

Modern Turk

Turkish Art in the Second Half of the 20th Century

~~Amongst the art institutions,~~ museums are one of the fundamental establishments that benefit society with their research, documentation, preservation, assessment and presentation of the rich heritage of human creativity. Their status as institutions for the public's benefit stem naturally from the fact these institutions and their staff try to preserve the cultural and the artistic values of the past for the future, to assist society to uplift its standards of living along with their ideology. While art museums contribute to the creativity of the artists by supporting their activities, they are also accepted as necessary in playing a role in public education with their 'disemination' of the arts in society, hence helping different peoples and societies to understand each other. It could be said that because of the three basic functions - research, preservation and communication, with research representing the underlying element, with its contribution to the other two - the final verdict on art history is only possible through the existence of the museums. And this alone is enough to make the art museums that (much) necessary.

Although the art movements in the 20th century activated and affected the art of the world, the institutionalization of music, theatre and cinema that started shortly after the World War II, did not become effective in the plastic arts until the universities put contemporary art in their curricula towards the middle of the 20th century, while museums were still passive. In the grand art history museums of the western world, modern art still had a marginal status until the 1960s, when new wings or separate buildings were built. The forerunner of this kind museum - NY Moma - was founded in 1929 within a flat in a business building through the belief and hard work of Abby Rockefeller, a member of the wealthy business tycoon, together with the artist Mary Sullivan. The famous Guggenheim Museum of Solomon Guggenheim was opened to the public in 1959 as the "tempest/monument" that his advisor Baroness Hilla Rebay envisioned with the architect F.L.Wright's design. It should be said that the art museums designed by leading architects both in the US and Europe (specifically in Germany) opened after the 1960s. From then on the museums started to get the attention of the public not only with their collections, but with their buildings as well. "The art space for the artist and neutral spaces where the art works dominates the space" caused the development of two separate aesthetics. Different approaches to exhibition follow up this change. Thematic or changing monographic exhibitions showing fewer artists with different stages start new trends in exhibitions beyond the chronological exhibitions dominate by art movements or concepts. Long term temporary exhibitions replace permanent collection exhibitions to attract people to museums, going beyond education within pluralist activities directed towards the popularization of culture. Eventually the museums without collections are accepted as museums in the American museum world. The

family

age of the curators have come to stay. Besides the temporary museum exhibition, biennials and mega exhibitions that go beyond the borders of the countries dwell on the art of today and future in the making.

When the tower of "Modern Art", NY Moma, was founded, "Modern" and "Contemporary" were almost synonymous. It can be said the years under the direction of A. Barr the synchronism started to shift to differences in meanings, with "Modernism" ending in 1970s, and "Post-modernist Contemporary Art" taking its place in the last quarter of the 20th Century. The "Modernism" with abstract, formal, experimental, stylized, pure and elitist specialities versus "Postmodern" with hybrid, imitation, materialistic, pluralist, popular and unoriginal characteristics resulted in 2 different types of museums: "Modern" and "Contemporary". While the issues are being discussed on the separation of the two types art under different roofs, institutes or centers that are similar to art laboratories have been active as alternative establishments.

*More museums
in both kinds
opened up in
many cities.*

If the art museums are such influential establishments for society, how is it that the need for new museums for the Turkish art of the last fifty years does not surface? while the best examples of the Turkish art since the 19th century at MSU Museum of Painting and Sculpture along with two other museums under the Ministry of Culture can only be seen. It is possible to find the answer in the 0/002-5 of the budget of the Ministry of Culture out of the total state budget. However financial impossibilities are not the real reason. The State's cultural politics unfortunately does not cover the art of today. This is a serious injustice to the present and to its art.

On the other hand,
It is almost impossible to hope for a society that appreciates art in an economically and industrially rapidly growing environment where the educational system has replaced social studies and humanities with sciences. Even if a small group artists and friends of art feel the need for the arts, the majority of the population struggling for a living does not, and the state's cultural policy does not encompass the improvement of old, or development of new, museums of art. Businessmen with art collections have been taking their positions at the sidelines of the arts, moving on to initiate art museums after a struggle of 20 years. Private museums are being founded. Non-governmental organisations are being established for new museums. Our hope is in the founding of more than one art museum.

The Istanbul Art Museum Foundation, whose main purpose is to establish Istanbul an art museum of international standing, became possible through the efforts of 32 founding members. The 21st Century Project of the Foundation is moving on in 3 major venues, site, collection and management while the site problem is not solved as an ongoing / unresolved relationship between the Foundation and both the State and the Municipality. On the other hand the collection policy and mission have been set and archival studies have been started. The four main sections, national and international visual arts, design and architecture, and performance arts

have been planned for the long term operation. As a result of Istanbul's unique geographical position the art that has been produced in Eastern Europe, Balkan, the Mediterranean, Black-Sea, Middle East Countries and Turkic Republics along with the samples of the world art that have affected the world art of today will be included (collected) to contribute to the international art venue.

The Foundation has realized a series of activities to initiate the sense of need for art to all from the top-level state member to the public. Today the Foundation has organized an exhibition to attempt to show that few art works from the 2nd half of the 20th Century has been collected in the collection of the three present Museums of Painting and Sculpture. This exhibition is opened to the public in the Royal Stables of Topkapı Palace Museum by the gracious sponsorship of the State Ministry of Culture with the works from the last 50 years to realize the installation for the national visual arts. It can be said the exhibition that is divided in 5 ten-year periods according to different influences and technical approaches will start a series of research and assessment that requires for the writing of the history of art.

The fact that three present Museums of Painting and Sculpture have not done such an exhibition in spite of their collection show that research for such exhibition is important but extremely hard to realize. We hope a full assessment of Turkish art world will be reached by the series of exhibitions that has started by this exhibition.

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