

'AUTONOMY' OF ARTISTIC FIELD: THE CASE STUDY OF İSTANBUL

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## ABSTRACT

'AUTONOMY OF ARTISTIC FIELD: THE CASE STUDY OF İSTANBUL

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This thesis critically analyzes the dynamics wherein the artistic field- the art world per se possessing both 'glocal' and 'universal' attributes- has been constructed as an autonomous field within the discourses produced about art. The research focuses on some of the moments during which the field, as becoming an 'institution' inside the framework of modern state paradigm, has been imbricated and freed from social history by designating some of the fundamental arguments about its epistemological, historical and structural qualities and it shows how 'autonomy' has been a stake of struggle. The narratives about how 'commodification of culture' and 'autonomy of the field' proceed in the 'West' and in Turkey are discussed in comparison in this ethnographic study that is realized by Constructive Grounded Theory and carried out by centering a group of art professionals living in İstanbul.

Keywords: Art, Autonomy and Modernity

## ÖZ

SANAT ALANININ 'OTONOMİSİ': İSTANBUL İLE İLGİLİ BİR VAKA ÇALIŞMASI

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Bu tez hem küresel/yerel hem de 'evresel' niteliklere haiz bir topluluk olan sanat dünyasının hangi dinamikler çerçevesinde 'otonom' bir alan olarak inşa edilmeye çalışıldığını sanata dair üretilen söylemler çerçevesinde eleştirel bir bakışla analiz etmektedir. Araştırma, modern devlet paradigması çerçevesinde bir kurum niteliği kazanan söz konusu alanın epistemolojik, tarihsel ve yapısal özelliklerine dair bazı temel argümanlara işaret ederek, sosyal tarihle örtüştüğü ve ondan ayrıştığı kimi momentlere odaklanmakta ve 'otonominin' nasıl bir mücadele bahsi olduğunu göstermektedir. “Yapısal Gömülü Kuram” metodu uygulanarak ve merkezine İstanbul'da yaşayan bir grup sanat profesyonelinin alarak yürütülen bu etnografik çalışmada, 'kültürün metalaşması' ve alanın 'otonomisi' meselesinin 'batıda' ve Türkiye'de seyrine dair anlatılar karşılaştırmalı olarak ele alınmıştır.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Sanat, Otonomi, Modernlik

To the memory of our dear Professor Hasan Ünal Nalbantoğlu (1947-2011)

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

For there are 'made' laws, 'discovered' laws, but also laws -a truth for all time. These are more or less hidden in reality which surround us and do not change. Not only science but art also, shows us that reality, at first incomprehensible, gradually reveals itself, by the mutual relations that are inherent in things.

Piet Mondrian, *Figurative Art and Nonfigurative Art* (1937)<sup>1</sup>

The words of painter Mondrian reveals one aspect ascribed to art both before and after him. Art's connection with 'truth' and even with 'law' also incorporates the claim that it is 'universal' and trans-cultural. It is such an overarching characteristic that interconnects the metaphysical with scientific curiosity in the minds of many thinkers. One of the groundbreaking anthropologists of the last century Claude Lévi Strauss<sup>2</sup>, for example, says that he finds relationships between his work on the myths and what painters like Max Ernst do in art works, within which the moments of 'manifestation of truth' become evident. Or, professor of history and philosophy of science Arthur I. Miller, fairly recently, looks for the relation between science and art in his books *Insights of a Genius: Imagery and Creativity in Science and Art* or *Einstein, Picasso: Space, Time and the Beauty that Causes Havoc*.

Nevertheless, even this overarching peculiarity of art, its relation to 'truth', will be disputed so much that Theodor Adorno says, "Art is magic delivered from the lie of being truth". (Adorno, 2005: 222)

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Artury, I. Miller, In *Insides of a Genius: Imagery and Creativity in Science and Art*, 2000: MIT Press

2 Claude Lévi- Strauss, 'The View From Afar', tr. by Joachim Meugroschel and Phoebe Hoss, 1985, Oxford: Basil Blackwell

The idea that art does not serve anything other than itself serves as the basis for the establishment of aesthetics and therefore art, as an 'autonomous' field. Such a belief on the pure aesthetics, according to Bourdieu, is rooted in an ethic, or rather, in an ethos of elective distance from the necessities of natural and social world. (Bourdieu, 1984)

Therefore, 'autonomy', as the most significant aspects of art, becomes the symbol of freedom against all kinds of power structures for people, especially for artists and intellectuals, creating a circle of belief in 'pure' art. Taking the lead in creating an 'autonomous' world of 'art for art's sake' and determining what art is, artists and intellectuals also position what 'autonomy' is - as seen in the above mentioned assessments about art's relation to 'truth'- within power structures and during the course of social history.

Hence, the principle of autonomy is crucial in the formation of 'universal' artistic field, for cultural producers; i.e. the artists and intellectuals. As the more powerful in Informational Capital<sup>3</sup> and having the knowledge, education and awareness on art's symbolic value, artists and intellectuals have the primary role in the creation, the evaluation and the legitimization of each other and institutionalization of 'autonomous' artistic field.

*“The things produced according to the logic of market cannot be called art”* says one informant, and *“artists should be emancipated from the reason of the state”* emphasizes another one.

Thus, 'autonomy', in its various senses, is declared as the origin of art by cultural producers. In this study, by focusing on a group of people, the members -who are in the position of decision making in various artistic institutions, who also write about art and therefore contribute to the knowledge production about art - of a 'glocal'<sup>4</sup> art community in Istanbul, I will try to analyze how art, as an autonomous institution, has been

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3 Bourdieu offers to use 'Informational Capital' instead of 'Cultural Capital'. He says, 'I have analyzed the peculiarity of Cultural Capital, which we should in fact call Informational Capital, to give the notion its full generality, and which itself exists in three forms, embodied, objectified or institutionalized. ( Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992: 119)

4 Glocal is part of 'Glocalization' derived by conflating the terms 'globalization' and 'localization'. 'Glocalization' is popularized by sociologist Roland Robertson, as in 'The Conceptual Promise of Glocalization: Commonality and Diversity'. source: [www.artefact.mi2.hr](http://www.artefact.mi2.hr).

constructed.

### 1.1. The Context:

Beyoğlu! These white buildings are the reminiscent of a piece of rising soil without vessel and blood! These avenues where sludge dresses sunday clothes and stone is arriviste! These houses are like fairground theaters! The rooms where the Rum<sup>5</sup> from Konya and the Armenian from Antep play cabal! The most coward eyes become terrifying in the shadow of a hat in this place, and under a hat, Charlemagnes from Samatya, Doges of Venice from Tatavla wonder these streets. These wooden knives and cardboard bombs will be iron and blaze in the day standing under the banner of Muscovite. This local firenk that is capable of alaturka deceptions as much as one from Şebinkarahisar! This kokona that smells musty sweat and sour lavender! Then, this Consul civilization! Then, this lone flag, like a drop of blood from the ancestor, walk around these heimatlos street on Fridays! Then, this ruinous Kamerhatun Mosque is like widows hiding their faces between knees from evil eyes! Beyoğlu, is the unconquered İstanbul. (Kuntay 2012:61)<sup>6</sup>

These are the expressions of a writer Adnan's feelings about Beyoğlu, the main character of Mithat Cemal Kuntay's novel, 'Three İstanbuls'. Kuntay's novel takes place in the capital city of crumbling Ottoman Empire at the eve of World War I. Beyoğlu, formerly known as Pera, has been and still is the symbol of western side of Istanbul for both foreigners as well as for residents. Most of the new art venues of Istanbul are mainly located here, in a peninsula at the northern pole of Golden Horn, across the historical Constantinople and Topkapı Palace. At the center of the district, there is a small hill in the summit of which there is İstiklal Avenue and at the outskirts, there are Galata, Tophane, Fındıklı neighborhoods. So to speak, the heart of the art world and Istanbul beats here. The demographic characteristics of the district is perhaps the most diverse of Turkey, at least, it will be as such until the gentrification program is completed; there are local and international tourists, the rich and the poor, legal and illegal immigrants, gypsies, sex workers, transsexuals, drug dealers, Muslims, non-Muslim minorities...

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5 Adjectives: Greek originated people in Muslim lands are called 'Rum'. Ottomans used to call Europeans, especially french 'Firenk'. Kokona' means 'pompous old lady, christian woman'. 'Alaturka' means Turkish style.

Eponyms: Konya and Antep are the two cities in Turkey. Samatya and Tatavla are the neighborhoods in İstanbul, they were mostly inhabited by non-muslims. Şebinkarahisar is a district of Giresun Province, known as one of the first lands occupied by a Turkish Sultanate.

Friday is the holy day for Muslims. (collected and summarized from different sources)

6 All the translations of Turkish sources are mine.

İstiklal Avenue is an approximately three kilometers long pedestrian lane extending between Taksim Square and Galata Square. The Avenue is a home to many bookstores, restaurants, coffee shops, offices, new and historical patisseries, consulate buildings, many churches and few small mosque, movie halls, theaters, cultural centers including Atatürk Cultural Center, the main building of State Opera, Ballet and Theatre of İstanbul dominating the Taksim Square.

Actually, it would have been better if I made some of these statements in the past tense, because many of these places are closed and some of them are dysfunctional. Atatürk Cultural Center is not in use since the 2000s. The old small shops, familiar cafes are closing one by one, so are the theater and cinema salons or buildings. Some main historical buildings are converted into shopping malls, and the movie halls and small theater salons are embedded in them. The prominent theatre troops are kicked out of Beyoğlu and the new modest ones settle in the apartments on the side streets due to gentrification led by the government.

However, the big and small, the new and renewed private art institutions, museums have popped up, because the contemporary art market has boomed for the last decade as Sarah Thornton suggests! (Thornton: 2008) So, may this be the only explanation for the recent changes? Is it not paradoxical to witness the establishment of many cultural centers that need to become homes for memory, science and the arts while the remnants of near and distant history disappear? Is Istanbul really one of the hottest spot of the art world? What makes the art 'hot'?

None of these questions can be answered in a few sentences. Besides, even a comprehensive study focusing on only one of these will have shortcomings. Not only because these questions are too broad, but also because the field is very intricate. Of course, those who talk about the complexity of each field are right. However, the intricacy of the art field stems from the fact that it is very much embedded in humanities and science.

Returning to the writer of 'Three İstanbuls', Kuntay says that though Adnan thinks that he only loves the Istanbul of minarets and domes, he did not actually hate this 'unconquered' Beyoğlu, on the contrary, he likes it. I think, this duality of emotions

Adnan experiences is very relevant, regardless of the political and social preferences, of many intellectuals in Turkey. So, in this study, my aim is to uncover particular dimensions of this socio- psychological symptom within the secular art world in 'oriental' İstanbul. This 'Orient' is the 'other' created by the 'West' looking itself in a concave mirror, in which it sees its most vivid phantasies and nightmares, the venue of one thousand and one night tales. And, İstanbul has been the main entrance of this “Wonderland”.

## **1.2. The Field:**

Artists, curators, collectors, dealers, critiques, art historians are the actors that are at the center of the art world; they hold temporary or relatively permanent positions in both private and public art institutions. Although, all might seem to be the professionals of culture industry (and the art institutions can also be considered as the part of it), it is important to keep in mind that the art world is bigger than the art market. Not only because it is also a place for bohemians, but also the positions in the field of cultural production are never intact. As Bourdieu says:

Offering positions that are relatively uninstitutionalized, never really guaranteed, therefore open to symbolic challenge, and non-hereditary, this is the arena *par excellence* of struggles over job definition. In fact, however great the effect of position, it never operates mechanically, and the relationships between positions and position-takings is mediated by the dispositions of agent. (Bourdieu 1993:61-62)

Indeed, the job definitions of all the participants vary and their academical backgrounds are not necessarily related to conventional art education: critics teach, artists curate exhibitions, collectors act like a curators, professors do curating, and so on. Just like curator Beral Madra<sup>7</sup> says about Vasif Kortun, “He does not do curating anymore. He now calls himself the director of research or something”. However, the main connection among the members of this group of people is that they all hold mediatory positions in the art field; organizing events, connecting the sponsors, artists, institutions, collectors and public. In addition, the five actors, whose' voices are echoed the most in this thesis, have been somehow at the center of the art field in Turkey since the second half of 1990s. I have conducted in depth interviews with four of these people and none of them is called artist nor collector. They all are well educated members of the middle or upper-

<sup>7</sup> Interview on September 12, 2010

middle class, all are over 50 years old.

The informants with whom I made in-dept interviews are Beral Madra, Vasıf Kortun, Zeki Coşkun and Ali Artun.

Beral Madra is a critique, curator and writer; currently working as the director of a private art institution and she has been the head of many major art events (including the first two Biennials of İstanbul) both in Turkey and abroad. Vasıf Kortun is currently the director of an Art and Research Center SALT founded by Garanti Bank; he also worked as the curator for some of the local and international art events, including the 9<sup>th</sup> Biennial of Istanbul and Turkish Pavilion the 52<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennial. Zeki Coşkun is a professor at the art history department of Mimar Sinan University and also holding an administrative position there. Ali Artun, co-founder of a very prestigious art gallery Nev and currently the editor of İletişim Publishing House. There is also Hasan Bülent Kahraman. I did not make an in-depth interview with him, but you will hear his voice in this text; because, he had dominated one of the below mentioned symposium with five conferenciers and I find his comments very intriguing. Mr. Kahraman is a critique, curator, a board member of many artistic institutions and vice-chancellor of Kadir Has University. The other four conferenciers of the symposium are Bedri Baykam, Ekrem Kahraman, Balkan Naci İslimyeli and Sevim Dolmacı. Bedri Baykam, Ekrem Kahraman and Balkan Naci İslimyeli are all renown artists. İslimyeli is also an art historian, so is Sevim Dolmacı. All of them are writing about art. There is also Ebru Yetişkin, who is a sociologist, a critique and a lecturer at İstanbul Technical University.

Since I wanted to do the fieldwork with the art professionals in order to understand their point of view about the recent institutional changes taking place in Turkey, I have tried to contact with the members of AICA.<sup>8</sup> Placing an NGO at the center of my study would provide me a 'community' in an urban setting. When I contacted the chairwoman Burcu Pelvanoğlu of AICA Turkey, she willingly added my name to their e-mail group. So, I already had some ideas about how the things are handled, what are the main topics of their conversation before I moved to Istanbul in August 2010.

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8 The International Association of Art Critics is an NGO official partner of UNESCO, founded in 1950, whose objective is to support art criticism in its all forms, worldwide and to keep pace with its changing disciplines. Source: [www.aica-int.org](http://www.aica-int.org). Reached on February 18, 2013.

However, as I furthered my fieldwork, I realized that I will not be able to engage with the members in the ways I wanted. Not because of their unwillingness to talk to me but because AICA Turkey<sup>9</sup> seemed to be one these NGOs basically functioning on the paper, despite some of the members' tremendous efforts to run it properly. They did not have an actual place. The apartment that was a home to AICA TR was gone because of a dispute taken place among the two or three of the members. Later, I realized, through e-mail correspondences, that the place was available as one member's favor who was part of the dispute. As she quit her membership, AICA TR lost its place. In addition, many individual activities of the members are demonstrated as the activities of AICA TR in order to reinforce its public visibility. I have attended some of these activities when possible. Some of the seminars announced as the activity of AICA TR held in various private institutions, required payment of a considerable amount of money, so I was not able to participate. Besides, some of the people I wanted to meet were not a member and some, though members, had nothing to do with AICA TR. So, the field, in this setting, was going to be something other than the kind I had in mind.

After meeting with Mrs. Beral Madra for the first time, the honorary chairwoman and re-founder of the AICA TR<sup>10</sup>, I decided to contact the names that I had in my list. In addition to in-depth interviews I made with four actors (Madra and Coşkun are the current members of AICA), I also had a chance to do participant observation in their work environment. I also participated in some lectures, seminars which are related to my area of interest. Some of these events are primarily important because of their direct relation to the questions I asked during fieldwork. Even the titles of some of these gatherings display their relevance to subject: 'The Trends in Contemporary Arts', 'Art Criticism and Curatorialship', 'Antidote to Orientalism', 'How to Write Contemporary Art History of Turkey?'<sup>11</sup>

In addition, İstanbul was named as the European Capital of Culture (ECC) in 2010. And, I participated in 'A Soul for Europe Istanbul Forum' that was the final event of ECC. The forum was held in 12-13 of September in 2010 with the collaboration of the

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9 For more information; [www.aicaturkey.com](http://www.aicaturkey.com) and [www.aicaturkey.blogspot.com](http://www.aicaturkey.blogspot.com)

10 This NGO is opened and closed several times due to military interventions. The latest re-establishment is in 2003. source: [www.aicaturkey.com](http://www.aicaturkey.com) , accessed February 24, 2013

11 The meeting is held at Piramit Art Center, owned by Bedri Baykam, in September 17, 2011



Istanbul European Capital of Culture Agency<sup>12</sup>, I had a chance to observe the perceptions of people from the other fields, such as the artists, the directors of Istanbul 2010 European Capital of Culture Agency and their European colleagues, representatives of Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality, representatives of other NGO'S like TUSIAD<sup>13</sup>, KAGIDER<sup>14</sup>, Turkish and European scholars, etc.

