.)

Circling back to the aforementioned premise of conceptualizing an artistic spectrum between stability and motility through these three influential artists and their works’ characteristics in order to locate and discuss Transier’s in-betweenness among the vast artistic discourse with this respect and to also locate my sculptures in an art historical context. It is important to note that this theoretical spectrum is not linear but rather spherical with many reference points, where I imagine this spherical shape smoothening and being more defined as the reference points are proliferated (Figure 3.10).



Figures 3.10: Diagram Visualizing the Conceptual Spectrum Between Stability and Motility, Digital Sketch.

Between stability and motility, on one end of the spectrum, Donald Judd's specific objects are the epitome of stability; on the other end of the same spectrum, since they are on the verge of being read as a happening, Jean Tinguely's self- destructing self-constructing machines are the epitome of motility and his meta-machines are the epitome of specifically machinic motility; whereas Alexander Calder's theatrically moving shapes stand somewhere between the two as they freely undulate in a state of kinesis. I place these two specimens somewhere between the three along the spectrum as they relate to each in their different aspects despite their inherent opposing dualities in some of their nuances. These specimens aka. machinic entities relate to Judd's conception of specific objects not in terms of their anonymously simplistic minimalism that reject overt symbolism and emotional meaning but in terms of their emphasis on materiality, modular orthogonal geometricity and immobile physicality in their static non-sculpture state. The opposing duality here is that contrary to Judd's work, these specimens are enmeshed with rhetoric symbolism and emotional meaning as per their multi-layered construction. They relate to Calder's *Mobiles* in terms of their kinesis, as in an inherent possibility embedded in their structure to move in response to an external stimulus that is often unpredictable by its nature. In other words, recalling Merleau-Ponty, an inherent spatial and bodily possibility to move therefore embodied spatiality. The opposing duality here is that contrary to Calder's work, which often harkened their viewer back to nature and natural elements, these specimens are purely artificial beings as they are electrical-motor driven and made out of recycled plastic. They relate to Tinguely's meta-machines simply in terms of their machinic beings that have underlying philosophical, socio-political commentary and his explosive kinetic constructions in terms of the spectacle of the machine present in their artificial machinery such as their machinic qualities both in terms of their sonic and motile aspects. There are no opposing dualities to point in their relation with Tinguely's work maybe because I personally feel a closer connection to Tinguely's artistic intentions. This is of course, not to

state a direct correlation, they do, prominently differ from each other in their nuances and specificities just not with a stark opposition but maybe with an ever so slight reminiscence.

> "Before there's a sculpture, it's just a machine. Just a machine who does nothing. Just moving by herself, and enjoying people, maybe… or making people mad, too. Sometimes making people angry, or bringing a problem to people" (Jean Tinguely as heard in Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam, 2016).

Transier's first two specimens are undoubtedly machinic entities, especially when they are distilled down to their electro-mechanical components to an extent that they come alive when they are plugged in to the power outlet.

III.II. Technical Specifications Overview

> *After reviewing many options and not settling on any of them, Müge continues manually shaking her recycled plastic strips:* G: Actually… there could be something that should do just *that*. Are you thinking what I am thinking? A: Yes. In fact, we have used it in one of our engineering projects, remember? *Ahmet Can & Giray both turns to Müge:* A: But it has a particularly distinct sound and I wouldn't assume that you would like its sound. M: What sound? *Giray shows a video of the servo motor:* M: OH.MY.GOD! Are you kidding me? This sounds AMAZING! (Excerpt from the brainstorming process.)

For the electro-mechanical components of my sculptures, I have collaborated with Giray İlhan (M.Sc.), and his engineering partner Ahmet Can Varan. Both are extremely talented and brilliantly sharp-witted electrical and electronics engineers graduated from Bilkent University. I have consulted their knowledge, experience, and expertise on their own field every step of the way on figuring out this part of my project from understanding each aspect of these components to coding and final electronical assembly. They have patiently listened to what I am envisioning

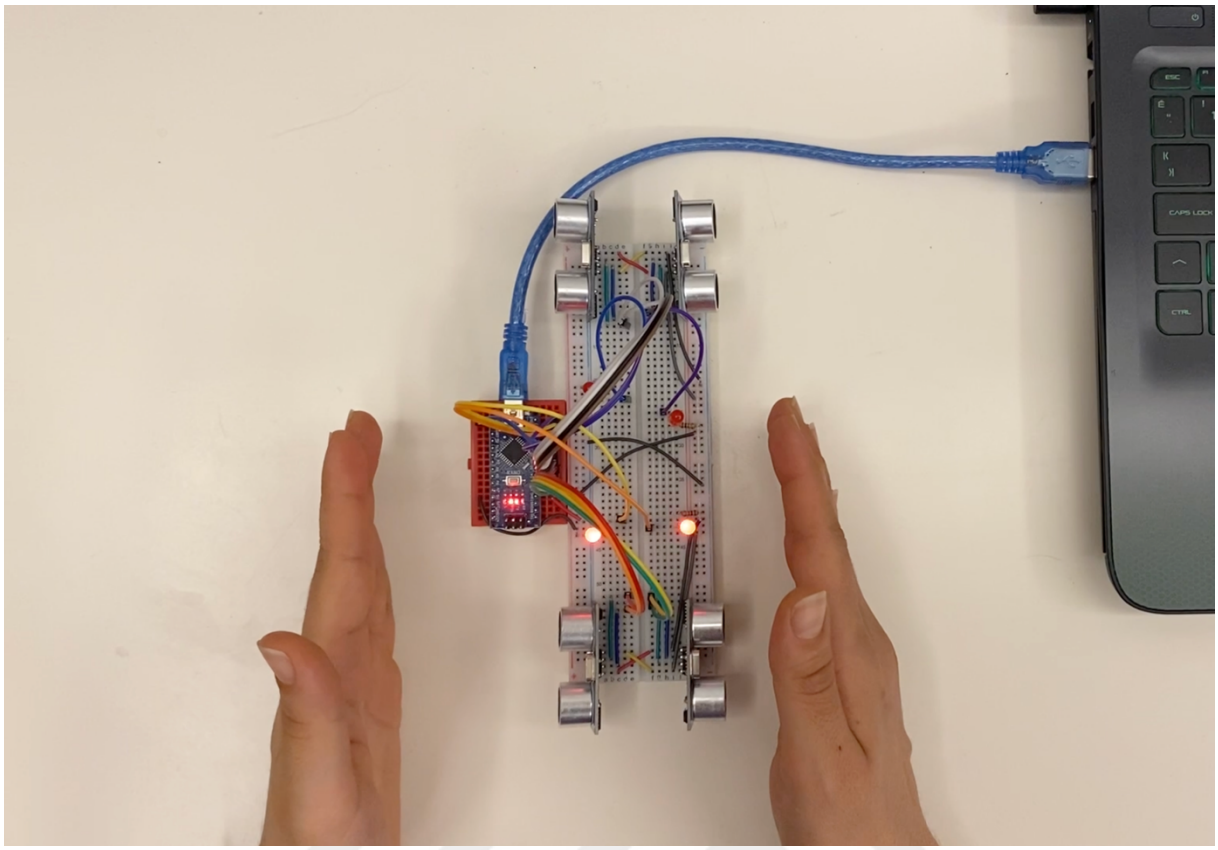
for each of my sculptures and provided me with necessary help, information, knowledge and a wide variety of solutions to choose from without interfering with my artistic processes.

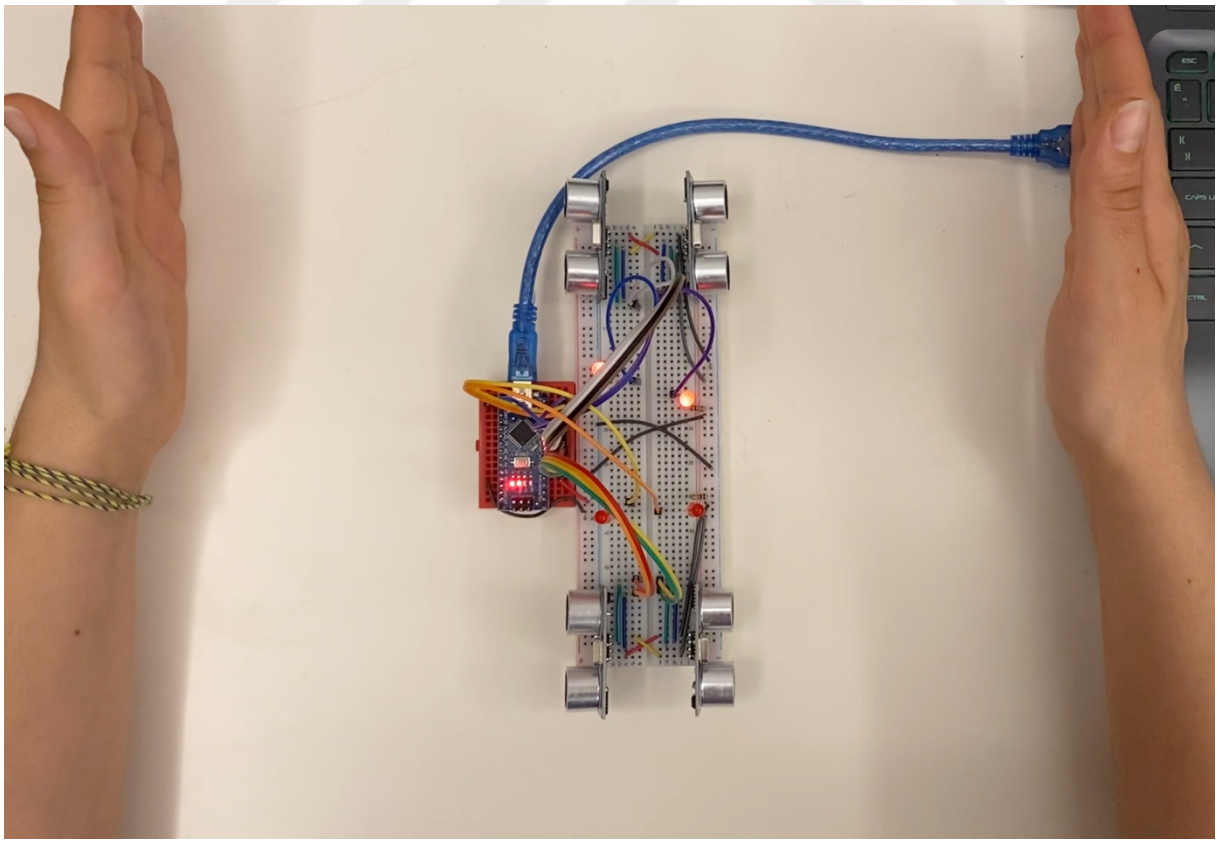
The electro-mechanical systems we have designed for specimen_a & specimen_b consist of four main elements: sensors, actuators, a single-board microcontroller, and a power supply. For each specimen, the sensor of choice makes up their mode of detecting the passer-by, whereas the actuator of choice makes up their mode of achieving motion and together with the programmed microcontroller they make up their mode of reacting to the passer-by. For both sculptures, the single-board microcontroller of choice is Arduino Nano and the power supplies were selected according to the necessary voltage and amperage values for each specimen. However, sensors and actuators of choice as well as their positionings and programming are different for each sculpture and those are further explained and elaborated on in the following two sub-chapters dedicated to each specimen accordingly.

III.III. Specimen_a and its Social Anxiety

During the exhibition, one of the visitors after curiously examining the sculpture, made the comment: “It has social anxiety, like me!” and blurted out an adorable little nervous laughter. Another, associated it with Indiana Jones artefacts and did so with an explosive joyful attitude. Some started playing with it by dancing around, waving their hands and body in front of it with a big smile on their faces.

I have recently published three videos titled *specimen a view from the exhibition 1, 2, & 3* which are showing footage from the graduate theses’ exhibition and are suggested to be viewed for a better understanding of this specimen (2023a; 2023b; 2023c).