Furthermore, there are three important events that occupied the artistic and public space in Turkey. Firstly, in a recently gentrified neighborhood in Istanbul, a couple of art galleries were attacked by the inhabitants in September 2010. The second incident is the demolition of Mehmet Aksoy's<sup>15</sup> Humanity Monument after being declared as 'ucube'<sup>16</sup> by the Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. During the period I started writing the thesis; another important event took place. Artist Bedri Baykam and his assistant Tuğba Kurtulmuş were stabbed in April 2011<sup>17</sup> after attending a meeting to protest the demolition of Humanity Monument. These events, as expected, are occasionally interpreted through the research process. Though, not referring to them specifically in the following chapters, I will try to provide some of the structural dynamics that, in my opinion, invite such incidents to happen. Because, many similar events emerge in the rapidly 'changing' agenda of Turkey.

I conducted the fieldwork in Istanbul between May 2010 and February 2011. The time span between collecting the data and starting to write about it was about nine months. However, I continued to participate in one of the interviewee's 'Art and Criticism' lectures at a university during the following few months. I still gather information from

12 Istanbul European Capital of Culture Agency is developed according to a special law by Turkish Parliament to organize the activities after the city is announced as 2010 The Cultural Capital of Europe by European Union. The purpose of the 'Cultural Capital of Europe' is to highlight the richness and diversity of European cultures, celebrate cultural ties, foster intercultural dialogue and to integrate national histories, value systems, world views throughout a year in a selected city. Cultural Capitals are also financially supported by European Union. Source: [c.europa.eu/culture](http://c.europa.eu/culture)

13 Turkish Industry and Business Association.

14 Women Entrepreneurs Association of Turkey.

15 Mehmet Aksoy is a very well known Turkish artist. 'Humanity' monument was placed at the city of Kars at the border of Armenia. Aksoy's 'Land of Fairies' sculpture was also abolished for being pornographic in 1995 by Ankara Metropolitan Municipality source: [www.mehmetaksoy.com](http://www.mehmetaksoy.com)

16 Ucube means atrocious, monsterlike. Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan revealed the historic Seyyid Hasan el Harakani Mosque and the Tomb is shaded by this 'ucube' monument. (source: [www.dha.com.tr](http://www.dha.com.tr), 13 January 2011)

17 Source: [www.cnnturk.com](http://www.cnnturk.com), 19 April 2011

the e-mail correspondences of AICA, the announcements, news, articles, etc. shared on social media and the internet editions of the newspapers. For this reason, it is very difficult to precisely circumscribe the time frame of the field work.

The members of this partially imagined and partially-concrete 'glocal' community have been experiencing a unique process for the last two decades; that is the commodification of artistic field has become blatant. My research subject is a part of such a community that resides in one of the biggest and yet peripheral metropolises of the world, Istanbul. Art has become literally a very 'hot topic' in recent years in Turkey, and Istanbul has become one of the hottest destinations for the art-related public thanks to the new art institutions opened up one after another. This study, by focusing on a group of people, tries to understand how the members of art field in Turkey, as a part of 'glocal' community, give meaning to this process within the concept of autonomy.

During my field work, I used semi-structured, un-structured interviews, discussions, informal talks as I applied qualitative research method. I recorded some of the interviews and took the notes of some others. I used pencil and a notebook to take notes and also kept a journal during the entire field work. I got a hold of a video recording of one of the above mentioned gatherings and a transcription of another one in a book format. I did the transcription of all the recordings. I also transferred all the data to my computer on a daily basis. The data I collected consists of fifty pages of interviews, seventy five pages of field notes, twenty five pages of video transcription, all written on Microsoft Office program in Times New Roman format, single spaced, 12 font. In addition to that, I have two hundred pages of a booklet of the 'A Soul for Europe; Istanbul Forum'.

### **1.3 The Research Interest: The Reflections of a Semi-Insider Studying “Sideways”**

I am the only child of a nuclear family. My mother is a retired teacher, published story writer and my father is a lawyer. We might well be considered as the middle class 'white collars'. My parents' circle of friends has had many artists, writers, journalists, academicians. As a result, I have been very familiar with the 'western' mode of artistic production since my childhood. I have taken ballet classes, studied drawing, played

piano and later engaged in contemporary dance. On the other hand, I was also familiar with the Turkish Folklore and Classical Turkish Music since they were welcomed in my parents' house. As I grew older and started seeing outside my primary habitat, I gradually realized that the involvement in western mode of practices is not very widespread. Though having some knowledge in such 'culture' has helped me throughout my education in the state schools of the capital city Ankara, I could not escape from the labels such as 'entel<sup>18</sup> bug' given by my schoolmates. The label was neither flattering nor personal. The word 'entel' was widely and pejoratively used to identify 'pretentious' people who behave as somebody they are not. For some, the 'excessive' participation in Western cultural modes was considered to be a kind of denial of our 'real-societal identity'.

This so-called 'real identity' could mean different things in different contexts; some would emphasize religion while some, ethnic Turkish identity. Proponents of the synthesis would offer that "we ought to get the science and discipline of the western societies and yet protect all the things that make us unique"<sup>19</sup>. However, my parents and people alike have had a serious feeling of losing prestige before the public eye as 'the children of Turkish Republic' after the coup d'état of 1980. 'The Child of Turkish Republic' has indicated the ones, who benefited from the cultural revolutions of republic and created themselves by means of education, though many had no inherited financial or social capital.

According to some, while 'the Turkish-Islamic Synthesis'<sup>20</sup> has dominated the cultural climate of Turkey as the ideology of the coup of 1980, the adaptation to global economy has empowered the consumer society through which the individual and financial well-being, at any cost, ranked before everything. The spread of mass media, some argued, made the culture in Turkey much more strongly tele-visualized than western cultures;

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18 'Entel' is abbreviation of entelektüel, meaning 'intellectual'.

19 An anonymous pledge, repeated very often.

20 The Turkish-Islamic Synthesis is the doctrine of Aydınlar Ocağı (Association of Intellectuals). Association of Intellectuals is a right-wing think-tank established during 1960s to merge nationalists and Islamists as a singular block against leftist political movements. According to their policy, Turkey was under the attack of foreign culture. To ward off this danger, the association had determined Turkishness and Islam as the two essential sources of national culture. The decisions derived from 'The Socio-Cultural and Economical Issues of Turkey' Seminar held by this association in 1979, and were used as a guidebook by the management of military coup of 12 September 1980. (source: [www.odp.org.tr](http://www.odp.org.tr))

because mass education and literacy were already quite recent developments, a statement supported by the typography machine's 300 years of late arrival. This has been one of the quick answers to a larger socio-cultural phenomenon that has been quite overlooked. These conditions are considered to be the factors causing especially the left-wing intellectuals lose social status. 'The Child of Republic', 'Laics' and recently 'concerned moderns'<sup>21</sup> are some of the terminologies used in mass media to indicate people who have modern life styles and who also oppose The Justice and Development Party's conservative policies. In the last couple of decades that I know of, seculars versus Turkish-Islamists duality has determined the political conjuncture of Turkey during which the transformations of economy and class structures have been largely ignored. These conditions have affected the mentality of the 'concerned' members of this community- including me- in the 'local' context.

Occupying quite an important place in my life, art has already been in my mind as the subject of study when I applied to the Social Anthropology Department of METU. However, determining specifically the art professionals as the focus of my field work is very much related with my semi-professional experiences in the art world both in Turkey and the USA. After spending almost three years in the art related environment and meeting some of the top members of the "statusphere"<sup>22</sup> in New York, I was struck by the kind of conversations about the recent artistic developments taking place in İstanbul when I returned to Turkey in the end of 2001. As I took the courses about art during my education, I gradually realized that it was best to do the research with the professionals in the field to make sense of this jigsaw puzzle occupying my mind.

I think it is very difficult to fix the meaning of the terminologies such as 'identity and culture'. The concepts like 'insider' and 'outsider' are the same. When a new variable enters into the picture of social relations, each terminology might well be a contested category. Considering my above mentioned experiences, I might be called as an

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21 According to Assistant Professor of Law Vahap Coşkun, the term 'Concerned Moderns' (Endişeli Modernler) is first used by journalist and political analyst Tarhan Erdem. Later, Political Scientist Binnaz Toprak used it as a heading of her column in Radikal Newspaper. Toprak claims that conservatism rises and threatens the modern life style. International Relations Professor Fuat Keyman determines 'concerned moderns' as Secular Middle Class and analyses them in two groups: The first group is 'Excluding Moderns' who do not want to live with religious people. The second group is formed by people who possess modern and democratic values, accepting to live with religious people. According to Keyman, Concern Moderns' fears are reasonable (source: sde.org.tr).

22 "Statusphere" is a term used by Tom Wolfe, an informant of Sarah Thornton (2008)

'insider'. However, regarding that the professionals of the art world are at the center of my study, my position in front of theirs does not allow me to call myself an 'insider'. The concepts like 'insider, outsider', used in a discipline traditionally emerged as the study of the 'other', do not function sufficiently enough in this kind of field enmeshed in power relations in an urban setting.

This thesis, by no means, is a study of 'subalterns'. Since related with power relations, it might well be called “studying up”, following the footsteps of Laura Nader. (Nader, 1972) However, remembering the statements I made in 'the Context' part of this chapter about how the art field interpenetrates with the humanities, “studying sideways” as Ulf Hannerz suggests, seems to best define my position towards this field. He addresses such fields as “neighboring tribes” of power/knowledge regimes that are “formal institutions of modernity that exercise power through creation and management of knowledge” in George Marcus's definition. So, as Hannerz emphasizes, such fields -in a sense- enables anthropology and anthropologists to look into its own mirror. (Hannerz 2004:3) Hence, in a field as this one, I liken my position with that of “a cat on the prowl<sup>23</sup>”.

#### **1.4. The Research Process: Grounded Theory Method**

I used Grounded Theory (GT) and Constructivist Grounded Theory (CGT) as research methodologies. Grounded Theory is the way of establishing the theory based on data that are collected in the field rather than on a priori assumptions. Even though field research is not exclusive to GT, conventional descriptive methodologies, in general, tend to test a priori hypothesis before field research. GT had been originated by sociologists Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss in 1967 and it has been discussed and modified ever since according to the basic methodological discussions. Glaser and Strauss described GT as logico deductive theorizing. Formulating the theory based on data that are gathered from the qualitative research can be considered as social scientist's attempt to pursue a more 'objective' approach to his/her subject/object of study. According to B. Glaser and Anselm Strauss, this method makes the theory understandable to both academics and layman. (Glaser and Strauss, 1967)

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23 An expression by Sarah Thornton.

This methodological approach allows scholars to manage the field work by comparison, conceptualization, interpretation serving to the purpose of theorizing and analyzing the data synchronically. As Ralph LaRosse puts it, the kind of GT developed by Glasser and Strauss among other GTs, not only establishes a foundation for the interpretations but also contributes to recognition of dialectic between induction and deduction. (LaRosse, 2005) GT is the set of procedures that make sense of the non-statistical data gathered during field work. Thanks to GT, textual data like interviews, observational notes, transcripts, etc. can theoretically be considered and interpreted through out the research process. As a result of this methodology, the ‘concepts’ related with the study are discovered in these textual data sets. The textual data imply the importance of verbal communication in social construction. GT paved the way for the researcher to be aware of the centrality of language in social life and indicative quality of the words. Thanks to GT, the researcher can associate and reconsider the empirical and conceptual data, discover the link among variables and have a strong technique in creating a story line. Case studies are conducted better by GT since its procedure involves extensive observation and interaction with the participants.

The ‘Constructivist Grounded Theory’ is the revised version of the classic GT established by Glasser and Strauss. Since the data and the theory are contemplated synchronically during the field research, the founders of GT thought that this is the ‘objectivist’ approach in social research. In 2000, Kathy Charmaz criticized the claim of objectivity in classic GT and offered a revised version of it that acknowledges a relativistic stance, multiple standpoints about an event and/or phenomenon. In CGT, there is a place for the realities of both the grounded theorists and the research participants. The reflexive stance of both the researchers and the participants are also welcome in CGT. According to Charmaz, this method enables the researcher to study a process. Through CGT, the researcher has the means of making early links between theoretical approaches and empirical data. In comparing the data with data (statement with statement, story with story, incident with incident) it is possible to depict the different layers of the subject of case study. CGT helps scholars understand how the temporal ‘reality’ be constructed socially during the specific period of time when the study is conducted. (Charmaz, 2003: 312-320)

Owing to many similarities with ethnography, GT is a very useful tool for the field inquires especially for anthropologists. GT might be quite a challenge for inexperienced researchers since the researcher should do the inquiry, data collection and the analysis hand in hand. Even though it might be quite chaotic for the novice researcher, this method also enables researchers to do multi dimensional analysis. Since anthropology is more interested in the grey areas of social field, the uncertainties enclosed in the data might well be the means of displaying these areas.

This inquiry I conducted is not the first field research but it is the first time I used GT. Though I had my theoretical assumptions in mind when I started doing the fieldwork, GT helped me to both see the reflections of such assumptions and their inadequacies. As I proceeded in the fieldwork, the data I gathered led me to different and new approaches that better suited the data. Thanks to GT, I end up structuring my thesis within the concept of 'autonomy'. As chaotic as it might be, GT still helped me to be open to the realities and different approaches of the participants rather than my own assumptions about the subject I studied.

### **1.5 Research Focus and Aim:**

'Autonomy' seems to be the single concept uttered most by the informants. Not only in their discourses, but also in almost all the books I read about arts I frequently observed that 'autonomy' is projected as an important tool, a constituting element of art as an institution. It is referred to as 'disinterestedness', 'detachment', 'indifference', and so on to separate 'art' from the other domains of life.

Though, it is a very flexible, controversial concept, 'autonomy' seems sine qua non for art. According to Bourdieu, the aesthetic disposition, i.e. 'autonomy', creates the self-sufficient world of 'art for art's sake'. In other words, it is the principle that requires the recognition granted by set of producers who produce for other producers and it, in Bourdieu's and in many other thinkers' conceptions, 'distinguishes' art from the other fields.

Along with the pure disposition principle of the art field, Bourdieu determines two more principles, all competing in the field of cultural production. The second principle

corresponds to 'bourgeoise' taste and the consecration bestowed by the dominant fractions of dominant class and by private tribunals, such as salons, or public, state-guaranteed ones, such as academies, which sanction the inseparably ethical and aesthetic taste of the dominant. The third principle, which its advocates call 'popular', corresponds to the consecration bestowed by the choice of ordinary consumers, the 'mass audience'.

Thus, art embodies its distinction versus both the 'bourgeoise' taste and the 'popular' taste thanks to the principle of pure (aesthetic) disposition. While bourgeoisie, as the dominant fraction, incline towards a hedonistic aesthetic of ease and facility Bourdieu argues, the dominated fraction- i.e. the artists and intellectuals- have affinities with the ascetic aspect of aesthetics and tend to support all artistic revolutions conducted in the name of purity, purification and the refusal of the bourgeoisie taste for ornament. (Bourdieu, 1984)

According to Bourdieu, the distinctive quality of art emerges from the condition that, by self-referencing to its own history, demands to be perceived historically. He continues:

It asks to be referred not to an external referent, the represented or designated 'reality', but to the universe of past and present work of art. Like artistic production, that is generated in a field, aesthetic perception is necessarily historical, inasmuch as it is differential, relational and attentive to the deviations which make styles. (Bourdieu, 1984: 3-4)

Bourdieu continues that the pile of the art works inherited from the past and deposited in museums and private collections is the product of history and of historical action, as the element of objectified capital. When 'aesthetic disposition' is objectified museums, it becomes an institution demanding on the absolute primacy of 'form' of art object over any kind of 'function'. According to him, not only these art works (the manifestations of aesthetic disposition) but also books, articles, documents, instruments that are the trace or materialization of theories or critiques of these theories, problematic or conceptual systems, constitute all the objectified capital, presenting themselves as an *autonomous world*, with its *own law*. This objectified capital, he says, transcends individual wills and remains irreducible to what each agent or even the whole populations of agents can appropriate. (Bourdieu, 1993)



Bourdieu regards the disinterestedness of art as one of the outcomes of empowerment of bourgeois class over aristocracy. He says:

Whereas the court aristocracy made the whole life a continuous spectacle, the bourgeoisie has established the opposition between what is paid for and what is free, the interested and the disinterested, in the form of the opposition, which Weber saw as characterizing it, between place of work and place of residence, working days and holidays, the outside (male) and the inside (female), business and sentiment, industry and art, the world of economic necessity and the world of artistic freedom that is snatched by economic power, from that necessity. (Bourdieu, 1984: 55)

This time 'autonomy' appears as the artistic freedom, the acquisition of the emerging bourgeois modern state. However, as stated above, the autonomy of the arts (the pure disposition principle) divides the bourgeoisie class. The artists and intellectuals, as the dominated fraction longing for the pure disposition, struggle with the (haute) bourgeoisie tending towards a hedonistic aesthetic of ease and facility. However, says Bourdieu, "this pure disposition is so universally recognized as 'legitimate' that no voice is heard pointing out that the definition of art is an object of struggle." (Bourdieu 1984)

The universal recognition of 'the pure disposition' of the art echo in one of the participants, the critique Artun's passionate remarks as such; "Art has nothing to do with politics, it says 'I am the politics!'"<sup>24</sup>

As stated above and will be stated in the following chapters, I have come across multifarious statements where 'autonomy' was at the heart of the discourses gathered in the field as well as in the theories about art, it eventually turned out be symptomatic, a key. Though, the artistic field seems to be very much embedded into the power relations, why is 'autonomy' considered to be one of the constituting principles of it? How are we going to reconsider the relation between autonomy and artistic field? If autonomy is such a vital foundation and considered as dearth, how are we going to explain the existence of artistic field? So, the question is not simply how the autonomy of artistic field is constructed, but how is the discourse of autonomy crucial in the formation of art market, the modern state and the West? While art tries to separate itself from the other domains with the principle of 'autonomy', it seems that 'autonomy' paradoxically becomes the constituting element of the other fields within the context of

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24 Lecture, December 8, 2010

modern state.