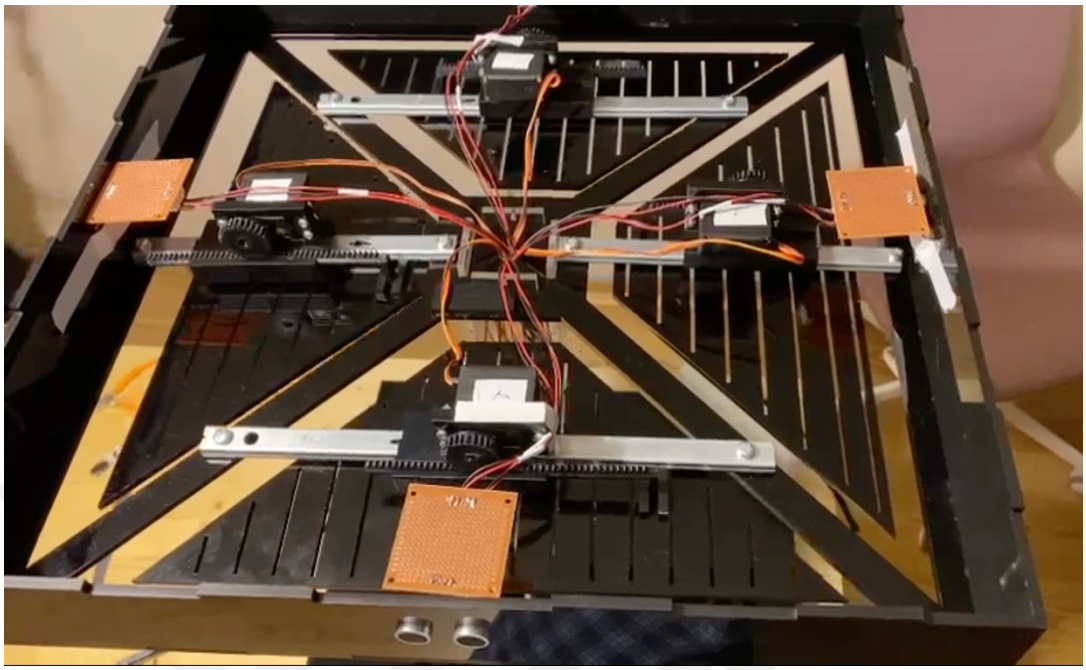


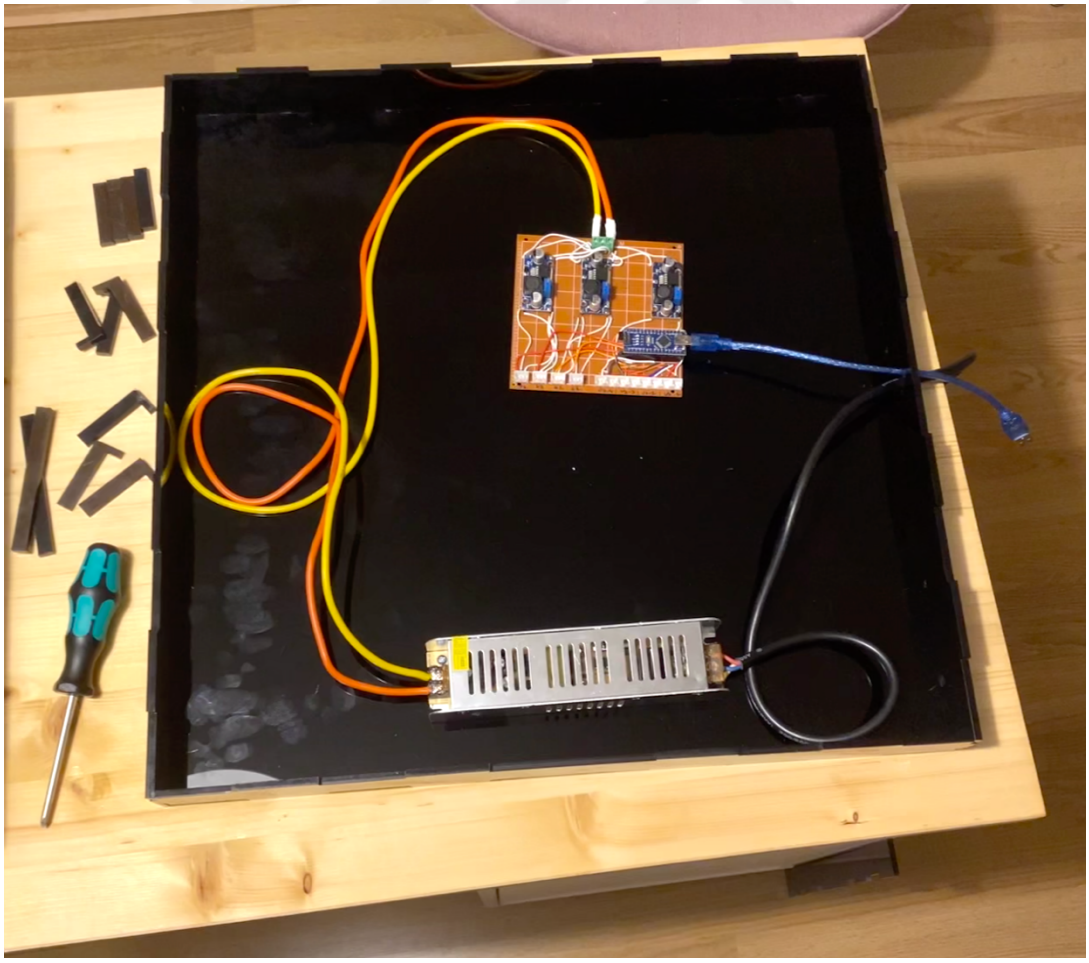
Figures 3.11 & 3.12: First prototype

During early stages despite my overwhelming curiosity and eagerness, deep down, I was rather anxious and highly skeptical about the electro-mechanical components since it was my very first time working with them and dealing with this newfound world. One of the first concrete indicators to me that I was able to make these sculptures came after some of the first experiments in the form of a Christmas ornament-looking curious temporary circuit board with four little led lights and four ultrasonic distance sensors as well as an Arduino Nano attached to it. (Figures 3.11 & 3.12) Each sensor was switching their corresponding lights on as they were triggered from different distances and, unlike anyone who was already familiar to this world, it was like magic to me. Specimen_a initially started out as a prototype of Specimen_b. While we were experimenting on different actuators and sensors, due to my unexpected fascination towards the sound of servomotors, a second sculpture was due, and almost instantly it was due shaking. I had a clear vision for specimen_b from the beginning and the vision and conceptualization of specimen_a I now have developed and advanced along the way. Specimen_a utilizes four identical active ultrasonic distance sensors as its mode of detecting the passer-by. As for its mode and source of movement, it utilizes four identical servo motors. Servo motors initially provide rotational movement but are versatile and can be used as composite motors that convert the rotational movement of DC motors to linear movement with a custom gear system. We have converted our servo motors as the latter for specimen_a's shaking motion accordingly. To be exact, the ultrasonic distance sensors were HC-SR04, and the servo motors were Tower Pro MG-995. Chu & Cetin (2022) describes ultrasonic sensors as follows:

> "Ultrasonic sensors measure distances based on transmitting and receiving ultrasonic signals, which detect sounds greater than 20 kHz (inaudible to humans). Ultrasonic sensors are generally made up of piezoelectric material, where the ultrasonic transmitter transmits the ultrasonic wave which travels through the air until it reaches an object or person, then the wave is reflected back and received by the ultrasonic receiver. By analyzing the time and distance that the reflected ultrasonic wave is received and

how these changes over time, it can infer whether there is an object or person in the space. However, the sensor itself may not be able to distinguish between people and other objects" (p.439).





Figures 3.13 & 3.14: Specimen_a in the making: inside the top and bottom enclosures.

At first glance, specimen_a almost reads as a cube with its top, bottom, and middle enclosed parts constructed from laser-cut plexiglass. While its middle enclosure is transparent, its top and bottom enclosures are made from opaque black plexiglass. I have designed each and every part of these enclosures to fit together like puzzle pieces. The power supply and the single-board microcontroller are located at the bottom enclosure whereas the middle enclosure contains its binding made of eight sets of cables that are attached to the motors and sensors contained in the top enclosure. I have modelled and 3D printed the gear system necessary for the servo motors with correct specifications needed for this system. The servo-motors are attached to four cut-to-length ball bearing drawer slides via their custom gear system that are also attached to laser-cut plexiglass pieces of the top enclosure that are moving and through their cut-out repeating parallel fissures the recycled plastic strips are installed. With this system, as each servo motors are triggered, the recycled plastic strips attached to the corresponding motor via the corresponding plexiglass piece are moved together. As one pass-by specimen_a, their passing presence as well as proximity is detected by one of the corresponding ultrasonic sensors; the input from the sensor triggers the corresponding servo motor; its linear back-and-forth movement shakes and vibrates the strips accordingly; and this sequence of events in terms of inputs and outputs was programmed into and controlled by the Arduino Nano. For specimen_a the existence of the passer-by is a matter of proximity. Depending of the proximity of the passer-by, the short-range linear movement of the servomotors are accelerated or slowed down. In my opinion, its social anxiety stems from its mode of reacting to the passer-by since it franticly shakes upon close encounters with it and gradually slows down upon distance as I’ve depicted above. It is self-contained simply because of this enclosure system that is also showing its insides through the transparency of its middle.

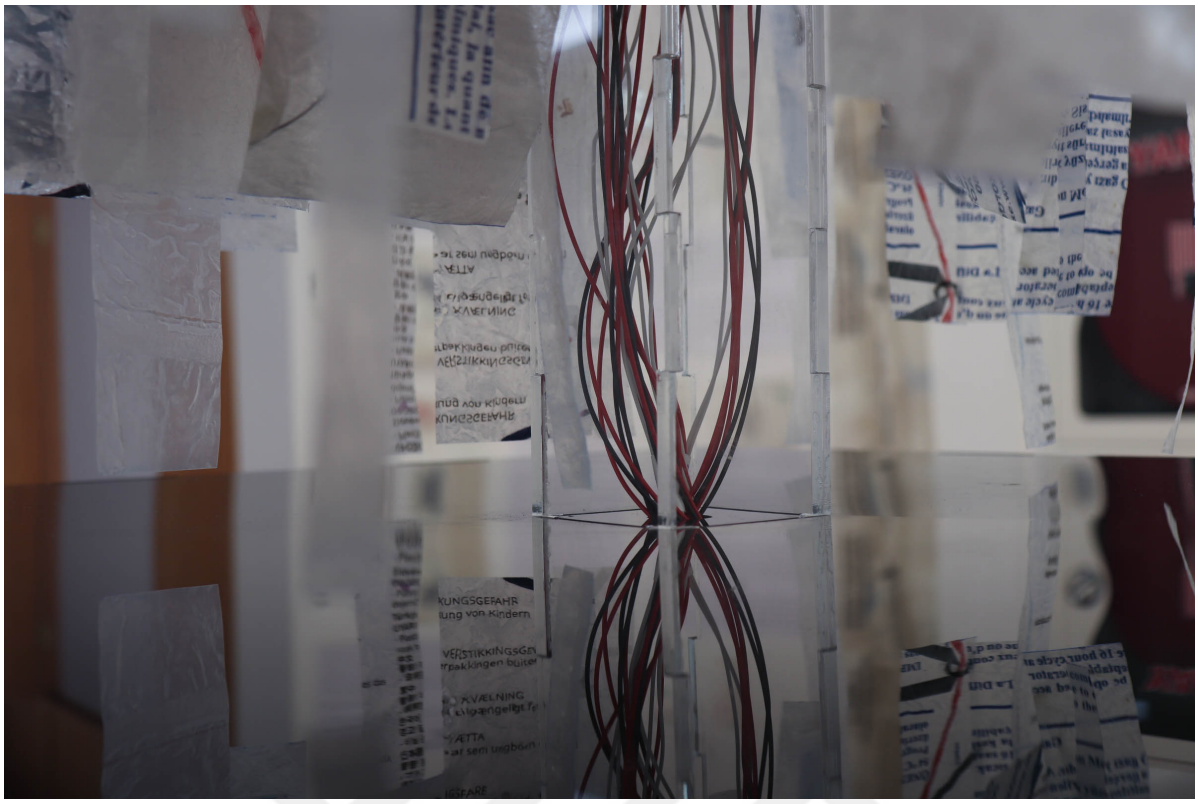


Figure 3.15: Detail from Specimen_a: shown insides through the middle enclosure.



Figure 3.16: Detail from Specimen_a: below.

III.IV. Specimen_b and the Soft Wind

Another one of the visitors compared the two by saying: “This one doesn’t want people to pay much attention to it, while the other is screaming for attention but in my opinion, it is as interesting as the other, maybe even more so.” One visitor even asked if they could stand in between the tentacly arms of specimen_b, was hesitant at first but gladly did so eventually as per my encouragement. Some got confused as to how it is working; some didn’t recognize it at first but was startled as their presence triggered the fans, as the soft wind blew; and some didn’t recognize at all and kept walking.

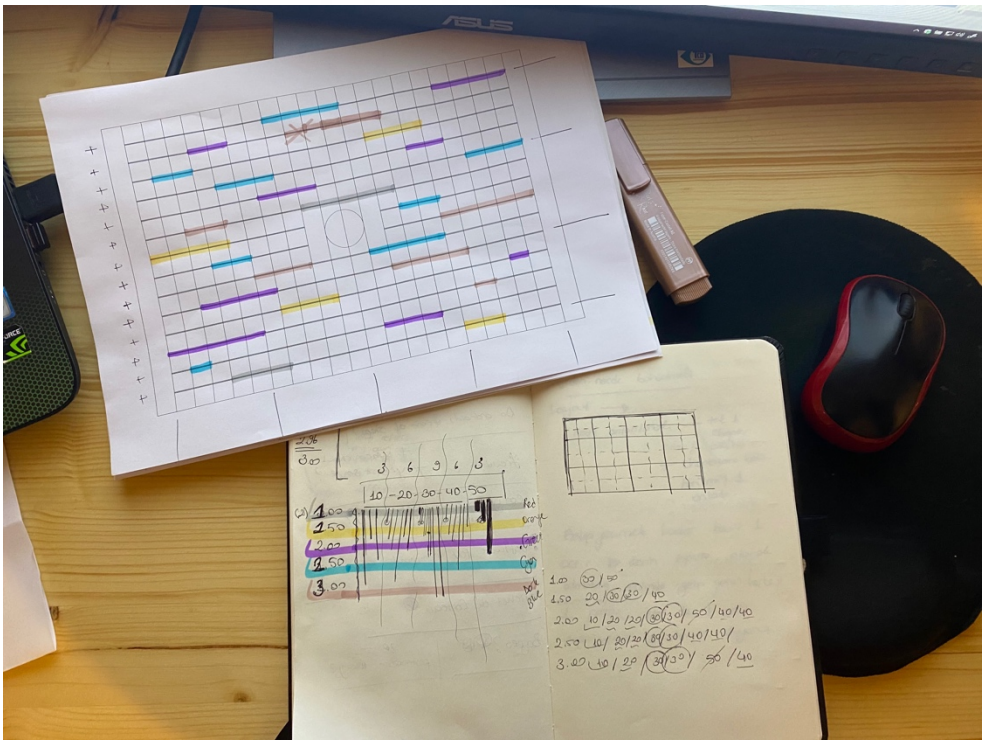
Likewise, I have recently published another set of four videos titled *specimen b view from the exhibition 1, 2, 3, & detail* which are showing footage from the graduate theses’ exhibition and these too are suggested to be viewed for a better understanding of this specimen (2023d; 2023e; 2023f; 2023g).



Figure 3.17: “The wheatfield”, Film Still. Ridley Scott, *Gladiator* (2000).

Maybe I have gazed into the tall barley grass covered empty slot across my then-home as the barley grass peacefully swung back and forth with the sweet evening breeze in reverie a little too much during Covid-19 lockdowns, maybe it is so that I have always loved the feeling when a soft wind kindly brushed my face, maybe I have always chased and cherished the same wind, or maybe it is that I've always dreamed of a brief moment where I am on a boat, moving slowly across the water and I reach to the water, running my fingers through it peacefully, it is hard to tell exactly. Regardless, this whole project started with an unavertable desire to somewhat recreate or achieve a similar feeling with a moving sculpture. *Gladiator* (2000) has its protagonist enter and exit the story with images of him in a wheatfield. The opening scene, introduces Maximus as an anonymous hand whose fingers peacefully, maybe longingly brush the wheat as he slowly moved across a wheat field. We later learn more about this mysterious hand as a successful general and witness his quest for vengeance as he was betrayed by the murderous death of his family, enslaved after an unsuccessful attempt on his assassination, turned into a gladiator, fought and died as one. As Maximus dies on the ring as a gladiator, we are shown a scene of him in the same wheat field this time, his family is waiting for him across the field as he is finally 'home'. It is almost as if he was always dreaming of this particular moment of this ethereal dream sequence. I find the opening scene particularly peaceful, moving even, and its later association with Maximus' death does not diminish this peacefulness. On the contrary it enhances this peacefulness since it is indicated that contrary to the unfortunate events depicted throughout the film along with the stark hostility of themes like betrayal and vengeance, he eventually reached what he longed for: home, lost family, and thus, peace. At first, during the initial presentations of my idea, I was often referring to the opening scene of *Gladiator* (2000) with the wheatfield scene by saying "let's go back to the wheatfield" in its early stages of conceptualization. This going back to the wheatfield meant to me, and was representative of the underlying reference, that I was aiming for a peaceful subtlety in its

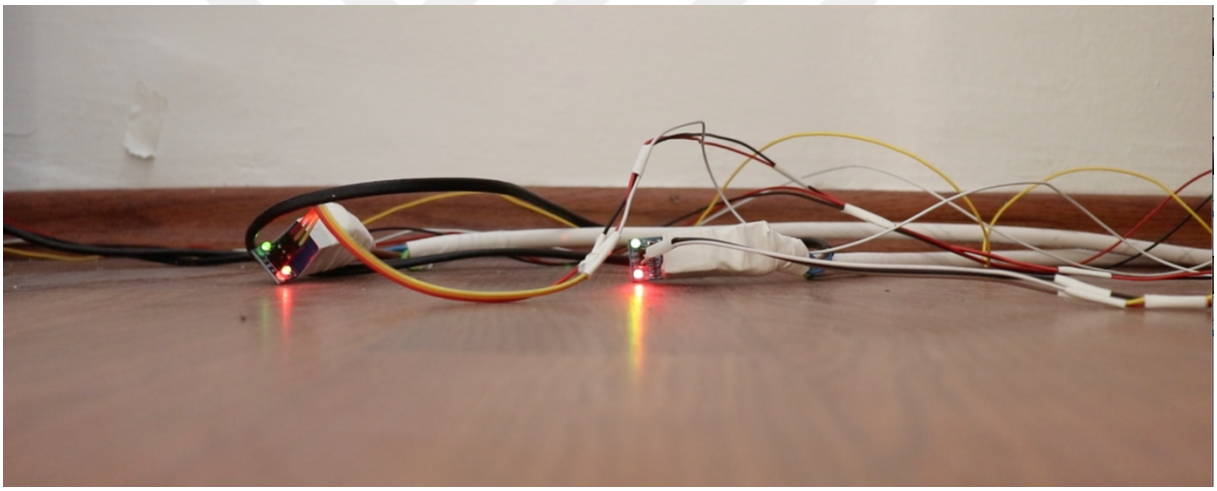
movement with a hint of contrariety. I believe I have achieved that in specimen_b as I've found the said peacefulness in the subtle sway of my recycled plastic strips in the wind, and the said contrariety in its source of movement, that is the wind, being artificially created. As an earliest of early stages, before the physical experimentations with actual sensors and motors, I have simulated my vision for this specimen in order to visualize the subtle flow of the material in terms of its movement and published three videos from this simulation process on my YouTube channel titled *1* (2022a), *2* (2022b), and *3* (2022c) a while later. In its final form, specimen_b utilizes two identical wall-mountable fans, both thrifted, and their artificial wind as its mode and source of movement. As for its mode of detecting the passer-by in order to react to it, it utilizes two passive infrared (PIR) sensors located at the top in accordance with their detection distance range. The fans are just regular old fans that are commonly used to cool off through the air flow it creates at households. To be exact, the fans I was able to thrift were both SINBO SF-6710's, and the PIR sensors were HC-SR501. Passive infrared sensors are commonly used

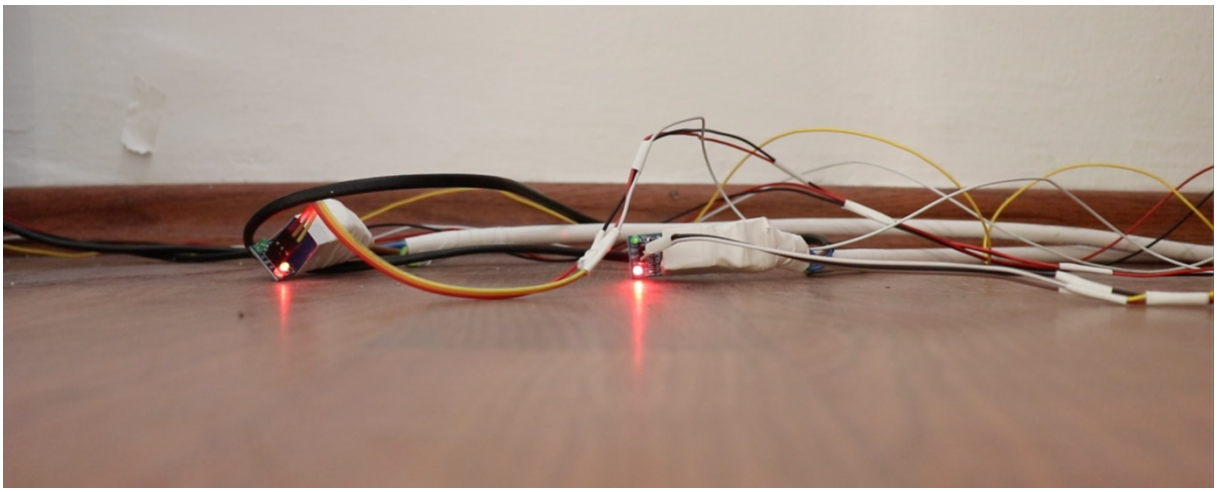


Figures 3.18: Specimen_b in the making: on paper.

for motion detection in automatic doors, security alarms, automatic lighting switches etc. and Chu & Cetin (2022) describes the PIR sensor as follows:

> "This type of sensor system includes both passive and active infrared sensors. PIR (passive infrared) sensors do not generate or radiate energy for detection purposes. Rather, they detect infrared radiation heat that is emitted by or reflected from objects, which in this case, are occupants. When a person enters the sensing area of a PIR sensor, the sensor receives an increased IR signal; when the person leaves the sensing area, the sensor receives a decreased IR signal. PIR technology is one of the most used off-the-shelf occupancy sensor types since it is relatively easy to implement and low in cost. However, it is not as easily able to detect low motion level of occupants because it depends on movement to generate the IR changes for the sensor to sense" (p.439).





Figures 3.19 & 3.20: Details from Specimen_b: by means of detection.

Specimen_b is suspended from the ceiling via an idle oriented strand board (OSB) panel I have found at the CNC atelier I was visiting, located at the industrial zone of Ankara, to discuss whether or not they can cut the base material I have designed. This OSB panel was later cut repeating parallel fissures out of it at the same atelier; painted with black spray paint; subsequently had sensors and the single-board microcontroller attached to it after I have installed my recycled plastic strips through the fissures. The fans and power supply were also attached at this stage but they were placed in their correct positions in situ during the installation process. I have also modelled and 3D printed custom casings for the PIR sensors for easy mounting and ability to be adjusted after installation if necessary. Its binding, consisting of four sets of long wires, is travelling the whole ceiling height to reach the power supply located on the ground. As one pass-by specimen_b, their passing presence is detected by one of the PIR sensors, the input from the sensor triggers the fans, they blow their artificial wind for a short



Figure 3.21: Detail from Specimen_b: below.

duration and this sequence of events in terms of inputs and outputs was programmed into and controlled by the Arduino Nano. For specimen_b the passer-by has two stages: existent and nonexistent. It reaches out or bursts forth simply because most of its electro-mechanical components are either located on the ground or exposed between the ceiling, OSB panel, and the ground.



Figure 3.22: Specimen_b, view from the exhibition.

III.V. Kinetic Philosophy: Kinesthetic Being

Naming four major historical conditions that situate his thought as mass migration, digital media, quantum physics, and climate change, Thomas Nail (2018) identifies movement and moving motion as a defining aspect and factor of the present century. With this respect, Nail's philosophy of movement unfolds in a series of books as each takes on different major areas of philosophy such as ontology, politics, aesthetics, science, and nature as their primary focus; each providing a a theory, history, and contemporary case study of the kinetic method with respect to their corresponding primary focuses; and developing a terminology of kinetic philosophy while doing so. Among them, *Being and Motion* (2018) explores the concept of movement—motion and its role in understanding reality—being, while developing a historical ontology of motion. In other words, it explores the complex relationship between being and motion with a materialist perspective, placing motion at the core of understanding the nature of being. In doing so, Nail (ibid.) redefines how we think about the nature of reality, existence, and identity by emphasizing the primacy of motion and material processes. Nail (ibid.) offers an alternative way of understanding people and things as processes and patterns in motion in other words. By rejecting to think of motion "as something that only happens when given beings move from point A to B"; arguing instead that it is "something that is fundamentally constitutive of beings themselves and those points"; and taking into consideration some of "the most important scientific phenomena of our time, such as nonlocality, entanglement, tunneling, and quantum gravity" Nail (ibid.) proves a philosophical method where a primacy of mobility and movement is essential in our thought for understanding the nature of being.

As there is nothing that is entirely static in our vast universe even at the tiniest subatomic levels for Nail, from the ongoing expansion of the universe along with constant galactic and planetary motion in this expansion, everything is in motion. In this sense his thought is firmly rooted in materialism since he draws some of his core understandings from quantum physics and finds the motion of being in the indeterminate quantum fluctuations of energy that never stops moving. In other words, everything is material but this material is always in motion. In this sense, Nail (ibid.) offers an alternative perspective on the nature of reality, moving away from static notions of being to embrace the dynamic and ever-changing nature of the universe as being itself to introduce his main concepts of flow, continuum, multiplicity, confluence; fold, junction, sensation, conjunction; field, circulation, knot as his theory of motion. To briefly sum up and in other words, Nail's philosophy of movement studies patterns of motion as they flow and intersect with themselves to create folds or kinetic cycles and junction points, and in doing so defines a kinesthetic understanding of being.

> "Since everything is in motion, there are all kinds of kinetic events. … Being flows, but it also folds over itself in habitual cycles and patterns of dynamic equilibrium, creating regional stabilities-in-motion" (Nail, 2018).

However different in its most fundamental viewpoint as rather strictly a materialist one, the kinesthetic being that can be grasped through Nail's philosophy bears significant similarities to Nishida's dynamic understanding of being in the notions of all-encompassing pure nothingness, basho, and constantly self-mirroring structure of self-awareness (jikaku). To avoid detour and departure from our main scope, I choose not to further expand and elaborate on this here and now but I also find it worthy of recognition.

III.VI. Transier and Spatial Movement

Transier, as per the totality of their technicalities, subsume a structural enmeshment with dependance on external stimuli with external stimuli being an uncontrollable variable such as the unplannable, indeterminable viewer interaction mentioned as passing-by. The act of passing-by is often unpredictable by its nature. Furthermore, how any passer-by would interact with the individual specimens or if they are going to choose to further interact other than passing-by at all, adds to the unpredictability of available viewer-interaction. Therefore, what is defined and outlined with Transier as the framework in terms of movement is kinesis with respect to its afore-proposed definition. Each individual specimen is imbued with a constant state of kinesis.

Their kinesis enhances their enmeshment with spatiality. Recalling both Merleau-Ponty and Lefebvre's emphases on the body, bodily spatiality, and analyses of rhythms brings us to movement and helps recognize the understandings that bridges together the spatiality and motility of Transier through both the specimens' and the passer-by's bodies: machinic, humanoid, and phenomenal. If Transier's relationship with space occurs with their placement and mode of display and it is a spatial mode of expression; the relationship Transier has with movement is an artistic engagement with motility and technology in terms of their different modes of achieving motion; detecting the passer-by and subsequently reacting to the passer-by, and it is a spatio-mobile or spatio-kinetic mode of expression.

The electronic motors as their mode of achieving motion are bringing a possibility of constant rhythmic movement, when this rhythmic possibility is juxtaposed with the

unpredictability of passer-by activity, the specimens exist in the liminal zone between rhythm and arrythmia. Their distinct machinic sounds help achieve their aforementioned intended disruption of the passer-by's unconscious state of transience and amplify their positioning as irritants both conceptually and physically. Relying on a Husserlian understanding of intersubjectivity, in the split second the initial disruption happens, they turn into objects of consciousness from inanimate 'specific' objects and in their machinic aliveness, as long as they are plugged in and encountered, they turn into subjects of the said consciousness. Between their rhythm and arrhythmia; stability and motility, along with its loaded rhetoric, specimens of Transier realize themselves as an interplay between the dichotomy of object and subject by their kinesis and spatio-kinetic expression.

As it is both startling and repulsive, specimen_a introduces a powerful tension between invitation and confrontation; attraction and repulsion. This tension is further enlarged and enhanced with the stark difference between specimens a & b in terms of their distinct attitudes towards the aforementioned disruption of the transient state of the passer-by. Recalling the earlier statement that these specimens fail to realize themselves by the very definition of a kinetic sculpture without the passer-by. At this point I would like to argue that without the disruption these specimens provide, the passers-by also fail to realize themselves in the context of non-places by the defining factors of the same non-places. Just as I identify their movement and so how they realize this disruption enhances its relationship with space and as I find their connection through bodies, bodily spatiality and between rhythm and arrythmia. I identify the inherent connection to non-places in this mutual and reciprocal failure of realizing oneself. With this disruption through these specimens, on one hand the non-place has a chance of becoming a place when passers-by are present and made aware of its potential for place-ness. On the other hand, the passer-by has a chance of being reminded of their erased identity within the non-place

when these specimens are present and make them aware of their transient state of passing-by through the aimed disruption.

The tension mentioned above is better demonstrated in the video titled *Transier, edit* (2023h). Furthermore, the two specimens together in the exhibition setting can be seen through footage from the graduate theses' exhibition in the videos titled *Transier, view from the exhibition 1 & 2* (2023i; 2023j) as well as *Transier, view from the exhibition day 2 timelapse* (2023k). These too are suggested to be viewed for a better understanding of these two specimens in relation with each other.

The aforementioned reliance of a Husserlian sense of intersubjectivity for the specimens to turn into subjects of consciousness might seem like it presupposes a contradiction with the necessary unity of subject and object within Nishida's thought, but it is precisely this reliance that results the specimen to be defined as a subject makes possible the perception of the same specimen as another I that the passer-by faces. The self of the passer-by has thus offered a possibility to surpass itself where consciousness and subsequently jikaku (self-awareness) *can* occur with this dually positioned composition. From where I stand, in order to surpass the need for being conscious *of* something in its phenomenological necessity for arriving at jikaku as self-awareness in Nishida's awakened realism (Ishihara, 2019), we must first be conscious of our transient state in non-places in terms of being made aware of the transient state of our current day-to-day existence. In other words, for self-awareness to occur, there must be an antecedent initial awareness present. And the awareness we aim to revoke at the conscious first-person sphere is first of all, this initial one.





Figures 3.23 & 3.24: Views from the exhibition.

CHAPTER IV

ON MATERIALITY: THE SIGNIFICANCE OF RECYCLED PLASTIC

IV.I. Personal Remarks: In Retrospect

My relationship with recycled plastic as a material started with an intuitive idea. It was the winter of 2019, and we were at Lake Eymir of Ankara, Turkey, exploring the area for our projects with Studio Niche during a site visit. There were plastic bottles and all sorts of trash scattered throughout the woodland surrounding the lake, intensifying and lessening depending on the density of human traffic on different routes. Among the peaceful nature they seemed obnoxious, horrid even. Much like little monsters. The initial instinct that captured my attention was to design monstrous pieces of urban furniture along these routes made of recycled plastic, rightfully collected from the area itself. Once a monster, always a monster, it was as simple. The initial a-ha moment was nothing but thrilling. Ever since that day, I felt an internal drive towards materializing this idea, leading to an ongoing research on how to use and equip recycled plastic as a material for art and design, for my practice. Upon initial research, it became apparent that pulling this design off, if by pulling-off we mean producing a 1-1 physical model made of the intended material, requires a certain level of expertise on the said material that required time spent researching this material, time spent experimenting with it. That time is still to this day being spent, which is nothing short of a sensational experience for me.

When first started working with plastic waste right after my initial interest, almost immediately upon my introductory research, I came to a distinction between certain types of

plastics: soft plastics and hard plastics. Although it is pretty self-explanatory, I am going to explain and later refer to this distinction as we came to use it as a common informal terminology for my practice. Soft plastics is used as a placeholder for when referring to plastic bags and plastic bag-like soft packaging of common mass-produced consumer items that are easy to squish by or compress with, and process by hand. Hard plastics is used when referring to, harder packaging of common mass-produced consumer items that are harder to squish by or compress with, and process by hand since they are usually molded and hold their shape. Recycling processes and methods I employ when dealing with the two are different from each other in particular details. I mostly use soft plastics in my practice as of right now and I continue experimenting with hard plastics as well. The plan and/or wish is to introduce hard plastics with Transier and look into what comes out of their relationship in the future as well. But that is for another thesis. As of right now, I consider myself a house/apartment miner as I collect my raw material, plastic waste, mainly from my own home along with the homes of my close circle of friends and family. I sometimes feel like an archaeologist or maybe an anthropologist as well while sorting the waste accumulated from different households as I have noticed that I can distinguish which trash bag came from which household among a mixed pile from its contents. That is, a fun little fact about my mining process.

IV.II. Constructing The Fabric of the Sculptures

My experimentations with plastic as a material for my artistic practice led to the following process in its current form. When constructing the fabric of these sculptures, strata of broken-down plastic waste are merged together by being subjected to heat that instigates a physical change in the material with the intention to produce a stratum of plastic sheet made up of the said fragments that accommodate a different aesthetic than its origin. In other words, I

iron out purposefully shredded, cut, deformed, etc. opaque and semi-transparent plastic pieces together in between larger pieces of transparent plastic pieces to make a molded together collage. The end result of this process is also a single sheet of new plastic material which is later cut to orthogonal strips of varying sizes. The plastic waste in question is, what I call soft plastics as previously explained in this case. Using the waste of mass-produced consumer items as a raw material implies inherent socio-political connotations of consumer culture, mass production, and capitalist greed as added layers of meaning that reveal themselves when juxtaposed with other elements of the works and argued upon. Furthermore, the said waste being exclusively made of plastic brings along inherent implications of environmental issues and sustainability with it. An earlier individual work titled *Espial* (2021), shows the depicted method in video juxtaposed with footage gathered during the creation process of a collaborative artwork in an attempt to both uncover and express my artistic tendencies and the nature of my practice simultaneously.