The tensions and conflictual relations show that the principle of autonomy is produced not from within the artistic field but from the complexity of relations that cannot be reduced to the field itself. Therefore, the question that has been asked is not about whether autonomy exists or not, but it is about how the discourse on autonomy has been constructed.

This research has restrictions since I mainly focus on a group made of professionals who somehow act as a mediator in the art field mainly in the sense of knowledge and policy making. Thereby, the voices of the other parts; i.e. the collectors, dealers, artists, and especially the art related public that also have a crucial role in creating the art field, are not passed on sufficiently. Furthermore, as some of the theories came forward in relation with the data, I am pretty sure that I overlooked many approaches that might bring quite a different perspective to the subject.

I hope, the study will be a contribution to anthropology that is still broadly considered to be the study of the 'deviant' or the 'subaltern'. I think, studying 'sideways' is a path to understanding the power relations and an opportunity to scrutinize our own position-takings as anthropologists.

## **1.6 Content:**

In the following Chapter 'Art and Modern State', I will start by discussing how 'autonomy' has been conceptualized in establishing art and some of the major institutions of modernity. The discourses about 'autonomy' and the formation of the modern state will be at the core of the argument. This chapter will be based on various political and aesthetic theories and on the comments of participants. It will proceed with the discourses on the institutionalization of art in “western modality” during the Ottoman Era and its transformation process starting with the establishment of Turkish Republic in 1923 up until the 1980s.

In the 3<sup>rd</sup> Chapter 'Culture Becomes a “Jelling” Enterprise', I will review how the art professionals and academics evaluate what is called the shift of an era; the Rise of the

New Right in the world leading to globalization of economic liberalism. This incident corresponds to former prime minister Turgut Özal's Term in Turkey. Dealing with the intricate relations of governments and business world; the evaluations about the recent past will follow that of Özal's Term in this chapter. The discourses on 'autonomy' will be pondered within and beyond Bourdieu's conceptualization; that is the pure disposition of art field versus bourgeoisie taste and popular taste.

In Chapter 4, 'Art Institutions as Public Sphere' will look at the outcomes of the globalization of economic liberalism on public sphere. The ideas on public sphere, the understandings of 'public' will be traced throughout the theoretical approaches as well as the narrations of the participants. The ideas on the relationship between the 'autonomous' individual of modernity and the public sphere, i.e. considered as an area of democratic debate and consensus, will be the focus of this chapter. Public Sphere encloses both an ideal and yet abstract area and the concrete art institutions like museums and galleries imagined as such.

Chapter 5 'The Art History as an Institution' is made of three strands. I will depict the impact of deconstructionist approaches on art and art history as it is interpreted by art historians and theoreticians. Remembering the above mentioned arguments of Bourdieu about how the art field emerges, as it is, by referring to the past and present works of art, this chapter will be a quick look at the basic transformations on the epistemology of art history. It will include the discussions about the art history of Turkey and the ways through which participants think of their own subjectivity.

Chapter 6 'Historical Autonomy versus Autonomy of Professionalism and Technicality' will be made of the discussions on the ideas of criticism. The intellectuals as a critique, the artists as a critique, the curators as a critique are at the center of this chapter. The shift in the position-takings of the agents in the art field will be examined. I will base my arguments on theories as well as the narrations of the participants.

## CHAPTER 2

### ART AND MODERN STATE

Initially, I want to start with a statement by Bourdieu mentioned in Chapter 1. Enriched bourgeoisie becoming a dominant class in Europe throughout colonial era has distinguished or -in Weber's terminology- characterized itself as a class from aristocracy (displaying life as a whole spectacle) by establishing the opposition between what is paid for and what is free, the interested and the disinterested, the place of work and the place of residence, the public and the private, etc. and, more importantly, between the world of economic necessity and the world of artistic freedom that is snatched by economic power from that necessity. (Bourdieu, 1984)

This world of artistic freedom, Professor of Comparative Literature Matei Calinescu argues, takes a side on the verge of two different modernisms in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century; the modernity as an aesthetic concept (of the world of artistic freedom) and the modernity as a stage in the history of Western civilization, i.e. a product of scientific and technological progress, the industrial revolution, and the sweeping economic changes brought about by capitalism. Since then, he continues, the relationship between the two modernities has been irreducibly hostile, but not without allowing and even stimulating a variety of mutual influences in their rage towards each other's destruction. Calinescu determines two distinctive and opposing set of values in the history of modernity: 1- The objectified, socially measurable time of capitalist civilization (time as a more or less precious commodity, bought and sold on the market) and 2- The personal, subjective, imaginative *durée*, the private time by the unfolding of the "self". The identity of time and self in the second set, he continues, constitutes the foundation of modernist culture. (Calinescu 1987: 5 – 41)

When we take a closer look at Calinescu's conceptions, we can identify the theoretical sources of the idea that bourgeoisie creates or “characterizes” itself as a class from court aristocracy. The artists and intellectuals as bourgeois subjects -thanks to snatching its personal and private time, its holidays from economic necessity- eventually establish a world of artistic freedom in its personal place. And, this world of artistic freedom starts criticizing the dark sides of capitalism; and the aesthetic modernity becomes *the spirit, the morality and the conscience* of the modern world and the modernist culture. In other words, moving from Weber's perspective, there emerges a polarization in the ethos of bourgeoisie that “rationalizes”<sup>25</sup> itself by dividing the personal and public domains.

As early as 1820's, a prominent thinker Henri de Saint Simon gives a very exceptional position to artists in his ideal state along with the scientists and industrialist as the parties of ruling elite. According to him, since artists are the men of imagination and capable of envisioning the future, they are to be given the privilege of leadership in order to establish a new kind of society. Though not focusing specifically on the artistic field in itself, Marx also gives a privileged status to artists and attributes a trans-ideological quality to 'great art'. And the Neo-Marxists of the 20<sup>th</sup> century carried this approach to their theories. (Calinescu, 1987)

Many scholars of Frankfurt School differentiate art from popular culture. Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, the renowned figures of the school, introduce the concept of 'Culture Industry' that implies the homogenized and standardized popular cultural commodities produced for the mass. (Adorno, 1991) In his article 'Art and Mass Culture', Horkheimer suggests that even though it has its own and unique criterion, the art is no less a form of knowledge than science is. (Horkheimer, 1972) Therefore, he distinguishes art from the commodities of popular culture and claims that popular commodities have nothing to do with the art's potential to reflect the truth, because, in an era of culture industry, supply and demand are no longer determined by social needs, but by the reason of state. Thus, the commodification process of culture serves the interest of ruling class, i.e. the state and (haute) bourgeoisie, and the mode of production manufactures not only certain commodities, but also the need for them. By the same

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25 It is called 'the act of rationalization' by Weber. With Weber, capitalism is regarded as a part of wider social and cultural phenomenon in social sciences. According to him, the act of rationalization in the modern west is accepted as a unique and pervasive phenomenon, which affects all spheres of life including economy, political organization, theology, science and the arts. (Zetlin, 2001: 197-202)

token, in his article 'Art as a Form of Reality', another member of the school Herbert Marcuse claims that art's utility is of a transcendent kind; it is a utility for the soul and, therefore, it is different from the daily acts of man. (Marcuse, 2007)

Thus, by looking at the above mentioned statements, we can suggest that differentiation between 'high culture' and 'popular culture' nearly corresponds to Calinescu's differentiation between aesthetic modernity and capitalistic modernity. While popular culture serves the interest of ruling class, aesthetic modernity serves the 'truth'. In other words, there occurs a split in the mentality of capitalistic modernist culture. By the same token, Bourdieu suggests that art becomes an 'institution', when aesthetic disposition is objectified in museums, demanding on the absolute primacy of form over any kind of function. However, it seems that regarding artistic field solely as an 'institution' is not sufficient to explain its 'autonomous' character. Rather, it seems that 'autonomy' of aesthetic modernity –by being the spirit, the conscience, a form of knowledge– becomes a stake of struggle among the ruling elite and thereby it contributes a great deal for the creation of 'modernity'. How?!

## **2.1 Autonomy as an Agent of Modern State:**

In a modest room of a university overseeing one of the well-known symbols of Istanbul, the Bosphorus, Zeki Coşkun<sup>26</sup> is so busy with the administrative documents to sign, the visitors coming and going, the students dropping by and asking questions that there is a clear contrast between his hectic schedule and the tranquil sea behind him. Nevertheless, despite the interruptions, he politely keeps saying “Where did we leave?” and continues:

There are two patrons of art before the Renaissance, the political and religious powers, as the two sides of the same coin. When these old patrons lose power, artist becomes a character who designs. It is separated from artisan. And the bourgeois class becomes the new patron of the artist. While the church loses ground, academy becomes effective. With the 18<sup>th</sup> century on, the art is to create and it suggests enlightenment, growth and awakening.

What many art historians say about the emergence of art are parallel to Coşkun's narration. For example, art historian Larry Shiner argues that 'invention' of art, as an

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<sup>26</sup> Interview on December 2, 2010

autonomous field, is closely related to the development process of the modern state in the 18<sup>th</sup> century Europe. (Shiner, 2004) Similarly, another art historian Linda Nochlin suggests, museums and art history were conceptualized at the same time during the optimistic days of Enlightenment and realized after the French Revolution, and they were used as tools for cultural integration. The intent, she continues, was to democratize the historical and aesthetic knowledge which was once the property of privileged minority. (Nochlin, 2006)

Medici Family is an example demonstrating the emergence of bourgeoisie as a class in front of aristocracy. Beginning in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, this family has established an effective dynasty in Europe until the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Famiglia de' Medici is a banking family which became very powerful in the Republic of Florence in the 15<sup>th</sup> century. Architect and researcher Ali Artun says that though they were initially degraded as nouveau rich by European dynasties, they have eventually penetrated to all of them in Europe; two members have become the queen of France and two of them popes in different periods. Their house Palazzo Medici, considered as the first example of modern museums, was a home where *the construction of artistic secularism, autonomy, the culture of exhibition and of history and an aesthetic canon* have been practiced. And the organization of libraries, art and science academies of the family, Artun continues, completed this process. (Artun, 2006)

As seen in the case of Medici, bourgeoisie leads the way for the establishment of a humanist universe with its museums, academies and libraries. Ultimately, converting Louvre Palace to museum and opening it to public after the French Revolution have become the symbol of art's being independent of power relations, being 'autonomous'. The country no longer belonged to monarch but public; and public museum became a place where, according to Duncan and Wallach:

The state and the audience communicate with each other. The individual solidifies his connection with the state before its spiritual presence. The museum has hegemonic and vital function in experiencing citizenship. ...Visitors of a museum execute a ritual that associates the idea of civilization with the authority of state. (Duncan and Wallach, 2006: 52)

By being the symbol of the idea of a humanist universe; 'autonomy' constitutes the state, the modernity, the independent individual. This is why Saint Simon gives a privileged

position to artists as leaders of ruling elite in his ideal state; Marxists attribute a 'transideological' character to it, or Bourdieu determines books, articles, documents, instruments, theories, etc. as the objectified capital along with the art works, presenting themselves as an autonomous world, transcending individual wills.

## **2.2 Museum Becomes a Tool for Resistance:**

While taking notes not to miss any detail in the documents on his desk, Coşkun<sup>27</sup> tells me “This land enters into a new cultural zone with Tanzimat!”, referring to the first reformation period of Ottoman Empire, started in 1839 and continued till the declaration of Meşrutiyet -the first constitutional era in 1876- to secure the territorial integrity of empire against nationalist movements. Art historian Wendy Shaw, in her book 'Possessors and Possessed: Museums, Archaeology, and the Visualization of History in the Late Ottoman Empire', talks about two art institutions that are organized like their equivalents in Europe after Meşrutiyet. According to her, the Ottoman Empire was striving to reform its identity that is compatible with European practices and institutions. The first School of Fine Arts (Sanayi-i Nefise Mektebi) teaching art in western modality was founded in 1883 in İstanbul, the capital of empire. And, the Imperial Collection reminiscent of military history 'Mecmua-i Âsâr-ı Âtika' (collection of antiquities) was transformed into Müze-i Humayun (Imperial Museum) in 1869. This museum, along with the military museum, would have cultural and educational functions, like the ones in Europe, and serve the objectives of Tanzimat.

On the other hand, Shaw points out the difference of Ottoman Museums from the European models. She states that the museums in Europe and North America are used to specify the uniqueness of each nation, to develop its own cultural history, and to educate people. However, the museum in Ottoman Empire is not used to specify the uniqueness of the nation, but rather, to claim cultural inheritance of the ancient world, just like the ones in Europe.

Moreover, Ottoman museums were not organized as educational tools, Shaw continues, they were employed as instruments of resistance against nationalistic discourses and European expansionism. Referring to Eilean Hooper-Greenhill, Shaw states that the

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<sup>27</sup> Interview on February 9, 2011



museum in France was based on three major elements: Republicanism, Laicism and Offensive war. Whereas, the museum in Ottoman Empire was based on Internationalism, as a contribution to world culture -as defined by Europe, she says-, Secularization, albeit implicit, and Protection of territorial integrity. However, Sultan Abdülaziz closed the museum in 1871 as a part of his plan to clear the state from the control of administrative reformists (Tanzimatçılar), but when an important reformist becomes a grand vizier a year later, the museum was reopened. (Shaw: 2004)

As we can understand from Shaw's narratives, the museum was initially used against nationalist discourses by the monarch (by referring to western concepts like internationalism and secularism in Shaw's conceptions) and then it became a tool of the reformists against the monarch. After the declaration of the Second Revolution (2. Meşrutiyet) in 1908, the museum starts serving the idea of creating a nation during the administration of the reformists, the Young Turks. To put it in very rough terms, an attitude against monarch in the ruling elite had identified itself with an 'autonomous' institution that is in contradiction with the ancient regime to establish a modern state.

The Turkish Republic, as a secular nation state, was established in 1923 by the former military officers of empire under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. According to Shaw, the major dynamic of modern Turkish Republic is the top-down revolutionary reformism<sup>28</sup> that changes the mode of production as well as culture. By the same token, economist Begüm Kösemen, in her unpublished PhD thesis 'The Culture and Art Investments of Private Sector in Turkey within the Frame of Social Capital Theory', suggests that founding Republican People's Party targeted to establish a modern capitalist state and a modern society based on cultural and economical statism during the first decades of the republic. In order to do that, she continues, a national bourgeoisie and homogeneous society are needed and the bourgeoisie of commerce who were mostly non-muslim during Ottoman Era were replaced by the -to be 'formed'- national

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28 'The top-down revolutionary reformism' is another cliché that has been repeated over and over and taught as such in state education in Turkey. Following Tanzimat (1839), The First Constitutional Monarchy was declared in 1879, which, according to political scientist Aykut Köksal ,was sharing the political power between the Monarch and the Bureaucrats. However, Köksal states that the new constitution of the Second Revolution (2. Meşrutiyet) declared in 1908 was making the government responsible only to the parliament elected by public not to the monarch or bureaucracy. Moreover, Köksal says, there had been many civil commotions taken place both in İstanbul and provinces asking for the change of the old regime, leading the Second Revolution. (The Revolution of 1908 in Turkey, İletişim Publishing House.)

bourgeoise. (Kösemen: 2010)

These statements are based on the idea that during the Ottoman period there did not emerge a Medici-type bourgeoisie accumulating capital, as in Europe throughout its colonial history; and consequently, the state was not changed and characterized as modern by a class, but the elites, the former bureaucrats of Ottoman Empire. Confident in his education in Political Science and International Relations, Coşkun<sup>29</sup> concludes that the establishment of capitalism in Turkey is similar to the 17<sup>th</sup> century Europe. He continues:

Turkish society met with money for the first time in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. There is no money in this geography, in eastern societies. The state owns the estate; the people only earn their living. This is more or less the situation here until the 1950s-80s. There is a type of rich created by the state. The accumulation of capital is not possible without exploiting the public sources. It is the same in Europe. It is not possible without the state, that is to say, the state is the founding factor. The ones that get rich tries to change the state, the public.