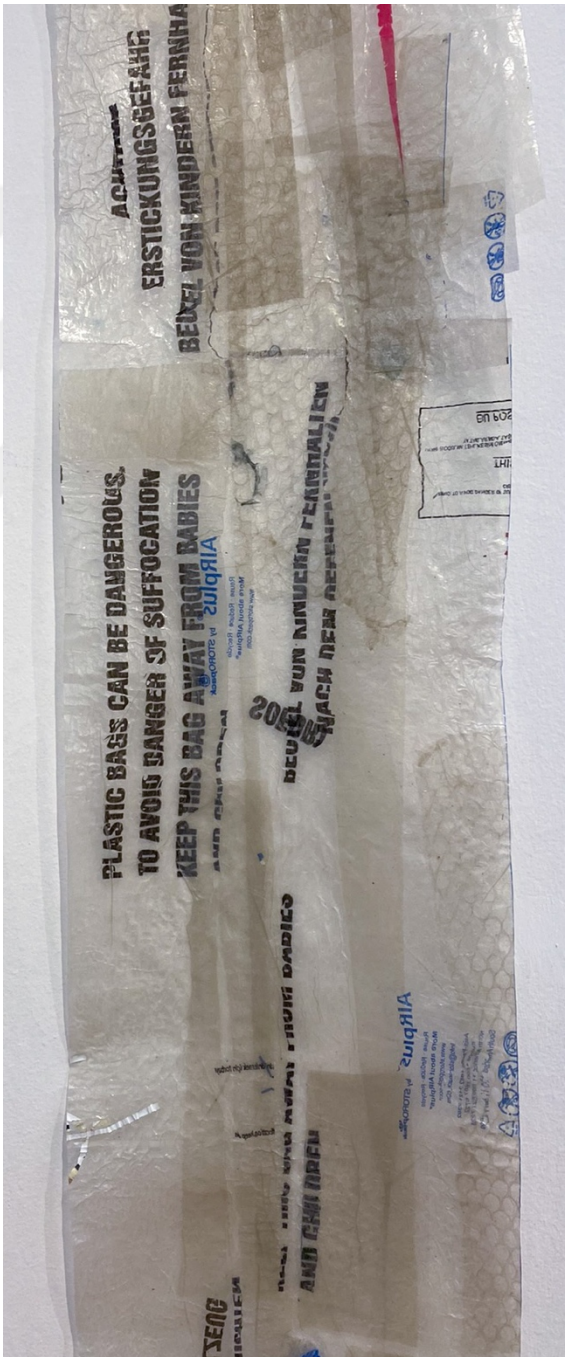
I tend to transform the trash I use on a material level. The transformation occurs by intentionally processing it both before and during the process of producing the recycled material in the form of cutting, deforming, and dissolving. It is treated as both the canvas and the paint, turned into and treated as fabric in most cases, and turned into floating pieces of painted and/or printed fabric in this particular case. In other words, while creating the new material, I am more interested in abstract or non-objective ways of working with trash as I explore its physical structure, physical conditions and possibilities while recycling such as color, texture, shape, transparency, opacity, form, and physical state. The trash I am working with is deliberately treated differently on various stages of transformation. When it is treated as paint, for example, it is often cut/shredded or stretched/distorted into different shapes and forms. This act is often implemented as a means of disfiguring the original packaging. The text, which usually convey

information on risks of suffocation that can be caused by plastic bags, or plastic recycling codes and symbols, is often left as is with little distortion and one can recognize the disclaimer as it is turned into an inscription. Subsequently, with ironing, heat exposure and its duration affect different levels of distortion during the transformation process. The end product of this process is perceived and often treated as a piece of fabric, a molded-together collage/assemblage made of altered and molten plastic waste once encapsulated mass-produced consumer items in their previous life. To achieve a certain translucency, I've mostly utilized transparent materials in larger fragments that hold everything together by acting as the adherend and included opaque materials in smaller fragments that I scattered rather sparsely throughout their composition while constructing the fabric of specimens a & b. In the graduate theses' exhibition, selected five sheets of plastic are hung and included in the collection to display the material in its state before being cut into pieces as fabrics, the visitors were encouraged to examine the material more closely by looking, touching, and feeling it. I like to refer to these five sheets as 'specimen_x and a half' as a node to possible future specimens. In addition, selected smaller leftover pieces of the material as well as another sheet made of selected leftover pieces of the cutting into pieces process with the same technique is included in the layout of the portion where I located the introductory texts. The sheet made of the scraps of older sheets after cutting them into pieces is hinting the future possibilities surrounding the technique and the material, and is an embodiment of my continuing experimentations as it is also a result of it. By putting the material in display alone, its significance is highlighted.

The very acts constituting the aforementioned process of transformation, along with the transformation itself during the construction of the 'fabric' occurs not as didactic presentations of a contemporary issue, but as "artistic acts of sublimation" (Giedion-Welcker as cited in Gamard, 2000, p.26), and simultaneously as critical acts made in the face of both "the seemingly

limitless interchangeability of plastic" (Boetzkes & Pendakis, 2013) and incorrigible consumerist culture of wild capitalism all the while instrumentalizing the said interchangeability of plastic and by making one last change in its lifecycle as abstract artworks made with its trashed, discarded, otherwise wasted debris accumulated in my home by myself.





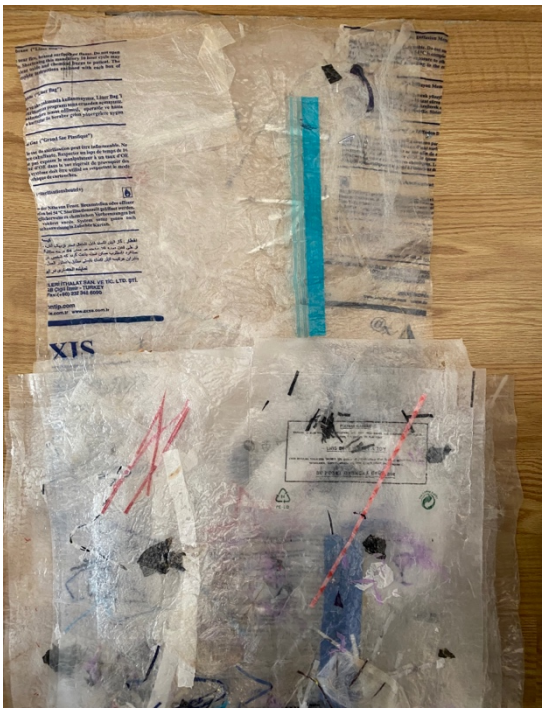
Images courtesy of the artist.

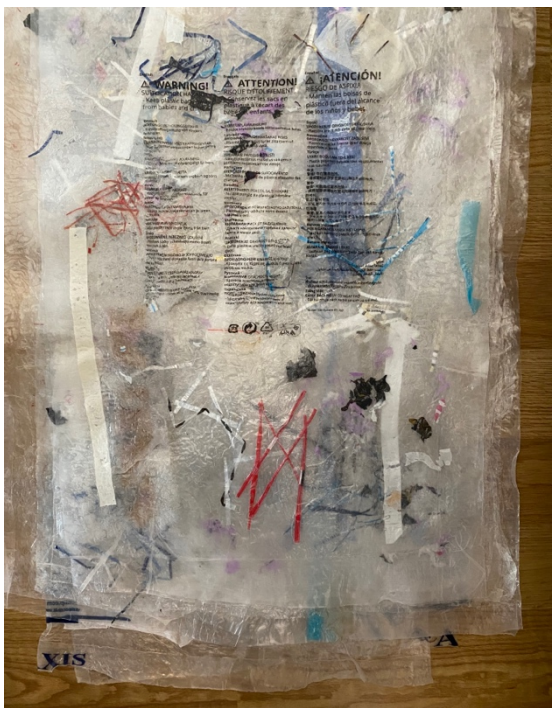
Figure 4.1: (Top) Selected smaller *leftover pieces of the material*, view from the exhibition.

Figure 4.2: (Right) *Recycled plastic sheet made of the scraps of older sheets* left after cutting them into pieces, ironed onto themselves, view from the exhibition.



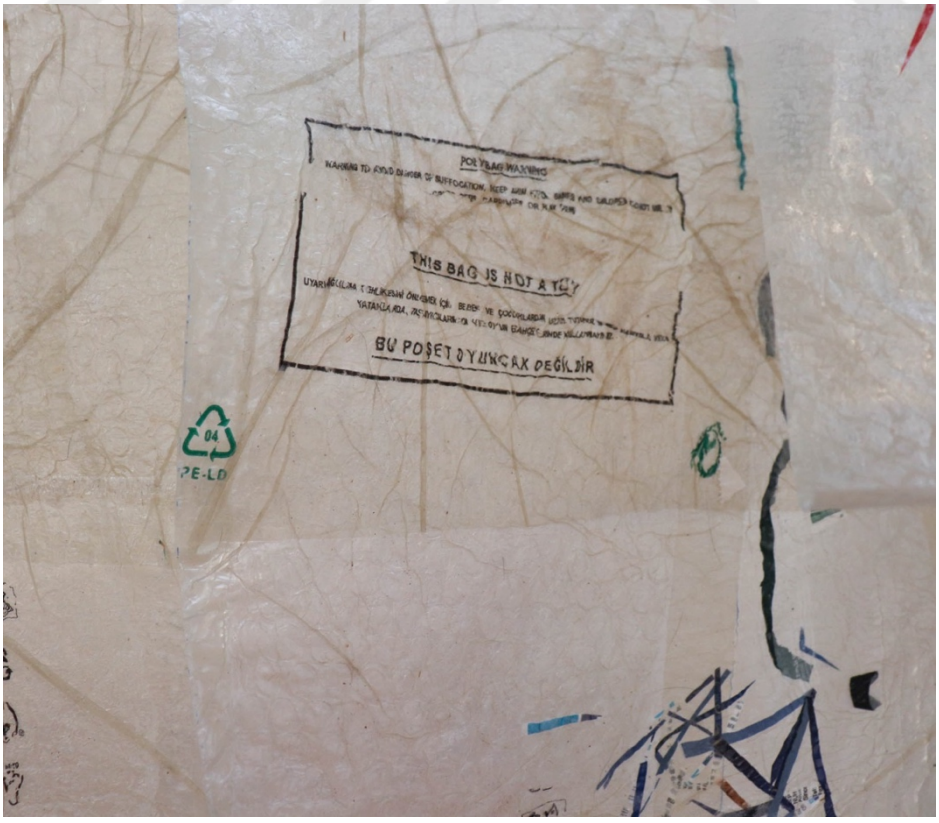
Figure 4.3: ‘specimen_x and a half’, five sheets of recycled plastic displaying the fabric of the sculptures, view from the exhibition.



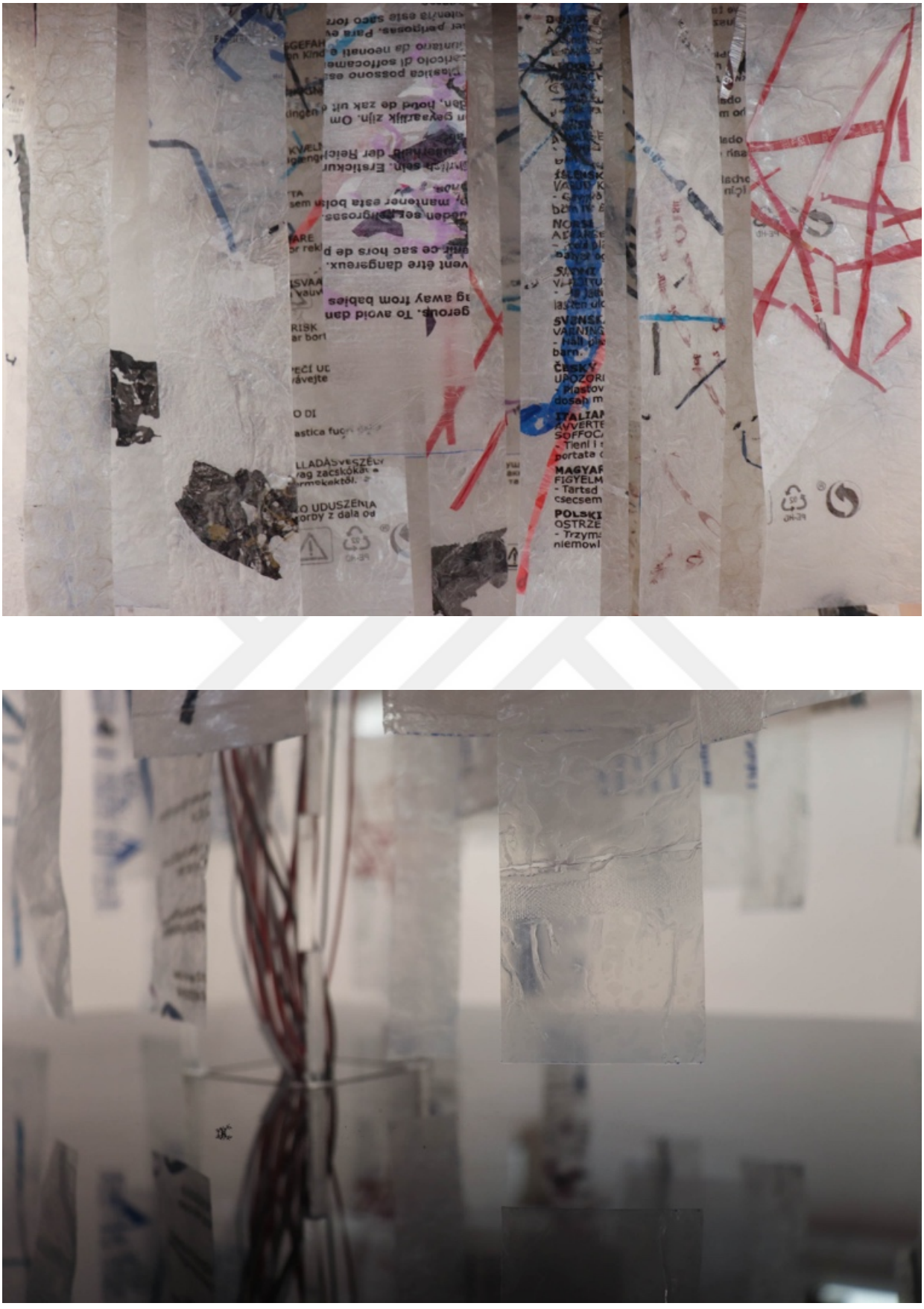


Figures 4.4 & 4.5: Excerpts from the process of constructing the fabric of these sculptures: multiple sheets of my material stacked on top of each other.





Figures 4.6 & 4.7: Details from specimen_b as seen in the exhibition.



Figures 4.8 & 4.9: Details from specimen_a as seen in the exhibition.

It could be argued that this process has certain similarities with and influences from one of Dada's many influential figures Kurt Schwitters' own form of Dada: Merz, along with the processual depictions, interpretations, explanations of his many collages and assemblages. Although trained as a painter, Kurt Schwitters (1887-1948) adopted collage as his preferred medium and process, ultimately extending its principles to a great many other activities, including sculpture, architecture, graphic design, music, poetry, and criticism. This marked a significant departure from Dada formations in other cities and along with a supportive cast, Schwitters forged links between Hannover and the broader Dada movement that were instrumental in helping put Hannover Dada on the map. (Doherty, 2005). Merz, like Dada, is a random and essentially meaningless word fragment taken from the German word Kommerzbank (Bank of Commerce) which emerged by chance in an early collage as Gamard



ARTstor image and original data courtesy of © Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation New York.

Figure 4.10: Kurt Schwitters. *Mz199* (1921). Gouache, paper, and fabric collage on paper with paperboard border. image: 7 1/16 x 5 11/16 in. (17.9 x 14.4 cm); border: 16 5/8 x 12 3/4 in. (42.2 x 32.4 cm) in. Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, Gift, Estate of Katherine S. Dreier, 1953. Accession 53.1350. © 2008 Estate of Kurt Schwitters / 2023 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York/VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn.

(2000) explains and in it, Schwitters emphasized not only protest and revolution but also what may be seen as an 'aesthetic of redemption' they claim. Thus, the idea of 'Merz' never solidified into a specific method or style but rather appeared to be a developing organism—a method-style-creed that was always reinterpreted depending on the context in which it was used: "The word Merz had no meaning when I found it. Now it has the meaning that I gave it. The meaning of the concept Merz changes with the change in insight of those who continue to work with it (Schwitters as cited in Gamard, 2000)" What reinforced the reception of Schwitters' work within the context of abstract art was his own manifesto-like short statement, "Die Merzmalerei" (Merz painting) as cited in Doherty (2005):

> "Merzbilder (Merz pictures) are abstract works of art. The word Merz denotes essentially the combination of all conceivable materials for artistic purposes, and technically the principle of equal evaluation of the individual materials. Merzmalerei [Merz painting] makes use not only of paint and canvas, brush and palette, but of all materials perceptible to the eye and of all required implements. Moreover, it is unimportant whether the material used was already formed for some purpose or other. A perambulator wheel, wire-netting, string and cotton wool are factors having equal rights with paint. The artist creates through choice, distribution and dematerialization of the materials."