### **2.3 The Ruling Elite Struggles upon 'Autonomous' Institutions:**

In Turkey, modernity is intimately linked with a disjunctive representation of past and future. The Turkish national project imagined a modern culture, but defined its artistic visual culture based on nationalist tropes of Ottoman/Islamic art which excluded the modern. While historically oriented collections were established during the Ottoman era, the Museum of Painting and Sculpture was not established in Istanbul until 1938, and subsequently received minimal interest, funding, or attention. Likewise in the capital city of Ankara, a similarly underattended Museum of Painting and Sculpture was only founded in 1981. (Shaw 2011: 10)

Though, I will address to technical argumentations about the Western painting that lead Shaw to make the above statement in the following chapters, what can initially be said is that she is making quite a generalization by defining 'visual culture' only with painting. Furthermore, when addressing only to the fine arts museums, she seems to be overlooking the other attempts to disseminate the 'western culture' to public and considers a too large time span during which highly turbulent political events have taken place. What had happened in this turbulent era shows that 'autonomous' institutions -in the sense of creating 'autonomous' self/individual, creating a secular society, dividing the public and private domains, etc.- were used as a stake of struggle by the

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<sup>29</sup> Interview on February 18, 2011

governments in Turkey.

Shaw goes on the saying that, in the early decades of Turkish Republic, art in western modality was confined to the service of political modernization and it became a communicative organ for the revolutionary state. The fine arts that were designed to celebrate the nation, she suggests, were quite distant from 'the contemporary', deeply ensconced in the traditions of allegorical history painting of the past century (of Europe) and far away from the intellectual modernist movements of the West. Besides, she continues, being used as a communication tool, the goal of the state was to promote this kind of art to public. Because of the financial hardships, the artists were dependent upon the state and cooperative organizations. State-owned banks, appearing as new patrons, have started commissioning new paintings. Commissions for unprecedentedly large paintings have provided new professional opportunities for the artists, says Shaw, but circumscribed the artistic freedom by limiting the subject matter and requiring clear, ideological messages. So, for her, the art in this period was neither seeking originality, nor rebellious like the art in Europe. (Shaw 2011)

Although Shaw might be right in saying the art in Turkey was asynchronous with the modern art, the kind of art seeking originality and rebellion was expelled from Europe just during the one party era in Turkey. The writers of 'Art Since 1900' inform us that the International Exhibition held in Paris in May 1937 was to become place of a “war of cultures” where the nations contest one another in national pavilions of art, trade and propaganda, while the Nazis opened the “Degenerate Art” exhibition, a vast condemnation of modernist art, in Munich two months later. As we all know that this cultural war was soon to become World War 2 and, eventually, to force many Surrealist to emigrate from France to the United States. (Art Since 1900 -2004: 281) Not only the artist but also the intellectuals, Frankfurt School, Bauhaus were booted out of Europe. So, in this sense, reading the 'autonomy principle' of the artistic field within the nation paradigm takes us to a dead end since 'autonomy, disinterestedness' not only establishes the art field but also the other 'agents' of modernism.

Kösemen talks about some momentums of the one party era during which the struggle among the members of ruling elite is observable through their policies on culture and art. According to her, the republic assesses the policies on culture and art as the most

effective tools to reach the level of contemporary civilizations. In order to achieve this aim, The Republican People's Party (CHP), Kösemen continues, also invests in the fields such as music, theater, history, language, etc. In order to spread this 'new culture' to public, People's Houses (Halkevleri, 1932) and Village Institutes (Köy Enstitüleri, 1940) were opened in the rural areas. Referring to political scientist Orhan Koçak, Kösemen underlines the variations of cultural policies even during the one-party era, stating that while the policies applied during Mustafa Kemal's administration were in harmony with the reforms of Tanzimat and aimed to eliminate the 'oriental and Islamic' past -as opposed to Shaw's argument that the artistic visual culture was based on the Ottoman/Islamic art-, the İnönü Period (1939- 1950) were embracing it.

It was also during this period that not only the state-operated banks, Kösemen continues, but also the private enterprises founded by the former bureaucrats of the state began gradually sharing the 'duty' of cultural and economical reforms with the state in visual arts as well as in literary field. Kösemen says that the foundation of first private bank Yapı Kredi Bank in 1944 is the first example of bourgeoisie, institution and intellectual alliance in the history of Turkish Republic. (Kösemen 2010: 216) Nevertheless, for Coşkun<sup>30</sup>, this is an issue of assignment rather than that of an alliance. He suggests that the logic of the state on culture was transferred to different institutions until the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War. He continues:

The nation-state here was relatively synchronized with that of Europe and elsewhere during the process in which the internationalism was abandoned. The first private collection in Turkey belongs to Yapı Kredi Bank, with Nedim Tör (being the chief counselor). This is when the Cadre Movement<sup>31</sup> dissolves, and the logic of the state began to be carried on by the institutions like Varlık Publishing House, etc. This nationalism here resembles that of Europe, it is relatively synchronic. However, we realize that the modernism of 15-20 years ago becomes out of date after the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War.

In his unpublished dissertation 'The Culture and Art Scene in Turkey between 1960 and 1970', art historian Bora Gürdaş determines four major topics of discussion in Turkish art world until the 1950's: i) Benefiting from the early sources prior to Ottoman period. ii) Emancipation from the Western Art. iii) Using art as an ideological tool in the service of the revolution and iv) Creating a Turkish humanism or renaissance by using folk art

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30 Interview on February 9, 2011

31 Cadre Movement: Kadro was a leftist journal published in Turkey between 1932-1934. Nedim Tör was one of the members of this movement. (Mustafa Türkeş: 2001)

in forming a political, i.e. “national”, identity for the arts.

Although these articles have shown the logic of a nation-state trying to shape the art world, the first sparks of searching 'autonomy' were also seen during World War 2. According to Gürdaş, the new generations of artists, who are sent abroad by the Ministry of Education to study, were trying to be independent from the centers of power, like The State Academy of Fine Arts (former Sanayi-i Nefise Mektebi), following European artistic movements and integrating the intellectual concerns into modern Turkish Art during the late 1930's and 40's. However, he states that the established authorities evaluated the art works of these new generation as amateurish.

The Second World War affects the political climate of Turkey and the multi-party period begins in 1945. Democratic Party (DP), claiming economic liberalism and democracy, comes to power in 1950 as the first party to win an election. However, the party was actually a mutation of CHP because the chiefs of staff were the former members and lead by a large landowner. The character of its mutation is observable in DP's policies on the modern institutions. Gürdaş states that a decade long leadership of Democratic Party is considered to be a period of stasis for the art world. The state patronage of the arts weakens and eventually breaks up the ties among the arts, artists and society. The opponents of Democratic Party claim that its rule hinders the continuity of the reforms and suppresses the artist and intellectuals who are to sustain them. (Gürdaş, 2008)

The claims of the opposition based on the fact that the cultural institutions considered to be the foundation of the Republic were closed during the Democratic Party Period. According to Kösemen, over 400 institutions initiated by the Republican's People Party and being incorporated to the state in 1949, serving in nine separate areas (language and literature, fine arts, theatre, sports, social benefits, public schoolrooms and courses, library, village studies, museology and exhibition) and the People's Houses (1951) and Village Institutes (1954) were closed during Democratic Party rule.

The Democratic Party rule was terminated by the military coup of May 27, 1960. According to Kösemen, DP's economic policies encouraging private enterprise and foreign capital were in harmony with the understanding of one party rule and these policies had made industrialists more powerful with respect to commercial bourgeoisie.

However, the inflationist environment created by such policies had become one of the reasons of the coup of 1960. On the other hand, Kösemen continues, the new constitution of 1961 had secured the freedom of association for the other segments of public and had paved the way for the establishment of socialist party. Artists and intellectuals who took their shares from these rights, for the first time, had the ground for discussing the problems such as social rights and security of the artist, the educational role of art in social structure, the responsibility of artist for the society in relation with the concepts of 'national art', 'Turkish folk art', etc.

Gürdaş suggests that since the constitution was expected to restore the power of the reforms, the artists and the intellectuals, the state was to reinvest in cultural institutions. Kösemen mentions some of the major artistic and cultural developments during this era: People's Houses reopened in 1963, Ministry of Culture opened for the first time in 1971, culture is included in five-year development plan, Directorate General of State Opera and Ballet Founded, etc. Another noteworthy development is the emergence of a large number of prominent private theaters, following the 'Küçük Tiyatro' founded by the support of Yapı Kredi Bank in 1951. For this reason, Kösemen states, the 1960's are known as the golden years of private theaters in Turkey. One of the significant changes brought by the New Constitution, Gürdaş suggests, is the emphasis on the importance of welfare state as the main determinant of legal applications. Thus, the artists and intellectuals, like the other citizens of the state, would be more independent (or autonomous) of the limitations of the structures surrounding them, like the market, the family, etc. for their basic needs are met. Another important issue in this period is an administrative one as to which authority, whether the Ministry of Education or the Ministry of Tourism, should handle the cultural and artistic activities. After 1961, the formation of a ministry solely for culture and art is offered, but it was objected on the grounds that art and culture should not be separated from the Ministry of Education, as they are the main sustainers of the reforms.

According to Gürdaş, it was only after 1960 that the effort was spent to reestablish the broken ties between the artist and people during Democratic Party period. Many artistic exhibitions were organized in European cities to display the Western side of Turkish art. Nevertheless, Gürdaş points out that some European experts criticized those exhibitions for the lack of local quality and not being emancipated from the Paris art scene. On the

other hand, he continues, the people in the art scene would finally start discussing the notions such as East and West, universalism and nationalism, the place of figurative and abstract art. Not only the 'contemporary' issues were discussed, adds Gürdaş, but also the new/contemporary and the unconventional ways of art making were displayed in the art field during the 1970s. In her unpublished PhD thesis 'Transformations: Art in Turkey after 1980', art historian Burcu Pelvanoğlu also mentions the names of some of these independent art exhibitions, such as 'the Contemporary Artists Istanbul Exhibitions' and 'Avant-garde Turkish Art Exhibitions'. Pelvanoğlu states that these organizations were different not only for their contents but also for the fact that they were organized by the actors of artistic field who seek autonomy by distancing themselves from the state sponsoring. (Pelvanoğlu, 2009)

However, parliamentary democracy was once again interrupted by the military coup of 1971. Kösemen states that the coup of 1971 was made to control the labor movements that gained a momentum thanks to the fundamental rights and freedom adopted by the Constitution of 1961. Interestingly enough, while the coup limited the rights and freedoms recognized by the constitution, Turkey's industrialists and businessmen founded Turkish Industry and Business Association (TUSIAD) in 1971. TUSIAD<sup>32</sup> explains its foundation as a reaction to 'the closed and public driven economic system' that could not be maintained because of the collapse of the International Monetary System (Bretton-Woods) due to the recession in the USA caused by Vietnam War. Association states that they adapted and advocated the adaptation to 'free market economy' that is open to competition as their new strategy in order not to experience a drastic loss of welfare and political institution finally adapted this strategy.

Referring to the above mentioned consequences of the coup of 1971 and also to 'A Manifesto about the State's Care for the Artist' announced by a group of prominent artists, intellectuals, journalist, etc.<sup>33</sup>, Kösemen determines state's approach to culture and art as “a planned planlessness”, since it gradually starts leaving these domains to private sector. Istanbul Foundation for Culture and Arts, one of the important actors of the art field today, was established during this era as a private enterprise. (Kösemen,

<sup>32</sup> [www.tusiad.org](http://www.tusiad.org)

<sup>33</sup> Manifesto was published in Art Region Magazine, March, 1979, İstanbul. Türkkaya Ataöv, Korkut Boratav, İlber Ortaylı, Mehmet Selik, Uğur Mumcu were among the members of group who signed it. (Kösemen, 2010:115)

2010)

## **2.4 Conclusion**

Thus far, it is evident that though it has been symbolized with the 'disinterestedness of artistic field' since the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, 'autonomy' becomes a stake of struggle within established authorities. This cleavage in the mentality of bourgeois capitalist society pulls modernity to opposing poles. It can be a stake of struggle both for 'haute' bourgeoisie and for the dominated bourgeoisie, i.e. the artists and intellectuals, throughout their endeavors. In this sense, 'autonomy' becomes one of the constituting principles of modernity and it melts the feudal state as explained with the example of Medici Family.

In the sections 'Museum Becomes a Tool for Resistance' and 'The Ruling Elite Struggles upon Autonomous Institutions', I tried to demonstrate how institutions, such as museum and other cultural and economical establishments carrying the logic of 'autonomy' for the creation of modern state have been the place of struggle among the ruling elite in Turkey. As of the second set, I showed the limitations of reading 'artistic' autonomy within the context of nation-state with the example of World War 2. I discussed how the two conflicting modernities of Calinescu are manifested in conditions specific to Turkey. Even though, detailed analysis about the concepts such as 'nation state', 'nationalism', 'secularism' encountered through the establishment of modernism exceeds the limit of this thesis, I will partially mention these issues in the following chapters.

In the same section 'The Ruling Elite Struggles upon the Autonomous Institutions', I tried to address the issues relating the art field within the above mentioned conditions and discourses. As of 1950s, it seems that the national 'bourgeoisie' as a class has become an effective actor in both cultural and economical areas. Nonetheless, the conflict of the ruling class, i.e. bureaucrats, 'bourgeoisie', seem to confine the art field to some of the major cities, especially Istanbul, and left it to the mercy of the new patrons and it has been mostly supported to display 'western' face of Turkey. As Turkey's articulation to liberal capitalism speeds up by the coup of 1980, this story gets even more complicated.



## CHAPTER 3

### CULTURE BECOMES A “JELLING” ENTERPRISE

During my fieldwork, almost everyone -one way or the other- expressed his/her opinion about how the 1970s and 1980s had totally changed people's understanding about the world and life. For some, this meant an epistemological shift; however Coşkun<sup>34</sup> said that everything is turned upside down. He continues:

We entered the new century, somewhere between 1965 and 1973. The issues such as progress and collectivity are over along with society around the same time. The base of business world is no longer capital but is knowledge. The same is true for the state. What is conveyed from 18<sup>th</sup> century to 20<sup>th</sup> century was over in 1970s and this is how the new century begins. David Harvey talks about the same thing in *The Conditions of Postmodernity*. He says that new realities emerged in our way of existing in space.

If we accept what I proposed in the previous chapter of this thesis, that is 'autonomy' as a stake of struggle, what happened to 'autonomy' in this “new era”, which indicated by Coşkun? If, as suggested, autonomy is the fundamental principle for unfolding the self, creating a private time and place for each 'subject' along with bourgeoisie and the 'reason' behind the modern state, which appeared to be an 'autonomous' and 'collective' instrument of society, the 'people'; why Coşkun says these issues happened to be over ?

The knowledge's becoming the base of business world, Coşkun points out, was related to global dissemination of information technologies; the commodification of culture became evident. After Adorno and Horkheimer, many social thinkers were agreed that Enlightenment had turned into a mass deception. Guy Debord wrote 'the Society of the Spectacle'. Neil Postman wrote 'Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business'. Marshall McLuhan claimed that “the Medium is the Message” regardless of its content. For him, the electric light - as a medium and the characteristic

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<sup>34</sup> Interview on January 6, 2011

of all media- is pure information. He says:

Electric speed mingles the cultures of prehistory with the dregs of industrial marketeers, the nonliterate with the semiliterate and the postliterate. Mental breakdown of varying degrees is the very common result of uprooting and inundation with new information and endless patterns of information. (McLuhan, 2008: 23)

This time, the world has become the space of 'Spectacle' serving the interest of bourgeoisie class by means of mass media. As a result of it, says the professor of modern art Benjamin Buchloh, the 'autonomous' spaces of cultural representation-spaces of subversion, resistance, critique, utopian aspiration – are gradually eroded, assimilated, or simply annihilated. (Art Since 1900, 2004)

Slogans of a fairly small group of protesters, as often happens, heighten marching thoroughly on İstiklal Avenue. While the construction noise from the building across street that soon to become a shopping mall is mixing with these slogans and filling the room; Vasıf Kortun<sup>35</sup> tells me in an ironic yet serious manner “Private Sector comes side by side with Culture Sector, I call it 'jelling'...” While a definite 'realism', rather than a cynicism, setting the tone of his voice, he concludes that 'Experience Economy'<sup>36</sup> 'is quite a descriptive term to explain what is happening now.

'Experience Economy: Work is Theater and Every Business a Stage', is an article co-authored by business partners B. Joseph Pine II and James Gilmore, through which they claim that there is the rise of Experience Economy as the fourth stage of economic development after Agrarian, Industrial and Service Economy. They state that people are now outsourcing their experiences, for example their birthday parties. Consumers unquestioningly desire experiences and more and more businesses are responding by explicitly designing and promoting them. Pine and Gilmore suggest “Commodities are fungible, goods are tangible, services are intangible, experiences are memorable” and business should adapt to this economy.

Providing clues about the logic Business World- i.e. the outcome of the kind of modernity as a stage in the history of Western civilization, the production of the

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<sup>35</sup> Interview on December 18, 2010

<sup>36</sup> 'Experience Economy', Harvard Business Review, July-August 1998, reached from [www.red-tape.info](http://www.red-tape.info) and [www.strategichorizons.com](http://www.strategichorizons.com) ( June 12, 2012)

sweeping economic changes brought about by capitalism in Calinescu's conception-Kortun<sup>37</sup> exemplifies how private sector invests in 'public' areas like museums and creates new markets:

Take a look at Cultural District<sup>38</sup>. Museumgoers are more than football, baseball or basketball goers even in America. Moreover, each family that goes to museum spends at least 100 dollars. This field is cleaner and more regulated than sports and it doesn't contain potential violence. On the other hand, people here do stupid things like formula 1 on a huge area. Abu Dhabi<sup>39</sup> wrote a nice scenario to itself if she can manage. They founded New York University there, same departments, and same professors... These places are ideal venues for nouvelle riche and rising middle class. There is no drug, no alcohol. So, we are talking about a state that provides a high quality education in the security of a shopping center. For some, it is very attractive.

If so, what happens to 'aesthetic autonomy', to 'high art' while museum- where “the state and citizen communicate with each other”<sup>40</sup>- and the other venues of 'objectified capital' seized by private sector?

In the book ‘Privatizing Culture; Corporate Art Intervention since the 1980s’, Chin Tao Wu scrutinizes the cultural policies applied by the governments of Thatcher in England and of Reagan in the USA. Wu focuses on the discourses produced about culture while the policies have transformed publicly owned artistic institutions as these governments cut the budgets spent on Art and Education. According to him, this process is the part of the replacement of Welfare State Capitalism by Free Market Economy during the administrations of Thatcher and Reagan. Wu claims that the great flux of corporate money has spoiled the function and the status of cultural institutions and transformed the public art museums and galleries into public relation vehicles for corporations. (Wu, 2005)

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37 Ibid 37

38 Cultural District Concept: 'City Park' masterplan for West Kowloon Cultural District in China created by the Architecture and Planning firm, Foster and Partners in 2009. “The district is designed to capture and recreate the unique character that makes Hong Kong such a great city. At its heart, a 23 hectare park and a grand avenue will provide a landscape setting for a series of spectacular new cultural buildings.” in [www.bustler.net](http://www.bustler.net) and [www.fosterandpartners.com](http://www.fosterandpartners.com) (June 12, 2012)

39 In his speech 'From Princes of Florence to Sheiks of Dubai: Collection, Art, Regality/ Floransa Prenslerinden Dubai Şehylerine Koleksiyon, Sanat, Saltanat' Ali Artun explains the differences and the similarities between Medici Dynasty and El Nahyan- El Mahdum Dynasties in Dubai and in Abu Dhabi. Page 19- 39 in Contemporary Art Talks 4: Collection, Collector and Museology, editor: Levent Çalikoğlu, YKY September, 2009

40 “Tarih Sahneleri, Sanat Müzeleri 2”, (p.p. 50-56), 2006, İstanbul İletişim: Yayınları

### 3.1 'Autonomy' as a Stake of Struggle between Privatization and Mass Culture:

The rise of the Free Market Economy and the privatization of public sources are often mentioned as 'Özalism' in Turkey, likened to 'Thatcherism' and 'Reaganism'. As Kortun says<sup>41</sup>; “this transformation has started with the economic regulations of January 24”<sup>42</sup>. Eight months later, democracy, once again, is interrupted by the military coup of September 12, 1980.

Coşkun<sup>43</sup> doubts about how long he will keep doing this administrative work that started just few months ago. When talking, he often refers to not only academical but also literary books. He seems concerned about the possibility that his recent occupation might keep him away from art. This is perhaps why he almost always immediately responds to my requests. Our meetings create some time for him to talk about something else other than paperwork. He recounts:

Özal had said ‘even their dreams can not catch what we are doing.’ It was even in the TV commercials then. Mustafa Denizli<sup>44</sup>, in a tile ad, said ‘you can not prevent change.’ The climate in the 80's is not determined by local actors and in the 1990's new actors appeared. The new identities have been invented by means of information bombardment, the rise of popular culture, etc.

The 'change', perhaps, is one of the most signifying concepts of Özal Period. Coşkun goes on to saying that its is during this process that the rhetoric of 'change' has also been transferred from the opposition to the power in the political field. While the left politics loosing power in many countries in the world, these winds of change had also change the lives of people in Turkey. Presumably, 'Özalism' might make more sense for the people of my generation who were kids or teenagers during the 1980s since we have been often defined as 'Özal Generation'. This generation, also known as “lost” generation' or “X” Generation<sup>45</sup>, had been differentiated from the previous generations

41 Interview on December 25, 2010

42 Economic Regulations of January 24, 1980 is prepared by then the treasury secretary Turgut Özal for the former prime minister Süleyman Demirel.

43 Interview on February 9, 2011

44 Mustafa Denizli (1949) is a former Turkish football player and a coach. He has managed many notable Turkish football clubs and has won the Super Lig title three times. ( source: en.wikipedia.org)

45 Generation X: Born 1966-1976, Age in 2004: 28-38: Sometimes referred to as the “lost” generation, this was the first generation of “latchkey” kids, exposed to lots of daycare and divorce.  
[www.socialmarketing.org](http://www.socialmarketing.org).

by being apolitical, identifying itself by consumption (especially the products of popular culture), having no interest in anything whatsoever but self salvation. In other words, we were the first 'products' of a neoliberal processes that demolished the ideas as society, collectivity and progress. Although these ideas might have come to an end, these years- so to speak- have given an opportunity to the people in Turkey to catch the last wagon of History Train. And, this was always one of the main themes that determined Coşkun's <sup>46</sup> narratives during our interviews. He continues:

While you were yahoo during the 80's, then you became valuable as long as you can market sandal, broom, etc. Instincts for getting rich, the idea that you become a man as long as you earn money, those who have money live like the kings... 'Turning the corner' relates to car. If you remember Kastelli<sup>47</sup> etc., it was the slogan for a car and credit promotion of an enterprise; having a car, catching the car, catching history.

Worked as a state minister and deputy prime minister for the junta administration, Turgut Özal had been in the office as the prime minister of Turkey between 1983 and 1989 and as the president of Turkey between 1989 and 1993. Despite his close relations with the junta regime, Özal had become the hero of democracy. He is known not only as the architect of the economic liberalism in Turkey but also he and the members of his family were the pioneers of a new kind of life style as Coşkun mentions, appearing quite often in the mass media. "Plug a tape to have fun Semra<sup>48</sup>!" is one of the most memorable utterances of his telling his wife, listening an arabesque song while driving a car in a 200 hundred kilometers for an hour crossing Bosphorus Bridge.

The rise of Arabesque Music as a commodity of Popular Culture - or Mass Culture in Frankfurt School's terminology- since the 1970s is considered to be one of the outcomes of the migration from the villages to big cities. While some argued that this music represents fatalism and submission, others found a liberating and protesting quality in

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46 Interview on February 18, 2011

47 Coşkun refers to Abidin Cevher Özden, known as Banker Kastelli. Özden introduces the new banking methods, e.g. the marketing tools such as stock exchange, stock certificates and executes marketing services for ten banks during the 80s. A huge banking crisis, known to be one of the biggest in the world, broke out in Turkey in 1982 when Cenral Bank of Turkey regulated the market. The crises is known as Banker Kastelli Scandal and it forces then the deputy prime minister Turgut Özal to resign. More info: "Sermaye Piyasaları ve Finansal Kurumlar" 2004, Anadolu Üniversitesi

48 'Tak bir kaset de neşemizi bulalım Semra!'

it.<sup>49</sup> Nevertheless, what is significant in Özal's example is that arabesque music prohibited in public broadcast agency (TRT) for many years has been legitimized by someone who had occupied the highest positions in state administration. In other worlds, Özal's attitude signified a transformation in favor of popular culture in the state, which's policies in culture and art has been, in Kösemen's terminology, a “planned plannedlessness” since 1970s. As the government withdraws from investing in, the private enterprise enters the culture domain. However, according to Coşkun, this sector does not really invest in this realm willingly rather it is transferred to it by the government. He continues:

The private sector does not create the public space; it is transferred to public domain. When Özal expurgates the bureaucracy from the state, he assigns this job to private sector. The bureaucracy of the Republic is the continuum of Ottoman bureaucracy. Turhan Feyzioğlu<sup>50</sup> and the likes are the representatives of it. However, after the 80's, American types of princes, like Engin Civan<sup>51</sup>, etc. -Özal's men involved in the market- 'bypassed', a term by Özal again, this bureaucracy. Therefore they introduce a different kind of culture. Preservative, civil, gentile man is replaced by vulgar, poseur type of person. Old type of bourgeoisie had to show its difference from the new coming contractor type of businessman. İshak Alaton, Eczacıbaşı, Sabancı, Koç became opinion leaders.

During the same years, Turkey was represented abroad by means of 'high art', becoming a tool of the big businesses to find themselves new markets. While heavily working for the organization of SALT, Kortun frequently traveled abroad to implement a variety of tasks undertaken in various international art organizations. Being currently a member of a board of a professional and ethical committee CIMAM/ICOM<sup>52</sup> is among his various

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49 According to sociologist Meral Özbek, the claim that arabesque's being the representation of fatalism and submission is the reflection of Turkish left and Westernizer modernists' perception about culture. Meral Özbek, *Popüler Kültüre ve Orhan Gencebay Arabeski* (Popular Culture and Arabesque of Orhan Gencebay), İletişim Publishing House, 1<sup>st</sup> edition November 1991.

50 Turhan Feyzioğlu (1922-1988), Professor of Law and Politician. Feyzioğlu as assigned as the prime minister for five hours by the junta leader Kenan Evren. Source: “Hükümet Modelleri ve Gizli Planlar”, 13 Ekim 2010, [www.takvim.com.tr](http://www.takvim.com.tr). Accessed February 25, 2013

51 Engin Civan was the general manager, assigned by Turgut Özal, of Emlak Bank ('emlak' means real estate). Source: “Engin Civan, CivanGate Skandalını İlk Kez Anlattı”, 10 Şubat 2009, [www.ekoayrinti.com](http://www.ekoayrinti.com), accessed February 25, 2013

52 CIMAM (International Comitee of ICOM for Museums and Collections of Modern Art)- ICOM (The International Council of Museums): CIMAM –International Committee of ICOM for Museums and Collections of Modern Art– is a relevant international forum of professional character for the discussion of philosophical, ethical and practical issues concerning the collection and exhibition of twentieth and twenty-first century art. source: [www.cimam.org](http://www.cimam.org), accessed February 21, 2013

tasks. So, he closely witnesses how art is organized as a global business segment. He<sup>53</sup> says:

The first public toilette was built in Tate in 1914 if I'm not mistaken. There was no toilette 150 years ago. Once a work of art was placed, it used to remain there for years. This model begins to break in the 80s. Metropolitan Museum started all these. They did 'Suleiman, the Magnificent'<sup>54</sup> exhibition about Turkey. *Philip Morris* entered Turkey thanks to this exhibition. And the way to produce and cultivate tobacco had changed here. As the black box of that era, the role of Şükrü Elekdag<sup>55</sup> is interesting in this scenario.

Wu describes the process of converting cultural capital into economic capital, which is indicated by Kortun above, with the example of *Philip Morris* as following:

By spending their easily gained acquisitions constantly for the last thirty years, the companies of Philip Morris had accumulated the cultural capital; thanks to this capital, they succeeded getting the support of prestigious art institutions in 1994 in order to lobby against the measures banning smoking in New York. Thus, Philip Morris converted its cultural capital into financial benefit. (Wu, 2005: 25-26)

Thus far, we can conclude that Turkey's articulation to neoliberal economy was first initiated by the coup of 1971 and it had gained a momentum with the coup of 1980. As expected, the coup of 1980 is considered as a turning point by academics who focus on the artistic field. According to art historian Pelvanoğlu, though the National Security Council of Coup D'état had a very nationalistic policy about culture, adaptation to global economy weakened the power of nation-state in the art domain. Similarly, Kösemen determines that the government's budget allocated to culture and arts has been decreased significantly between 1980 and 2005 and the Ministry of Culture was re-conjoined with the Ministry of Tourism in 2003, while the share of the private corporations, following the trends taking place in the USA and Europe, gradually increased. Kösemen claims that investing in culture and art becomes such an important part of free market economy that Turkish business world (the members of old type of bourgeoisie like Alaton, Eczacıbaşı, Koç whom Coşkun mentions above) wants to take

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53 Interview on December, 25 2010

54 New York Magazine, October 5, 1987, article 'The Bridge': "There are some examples of the art of a great empire and a great people that Americans know little about. They are part of a stunning exhibition entitled 'The Age of Sultan Süleyman the Magnificent'. Its final appearance will be at the Metropolitan Museum of Art from October 4<sup>th</sup> 1987 through January 17<sup>th</sup> 1988, compelling a year-long tour of three of America's most prestigious museums.

55 Şükrü Elekdag (born in 1924) is a Turkish diplomat, politician and academician. He served as the undersecretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ambassador of Turkey to Japan (1970-74) and to the United States (1979-1989). [ecrgroup.eu/wp\\_content/uploads](http://ecrgroup.eu/wp_content/uploads)

part in this newly developing global market. Additionally, investing in this area means a way to improve social status (and the accumulation of cultural capital as in the case of Philip Morris), Kösemen suggests, because the concepts such as 'social capital', 'the social responsibilities of the institutions' and 'corporate social responsibility' have become more and more popular in the business world to legitimize their financial capital. (Kösemen, 2010)

Though there are only four public museums of modern/contemporary art so far, many privately operated ones have been pop up in İstanbul since the 1990s. Here, it is useful to mention the opening dates of some major and privately operated monuments of 'social capital' Kösemen mentions. As it is informed in their websites, the first attempt to establish Istanbul Museum of Modern Art<sup>56</sup> began in 1988 with the 1<sup>st</sup> İstanbul Biennial as an initiative of İstanbul Foundation for Culture and Arts. This foundation, as a non-profit and non-governmental organization, was founded in 1973 under the leadership of businessman, who is the founder of an industrial group<sup>57</sup> mentioned by his name, Dr. Nejat Eczacıbaşı. After searching for a location for years, one of the permanent locations of the Biennial, the fourth warehouse on the Galata Pier, was rented to the foundation by the approval of Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and the museum opened in 2003. Sabancı Museum<sup>58</sup> opened in 1988 to exhibit the private collection of Sabancı Family and the museum extended by the addition of a modern gallery in 2005. Pera Museum<sup>59</sup> was established in 2005 by Suna and İnan Kıraç Foundation. As an initiative of a private bank, Platform Garanti Contemporary Art Center<sup>60</sup> had functioned from 2001 to 2010 and then, the center has been transformed into SALT in 2011 with two main buildings with exhibition places and one of them also has a research center for the arts and culture. Owned by Sabancı Family, another initiative of a private bank, Akbank Art Center<sup>61</sup> opened in 1993. The center initiated the contemporary art exhibitions in 2003. It has been a home for exhibitions, modern dance,

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56 [www.istanbulmodern.org](http://www.istanbulmodern.org) June 9, 2012

57 [www.iksv.org](http://www.iksv.org) [www.eczacibasi.com](http://www.eczacibasi.com), June 22, 2012

58 [muze.sabanciuniv.edu](http://muze.sabanciuniv.edu), June 9, 2012

59 [www.peramuzesi.org.tr](http://www.peramuzesi.org.tr), June 9, 2012

60 [platformgarantienglish.blogspot.com](http://platformgarantienglish.blogspot.com) and [www.saltonline.com](http://www.saltonline.com), June 9, 2012

61 [www.akbanksanat.com](http://www.akbanksanat.com) , June 9, 2012



theatre, classical and jazz music concerts. The Borusan Culture and Arts Center<sup>62</sup> and Borusan Philharmonic Orchestra (BKS) were founded by Borusan Holding in 1997 and visual arts section was added in 2008.

As seen in Kortun's emphasis on Experience Economy, the organization of high culture by the private sector is considered to be one of the mundane consequences of the rise of economic liberalism. On the other hand, according to Artun<sup>63</sup>, this creates precarious circumstances especially in Turkey, because it comes to a point where the idea of public is destroyed; and furthermore, it is not necessarily valid for every country. He continues:

I was in Berlin recently; the Germans organize country museums separately for East and West Germany. All are public museums. Same thing is valid for England as well; there are only a couple of private museums there.