With Entformung being a Schwitters-invented neologism and generally translating as the 'metamorphosis' or 'dissociation' of form(s) from its original context, Formung and Entformung, were the terms Schwitters used to characterize his conceptual framework and methodology for both his literary and pictorial works and to describe the transformation or transubstantiation of the old into the new, also known as the 'making (of) new art from the remains of a former culture' (Gamard, 2000). Schwitters described his creative process in an article that appeared in the first volume of his journal Merz (Merz I: Holland Dada) as cited in Gamard (2000):

"Every means is right when it serves its end . . . What the material signified before its use in the work of art is a matter of indifference so long as it is properly evaluated and given meaning in the work of art. And so I began to construct pictures out of materials I happened to have at hand, such as streetcar tickets, cloakroom checks, bits of wood, wire, twine, bent wheels, tissue paper, tin cans, chips of glass, etc. These things are inserted into the picture either as they are or else modified in accordance with what the picture requires. They lose their individual character, their own Eigengift [special essence], by being evaluated against one another, by being entmaterialisiert [dematerialized] they become material for the picture."



Image courtesy of © The Phillips Collection.

Figure 4.11: Kurt Schwitters. *Radiating World (Merzbild 31B),* (1920). Brushed and stenciled opaque paint over collage of cut and torn printed paper and painted paper with ink, graphite pencil and crayon on board. 31 ½ c 26 ¾ in.; 95.25 x 67.945 cm. in. The Phillips Collection, 1600 21st Street, NW, Washington, DC, Gift, Estate of Katherine S. Dreier, 1953. Accession 1722. © 2022 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn.

However, Schwitters' work preserved the past for the present, both literally and figuratively, as a consistent aesthetic ethos that implicitly maintains and affirms the future

instead of radically replacing the past with the present (Gamard, 2000). In addition to using the Abfall (trash, refuse) of modern society of his time, Schwitters was also concerned with preserving the effectiveness of art as a self-sufficient endeavor since, in his opinion, 'art was a law unto itself, answerable only to itself (Schwitters as cited in Gamard, 2000)'. Nevertheless, "Schwitters' promotion of aesthetic values did not rely on a set of merely formal concerns, the efficacy of the object, but was grounded in his recognition of art's liberating function, a dialectical process of exchange that could redeem society by virtue of its revelatory activity (Gamard, 2000)."



ARTstor image and original data courtesy of © Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation New York.

Figure 4.12: Kurt Schwitters. *Merzz. 53. Red Bonbon (Merzz. 53. rotes bonbon)* (1920). Graphite, colored and printed paper, cardstock, and thread collage on paper with cardstock border. image: 5 1/16 x 3 13/16 inches (12.8 x 9.7 cm); border: 6 1/4 x 4 5/8 inches (15.9 x 11.7 cm) in. Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, The Hilla Rebay Collection. Accession 71.1936.R77.

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Just as reading the processual depictions, interpretations, and explanations of Schwitters' collages in their resembling conceptual parallels to the construction process of the 'fabric' in my case; the lucid visual fragmentation, enigmatic obscurity of the fragments, as in not being immediately obvious to determine the origins of the said fragments due to "the 'metamorphosis' or 'dissociation' of form(s) from its original context", inclusion of the printed texts and varying textures bear resemblances in terms of their form and composition. While the former is useful to illustrate the conceptual connotations and artistic intentions behind my process, the latter is rather an observative statement resulting from visual comparison.



ARTstor image and original data courtesy of © Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation New York.

Figure 4.13: Kurt Schwitters. *Mz 163 with Woman, Spraying (Mz 163 mit Frau, spritzend)* (1920). Paper and fabric collage on paper with paperboard border. image: 6 1/8 x 4 7/8 inches (15.6 x 12.4 cm); border: 12 inches x 8 7/16 inches (30.5 x 21.4 cm) in. Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, Gift, Estate of Katherine S. Dreier, 1953. Accession 53.1348.

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IV.III. Working with Trash: Socio-Political Connotations and Sustainable Implications

15th Venice Architecture Biennale titled 'Reporting From the Front' welcomed its visitors to its main Arsenale and Giardini exhibition areas through a room covered with discarded materials that the previous year's Art Biennale left behind. In this introductory area architect Alejandro Aravena, curator of the Venice Architecture Biennale 2016 and founder of Elemental, constructed a substantial steel installation constituted by approximately 100 tons of steel waste pieces suspended vertically and encompassed it with approximately 10,000 square meters of plasterboard covering the walls (WA Contents, 2016). In doing so Aravena created a conceptual arena for debate and reflection on the various ways that design can add value; as an act to address recycling, reuse, and sustainability all the while interrogating new aesthetic



Image © Luke Hayes, courtesy of World Architecture Contents (WAC)

Figure 4.14: Luke Hayes. View from the Introductory Room, 15th Venice Architecture Biennale, (2016). As seen in (WA Contents, 2016).

dimensions in a multi-layered context (*2016 Venice Biennale - Reporting From the Front - Film*, 2016 & WA Contents, 2016). The room also contained Aravena's personal documentation about the creation of the exhibition and what the visitors will experience in this room and is titled as 'The Making of' (WA Contents, 2016).



Image © Italo Rondinella, courtesy of Venice Biennale & World Architecture Contents (WAC)

Figure 4.15: Italo Rondinella. View from the Introductory Room, *The Making of*, 15th Venice Architecture Biennale, (2016).

As seen in (WA Contents, 2016).

In the documentary film on modern philosophy, *Examined Life* (2008), Slavoj Žižek can be found discussing his ideas on ecology in the middle of a dump yard. With his first line, "This, referring to the stacked piles of trash in the background, is where we should start to feel at home" his portion strikes from the start. He then draws our attention to the problematic and illusory nature of our daily perception of reality that trash seemingly disappearing from our world'. Much like the excrement we produce every day magically disappearing down the drain

with a simple flush; we have built systems that make trash and other kinds of refuse disappear from our immediate surroundings with simple acts of dumping. Ironically, even though we rationally know that it doesn't evaporate, we know that there are sewer and garbage collecting systems and our refuse go through a new journey through their respective discard system as a fact but because 'at a certain level of our most elementary experience it disappears from our world', it also evaporates from our minds. We toss it in the dump and then forget about it as if it magically disappears. Yet, trash doesn't vanish without a trace, nothing ever does. I think it is simply because of this non-confrontational illusion when we are being forced to confront with trash in any context, we are shocked, grossed out, shivering, triggered every single time. Encounters with trash is undeniably uncomfortable precisely because of this oxymoron and when happened especially within the context of art it strikes differently and triggers deeper thinking on this issue.

One prevalent way of working with trash is through apparent representations of its scale and volume, exposing the unseen. This is why at an architecture biennale situating the entrances and discussion forums in a room surrounded with the trash of the previous year's art biennale juxtaposed with its title 'Reporting From the Front' is poignant from my perspective. It could be argued that by doing so, Aravena concurrently breaks the aforementioned illusion of trash in that particular realm of the most influential institutions of art and design; defines a problem; opens it to discussion; invites people to think on and confront with the issue; and offers a space for ideas towards possible solutions on the same problem could emerge.

Jean Baudrillard (1998) argues that "the humans of the age of affluence are surrounded not so much by other human beings, as they were in all previous ages, but by objects" and that

this state of being surrounded by "a kind of fantastic conspicuousness of consumption and abundance, constituted by the multiplication of objects, services and material goods" is representative of "a fundamental mutation in the ecology of the human species". These objects are, simply put, often subjects of trading that are bought or sold: increasingly mass-produced commodities. To mention a massive and widely-discussed phenomena in a few words, we have developed a consumer society in which the consumerism is fueled by a desire towards the new and with progressive amplifications of the said desire by various profiting parties led to over-consumption of the new and over-trashing of the old. Waste is, in terms of its quantities, making and dealings, located at the heart of urgent environmental, ecological problems of the current Anthropocene. Whiteley (2011) speaks of this by mentioning that one of the most important crisis management topics is how to deal with excessive amounts of trash and that we are "in danger of being completely overwhelmed by its accumulation" by the account of popular and academic accounts documenting alarming statistics on "domestic and industrial production of



Image courtesy of The New York Times.

Figure 4.16: Adam Dean for The New York Times. *Trash pickers scouring the Bantar Gabang landfill in Indonesia for recyclable plastic,* (2020).

As seen in (Tabuchi & Corkery, 2021).

rubbish." This accumulation is so rampant that, trash itself has turned into a somewhat refused commodity that no one wants in their backyard trying to dump, or export, into some far-away place to make it 'magically disappear' even more so that 'the East' has turned into the dump yard of 'the West' over the past decades due to the global waste trade.

> "Waste is, of course, an adjunct of luxury. Junk, trash, garbage, rubbish, refuse – whatever we call it – is dependent on economic wealth and excess production. Industrialized hi-tech urban cultures produce and thrive on the market for new and disposable goods – in 1960, Vance Packard warned the rest of the world of the environmental consequences of American style 'hedonism for the masses' and 'planned obsolescence' in his classic study, 'The Waste Makers' (Whiteley, 2011)."

Žižek (ibid.) points out that ecology and the way we currently approach the ecological problematic is increasingly ideological in the traditional sense of ideology that addresses very real problems but mystifies them, thus reinforcing an illusory way of thinking and perceiving reality. He claims that one of the elementary ideological mechanisms is what he calls 'the temptation of meaning' as in a prevalent spontaneous tendency to search for a meaning in the face of catastrophes as a coping mechanism of sorts. He parallels the implicit premise of 'ecology that the existing world is the best possible world' stemming from 'the notion of nature as a harmonious, organic, balanced, reproducing, almost living organism which is then disturbed, perturbed, derailed through human hubris, technological exploitation' with religion by suggesting that "ecology will slowly turn into a new opium of the masses" as Karl Marx famously defined religion. It could be argued that this idea of nature as a balanced totality which then we humans disturb, ecology as an immune to question god-like high authority figure might be the result of a misconception or misinterpretation and romanticization around its ability to sustain itself along with the persistence of life on Earth in retrospect. Žižek (ibid.) claims that nature is a set of unimaginable catastrophes which I interpret as an attempt towards its demystification. I believe that the somewhat false sense of harmony comes from the fact that

nature is made up of sustainable ecosystems. Regardless of its indicator, catastrophic events frequently take place in nature in a seemingly arbitrary way yet, nature as a system continues to sustain itself. Because ecology, rather than a rigid absolute truth to be achieved, is a sum of ever-changing, ever-evolving systems that are capable of sustaining themselves to be a factor of, to take part and belong in. I agree with Žižek (ibid.) when he points out the common misconception in this way of thinking that is subtracting humanity from the equation by assuming "the 'western people' in their artificial technological environment are alienated from immediate natural environment" resulting in a disregard of the fact that we, humans are in fact a part of the living earth. I, again, agree with Žižek (ibid.) when he points out that "we should not forget that we as humans are part of the living earth, we should not forget that we are not abstract engineers, theorists who just exploit nature, that we are part of nature, that nature is our unfathomable impenetrable background."

This attitude of subtraction and alienation of ourselves from nature, and the ideally sustainable set of equations that is ecology, reinforces our disembowel towards its problems. By doing so we refuse to confront with our part in them, much like flushing a toilet dumping the trash and supposing the refuse disappeared, resulting in the insertion of an illusory insolvability to the problems at hand. Making a priori assumptions, we all know very well that simple acts of trashing and flushing results in our refuse ending up in landfills or in the oceans amplifying some of the ecological problematics; what possible environmental catastrophes are awaiting; etc. but we collectively act as if we don't know. In my somewhat pointed view, rather than alienating humanity from nature as an abstract notion explained earlier if and only if we concede of our belonging in it, we would be free of the disassociations of this paradox and start to take responsibility of our actions as well as taking actions towards solutions.

Artists have been reacting to, analyzing, and documenting what is happening around them in various ways and at varying scales for a long time now. Along with the growing discourse around contemporary artists engaging with environmental issues, climate crisis, etc. either conceptually or materially or both in their works, sustainability as a term have been gradually introduced into the greater realm of artistic discourses and practices over the past couple of decades even to the extent that, although rather superficial, definitions and categorizations to terms like 'eco-art', 'sustainable art', and 'recycled art' are emerging apart from the established notion of environmental art. Many of the artists among the discourse of engaging with environment and/or in sustainability as observed by Blanc and Benish (2016) "claim an expressive autonomy", by "maintaining independence from traditional art structures, and re-inventing how they engage, become involved and change the social systems around them." As Kagan (2011) illustratively notes, "from the late 1990's and onwards, curators and writers from the world of contemporary art like Hildegard Kurt in Germany, Shelley Sacks in the UK, Maja and Reuben Fowkes in Hungary, Stephanie Smith in the USA, started discussing the relevance and different dimensions of sustainability for art in parallel to certain researchers from the field of sustainability, such as the sociologist Hans Dieleman in the Netherlands, who were attempting to introduce the theme in their exchanges with the art worlds" creating a transdisciplinary perspective around the subject. Hildegard Kurt (as cited in Kagan, 2011) was "among the first to explicitly discuss the notion of 'aesthetics of sustainability', understanding it as 'a new sensitivity to questions of aesthetics on the part of those involved in promoting sustainability' and refusing to 'see an aesthetic of sustainability as a completely new aesthetic' because it would be 'illusory' in the face of the 'plurality of contemporary life-styles' and setting up 'a new edition of 20th-century constructivism, which inclined to totalitarianism' in her opinion."

Within this rhetoric, Maggs & Robinson (2020) conceive of art as fundamentally an ontological agent resembling Schwitters' treatment to it. To clarify strategies for "good use" within transdisciplinary engagements, where both elements of the dyad are explicitly understood and incorporated, they construct a succinct two-part or "dyadic" theory of art as an essential balance between aesthetic powers of attention and expression (Maggs & Robinson, 2020). Within their comprehensive exploration of the social agency of art and its connection to complex issues of sustainability, their approach is rather critical towards customary research frameworks that link art to sustainability when posing the question: "Does it need to be good in order to be useful?". The answer is a simple no on my part and on top of that, I would like to add to the critic by posing one more question: Does it need to be useful at all?

> " Our 'Sustainability in an Imaginary World' approach breaks down into three steps: *crystallization* as an orientation to the work as effect, or as Andy Stirling called it, a "condensation point," something distilled from the larger environment; *emergence*, as the moment the creature becomes 'monstrous,' where the artistic vision takes the crystallizing beyond its derivative relationship to context; and finally, *resonance*, or what the monster is hopeful for, that resonating relationship with the broader world where its emergent properties take on meaning and value (Maggs & Robinson, 2020)."

At this point, I would like to circle back to the overarching theme of this chapter, working with trash, by identifying another way of doing so that is its treatment as raw material and as found objects which is also my way of working with trash. If we were to retrace the steps back in history through the lens of working with trash as an artist, using discarded materials as a practice has prominent predecessors. When Marcel Duchamp submitted a porcelain urinal inscribed with the signature of an imaginary individual assumed to be an independent artist at the time 'R. Mutt, 1917' to the Society of Independent Artists in New York; when Kurt Schwitters declared found objects and other unconventional materials as "factors having equal rights with paint"; when David Tudor stepped foot onto Maverick Concert Hall to perform the

premiere of John Cage's latest composition then, made of accidental sounds occurring while the performer sits silently other than arranging the time intervals on their timer, titled 4'33"; when Robert Rauschenberg grabbed some typewriter paper, glued them together, called John Cage to come over with his Ford Model A, poured some black house paint in front, and told him to drive just as straight as he could; the aftermath of their actions shook the artworld to its core by sequential trembles and the resulting shift reverberate still.

> "I consider every thing available to be potential painting material. I try to use these materials in such a way that they do not forfeit their identities for the sake of color, form or texture. (They are these already.) In this way, I consider the text of a newspaper, the detail of a photograph, the stitch in a baseball and the filament in a light bulb as fundamental to the painting as brush stroke or enamel drip of paint. R. Rauschenberg, Jan., 1956 (Craft, 2012)."



ARTstor image and catalog data courtesy of Allan T. Kohl, Minneapolis College of Art and Design.

Figure 4.17: Marcel Duchamp. *Fountain,* (1917). Photograph of the readymade sculpture by Alfred Stieglitz (American photographer, 1864-1946), (1917). Gelatin Silver Print. in. Minneapolis College of Art and Design Collection. Accession 10301. © 2008 The Georgia O'Keeffe Foundation / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.

In retrospect, radically critical ideas of Dada; revolutionary acts of Duchamp, Schwitters, Cage, Rauschenberg, and the likes of other avant-garde artists of the early twentieth century paved the way for discarded materials such as waste as an artistic medium along with the nonconformist artmaking methods the unconventional mediums call for to be implemented, recognized, and dare I say, even be imagined as a valid contemporary practice. Their extensive interrogations along the lines of what is and/or can be considered an artwork together with what can be perceived as one; confrontations with the purifications of the artworld at the time, and exposé were essential for their time and all-important for the future generations as they expanded the meanings and extents of art, artist, and the artistic act. Their use of discarded materials, found objects, and other provocative acts paved the way for contemporary artists including myself to further explore this as a field of practice. I personally have great respect for them and find inspirations in their courageously revolutionary acts. In other and more common

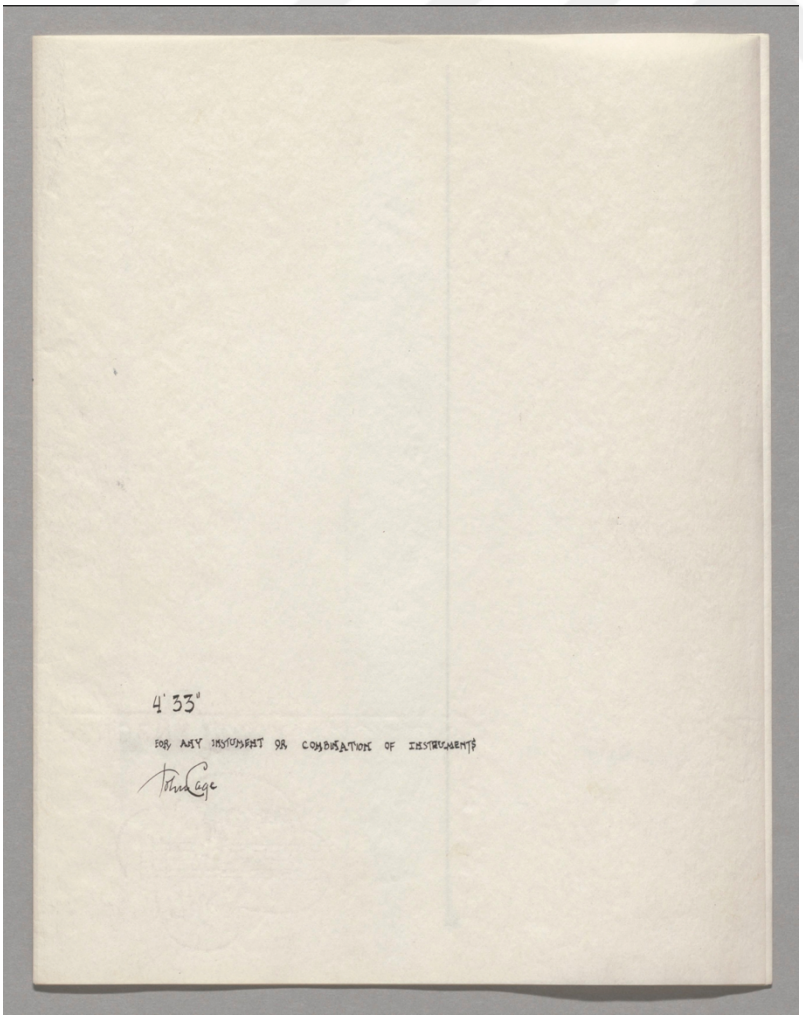
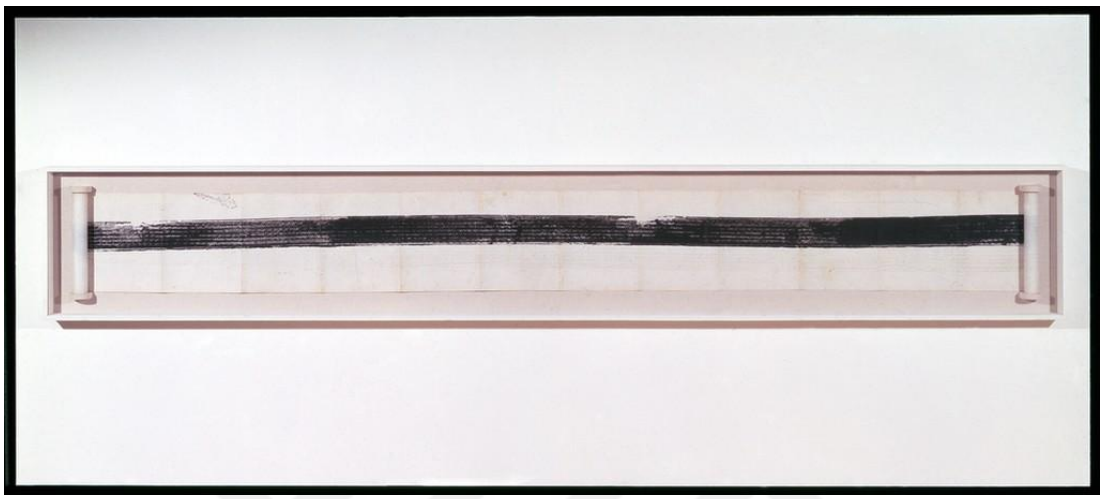


Image courtesy of MoMA, The Museum of Modern Art. http://www.moma.org

Figure 4.18: John Cage. *4'33" (In Proportional Notation).* Ink on paper. Each page: 11 x 8 ½" (27.9 x 21.6 cm). in. The Museum of Modern Art, New York, Acquired through the generosity of Henry Kravis in honor of Marie-Josée Kravis, 2012. Accession 71.1936.R77. © 2013 John Cage Trust.

words, they walked so we could run free. Art history is filled with moments like the ones I described earlier, artists and artworks that challenge the status quo of their time, and if we were to change our lens from working with trash to anything else, we would be mentioning many more great names.



ARTstor image and original data courtesy of the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art
http://www.sfmoma.org/

Figure 4.19: Robert Rauschenberg. *Automobile Tire Print,* (1953). Paint on twenty sheets of paper mounted on fabric, print. 16 1/2 x 286 in (41.9 x 726.4 cm) in. Collection SFMOMA, Purchase through a gift of Phyllis C. Wattis.. Accession 98. © Robert Rauschenberg Foundation / Estate of Robert Rauschenberg / Licensed by VAGA, New York; Art © Estate of Robert Rauschenberg / Licensed by VAGA, New York, NY

The socio-political connotations of working with trash starts from the aforementioned illusory dilemma of disappearance, continues with the quantities, makings and dealings of trash through larger-scale arguments on consumer culture, as well as our current understanding of ecology as a crucial field of ideology in the sense Žižek (ibid.) claims. The sustainable implications, on the other hand, seem like they stem from the widespread association of notions like recycling and reusing with the notion of sustainability on the surface but in its core, it is related to the complex web of relations and meanings surrounding trash, refuse, and ecological problems. Although it is an undeniable fact that recycling and reusing instead of merely trashing are crucial in building sustainable systems, and a reading within the context of sustainability is undeniably consequential, I am not so sure whether it is the best way to read each and every

contemporary artwork that utilize trash and interpret the intentions of contemporary artists that are working with trash solely in terms of sustainability, maybe because I prefer more holistic approaches and find the issues more complex in this regard. Whether disrupting its sway in its state of limbo that is the illusion that is disappears, by treating it as a raw material or representing its mass as an activist act, transformations of any kind in its perception; any kind of artistic intervention along the lines of the complex web of relations and meanings surrounding trash contains a dadaesque insurgence to it and is of equal value in my perspective.

IV.IV. The Problem with Plastic

> "More than a substance, plastic is the very idea of its infinite transformation; as its everyday name indicates, it is ubiquity made visible. And it is this, in fact, which makes it a miraculous substance: a miracle is always a sudden transformation of nature. Plastic remains impregnated throughout with this wonder: it is less a thing than the trace of a movement. … And as the movement here is almost infinite, transforming the original crystals into a multitude of more and more startling objects, plastic is, all told, a spectacle to be deciphered: the very spectacle of its end-products. … But the price to be paid for this success is that plastic, sublimated as movement, hardly exists as substance. … Plastic has climbed down, it is a household material. It is the first magical substance which consents to be prosaic. But it is precisely because this prosaic character is a triumphant reason for its existence: for the first time, artifice aims at something common, not rare." (Barthes, 1957).

In his short, brief yet trenchant 1957 essay *Plastic,* Roland Barthes provides us with a provocative Marxist critique by historically connecting the rise of bourgeois capitalism to plastic's early material history through its first position in and out of fashion. He does so by pointing to the myth of imitation materials as plastic is first commonly used to imitate rare luxury substances such as diamonds, silk, feathers, furs, silver, ivory etc. before its eventual

downfall as a common household material. As produced imitation materials disguise themselves as valuable substances of status and wealth by cheaply replicating them, they are indicative of pretension and are closely associated with the capitalist tendency to care about appearances over function. This is possible because of plastic's aberrant fungibility as "the quick-change artistry of plastic is absolute: it can become buckets as well as jewels" (Barthes, 1957). It is precisely its inherent interchangeability and limitless adaptability that plastic is celebrated for instead of being despised. Barthes continues: "In the hierarchy of the major poetic substances, it figures as a disgraced material, lost between the effusiveness of rubber and the flat hardness of metal; it embodies none of the genuine produce of the mineral world: foam, fibres, strata. It is a 'shaped' substance". Yet despite 'being sublimated as movement and hardly existing as a substance', its eminent transmutability 'abolish the hierarchy of substances: A single one replaces them all'. Nonetheless, plastic's ability to be shaped into almost anything brings its downfall and this downfall disguises itself as a triumphant success none other substance ever achieved before as 'plastic is wholly swallowed up in the fact of being used'. As I am wearing my contact lenses, in order to see my computer screen from where I sit despite my severe nearsightedness; as even right now I rely on plastic to maintain my contemporary life itself, that is to maintain my life on a certain comfort level, I see plastics everywhere I look. Barthes' last sentence could not resonate more: "the whole world can be plasticized, and even life itself since, we are told, they are beginning to make plastic aortas."

An extension of Barthes' critique towards twenty-first century can be traced through contemporary consumer culture and its instantly replaceable commodities through trash itself. Heather Davis (2022) reminds us that "plastic was one of the earliest materials created through the manipulation of matter at a molecular level" and "this orientation to matter emerges from a split between nature and culture, body and mind, that not only institutes a hierarchy but also

has been conceived as an adversarial relationship." Davis continues to argue that "plastic reinforces these relations through waste, as yet another means of capitalist accumulation. Plastic serves to reinforce the expectations of petrocapitalism that both matter and people should be ceaselessly pliable, bendable, and subordinate to economic accumulation." In other words, we invented it, it was magical; we've further experimented with it, new aspects of it unfolded; we've then magnified and multiplied it, it invaded our lives and the whole planet along with it. It is mystified, an enigmatic an almost utterly abstract concept as it seemingly could appear as virtually anything. We no longer perceive of it as a material having a wide variety of types and impressive capabilities, let alone a magical substance. It is created, fabricated; infinitely multiplied; widely distributed, incontinently and haphazardly left behind: it is undeniably taken for granted and rather disgraced. In fact, what we call plastic today, "is a set of materials grouped under a common process and derived from fossil fuels, but each molecular composition has its own characteristics, its own specificities (Davis, 2022)." Nonetheless, the word plastic is commonly used to group together the wide array of molecular chains, and in such common use, it fails to differentiate between the wide variety of materials it is indicative of in prospect. It is precisely this failure that simultaneously signaling its mystification and reinforcing its myth. All in all, creating yet another illusion, this time of anything and everything all at once-ness along with an unashamed disposableness –rendering it 'hyper'. Hence, it is "not a function of our knowledge" anymore, plastic is now a 'hyperobject' as coined by Timothy Morthon in *The Ecological Thought* 'to refer to things that are massively distributed in time and space relative to humans' along with trash itself: they are both 'hyper relative to worms, lemons, and ultraviolet rays, as well as humans' (Morton, 2013).

Within this plastic hyper-reality there is an inherent illusion that is suspiciously similar to the one discussed with trash and its illusory disappearance. It is important to note that both

trash and plastic, –as hyperobjects, have already had a significant impact on human social and psychic space as Morton (ibid.) declares. Amanda Boetzkes and Andrew Pendakis (2013) addresses this intrinsic dilemma all the while proposing a critical path around its double bind through illusory disruption splendidly as follows:

> "There is an eternity in plastic, though one very far from the dreams of Platonism or Christianity. This is not the transcendent suspension of change dreamed of by Plato, a dream of Truth, Beauty, and of the continuing power of the Idea to engross and challenge a human body. Instead, this eternity is a persistent "reality" that arrives from one continuous, infinite, and seemingly inexhaustible source, a source without location or specificity. Plastic is always a "some" or an "any," never a "this" or a "that." It feels infinite because it sheds every trace of particularity, every index of a located space and time. Plastic holds form without an internal structure or skeleton, without beams, bolts, or seams, and completely negates the distance between idea and thing, mold and object. Simultaneously eternal and eminently disposable, perfect yet utter rubbish, plastic is what happens to "Ideas" under the conditions of capitalism in the postmodern age. If we trace plastic back to its foundation in oil, we can pierce this fictional eternity that encloses us."

This trail, along with their observations on the contemporary artists' then-recent practice to "accumulate and redistribute plastic objects" juxtaposed with the overall tone of the pieces they examine shifting the focus of the visual field away from "the efforts to objectively expose the dirty truth of the oil industry", toward pieces with "a sensorial fullness, robustness, and flexibility", leads them towards the conclusion that "oil is not simply a political terrain limited to land claims, environmental management, and economy. It is a cultural and aesthetic mesh that mediates the sensorial field" (Boetzkes & Pendakis, 2013). Boetzkes (2019) later summarizes, within these opposing dualities that plastic embodies, "as a petroleum-based material, plastic is the medium by which oil capital becomes visible as a cultural agent." It is rather "an economic and ecological actant that produces relations" rather than a mere by-

product: “capitalism itself has become plastic”. The act of transforming these discarded plastic bags and packaging from mere by-products of mass production to sublime plastic to be faced both as parts of the bodies and in the context of these sculptures, also contains a commentary with this respect.

Caren Irr and Nayoung Kim’s (2021) words reverberate at this point: “when wrestling with plastic one inevitably comes to appreciate the fundamentally dialectical entanglement of waste and wonder” surely, muzzling the definite notes of panic and exaltation due to environmental dystopias. Meandering back to Boetzkes and Pendakis’ (ibid.) opening sentence stating that “plastic weaves itself into every facet of our contemporary reality”, along with its aforementioned ubiquity, and this current state of being woven into the very fabric of contemporary life and reality keeps me wondering, is it really plastic that weaves itself into every aspect of our contemporary lives, or are we the ones holding the knitting needle, doing the weaving, and putting the blame on plastic? From where I stand, plastic’s so-called consent to be prosaic is rather compulsory. It is us that are forcing it to be merely and blatantly mundane. Just because it has the capability of being effectively multiplied, easily molded into anything, should it entail being molded into *any* thing and *every* thing; multiplied to an extent that it feels eternal? I imagine and sense an esoteric agony in plastic’s material disregard and disgrace in its mundane end-products as well as a capitalist hypocrisy in its common treatment as a mere by-product of mass production. In other words, its daily banality and demotion involves a material agony. I imagine hearing instead, its yearning for being ‘shaped’ into oddities and peculiarities as it thrives in being those particularly aesthetically, and even beneficially at times it is applied with purely functional intentions outside of the economic confines of capitalist greed. This perspective might be one of the factors fueling the strong desire towards researching it as a

material for art and exploring the possibilities around it by accounting it as raw material that lies at the heart of my artistic practice.



Image courtesy of Kelly Jazvac.

Figure 4.20: Kelly Jazvac. *Plastiglomerate Sample,* (2013). Molten plastic debris and beach sediment including sand, wood, and rock. Photo: Jeff Elstone.

In 2013, geologist Patricia Corcoran and artist Kelly Jazvac began a research project at the suggestion of oceanographer Charles Moore, and with the assistance of local activists Noni and Ron Sanford and Megan Lamson on a strange type of existing stone on the shores of Kamilo Beach, Hawai'i. In Jazvac's own words in a later solo essay titled *Noni Knows*, the two first travelled to the site on the hypothesis that lava was melting plastic debris and forming a strange amalgamation as a new 'stone' type they will later name plastiglomerate. Upon further research the team revealed that the reason for this melting of the plastic debris and its subsequent agglutination to natural sediments was not lava, but anthropogenic activity on the beach,



Image courtesy of Kelly Jazvac.