In her published PhD thesis, 'Urban Transformation and Festivalism: Biennial in Globalizing Istanbul', Yardımcı claims that just after the coup, the national project of modernization is gradually transformed into a strategy of globalization. As cultural integration has become a 'necessary' condition in the process of adaptation to economic globalization, she says, the festivals of Istanbul enter into the picture of Oriental Istanbul as a sign of high culture. Additionally, not only did Istanbul have these monuments of high culture, Turkey's name also became globally recognized by means of cultural products during the 2000s. (Yardımcı 2005: 164-166) Moreover, Coşkun says, being recognized by the west has been the important issue for the generations of artists in Turkey. He<sup>64</sup> recounts:

I remember Fethi Naci<sup>65</sup> used to say “you could have novel as much as you have soccer. If you have the things valid abroad, open to competition then you have something.” Look, what happened recently; Turkey became the third in World Cup (2010), Galatasaray won the European Cup (1999-2000), Orhan Pamuk got the nobel prize (for literature in 2006), Turkey also had a biennial, etc.

Coşkun's interpretation is a good example of commodification of culture by the market and it also shows how the borders between 'high culture' and 'popular/mass culture' have

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62 [www.borusansanat.com](http://www.borusansanat.com), June 9, 2012

63 Interview on December 4, 2010

64 Interview on February 18, 2011

65 Fethi Naci (1927-2008) is a well-known writer and critic [www.bianet.org](http://www.bianet.org), December 31, 2011

been blurred. To put it in different ways, the modernity of the sweeping economic changes brought about by capitalism, in Calinescu's conception, besieged the modernity as an 'aesthetic concept'. Though they both refer to the West, the difference between Kortun's and Artun's interpretation on the issue indicates the gap between the organization of welfare state in Western countries and that of in Turkey.

As observable in Kortun's example about the role of elites within the frame of the 1990s, Yardımcı also says that Turkey's strategy of globalization is led by the political, economic and cultural-intellectual elites of Istanbul who aim to develop the city as a global and international node. (Yardımcı: 166) Probably, the most popular example of such partnerships is the establishment of Istanbul Modern Art Museum in the following years. As stated above, after searching for a venue for 15 years, the warehouse number 4 of Galata Pier was rented to Istanbul Foundation of Culture and Art by the approval of Prime Minister Erdoğan in 2003. Pelvanoğlu states that the museum was hastily opened before the necessary preparations are completed in 2004, because the government was to start negotiation for the membership for the EU. And this example brings us to the recent past.

### **3.2 'Autonomy' as a Stake of Struggle between Culture in 'Western Modality' and Conservative 'Democrats':**

However, it seems that such partnerships do not last for long, in other words, there happens to be setbacks from what Yardımcı determines as a strategy of globalization organized by the cultural, political and economic elites. Recently, it has been stated<sup>66</sup> that Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, who has been the chairman of the ruling mildly islamist Justice and Development Party (AKP) since 2002, has lost his enthusiasm for the EU. Thus, this shift in the foreign politics, or a political strategy and the overall return to nationalist – and even islamist<sup>67</sup>- policies in internal affairs seem to affect the party's policies on culture and art. Recent statements from the government officials and actual sanctions make the claim that 'adaptation to global economy weakens the power of nation-state on culture domain' very questionable.

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66 'The Enduring Popularity of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, [www.economist.com](http://www.economist.com), March 5, 2009

67 'Pious generation in Recep Tayyip Erdoğan: Tukey's elected sultan or an Islamic Democrat?' [www.guardian.co.uk](http://www.guardian.co.uk). October 24, 2012

In December 2011<sup>68</sup>, the Minister of Internal Affairs İdris Naim Şahin stated that art activities such as painting, writing poetry, writing articles and newspaper columns are used as tools of terrorist propaganda of PKK (The Kurdistan Worker's Party). He also determined psychological and scientific researches as terrorist activities and suggested that these activities are practiced at the 'backyards of terrorism' in places like İstanbul, İzmir, Vienna, Germany, London and continued by saying that nongovernmental organizations, professorial chairs and associations do the same.

In April 2012, Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan announced<sup>69</sup> that he will privatize the State and City Theaters as they started belittling, humiliating conservatives. He continued, "You cannot berate people by waving fingers with that despotic intellectual attitude of yours! You cannot get your salary from the municipality and criticize it at the same time. This nonsense cannot happen!" After a month, in May 2012, the General Secretary of the Presidency of Republic announced<sup>70</sup> that it is their obligation to create *conservative aesthetics* and *conservative art* just like their understanding of *conservative democracy*. The ruling party made Turkey competitive in every field and it should do the same in culture area.

Though one may argue that privatization of the state theaters is compatible with the ongoing privatization policy since the 1980s, these examples demonstrate how privatization itself used as means of pressure and intimidation on freedom of speech, academic liberties, freedom of press, etc. and therefore how 'autonomy' becomes a stake of struggle between 'culture in Western modality' and 'Conservative Democrats'. The rhetoric of government officials contribute to pile of dichotomies such as East and West, Muslim and Non-Muslim, the Conservative and the Liberal, Kurds and Turks, the elite and the poor, conservative / autonomous aesthetics...

Privatization, as a tool of pressure, also divides the ruling elite. The current processes about the venue of İstanbul Museum of Modern Art, which was rented to Eczacıbaşı by Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, is a good example of it.

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68 "İçişleri Bakanından Yeni Terör Tarifleri", [www.radikal.com.tr](http://www.radikal.com.tr), 31 December 2011

69 'O zavallılara Acıyoruz', [www.haber.mynet.com](http://www.haber.mynet.com) April 30, 2012 , 'Başbakan Şehir Tiyatrolarını Kapatıyor!', [www.radikal.com.tr](http://www.radikal.com.tr) , May 15, 2012

70 "Muhafazakar sanatın yapısını oluşturmalıyız", [www.haberturk.com](http://www.haberturk.com), March 26, 2012

In April 2012, the media announced that the building allocated to Istanbul Modern will be demolished due to privatization process of Galata Pier<sup>71</sup>. Here upon, Istanbul Modern declared<sup>72</sup> they have a lease for 28 years with the owner Turkey Maritime Organization and they have no knowledge about the demolition. Afterwards, the Board of Protection for Cultural and Natural Heritage Number 2 announced<sup>73</sup> that they asked the opinions of Ministry of Culture and Tourism and Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality about the venue as they received the plans from the Prime Ministry Privatization Administration. The chairman of the board says that while the Ministry of Culture and Tourism expressed its opinion for the protection of museum, Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality is for the removal of it; however there is no decision made on which buildings will be collapsed and which ones will be protected.

However, these announcements did not ease the tension of discussions; the argumentation between the parties still continues. Some say that Eczacıbaşı Group, i.e. the founder of Istanbul Modern Museum, was wrong to convince itself thinking that having the warehouse Number 4 would give them an advantage for the competitive bidding for the privatization of Galata Pier; however, it does not have such a priority since AKP government does not need them anymore. Istanbul Modern's chief curator Levent Çalikoğlu's respond to a question concerning the faith of the museum during a conference<sup>74</sup> held in June 25, 2012 confirms such argumentation. He says, “Here is Turkey, we don't know what is going to happen!”

The privatization process of Galata Pier has also become a story for media relating to a public art institution. In December 2011, a daily<sup>75</sup> announced that the Istanbul Painting and Sculpture Museum was moved from its old venue, the Crown Prince Residency of Dolmabahçe Palace, to warehouse Number 5 of Galata Pier thanks to President Abdullah Gül's request from Prime Minister. Because the museum was closed for the

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71 'Galataport Yeniden İhale Ediliyor', [www.milliyet.com.tr](http://www.milliyet.com.tr), April 12, 2012.

72 'İstanbul Modern'den açıklama', [www.radikal.com.tr](http://www.radikal.com.tr), April 11, 2012

73 'Modern' kalacak, [www.radikal.com.tr](http://www.radikal.com.tr), April 13, 2012

74 'Treasure Chests or Tools: Some Histories and Speculation about Art Collections' held in Salt Galata. The video recordings of the conference series can be found at [www.saltonline.org](http://www.saltonline.org)

75 'Cumhurbaşkanı istedi Resim Heykel'e Antrepo yolu açıldı'(December 1, 2011)-'Galataport Yıl Sonunda İhaleye Çıkıyor',(July 18, 2012) [www.radikal.com.tr](http://www.radikal.com.tr)

last five years due to uncompleted restoration and president was so unhappy for the poor conditions of the storage places at the old building. According to paper, museum will reopen after the warehouse Number 5 restored, now the artworks are kept in the storage of the building. The same newspaper reported in July 2012 that the Prime Ministry Privatization Administration declared that Galata Pier as a whole will be sold by bidding at the end of the year. In January 2012, another daily reported<sup>76</sup> that the transportation of the museum has a symbolic value since the old building was allocated to the museum in 1937 by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk as the first museum of Turkish Republic. It is a part of government's project to erode the institutions that represent the republic and the present government did the same thing for Atatürk Culture and Art Center. So, we now know that a public museum will be located in Galata Pier just across Istanbul Museum of Modern Art, but since the Galata Pier is going to be privatized, the destiny of these museums is difficult to predict.

These are just few of the recent incidents that show how the institutions, i.e. expected to be 'autonomous', become the means of symbolic, political and ideological struggle. This struggle continues within the ruling elite in terms of defining what 'bourgeoisie' is. What I heard during the fieldwork also provides some insights about this issue. Coşkun<sup>77</sup> recounts:

Non-national here equals to non-Muslim. This is the dominant ideology in Turkey. Bourgeoisie, both as a concept and from the ideological point of view, is non-national. However, it becomes national when MUSIAD<sup>78</sup> said 'We are the genuine bourgeoisie.' When they appropriate it, a local bourgeoisie emerges. The requirement for this is that the art work should be non-figurative. Now, Ülker<sup>79</sup> buys paintings. It buys either landscapes or non-figurative.

Murat Ülker, Coşkun mentions, is the CEO of Yıldız Holding; one of the biggest collectors in the art market in Turkey. Though, he has been buying paintings for the last fifteen years, his name as a collector was not known by the public until he paid the

76 'Resim Heykel Müzesi depo depo gezdiriliyor', January 30, 2012, [www.aydinlikgazete.com](http://www.aydinlikgazete.com)

77 Interview on February 18, 2011

78 MUSIAD is the abbreviation of Independent Association of Businessman and Industrialist established in 1990. [www.musiad.org.tr](http://www.musiad.org.tr) Ülker is the member of this association.

79 Ülker is a leading food and beverage group found by Ülker Family and now is a part of Yıldız Holding. It is the member of MUSIAD (Independent Industrialist and Businessmen's Association.) The Prime Minister Erdoğan was the business partner with Ülker before he engaged in politics then left his place to his son.

highest price ever paid for a contemporary artwork (2.2 million Turkish Liras for a painting 'Blue Symphony'<sup>80</sup> by Burhan Doğançay) in 2009. While this purchase caused great speculations in the art market -as some informants say “we have no criteria to explain this price”- his presence as a collector of western kind of artwork also creates a particular kind of appropriation in the art related public and his choices to buy landscapes and non-figurative paintings distinguish the social segment he is the member of from the 'other' kind of bourgeoisie.

The new definition of bourgeoisie comes from the founding chairman of MUSIAD Erol Yerar. He announced<sup>81</sup> to a daily three years ago that a new bourgeoisie was born after the 1990s; however this bourgeoisie is not new rather it is genuine. Because, he continued, none of the values the others, i.e. TUSIAD, introduce and represent do not 'originate' in this soil. However, he recently stated- for the same column in the news portal, that MUSIAD is not identical with bourgeoisie but ahi-hood and futuwwa<sup>82</sup>. “Bourgeoisie is two-three hundred years old western concept however ahi-hood and futuwwa have had thousands of years of history here.”

### 3.3 Conclusion:

In this chapter, I tried to show how 'autonomy' is a stake of struggle between privatization and mass culture with the rise of global economic liberalism since the 1980s. It seems that the 'ethos' of one modernity (i.e. symbolized with 'aesthetic modernity' and yet establishes the 'autonomy' of the institutions of modern state as being 'art for art's sake', 'science for science's sake', or communication theories that attribute controlling function to media on behalf of the modern state, the public, etc.) has been

80 Art historian professor Jale Erzen, whose 'Art and Criticism' lecture I attended at METU during Spring Semester of 2010, says that Blue Symphony is the depiction of the Battle of Dardanelle (1915-1916) that took place during World War I. The founder of Turkish Republic, Mustafa Kemal (Atatürk) was the commander of the battle won in favor of Ottoman Empire. Conservative media argue about this war with the example of Corporal Seyit. Zaman Daily and Samanyolu Television react to the removal of the corporal's name from Dardanelle Booklet. According to them, Corporal Seyid, alone, had sunk an armour ship by carrying a 609 pound bullet. January 12, 2012, [www.gazeteciler.com](http://www.gazeteciler.com)

81 Collected from the two internet news web in August 2012. <http://t24.com.tr/haber/erol-yerar-musiad-burjuvazi-ile-degil-ahilik-ve-futuvvet-ile-ozdestir/212000>, <http://haber.sol.org.tr/devlet-ve-siyaset/musiad-kurucu-baskani-erol-yerar-burjuva-olup-olmadigina-karar-veremedi-haberi>

82 Ahi-hood and Futuwwa (Ahilik ve Fütüvvet): Ahilik, 'assemblance of trade groups and artisans originated from the early Turkish traditions; Fütüvvet is the organization of religious and occupational guilds. Collected and translated from [www.tdk.org.tr](http://www.tdk.org.tr)

encompassed by that of a modernity of profit described as the “Enlightenment of Mass Deception” by Adorno and Horkheimer.

As the state's withdrawal from culture area in Turkey became evident after the coup of 1980, I mentioned how consumer society has been symbolized by the prime minister Turgut Özal's personality. As of the 1990s, I attempted to show how 'high art' has been utilized by private sector and become a globally exported commodity with the example of Philip Morris; and how business world in Turkey followed this trend, during which cultural commodities become competitive products in the global market.

In the section Autonomy as a Stake of Struggle between culture in 'Western Modality' and 'Conservative Democrats', I attempted to explain how 'autonomy' of the modern institutions has been inhibited, how privatization of economic liberalism is strategically used both to create a 'democratic' image and as means of pressure; and how 'culture' has been politicized and essentialized dividing 'conservative democrats' and their 'others'.

## CHAPTER 4

### ARTISTIC INSTITUTIONS AS PUBLIC SPHERES

Thus far, I tried to show how 'autonomy' has been a stake of struggle within the establishment of modern state and how it has gone through a several metamorphosis due to economic and social transformations. However, it seems that the discussions regarding this issue are related with the different conceptions and supporting theories about 'public' that becomes more observable since the 1980s, the globalization of economic liberalism.

As stated, 'autonomy' appears as the artistic freedom, the acquisition of bourgeoisie modern state in the West; it symbolizes the summit of public and private division in Weberian terms. However, it seems that the art field in Turkey does not define itself within the concept of 'autonomy' as its Western counterparts. In other words, the field does not see 'autonomy' as the vital response of local bourgeoisie' rationality; rather it tries to connect itself to 'aesthetic autonomy' characterized as universal. Thus, the discussions about the artistic field permeate the discussions of 'public sphere'. Therefore, 'autonomy' seems to be an essential concept in order to understand these two interpenetrated fields. In this chapter, I will try to explain the main approaches about the 'public sphere', and then, to demonstrate how it has been intermingled with the artistic field in Turkey.

As stated, the museum has contributed to the establishment of the modern state as an 'autonomous' entity and to the establishment of an 'autonomous' subject within the historical context. Therefore, the addressee of the museum has been the public, the citizen of the modern state. Bourdieu describes how bourgeoisie legitimizes its reason by means of artistic institutions as following:



There is in fact every reason to suppose that the constitution of the aesthetic gaze as a 'pure' gaze, capable of considering the work of art in and for itself, i.e. as a "finality without an end", is linked to the institution of the work of art as an object of contemplation, with the creation of private and then public galleries and museums, and the parallel development of a corps of professionals appointed to conserve the work of art, both materially and symbolically! (Bourdieu, 1993: 36)

Although, Bourdieu's explanation gives us a frame to understand how both public and private institutions are used by bourgeoisie for distinction in comparison with commercial representation, i.e. the mass/popular culture, it does not allow us to see how these institutions have been the object of struggle. With taking into account the contribution of Bourdieu, Jim McGuigan argues that the finest study of an historical embodiment of liberal democratic thought in public communications and culture is Habermas's 'The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere', which has shaped the understanding of the policies about culture. (McGuigan 1996:176-177) By the same token, Barrett argues, though Habermas's conception of public sphere refers to a literary and discursive communication more than an actual space, it is accepted as a "historical-sociological account by the *emergence, transformation and disintegration* of the bourgeoisie "public sphere" and defined as being between "civil society" and the state by Thomas McCarthy. (Barrett: 2011) She continues:

The bourgeoisie public sphere was "institutionally" guaranteed"- it was officially recognized by the state and consulted accordingly as a sphere with a critical function in relation to the state. It was constituted by private people, who put reason to use in public discourse and it "publicly monitored" the state through such discussion. (Barret 2011: 24)

According to Jennifer Barrett, the French Revolution is the triggering movement of the politicization of public sphere for Habermas, which initially starts around literature and art criticism, and later disseminates to partisan press and other public areas. The utopian or idealist goal of the late 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century democracies, she continues, is to use museum spaces for civilizing and educating people within which the policies are shaped accordingly. When it comes to such matters, Kortun<sup>83</sup> mostly does not make comparisons between the West and the East; or more specifically, between Turkey and liberal Europe. Nevertheless, he insinuates that the concepts such as 'public' have hegemonic function in class societies. He says:

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83 Interview on December 25, 2010

Publicness of culture has only had a history of 350 years and has not been invented by public. Publicness of art occurs when the museums, as one of the most evident places of Publicness, begin to be formed. The establishment of British Museum in 1753 is an example of it. This is an epistemological shift in the history of art.

As democracies transform -if we follow Barrett's description-, the art museum tries to separate itself from the other museums, which are based on homogeneous fiction of a 'public', representing the cultural, military and economic achievement of a nation. Therefore, contemporary museums start looking for new ways of attracting new audiences, engage new communities and responding to the locality or nation within which they are situated. Remembering Kortun's narrative stated in Chapter 3, "*The first public toilette was built in Tate in 1914 if I'm not mistaken. Once a work of art was placed, it used to remain there for years*", art museums begin to organize periodic exhibitions as they become a more interactive and democratic places for the communication between the state and its citizens since the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. That is to say, in theoretical terms, as the power of representative democracy increases, the institutions symbolizing 'publicness' becomes more democratic and tries to speak for all the segments of 'public'.

However, remembering Reaganism and Thatcherism, the 1980s is the breaking point in terms of determining the policies affecting culture area and consequently communicative public sphere. Jim McGuigan tells the transformation emerged during this era with the example of England. According to him, Labor Party governments following Thatcher era had followed the market reasoning of New Right and invented market realism in the social-democratic politics. Socialist politicians of this period had made culture more industrialized endorsing the idea that public-subsidy system only serves the well-off minority. He says that the social democrats' investment in culture industry in the 1980s represents a curious historical irony, because Culture Industry (of Adorno and Horkheimer) is just hostile to the industrialization of culture. McGuigan states that the new policies applied after the 1980s are theorized by postmodernist particularism associated by Foucault against the modernist universalism of Habermas. (McGuigan 1996: 74-75) The particularist approach on cultural policies also fills actor's mind in Turkey. Kortun<sup>84</sup> comments on this subject as follows:

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84 Interview on December 25, 2010

There is an issue of pre and post 80s. The postcolonial discourse... Multiculturalism has evolved somewhere else in the 80s. Museum was formerly was the place for art historians. There was also sufficient but humble money as well but the model of museology changed afterwards. Initially, the curator's job was to protect the collection. The first generation curators were different. A new franchise museum model emerged twenty years ago. The museum has changed. Collection is replaced by Event Management, trade-marking policies applied. It is a part of an entire transformation.

As museum differentiates, it becomes a place less for a modern subject but more of a traditional identities. According to McGuigan, the approaches originating from Foucauldian discourse- as seen in his article 'Technologies of the Self'- have based on the assumption that techné and praxis are two separate notions. (Foucault 2003:145) However, they are not mutually exclusive within the ancient Greek democracy, he argues, rather its politics was about theorizing the good and just life that constitute the object of praxis. Techné, in politics, has nothing to do with the 'techné', the skilled production of artifacts and the expert mastery of objectified tasks. (McGuigan: 186-187)

According to McGuigan, "bourgeois public sphere" is conceptualized as a place in which the 'equal' citizens have critical and rational debate; but it still is a place where the power relations become apparent. McGuigan states that the shift determining cultural policies has caused the re-feudalization of 'public sphere' within which the conversation is administered. According to him:

Power was not sufficiently devolved with universal suffrage; instead, the partnership between state and capital come to organize the condition of everyday life and the process of representation in both the political and cultural senses. (McGuigan: 26)

In this chapter, I will try to make sense of the discourses about the understanding of 'public' and how artistic institutions are considered as 'public sphere' in Turkey in comparison with the above-mentioned discussions.

#### **4.1 The Formation of 'Public Sphere' in Turkey:**

As for the issue of 'western' kind cultural institutions, as stated in Chapter 2, two museums opened during Tanzimat Period in Ottoman Empire, organized like their European counterparts, used against nationalist discourses and European expansionism: Muse-i Humayun (collecting antiques and archeological foundlings) and Military Museum. In the sub-section of her book 'Art Goes Public', Wendy Shaw states that the

Military Museum<sup>85</sup> and the exhibitions were used to demonstrate the genre of history painting and recruit soldiers in Ottoman Empire during the World War 1. However, she continues, these developments are not the results of a state-sanction practices but of an individual patriotisms. (Shaw 2011: 107-121)

Ottoman Prince Abdülmecit (1868-1944) and painter Hasan Rıza (1857-1913) are among these individuals who used art as a communicative vehicle for public patriotism. Shaw says that Prince Abdülmecit, both as an artist and the patron of the arts, not only used the art in 'western' modality for the creation of a nation, but also recorded the contemporary events by painting the literary figures of his time. On the other hand, Hasan Rıza both collected the portraits of the sultans and battle scenes, and made visible what has been written in the history books. Because of his works, Shaw says, the image was no longer perceived as a *religious treat* in the Ottoman Empire.

At that time, there was no museum specific to fine art, she says, nonetheless, the fine arts exhibitions held in Pera only attracted the Ottomans who are already interested in 'western' art and culture. Moreover, she adds, while the Military was addressing a broader audience, the projects of an art museum anticipated by Halil Eldem<sup>86</sup> (1861-1938) envisioned an audience limited to artists. Furthermore, Shaw mentions a Law for a Museum of Art enacted in June 25, 1917 and the painter Hüseyin Avni Lifij (1886-1927), who perceived art as an 'autonomous' field of expression. Shaw states that art eventually has been harnessed for the greater aim for progress. According to her:

Thus, during the Ottoman Era, art in the Western Modality entered the public eye. Most effectively at the Military Museum serves as a vehicle for public propaganda. In contrast, the establishment of a public art collection was associated less with addressing a broad audience. (Shaw 2011: 116)

However, as stated in Chapter 2, though Shaw tries to explain the variation of modernity experienced in Turkey by means of 'western' mode cultural practices, she makes a big generalization by limiting visualization only by painting. Consequently, we keep encountering a number of cliché and dichotomies; e.g. the image as religious threat, the top-down transformation as an impact of western kind institutions, individual initiatives,

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85 The renovated Military Museum opened in 1909 in the former church of Hagia Irene. The exhibition was organized in 1916. (Shaw: 2011)

86 Halil Eldem is the second director of the Imperial Museum. He is the brother of Osman Hamdi who was a painter and the founder of Imperial Museum. (Shaw:2011)

etc. However, understanding the process of modernity within these clichés is the main tendency; and the analysis about the kind of modernity created by social and political turmoils in Turkey, to a large extend, need to be done.

On the other hand, it seems that the administrative public and private division of modern state in Turkey has not been developed as a result of empowering of a class, i.e. bourgeoisie. Thus, according to architectural historian professor Uğur Tanyeli, there are no equivalents of the words 'public' and 'private' in either Ottoman or Turkish dictionaries before the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century. However, it does not mean that there was no 'common sphere' in which people encounter with the 'other' and struggle one another. (Tanyeli, 2008: 47-79)

Objecting the argumentations linking the lack of such distinction of public and private to Islamic Law, Tanyeli claims that there is a multi-faceted order in Ottoman Empire that emerges by the gradual reduction of privacy from the interior to outward. He determines three phases in the formation of a secular (public) spaces in İstanbul within which people come together without their traditional identities: the first phase starts in 1700s continues to 1820s, the second phase from 1830s (Tanzimat) to 1990s and the third phase is still the ongoing phase.

Tanyeli narrates this short history of public space by looking at the literary descriptions and the visuals of Ottoman Period. The early-modern public space is the promenade (mesire) created by public, yet perceived by the uneasiness it created. Men and women, the different ethnic groups and the ruling elite got together in these places that are frequented by middle class. The second phase is identified with Beyoğlu, which is characterized as the stage of modernity by Ottoman intellectuals, it is described as educating, yet to be controlled for its enticement.

When it comes to the issue of visualization of publicness, Tanyeli states that Ottoman upper class women possess publicness by means of the architectural charities; e.g. public baths, mosques, etc. The middle class women become visible by means of the miniatures in the inscriptions of the 17<sup>th</sup> century; e.g. 'Hamay-i Hatayi'<sup>87</sup> inscriptions. Tanyeli argues that the starting point of early-modern period can be dated even to the

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87 Tülay Artan, 'Mahremiyet: Mahrumiyetin Resmi (Privacy: The Picture of Destitution)', *Defter Magazine*, 20, Bahar/Yaz 1993

late 16<sup>th</sup> century by the opening of coffee houses frequented by man in Istanbul. However, for him, the quantity of the visualization of these 'public spheres' is the indicator to demonstrate how much they are legitimized. He says that there is only one picture depicting the late 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century coffee houses<sup>88</sup>, while there are many visualizations of the 18<sup>th</sup> century promenade and the visualization of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Beyoğlu is less than the depictions of promenade. This is because, Tanyeli says, perhaps, the state and parental authority on such 'uncanny' market (public) places-where woman and men meet- continued during the early Republican period so much so that such places perceived as 'private spaces' and it became very difficult to take the photographs of social actors in such places. For breaking the control mechanisms, Tanyeli concludes, woman as a 'defected' gender within publicness is represented not in the books anymore but in the movies in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Aside from how controversial my summary of Tanyeli's short history might be, it seems that his descriptions give us some clues about how the 'public' or 'semi-public/private' institutions are administered as a reflection of a greater social and cultural dynamic; that is the 'public sphere' perceived as the extension of private estate.

#### **4.2. The 'Public' as the State's 'Porcelains':**

In Turkey, 'public sphere' is predominantly understood as something imposed from the top to the down, not as something created and transformed by social actors. Almost always referring to the impact of globalization of economic liberalism, “We are not the actors of this transformation” was one of the most uttered suggestions of Coşkun<sup>89</sup>. He says:

It was the Power that used to produce Publicness, and as it was reproducing the existent system, it was valuable. However here, what we understand from ‘public’ is the state. The root of this understanding is the approach that ‘the nation is homogeneous, but the people are heterogeneous.’ The governor of Istanbul Fahrettin Kerim Gökay had once said, “the people rushed to the beach, the nation cannot swim.”<sup>90</sup> It is a great reflection of that understanding. It starts by Tanzimat<sup>91</sup>,

88 For more information: Lecture by Prof.Dr. Cemal Kafadar, 'Turkish Coffeehouse Culture', 2010, source: [www.vimeo.com/9492639](http://www.vimeo.com/9492639)

89 Interview on February 18, 2011

90 “Halk plajlara akın etti, millet denize giremiyor.”

91 Tanzimat is the reformation period of Ottoman Empire started in 1839 and lasted by the declaration

the creation of the public. What they understand from Publicness is a bit of visualization, and this is a kind of Publicness where people are passive. In this sense the culture is also a part of a program; State Museum of Painting and Sculpture, the Museum of Ethnography, etc. are all the parts of that program. 'Public' means, in this context, being an employee of public service. When I was a kid, I often used to hear news about the State Laws for Public Employment. Each time, I was amazed to realize 'how much porcelain the state possesses!' <sup>92</sup> After all, the public service is practically a business of protocol, where the assigned employees fulfill their duties according to regulations. For instance an employee had cultivated cannabis for years in Topkapı Palace's Garden and nobody noticed it.

One intersection point of both Coşkun's narrative and that of Tanyeli's is that the long-going 'public sphere' of Tanzimat characterized by the control of the elite within which the 'west' has been indicated both as homogeneous and civilizing in its entirety, yet 'uneasy' for the potential of changing 'traditional' relationships between the sexes, between the ethnicities and between the ruling and the ruled. However, on the other side of the same coin, there is a sociological dimension that makes such reasoning thoroughly embodied in the state; that is the 'public sphere' perceived as the extension of private sphere, the family, the patriarchal organization of the social depending on the mode of production.

There is a common ground linking a public employee with the prime minister Erdoğan. It seems that both the employee cultivating cannabis in Topkapı Palace's garden and the prime minister displacing Turkey's first Fine Art Museum from the Crown Prince Residency of Dolmabahçe Palace -as stated in Chapter 3- and using it as his office rely on this perception: the state is not understood as an 'autonomous' entity, rather understood as the estate, the property of the father. This estate is like their father's farm. Autonomous 'public sphere' does not control the state, but the governments and the elites, under the image of father, disciplines his 'adolescent' kids rewarding well-bred, while punishing rebellious. For this reason, critical art field will be punished. Artistic Field's becoming a stake of struggle within power structures, as suggested, is clearly observable in Kortun's <sup>93</sup> following narratives:

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of Meşrutiyet (the first constitutional era) in 1876 to secure the territorial integrity of empire against nationalist movements.

92 "Radyoyu dinlerken sürekli Devlet Kamu **Personeli** ile ilgili haberler duyardım, 'devletin ne çok **porceleni** var' diye geçirirdim aklımdan." Sargun was mixing the two different worlds, '**personel and porcelen**' as a kid. First means 'employee' while the second is 'porcelaine'.

93 Interview on December 18 & 25, 2010

September 12 (the military coup of 1980) is when the state entirely cuts its relation with art and artist, which lead the artists to head towards the private sector. Henceforth, the state's approach to the issue is that the effective use of culture is not necessary.<sup>94</sup> Although, there is money coming from the state spent to culture, there is no longer public control. There is a sector; I call Heritage Tourism. If the public museums in Turkey are operated by TURSAB<sup>95</sup>, this is just like Berlusconi's museums in Italy, it is not public anyway.

If we continue doing such analogies following this -not sole- but the main theme, we may propose that cultural and artistic sites are considered as the guestrooms of father's estate. The similarity that Kortun establishes between Turkey and Berlusconi's Italy indicates to a global dynamic of a same process. 'The Godfather'<sup>96</sup> image supersedes the image of Renaissance Italy during the globalization of mass/popular culture. If we put it in McGuigan's conceptualization, while the history of suffrage, social struggle waits to be written, the conversation within 'public sphere' has been more and more administered and re- feudalized, ignoring the struggles of living history of 'today'. This phenomenon spreads to all areas that are 'strategically' constructed as 'autonomous' since the Enlightenment.

The policies being executed mainly on such understanding of 'public sphere' in Turkey, i.e. the extension of private estate, creates a perception of a 'public sphere' that does not belong to the public. Questioning the local compatibility of the concepts and propositions mentioned during our conversations - each time with a considerable care- Kortun <sup>97</sup>says:

The equivalents of 'public administration and secular' in Turkey are 'selam versus mahrem, the street versus inside, and interior versus exterior'. I teach at Bilgi University, they (students) don't understand. I asked 'Who is entering the house with shoes?', they all said they take off their shoes before entering the house. And I told them you have the concept of interior and exterior, there is no public here, then, they understood. In a gathering, İhsan Bilgin<sup>98</sup> had thrown a wad of paper and told the audience, "the area till the wad is my territory and the rest is public."

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94 'Kültürün etkin kullanımı olsa da olur olmasa da olur' gibi bir yaklaşım var.

95 Türkiye Seyahat Acenteleri Birliği (TURSAB): The Association of Turkish Travel Agencies

96 Godfather movie trilogy directed by Francis Ford Coppola

97 Interview on December 26, 2010

98 Architect Professor Dr. İhsan Bilgin teaches at Bilgi University, İSTANBUL. (source [www.bilgi.edu.tr](http://www.bilgi.edu.tr))



In other words, most people do not have the perception of a notion that a 'public sphere' can be any place, outside/inside or concrete/virtual, where one gathers with the other. And, the various manifestations of patriarchal discipline continues to take place in the conventional, outside public spheres/ public spaces. You cannot sit on the grass in the park; there are limits of flirting with your special other (preferably, better not to flirt at all); there is a certain dress code, a behavior code, etc. And the majority, regardless of their political and cultural choices, are in consensus on these codes. Traditional family code and law enforcements control you everywhere. Entering the libraries, seeking rights from the public institutions, etc. are subject to authorization. The protocols you have to follow quite harms your mental health, if not kill you. Governments change, but the various manifestations of this understanding penetrates and it changes very slowly.

Suggesting the emergence of 'public sphere' as an extension of private estate is one of the tools for Uğur Tanyeli to understand the process of urbanism and architecture in Turkey. This description appears to be giving us a model that allows us to look at the way in which modernity might have been experienced in this land. We can explain the fact that governments' transforming the whole country into a construction site with the same understanding: 'public sphere' as an extension of father's estate. Public squares, pedestrian, parks, sidewalks, etc. are demolished without asking anyone; no democratic channel is put into practice. Thus, 'autonomous' subject, the civil rights, and the welfare state, and the freedom of association, and pluralism, equality before the law, etc., which characterize and legitimize the existence of modern democratic state, fade out; they are not even thought to be taken into consideration.