Figure 4.21: Kelly Jazvac. *Plastiglomerate Sample,* (2013). Molten plastic debris and beach sediment including sand, wood, and rock. Photo: Jeff Elstone.

namely, campfire burning (Corcoran et al., 2014). In the 2014 scientific manuscript Corcoran, Moore, and Jazvac co-authored they describe the term plastiglomerate as characterizing an indurated, multi-composite material made hard by agglutination of rock and molten plastic. They subdivide this material into two: “an in-situ type, in which plastic is adhered to rock outcrops, and a clastic type, in which combinations of basalt, coral shells, and local woody debris are cemented with grains of sand in plastic matrix” (Corcoran et al., 2014). Since “Kamilo Beach provides an example of an anthropogenic action (burning) reacting to an anthropogenic problem (plastics pollution)”, and given “the ubiquity of non-degradable plastic



Image courtesy of Kelly Jazvac.

Figure 4.22: Kelly Jazvac. *Plastiglomerate Sample,* (2013). Molten plastic debris and beach sediment including sand, wood, and rock. Photo: Jeff Elstone.

debris on our planet” along with the high possibility of its formation in different places globally under various ways extreme temperatures may occur, they then argue that plastiglomerate, as “the first rock type composed partially of plastic material, it has a strong potential to act as a global marker horizon of the informal Anthropocene epoch” (Corcoran et al., 2014). After the scientific manuscript that rendered plastiglomerate a geological artifact as an indicator of human impact on the Earth in terms of ecological consideration, Jazvac presented the

plastiglomerate samples as sculptural ready-mades in various exhibitions thus rendering it an artwork that “makes the familiar unfamiliar”; that “reifies the unfathomable, consolidating and attesting to difficult-to-substantiate material and social-political issues”; as “a remainder, a



Image courtesy of Kelly Jazvac.

Figure 4.23: Kelly Jazvac. *Plastiglomerate Sample,* (2013). Molten plastic debris and beach sediment including sand, wood, and rock. Photo: Jeff Elstone.



Image courtesy of Eli and Edythe Broad Art Museum, Michigan State University.

Figure 4.24: *Kelly Jazvac: Plastiglomerate,* (2018-19). Installation view from the exhibition curated by Georgia Erger at the Eli and Edythe Broad Art Museum at Michigan State University, 2018. Photo: Eat Pomegranate Photography. © Michigan State University

reminder, an indicator of the slow violence of massive pollution: it brings together deep geological time and current consumerism" (Robertson, 2016).

> "More poetically, plastiglomerate indexically unites the human with the currents of water; with the breaking down, over millennia, of stone into sand and fossils into oil; with the quick substration of that oil into fuel; and with the refining of that fuel into polycarbons – into plastic, into garbage. From the primordial muck, to the ocean, to the beach, and back to land, plastiglomerate is an uncanny material marker. It shows the ontological inseparability of all matter, from the micro to the macro. … Where ropes, nets, jars, toothbrushes, bottle caps, can lids, and cigarette lighters can be recognized, plastiglomerate becomes figurative, realistic. The plastic aspect gains a longevity and aesthetic vibrancy that it would not otherwise have. The combination of rock sediment and plastic creates a charismatic object, a near luminous granite, pockmarked with color. Plastiglomerate is trace evidence of human-nature interaction: plastic is made by an anthropogenic action, and plastiglomerate is made by a series of anthropogenic gestures that create fascinating, disquieting objects" (Robertson, 2016).



Image courtesy of Kelly Jazvac.

Figure 4.25: Kelly Jazvac. *Plastiglomerate Sample,* (2013). Molten plastic debris and beach sediment including sand, wood, and rock. Photo: Jeff Elstone.

Plastiglomerate presents a particularly intriguing case. Robertson (2016) provides us a great summation to its extent, albeit it speaks of pollution and current environmental problematic loudly, "the ready-made geologic being of plastiglomerate speaks to more than pollution: also geology, the deep time of Earth, colonization, human-animal knowledges, currents of water, and the endless unfolding and collapse of life on Earth." From where I stand,

plastiglomerate specifically calls for an attention towards plastic's material roots in oil –fossil fuel as it resembles a paradoxical lively fossillic being of petrified plastic and natural sediments as they are turned into one another in and as plastiglomerate. This call for attention subtly hints at the connections between plastic and petroleum and the dependence of plastic consumerism on the oil economy and provokes an expose in this regard. More recent classifications of marine plastic formations following plastiglomerate are pyroplastics, plasticrusts, anthropoquinas, and plastitar for now. Pyroplastics are first identified based "on observations made on beached samples from south west England" and are described as "comprising pieces of plastic debris within a matrix, or rounded plastic "pebbles", where agglomerated material has been weathered and smoothed into more brittle and neutrally-coloured geogenic-looking clasts" (Turner et al., 2019). Plasticrusts are described as "plastic debris encrusting the rocky surface", "presumably generated from the continuous hydrodynamic induced crash of large plastic items against rock" by the coastal waves (Gestoso et al., 2019). They were first described from Madeira Island of the Atlantic Ocean, Portugal and the United Kingdom respectively, and later observed in coastal habitats in Giglio Island, of the Tyrrhenian Sea, in Italy as well (Ehlers and Ellrich, 2020). Corcoran and Jazvac (2020) later included plasticrusts as a type of in situ plastiglomerate. Anthropoquinas are described as "sedimentary rocks containing anthropogenic items cemented with biogenic and silicastic material, formed by the cementation of different materials available in a natural setting" (Fernandino et al., 2020). Plastitar, have been found "in several of the islands of the Canary Islands archipelago (Spain)", it is due to partial evaporation and solidification of oil residues from earlier releases onto the coastal rocks yielding together with other materials such as though wood, glass, sand and rocks but mainly microplastics forming an agglomerate in the form of a new solid structure with characteristics that does not meet any prior classifications and "can be permanently attached to the rock, occupying even a 56%of the sampled area with an heterogeneous distribution" (Hernández et al., 2022). The identification

of plastitar, conjoins plastic and oil in a literal coalescence of their waste, giving Boetzkes & Pendakis' (2013) arguments an odd body to reverberate through. While pyroplastics resonate with Barthes' (1957) abolished hierarchy of the substances and conjure the concept of imitation while relocating the plastiglomerate as a phenomenon along with the consequences at the colonizer's doorstep; plasticrusts expands its causation including natural forces as one of the main actors alongside anthropogenic activity, pulling it further into the geological realm, and further relocates the phenomenon across the globe. Both additional classifications heighten the voice of its speech on environmental problems more but also reinforces Robertson's (2016) poetic implementation on what else it speaks of in my opinion. Nonetheless, plastiglomerate's initial extent and intrigue remain.

Reflecting on plastic through its journey in time through imitation, transformation, multiplication, encapsulation, permeation, and penetration with its hyperobjectness; material roots in oil; socio-cultural roots in and through oil culture –petroculture, all the way to the plastiglomerate I find myself reaching a full circle, resembling the mystic symbol of the Ouroboros. This full circle is representative of autopoietic processes of life on earth and the paradoxical serpent represents a paradox of human existence and dealings with its surroundings through an amalgamation of the synthetic and the natural. Boetzkes (2019) delineates this circle by arguing that "plastiglomerates procure the visuality of the Anthropocene through redistributed temporal and spatial coordinates and in their implicit geological scope, they disclose the human world as its own end". Moreover, existing as a denaturalized entity, it stands right at the crossroads between the cultural and the geological; and appearing as an outcome of an entanglement of autopoietic processes and human industrial production, they invoke a perspective of the present from this anthropogenesis (Boetzkes, 2019). Despite its many interpretations placing it in the literatures of art, culture, science and defining it accordingly,

when I look at plastiglomerate samples, I see a curious phenomenon still. From where I stand, I see explicit evidence of my rather unorthodox perspective that of plastic's material yearning to be understand and shaped otherwise. Following the aforementioned understanding of nature as a set of equations, along with the known fact that in an equation there is always room for a formerly unknown variable I also see strong evidence of humanities' belonging in nature. Not to imply that this belonging begets inaction but to imply that it rather calls for an action towards change. Its formation under anthropogenic activity rather than solely natural force that of the god-like hierarchical understanding of nature is particularly important in this sense. As Robertson (2016) concludes: "we have come into existence with and because of so many others, from carbon to microbes to dogs. And all these creatures and rocks and air molecules and water all exist together, with each other, for each other. To be a human means to be the land and water and air of our surroundings."

Having established a strong foothold, it could be argued that the real problem with plastic lies in the banality of its end-products as well as its common treatment as a mere by-product of mass production. In its core, plastic is a great material with many capabilities, a miraculous substance indeed. The many forms and ways it expanded throughout is also evident of this if we are to set aside for a second the extents of abuse and misappropriation in terms of its capabilities. With an environmental lens, the abundance of waste along with plastic's near-eternal physical presence in natural habitat, the problem is progressively a pressing matter. Single use is particularly detrimental in this regard. As the rapid accumulation of non-disappearing trash pile increasingly overflow from the hidden black holes to day-to-day eyesight—where trash seemingly disappears but also accumulates at; the sense of impending environmental doom is escalated. I am a firm believer of the wrongdoings in the use of such a durable, promising, exciting and precious material for blatantly mundane single-use items,

especially considered through an environmental lens. Although 'dependence on plastic' particularly in the single-use realm is 'so advanced that in most cases, a radical cultural change would be required (Irr & Kim, 2021)', transformation is not impossible.

Plastic pollution is a humongous issue with both immediate and tardy delinquent consequences exceeding across a flock of cross-species bodies and tackling it requires various parties in different professions and power positions working together to create change and achieve tangible solutions. Since "the work, play, medicine, sanitation, and sensations of petromodernity are literally wrapped up in plastic"; and precisely because the cultural norms that support the use of plastic in its current state are deeply embedded in the consumerist societies of the global North, change is exceedingly difficult (Irr & Kim, 2021). It is essentially a chicken and egg situation rooted in consumerism. Besides, there is yet another illusion at play in pointing to the individual consumer much more so than the main actors capable of achieving tangible solutions. Resulting from a deliberate campaign of systematic misdirection as Jensen (n.d.) points out, this illusory sense of self-responsibility diverts the attention from the main culprits by disguising that it is consumer culture and capitalist mindset that misteaches us to consider individual actions of consumption as equivalent to organized political resistance. While the main responsibility is incumbent on governments, politicians, big corporations, industries, and producers, much more so than the individual consumers; the artists and designers of this world also have their respective space in this matrix of responsibilities to revert this ill-advised conjectural perspective that plastic equals single use. However well-meaning and also necessary, simple calls for boycotting single use plastics and their replacement for reusable goods, are insufficient when implemented alone. For a transformation in the way we use plastic also requires a collective conscious rejection and refusal to confine our imaginations within environmentally destructive visions of synthetic technologies and the massive waste they produce (Irr & Kim, 2021).

I argue that a key approach to this shift in perception could be informed from a material appreciation and a necessary added value in its recycled form. Whether it is artistic value, design value, or intellectual value, if we are to accumulate enough discourse along this path of added values, the aforementioned shift in perception will eventually occur. Subsequent efforts from scholars and artists to conceptualize and demystify plastic, to create and identify different visualizations of trash, etc. could all be taken into consideration towards a cumulative sum. An added value, in my case, not for the sake of merely adding the said value and thus recreating a similar dynamic of the existing situation, but for the sake of the material, its qualities, origins, and yearnings. As a value occurring during creative acts of sublimation and subsequently adding itself; a reverse-sublimation towards its molecular through its substantial, corporeal apprehension; a critical gesture towards an answer to its yearning. There is enough plastic debris accumulating within an arm's reach for us to experiment with in terms of small-scale operations, excavations, and creative explorations. If humanity can simultaneously decrease the demand for new plastics to be wasted to a large extent globally and increase the recycling of existing plastic waste towards more valuable stuff, a larger scale solution will be possible in the future for this problem in my belief. This is of course not to minimize the scope and urgency of the existing problem; not to say that I am trying to save the environment all by myself; and not to put the burden of the catastrophic scenarios and environmental problems on the shoulders of artists and designers of the world alone; but to bridge together the dichotomy between theory and practice around the issues at hand. Plastic already is a spectacle in and of itself, which I find worthy of deciphering, why not make the spectacle a little bit more interesting and have some creative fun along the way too?

I mostly try to make sense of the world around me navigating my way through a life surrounded with commodities of consumer culture, infested by heaps of waste that I feel like we are drowning ourselves in; revealing, remembering, and investigating my own consuming habits, patterns and participation in throwaway culture during the process for myself to take notes on in the meantime. This personal note-taking aspect can utilize Broetzkes' (2019) 'found lens with which to examine the drive to waste in its current aesthetic form' on a personal level. Although I am not ready to reveal the exact notes themselves yet, it is worthwhile to say that my personal notes on my own consuming habits are inherently existential as production of the self is done with and through consuming in our contemporary mediated imaginary in the sense that our consumptions are due to self-expression. The notes themselves are not specifically veiled yet they are also not fully and deliberately revealed but they echo as the abstraction of their remains, remainders, and reminders. My value-add proposition and the aforementioned shift in perspective emerges almost as a side-effect of my experiments, investigations, and interventions. An accidental discovery made while digging into the trash bags of different households, sifting through the remainders of their consuming habits. It should be understanded and interpreted as such rather than some goal that my artistic actions are oriented or based upon. Much like the socio-political implementations, environmental concerns and implications of sustainability too are almost automatically implied as an added layer of meaning when it is dug enough to reach among the strata of meanings created and accumulated because it comes along with plastic's baggage filled with many-a-meanings. An environmental tint in my multicolored due to its multi-layers lens is almost inescapable by reason of my genuine concerns with our planet's well-being as a hospitable habitat, rooted in a deep care for those we share it with, imprinted in the entity that is myself. Fundamentally, this is my way of trying to feel at home

among a trash-filled dump; creating and searching for poetic instances in an increasingly artificial, terrifyingly materialist environment through recreating an aesthetic dimension in things like trash; and through this, loving the world around me as is.



Image courtesy of Yara Emad AbuNemeh. **Figure 4.26:** *The 'fabric' and me*, view from the exhibition. Photo: Yara Emad AbuNemeh.

IV.V. Transier and Recycled Plastic

> "We live in an age of movement. More than at any other time in history, people and things move longer distances, more frequently, and faster than ever before. All that was solid melted into air long ago and is now in full circulation around the world, like dandelion seeds adrift on turbulent winds. We find ourselves, in the early twenty-first century, in a world where every major domain of human activity has become increasingly defined by motion" (Nail, 2018).

As previously mentioned, Thomas Nail (2018) identifies movement and moving motion as a defining aspect and factor of 21st century. One of the major historical conditions that situate his thought is mass migration. In defining this mass migration by considering constant

movement of material, human, and animal bodies as part of the said migration one way or another, this moving motion that defines the century is beyond human. Plastic is undoubtedly an important material subject that is constantly on the move with this respect. Barthes' (1957) observation that plastic being sublimated as movement hardly existing as substance and claim that it is the very idea of constant transformation more than a substance along with its direct correlation with Morton's (2013) notion of hyperobjects that refer to things that are massively distributed in time and space relative to humans, plastic's hyperobjectness is in direct relation with this century-defining motion. Mass migration of plastic in the form of waste as a contemporary problem is evident in the case of plastiglomerates.

The cyclic motion of recycling as a process is particularly important in its relation with Nail's kinetic framework as it proves to be a particular pattern of motion, a particular kinetic cycle among the ever-flowing, folding-onto-itself movements of being. The plastic, machinic being of these specimens is therefore directly related to being itself with this respect. As per the aforementioned understanding of waste as an adjunct of luxury, the main raw material of these specimens being plastic waste is directly related to the concepts of non-place and supermodernity in terms of excess. As it is recycled, folded onto itself as this kinetic cycle that is the process of recycling as my method of producing the fabric of these sculptures a distinction similar to that of place and non-place is reproduced on a material level in the distinction of their raw material—plastic waste and refined main material—recycled plastic strips. This process and distinction are also presented as a disruption to plastic's inherent interchangeability and limitless adaptability in the sense it is mentioned before. With this respect, following the aforementioned statement that these specimens are non-sculptures for the non-places inhabit for anyone at any given time so long as they are not passing-by, plastic waste is the non-material

for these non-sculptures since without the fold of my recycling process, plastic waste is not considered as a material in itself.

In conclusion, I believe the significance of recycled plastic as a material for art, more specifically these sculptures within the context of this thesis, lies in its reflective nature both on personal and on socio-cultural levels. On the personal level, it is my own trash that I've near-obsessively collected, meticulously sorted, and intuitively transformed; turned into my own artwork, my own expression. Any self-aware individual can see or at least sense their own reflection in it through their confrontment with plastic waste and its greater socio-cultural meanings. Even an atom of the passer-by is moved by it for a split-second, it is enough to count this encounter effectual on my part. Juxtaposed with the reflective nature of the motions these two specimens employ, it adds another layer and deepens the meanings they are able to create. It is conceptually representative of both my own reflection and the casual passer-by's.

As its reflective nature is enhancing its claim to be mirroring the I that passes-by qua the other I that they are faced with, my recycled plastic strips as one of its main materials is further enhancing the aforementioned possibility for jikaku to occur since it provides and points towards and provides a particular context to reflect upon. With their plasto-mechanic being, along with their rhetoric, these sculptures inhold the possibility of and the ability for an aim to evoke an awareness of the self within this context. Relying of course, on an ever-changing dynamic understanding of being that is related to a constant state of flux described in both Nishida and Nail's philosophies and jikaku as self-awareness in particular.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

> What is encountered are elements that have an *affinity* and *complementarity*; those elements that encounter one another express a readiness to collide-interlock, taking hold like water becoming ice, like mayonnaise emulsifying, like milk curdling. Things take hold, are taken hold (*sur-prise* in French), by *surprise*. "Every encounter is aleatory", says Althusser, "not in its origins (nothing ever guarantees an encounter), but in its effects. In other words, every encounter might not have taken place, although it did take place". (Merrifield, 2013, pp. 56-57).

In my attempts to both uncover and express my artistic tendencies and the nature of my practice simultaneously throughout 2021, I've revealed a tendency to work within binary oppositions and an interest of creating and playing with the contrast of these opposing dualities reserve. Since then, I have been acting on this finding more deliberately. In doing so I utilize my own balance between desire and need, playful nature, and the power of synthesis vested in me through my architecture background to create these creatures investigating the forgotten, treated as an afterthought, nooks and crannies within our built environment and consciousness'. All of Transier's main pillars bring their own sets of nuances, specificities, and layers, with each layer enlarging the canon of available meanings under this framework, each specimen lives as machinic, synthetic entities that dare to exist within the junction of these and concurrently extend this same junction they inhabit by the nuances they themselves bring. Transier thrives on hand-in-hand contrapositions: along with their reflective nature stemming from their movements, the permanence of recycled plastic as its material also allows me to

create a contrasting sense of permanence as opposed to the impermanence of the state of transition and transience. They are both permanent and impermanent at the same time.

From where I stand, the importance of an emphasis on transitionary spaces, transience, etc. lies in the very nature of existence itself as one comprehends. Considering the past is a series of memories, remembered by an entity and the future is a series of possibilities that entity envisions; all we can really be sure of is the split second that we perceive at any given moment within the constant flux of existence. If the constant flux of existence subsumes a story we write, we are neither the beginning nor the ending of a sentence. All I am confident about is that we are just a blinking cursor/insertion point at any given time among the story between what is already written and about to be written. Surely, I am coincidentally capable of remembering what I have written and imagining what to write down next. Regardless, all I can be sure of is the blinking of the cursor. Life, in my eyes, is ephemeral, it consists of moments, all of which exist as thresholds. Furthermore, a living being is the sum of its many transitionary states, in other words, *transiers*. Any transitionary state within this complex web is a reflection of our own human path seeking a balance between all the liminalities and a confirmation of the constant state of flux. Along with its every aspect, within the framework defined by Transier, these sculptures are a reflection of my own human path seeking a balance between my personal interests, different identities (as architect, designer, artist) and their intersections, life and all of its liminalities. By creating works that are drawing attention to this transitionary state, with this emphasis on liminality, I feel like deep down I am actually examining being, becoming, existing. With the power of an encounter, I am inviting the viewer to a glimpse of a moment in a creature that is the embodiment of this rhetoric.

After all, aren't we all just passing-by?

> "Transience today refers to a quality of temporary existence; of passing by; of ephemerality. Etymologically, the word is composed of 'trans', meaning 'across', and 'ire', meaning 'to go'. To be transient means to exist between the words 'cis', 'on this side of', and trans, 'across'. The transient exists within the act of crossing and not resting at any given destination" (Olawepo & Tollo, 2020).

Throughout this thesis, I believe I have consistently established an emphasis towards my understanding that the concepts of space, place, movement, being, and transience are all inherently interconnected. First of all, in recognizing space and its relationship with being in its constant state of flux, and subsequently arguing that the aforementioned "distinction of place from space subsumes a similar state of constant flux affiliated with space within the presumed fixity of place", (p.12) the interconnectivity of space and being along with space and movement is emphasized. Furthermore, by introducing the concept of basho as the place of being and nothingness and arguing that "Nishida's concept of basho inholds a kinetic process or field that represents a dynamic, ever-changing and constantly evolving understanding of reality rather than a static place or point in space" (p.37), the interconnectivity of movement and being is emphasized. This emphasis is subsequently enhanced through the introduction of Nail's kinetic philosophy (pp.66-67). Through Transier's further elaborations of its relationship with spatial movement emphasis on the interconnectivity of space and movement is enhanced (pp.68-70). Furthermore, through further elaborations of its relationship with recycled plastic as its main material and the recognition of my recycling process as a particular pattern of motion as a kinetic cycle, the emphasis on the interconnectivity of being and movement is further enhanced (pp.111-113).

Recalling my artist's statement once more, I "position these specimens within the dichotomous contradictions of place and non-place; stability and motility; transience and

permanence. From there they constantly delineate, compose, inhabit, and evocate a way of being within the thresholds of constant liminalities" (p.128). I define this way of being as a transient one and argue that in their plasto-mechanical transient being, these specimens affirm the transience of existence itself. Along with the existential philosophical standpoint that have been established throughout the thesis as a dynamic understanding of being; the above confirmation of the constant state of flux present in existence; and the presupposition that if something is in a state of constant flux then it is subjected to constant change or an inherent possibility of ever-changingness. Being, then, as in its dynamic understandings that are implying constant state of flux is directly related with transience. Thus, it could be argued that being is transient.

V.I. Limitations, Future Work and Further Research

If I may be so direct, the exhibition hall itself proposed the main practical limitations for my thesis project. Since it is a more controlled environment, the idea of passing-by in referring to the viewers as passers-by is not realized in its full potential. Despite this, it also offered new perspectives and possibilities both for my research and practice. As this process proved itself to also be exploratory, especially during the artistic production process, any limitation is surpassed itself as and transformed into some form of extension along the way. With this respect, limitations of this process enabled further exploration as they introduced new directions that I did not initially consider. I would assume the same to be the case for future work and further research as well.

I envision Transier as a growing series of kinetic sculptures, an ongoing project among my artistic practice. This is precisely why I chose to name these specimens with letters in alphabetical order. I am currently working on a specimen_c. Because Transier is defined also as the framework of individual specimens, I hope future work and further research will be easier to tackle with and navigate through. I am beyond curious and excited to explore the possibilities that this framework holds. With specimens in their different placements, modes of display; achieving motion; detecting the passer-by and subsequently reacting to the passer-by, and even its main materials can be seen as variables that hold possibilities of further experimentation with them in store. What would happen if I were to play with these variables? What if the implicated scale of the notion of non-places changed to an urban scale, for example, what if one specimen is placed at an urban corridor? Then, I would be directing the accompanying research of another body of work that the said future specimen is part of, more towards other important studies of space other than the ones that employed within the chosen aperture for this thesis. Doreen Massey is the first name that comes to my mind with this possibility. A consequent reading and employment of Massey's theories of space would introduce gender as a point of critique, concern, and inspection within this context. This possibility is particularly intriguing for me since the notion of transience is frequently employed in gender studies, and I would be thrilled to reflect upon the intended genderlessness of my specimens. Also, then another possibility of looking into automation as a concept for societal critique would appear. What if, the passer-by's obligatory bodily contact with the specimen is the mode of achieving motion for another future specimen? With this respect, then an inquiry in touch and sensation is called for. These examples can easily be multiplied in my mind and imagination. I would be more than thrilled to further explore these and more possibilities, to further play with these defining aspects of specimens in my future work and research.

As I have previously identified a similarity in Nishida and Nail's dynamic understandings of being, I would be more than happy to attempt a parallel reading of these thinkers' thoughts more deeply. In other words, this recognized similarity calls for a possibility of a kinetic reading of Nishida as possible further yet separate research in the form of an article perhaps. If not, it is at the very least an intriguing area of theoretical exploration for me to further reflect and elaborate on. Especially in the resemblances of quantum field theory I have recognized upon trying to understand Nishida's concepts of particular and predicate while reading Nishida. I find this worthy of noting despite the fact that I chose not to elaborate on these in detail in its respective sub-chapter simply because I found them rather out of context for this thesis.

Reflecting back upon this journey specifically towards its theoretical research process, upon realizing the now-apparent male-dominance among the thinkers and artists whose thoughts and works I utilize to articulate my arguments and build my research upon, I felt disgruntled. As a result, I am now more aware of my role within the academic and artistic communities as a woman-identified researcher and artist. With this jikaku (as self-awareness), in further researches I will try and conduct my research processes more consciously, more towards, and more consciously towards utilizing thoughts and works of women and queer identified thinkers and artists with a particular intention now that I am more aware of the issues regarding visibility within the academic and artistic communities and my own role among them.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A. Artist’s Statement

Bu sanatsal araştırma, tanımlanan çerçeveleri olarak Transier'in ilk iki örneklemindeki uygulamaları aracılığıyla mekân, hareket, maddesellik ve nihayetinde gelip geçicilik arasındaki karmaşık ilişkiler ağını araştırır. Bu bireysel örnekler, geri dönüştürülmüş plastik şeritler ve elektro-mekanik bileşenlerden yapılma iki interaktif kinetik heykeldir ve büyüyen bir çalışma grubunun parçası olarak tahayyül edilmektedir.

Heykeller hareketlerinin kaynağını etrafından gelip geçmekte olanlardan alarak, yine etrafından gelip geçenlerin muhtemelen farkında olmadan gerçekleştirdikleri geçmekte olma hallerine bilinç düzeyinde dikkat çekmeyi ister. Bu anlık ve başarılı olma garantisi olmayan istek ile mekân ve yok mekân; durağanlık ve devirgenlik; geçicilik ve kalıcılık gibi ikili karşıtlıkların çelişkisi arasında konumlandırılmışlardır. Burada kendilerine sürekli olarak belli-belirsizliğin eşiğinde bir var olma biçimini betimler, yaratır, yaşar ve hatırlatırlar. Bu tez, bu ilk iki heykelin bahsi geçen konseptler bağlamında kavramsal anlatısı üzerinden hem Transier’i bir çatkı, bir iskelet olarak tanımlar hem de bu iki heykelin yine aynı bağlamda öne çıkan belirleyici özelliklerinden bahseder.

This artistic research explores the complex web of relationships between space, movement, materiality, and, eventually, transience through their implementations on the first two specimens of Transier as their defined framework. These individual specimens are two interactive kinetic sculptures made of recycled plastic strips and electro-mechanical components who are envisioned to be part of a growing body of work.

Taking the source of their movements from their passers-by, these sculptures beseech attention from the same passers-by towards their likely unconscious state of transience, at a conscious first-person sphere. With this instantaneously tentative wish, they are positioned within the dichotomous contradictions of place and non-place; stability and motility; transience and permanence. From there they constantly delineate, compose, inhabit, and evocate a way of being within the thresholds of constant liminalities. This thesis both defines Transier as a framework through the conceptual narrative of these first two sculptures within the context of the aforementioned concepts, and also talks about the distinctive features of these two sculptures in the same context.

Appendix B. Artist's Biography

Müge İrem Beyazıt, 2019 yılında Orta Doğu Teknik Üniversitesi Mimarlık Bölümü'nden mezun oldu. Eğitim hayatına Bilkent Üniversitesi'nde Medya ve Tasarım alanında yüksek lisans derecesi ile devam etti. Günümüzde kendisini Ankara, Türkiye merkezli bir tasarımcı, mimar, ve yaratıcı (diğer bir deyişle sanatçı) olarak tanımlar. Oyun, beden, hareket, ve mekân üzerine görsel-işitsel sanat üretimi, karşılaşmalar, ve film çalışmaları ile ilgileniyor, bu alanlarda pratik ve teorik üretimine devam ediyor. Şu anda çevresel sorunlar ile alakadar olmakta ve çalışmalarında geri dönüştürülmüş plastik gibi eko-bilinçli malzemeler kullanmaktadır. Bireysel çalışmalarının yanı sıra Sojörn adı altında bir sanatçı ikilisinin yarısı olarak sanat üretimine devam etmekte, Studio Niche ekibi ile de küçük ölçekte mekânsal ve fiziksel araştırmalara dâhil olmaktadır.

Müge İrem Beyazıt, received her Bachelor of Architecture from Middle East Technical University in 2019 and continued her academic career with a Master of Fine Arts degree in Media and Design at Bilkent University. She identifies as a designer, architect, and creator aka. artist; and she is based in Ankara, Turkey in this day and time. She is interested in play, body, movement, and space related audio-visual art, encounters, and film studies, and continues her practical as well as theoretical production in these fields. She is currently concerned with environmental issues and is incorporating eco-conscious materials such as recycled plastic in her works. Alongside her individual practice, she is one half of an artist duo under Sojörn and is involved in small-scale spatial and physical explorations with Studio Niche.

Appendix C. Exhibition Wall Text

transient /ˈtranzɪənt/ adjective:

1: lasting only for a short time; impermanent.

2: passing especially quickly into and out of existence: transitory.

: passing through or by a place with only a brief stay or sojourn.

3: affecting something or producing results beyond itself.

Transier, is an interactive kinetic sculpture that is rebuilt everyday by the passers-by of the space it inhabits. Its main material is recycled plastic strips and electro-mechanical components. It does not move without an effect and therefore does not have a predetermined pattern of motion. Instead, the space it inhabits and that space's inhabitants becomes the input for its motion. They are all dependent on each other to realize themselves. With its materials and movements, it is both *transparent* and *reflective; permanent* and *transient*.

Non-place is a Marc Augé coined term used to describe anthropological spaces of transience where human beings remain anonymous, and that lack the significance enough to be regarded as 'places' in their anthropological definition. A crossroads of human relations, so to speak. As any given individual can view any given 'place' as a non-place, the perception of it is precisely subjective. With its *transparent* and *reflective* nature, for the regular passers-by, *Transier* is a living entity, defined by their movements every day. But for any outsider, at any given time it is a *non-sculpture* for a *non-place* that the inhabited space is.

Transier and its overarching description is envisioned to be representative of a growing series of individual sculptures aka. *specimens*. Each specimen is reflective of an exploration of its surroundings, and conducting a self-contained experiment. Varying in sizes, technicalities, and "places" each specimen is suggesting answers to existing questions, concurrently on the search for and bringing forth new ones all the while carrying the overarching concepts and concerns that are expressed with *Transier*. With each *specimen* coming alive, with each encounter they have with their passers-by, *Transier* finds and reveals its true form and meaning. It is, indeed, an ongoing research on the relationship between *space* and *movement*.

Specimen_a leans on, plays with, and explores, mainly, the interactivity aspect of *Transier* by luring passers-by closer to itself via the squeak-like mechanical sound it emits as a reaction for this encounter. The intensity of the sound and movement is increased as the passer-by comes closer. Being put on a pedestal right in the middle, this robotic creature offers a critique of the space it inhabits. It does so by turning inwards: being self-contained with exposed insides.

Specimen_b explores and points out one of the main spatial concerns of *Transier*. An encounter with this specimen is subtler with an instantaneous artificial breeze tingling the plastic strips as a reaction for this encounter. It is almost a matter of realization. Being located on a self-established non-place portion of the exhibition hall, this subtler creature offers a commentary of the space it inhabits and its encounter with the passer-by. It does so by bursting forth: reaching outwards with its binding for the source of its motion.