#### **4.3 'Autonomy' of Art Field is at Stake within Re-Feudalization:**

Within the frame-work of above mentioned arguments, I think, it would not be wrong to suggest that the mentality of the private sector about 'public' directly affects the 'autonomy' of the artistic field. The claims regarding the characteristics of this mentality are consistent with one of Tanyeli's argumentations. As far as I draw from our conversations, according to Kortun<sup>99</sup>, corporate cultural institutions do not have even a consistent stance, let alone a radical one. He continues:

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<sup>99</sup> Interview on December 25, 2010

Istanbul Modern invests to that matrix. There is a kind of public that they miss. It is quite dangerous to stay away from this matrix. We just try to stay at the edge, not to fall of it and do our jobs. We produce a vision at the edge of this matrix. Cultural Modernism is at the center of it, a version of which is produced here right now, places like Borusan, Istanbul Modern do not work. In my opinion, Sakıp Sabancı Museum does not work right strategically. They do not work as a part of a university; I would expect them to do more research.

Though its history not written, we might temporarily suggest that the projection of the Cultural Modernism of the private sector is the continuum of the 'top-down' revolutionary reformists. In other words, following Barret's argument, it roughly invests in a homogeneous conception of 'public', representing the cultural, military and economic achievement of a nation. And, moving from Tanyeli's suggestion, its understanding of public somehow follows the understanding of Ottoman Intellectuals; that is conceiving the modern 'public sphere' as educating, civilizing, yet uncanny.

However, the above-mentioned connection established with the history of 'public sphere' in Turkey just explains only a part of the recent conditions. Barrett argues that 'community' approach has gradually avoided 'public' approach in museology since the 1980s. Referring to Habermas, she says, blurring the distinction between private and public spheres weakens the political possibilities for reforming a "truly liberal democracy" and creates a 'pseudo' public sphere. She continues:

The community is often identified with or characterized by a struggle with government or private economic interests, reinforcing its separateness from both 'private' and 'public', yet irrespective of their over connection to the sphere of government at local, regional and national levels, references to museums as public spheres are persistent. (Barrett: 10)

In other words, 'autonomous and critical' artistic field, emerging from the private and public distinction, loses its monitoring and controlling quality as it moves away from the idea of 'publicness'. Even though, her name is perhaps the first name that comes to mind talking about the contemporary artistic events in Turkey, Madra<sup>100</sup> is extremely unhappy about the current situation of the private artistic institutions. She says:

Let's say, nearly a million people visit İstanbul Modern in a year. Do you think this is enough in a country of 70 million people? The quote in the world is 10 percent. It means 10 percent of the whole population should benefit from this museum. There

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100 Interview on September 12, 2010

are no museums that are peculiar to 'today'. Today, museums, in any event, are venues where ideologies are questioned. There is no museum in Turkey that does it. You know, the collection of Istanbul Modern does not question anything. It just demonstrates it.

The common point of both Barrett's and Madra' s narratives is that the 'critical' quality of artistic field is barred. However, leaving aside their being problematic, we cannot talk about the existence of the type of community-based art and cultural institutions in Turkey. Nonetheless, in addition to Madra's narrative, I would like to explicate a sketch of my everyday experiences that might provide more hints about the specifics of the private sector's conception of 'public'.

As far as I know, this type of culture and art institutions shall be open during the day, six days a week, except Mondays. It is a 'universal' rule. However, it is very common thing to find a popular art gallery closed in any of these available days. You might have looked at their websites, be sure that it is open; but it is not. Or, your projection about a museum experience might be to have a feeling of a settled institution, but you may be disappointed. May your disappointment be caused by a private event, which only address to a 'niche' art audience? Probably not. For example, I went to see Sophie Calle exhibition at Sabancı Museum- organized as a part of Sabancı University- in September 2011; expecting that I will see an exhibition in the new building specifically built for the contemporary exhibitions. However, the small scale exhibition was installed in couple of rooms in the old building, the new building was reserved for a business meeting between a German Firm and Sabancı Group.

By looking at the above mentioned data, it seems that many large and small institutions drive their supposedly 'autonomous' museums and galleries as their private properties. Under all these fancy, professional covers and advertisement strategies about the exhibition of a 'great master', you might end up observing that 'public sphere' is pretty much perceived as the extension of the private estate. In the middle of an hectic operation for the opening of SALT, Kortun<sup>101</sup> explains his new vision about 'public sphere' as follows:

Of course, there must be an intention about public; however it does not mean that you are for the public. This issue of publicness that should be described each time and this definition needs to be sustained. Where is the public in this new order? The

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101 Interview on December 25, 2010

definition of public during Habermas and post-Habermas period are very different. But, where are we, me and the institution? ...Institutions want to be more hegemonic. We want the institution to have a direct relation with audience. An urgency determining the operation of the institution is required. We have to develop the feedback loops accordingly. Now, the user will decide everything. How the institution will be open/accessible for the user?"

Thus, we may suggest that Kortun and the institution where he works want to invest in a 'multicultural' and more democratic 'public sphere' and they are going to use new media technologies in order to sustain this understanding. However, the will of this particular institution cannot be generalized for the majority of the public/private institutions in Turkey. Moreover, Barrett's argumentations are thought-provoking in this context; i.e. the 'community-based' description of 'public sphere' leads culture and art institutions to lose their objective. Based on my personal experiences, it does not seem very possible for these institutions to be 'hegemonic' and thus, to construct the kind of "cultural modernity they miss". Because, they only invite me to their 'private' saloons, not to a 'public sphere' where I can encounter with the 'other', the 'critical' artwork, the 'modern' or 'postmodern' vision, etc. According to them, I am not an 'autonomous' subject, and this 'museum' or 'gallery' is not an 'autonomous' sphere where 'homogeneous' or 'heterogeneous' public can meet. So, it seems that most of these institutions seem to be showing of strength and territorialize certain places. We do not even need to talk about the ways in which these institutions invite the public to 'unconventional', 'interactive' exhibitions, how the 'unconventional' artworks are treated in these exhibitions, where the setting of an artistic event lead the audience to, etc.

Recalling the arguments stated in the introduction of this chapter, there seems to be, generally speaking, three phases to understand the emergence of public sphere in Europe following Habermas's description: i- homogeneous fiction of a public and public sphere, representing the cultural, economic and military achievement of a nation; and the struggle of partisan public up until the 20<sup>th</sup> century, ii- a 'multicultural' conception of public sphere contributing relatively more democratic systems up until the second half of 20<sup>th</sup> century, and finally re-feudalization of public sphere since the 1970s and 1980s. And Tanyeli detects three turning points during this process in Ottoman Empire leading the formation of modernism and the modern state. I think, there is an urgency to analyze how the transformation of mode of production in Ottoman Empire had changed this process.

Re-feudalization of 'public sphere' and 'public spaces', as stated by McGuigan, provides the state and capital to organize the condition of everyday life and the process of representation in both the political and cultural senses. Nevertheless, what is specifically vital for this study is that, this process emerges as a boundless and immense- yet invisible- oppression on the 'autonomy and criticism' of artistic field.

#### **4.4. Conclusion:**

I tried to demonstrate that 'public sphere' is Habermas's conceptualization that function as a monitor between 'civil society' and the state; it historically corresponds to all concrete and virtual areas within which the class, culture and identity struggles have taken place and transformed the modern state. The claim here is that 'autonomous' modern state that is controlled by 'public sphere' will be at equal distance to everyone and talk back with the public in a pluralistic discourse and arbitrate conflicts with humanism.

It seems plausible that there is a public sphere and its representation with its structural and cultural differences in this land that creates both modernism and modern state. In Turkey, the history of public sphere, the process of which are modeled by Tansuğ, waits to be understood in all its diversity and complexity. However, there appears to be a quite global phenomenon within which the public sphere has been re-feudalized since the 1970s that corrodes the perception of 'autonomous', yet 'controllable' modern state.

According to McGuigan, the globalization of economic liberalism is the most definitive factor causing the re-feudalization of public sphere. Governments' giving up from the public-subsidy system hands over the institutions representing modern state to market reasoning. McGuigan states that the renewed public policies supported by Foucauldian argumentations goes hand in hand with this process. Nevertheless, he states, saying that operations of power and of discursively formed knowledge are closely intertwined (one of Foucault's claim) does not mean that power and discourse are identical. Same thing, as stated above, also applied to the discussions about techné and praxis. Calling to the intellectuals as knowledge workers, he says:

Without techné nothing would ever get made but without praxis there would be no sense to the making. The main reason for insisting upon praxis as a form of practicality is that systematic forces tend to relentlessly to reduce praxis to techné, theoretically informed practice to mere technical means in the utilitarian and instrumentalist way. (McGuigan: 187)

This means to remind knowledge workers contributing power and knowledge regimes that praxis is more about a politics targeting “good and just life” rather than technique. Considering all these, the arguments, claiming that 'autonomy' of the artistic field re-creates the distinction of social classes, need to be re-considered.

## CHAPTER 5

### AUTONOMY AND ART HISTORY

Remembering Bourdieu, the 'distinctive quality' of art emerges from the condition that, by self-referencing to its own history, it demands to be perceived historically. Thus, he continues:

It asks to be referred not to an external referent, the represented or designated 'reality', but to the universe of past and present work of art. Like artistic production, that is generated in a field, aesthetic perception is necessarily historical, inasmuch as it is differential, relational and attentive to the deviations which make styles. (Bourdieu, 1984: 3,4)

In the first part of his statement, Bourdieu suggests that art demands to be referred to itself within the framework of the universe of art works that 'distinguishes' it from the other fields. What if I complete his idea as: *Like anthropological study, that is generated in a field, anthropological perception is necessarily historical, inasmuch as it is differential, relational and attentive to the deviations which make 'culture' and 'social'?*

Unlike Bourdieu, I have insofar tried to show that 'aesthetic autonomy' is the 'symbolized' notion of 'autonomy' that itself contributes to invention of modernity. In this chapter, I will try to note both the philosophical roots of 'aesthetic autonomy' and its critique; as well as their consequences in the art field. I also aim to depict how the art field in Turkey has been interpreted by the informants in relation with the discussions on 'autonomy'.

A treatise 'The Critique of Judgment' of Immanuel Kant, who is one of the major thinkers of Enlightenment, is the founding text of the discipline of aesthetics in Europe since the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. According to art historian Rosalind Krauss, this treatise of Kant supports modernism with its conviction in the autonomy of the arts. She

summarizes the main argument of Kant as following:

“Judgement”, the outcome of aesthetic experience, must be separated from “Reason”; it is not dependent on cognitive judgment but must reveal the paradoxical condition of “purposiveness without purpose.” (Art Since 1900:45)

In this text, Kant differentiates the discernible from the understandable, the ascetic from the secular, the transcendental from the empirical. Hereafter, as seen in before-mentioned thinkers who attribute a privileged quality to it, 'aesthetic autonomy' will be in the service of a secular, humane and progressive world and set free from any pragmatic function.

With the impact of two world wars; psychoanalysis, formalism, structuralist semiotics, feminism and post-structuralism emerge as serious criticisms against modernism in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. These approaches presented new propositions about the modern human condition and society with questioning the already established theories. According to Krauss, the post-structuralism contested before all else the main premise of structuralism that each system, for example a language or a kinship system, is autonomous. It states that it is not possible to determine any 'disinterestedness' for any specific field, a claim that is echoed in the art field as well.

For example, in the literary field, a famous figure of the post-structuralism Michael Foucault assess that 'discourses' are not neutral as accepted, rather they are always charged from within by power relations and even by the exercise of force. Another influential thinker, Jack Derrida's contribution to the field is especially important as he directly addresses to Kant's 'Critique of Judgement'. For Kant, the logic of the artwork is internal to it, what is outside of it may only be an ornament, like a frame of a painting. However, what Derrida does by using ‘deconstruction<sup>102</sup>’, or the 're-mark’, as he sometimes calls it, is to demonstrate that Kant’s essay ‘The Critique of Pure Reason’ establishes a cognitive ‘frame’ for Kant’s theory on aesthetic in ‘the Critique of Judgment’. That is to say, neither Reason nor Judgment is pure. As these two notions/signs cannot be separated from one another with a definitive line, they both are

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102 Derrida starts questioning the bivalent texture -the signifier (the written/spoken form of a concept) and the signified (what the written concept indicates) are divided as the signified is given privilege over the signifier-and opposing binary pairs, i.e. young/old, man/woman, of linguistic structuralism first established by Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure, and so leading to ‘deconstruction’. (Art Since 1900: 2004)



interconnected. For Derrida, the “différance”- not the différence- of a sign is detected in the breaks, in the line spacings of a text that enables the articulation of a sign from another. In short, Derrida shows the former texts determine the latter one.

Krauss suggests that the concepts such as re-mark, “différance”, etc. grounded new artistic movements emerged in the wake of modernism and became the staple not just of poststructuralism but of postmodernist art. It has become fully apparent by means of mass media that 'representation' and 'reality' are not mutually exclusive; rather they shape each other, they arise from one another. According to Krauss, as being fascinated by the reversal between reality and representation, some artists start arguing that now representations, instead of coming after reality, precede and construct reality. They suggest that the representations and the narratives reflected in the mass-media products are the sources and means of our 'real' emotions and our 'real' selves. Along with these arguments, artists continued to question all the premises, the conceptions of authorship and originality, aesthetic institutions, all the implicit power relations that establish the art-world. The kind of artwork, Krauss continues, building a critique of forms of ownership and fictions of privacy and control came to be identified as postmodernism in its radical form. (Art Since 1900: 2004)

### **5.1 The Conversion of Art History:**

This shift in theory and art had also transformed the art histories. Philosopher and art critic Arthur Danto demonstrates this process by focusing on the approaches of two well-known art historians; Ernst Gombrich and Clement Greenberg. According to him, Gombrich's almost 'Kantian' approach resembles the approach of Karl Popper, who thinks that the history of science is established by certain leaps that are disciplined by the criterion of falsification. Adapting the formula of Popper, '*How a representationalist art is possible?*' was Gombrich's question, says Danto, and treating art as some superordinate being that learns how to represent the world through centuries. However, Danto points out that even though this approach provides Gombrich with a formula for writing an art history, it lacks the sense of historical change and assumes an almost evolutionary progress in the forms of representations. (Danto 1999: 1-4)

According to Danto, it is not possible to track this kind of progress in the history of modernist art, which started with impressionism in 1870 and lasted till post-

impressionism, or from Cézanne<sup>103</sup> to cubists<sup>104</sup> and fauves. This time, Danto focuses on American art critic Clement Greenberg's 'quasi-Kantian' approach, where he investigates a novel theory of modernism to seek art's own foundations. According to Danto, what Greenberg says about this modernist era is very important, because it is in this period that art became aware of itself, seeking its originality in the possibilities of change and leaps. However, when the pop art emerges in 1950s, 'originality' as a distinction sign for the arts was no longer applicable to evaluate a work of art. Danto says, just like the modernist art limits the theory of Gombrich, pop art limits the theory of Greenberg. This is how the term 'contemporary art' becomes a name of all styles, becoming too inclusive a term that some people even claim that anything can be considered as a work of art. Nevertheless, the answer in this new situation, for Danto, is to consider art as a philosophical problem and to realize that work of art actually establishes a kind of history itself. According to him, there are now two criteria to evaluate artwork, it has to have a content and a form or a mode of representation that must embody its content. He says:

What *Brillo Box*<sup>105</sup> is about is *aboutness*; and it must *embody* that content. So what Brillo Box is about is an important first question to ask, and whatever answer one comes up with, it will have to differ from what Brillo cartons are about- in case we recognize that the shipping carton is, after all, a piece of commercial art. The design of the box proclaims the virtues of its literal contents, namely soap pads. But one may be certain that this is not what Brillo Box is about. Similar question arise for piles of felt scraps, whether presented as art or merely left over after the sheet of felt are shaped in the cutting room. These issues belong in what I term the "discourse of justification," and while the definition will doubtless need to be carried further, these two conditions explain how two things may look alike but one of them not be art. To be art is to be internally connected with an interpretation, which means precisely identifying content and mode of presentation. ... There is in my view a great deal in Hegel's belief that art and philosophy are deeply affined- that they are, in his heavy idiom, two moments of Absolute Spirit. (Danto:8-10)

As stated by Danto, though 'originality' becomes the formula of Greenberg to assess the art works of "the modernist era" (the 1900's- the 1950's), it does not mean that the artists

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103 Paul Cézanne dies in sothern France in 1906: following the retrospectives of Vincenty van Gogh and Georges Surat the preceding year, Cézanne's death casts Postimpressionim as the historical past, with Fauvism as its heir. (Contents, Art Since 1900)

104 In 1911, Pablo Picasso returns his "borrowed" Iberian stone heads to the Louvre Museum in Paris from which they have been stolen: he transforms his primitivist style and with Georges Braque begins to deveop Analytical Cubism. (Contents, Art Since 1900)

105 A re-made by Andy Warhol. A Brillo Box deposited in a transparent plexiglass box is called '*Shine Box*' sculpture. It is one of the other re-made cans of Kellogg's cornflakes, Heinz ketchup, Matt's apple juice, etc.

Greenberg talks about were longing for the 'originality' in the possibilities of 'change' and 'leaps'; rather they were in search of 'a moment' in which the 'truth', the 'Absolute Spirit', an alternative perception is revealed since the first half of 19<sup>th</sup> century as Calinescu stated. Moreover, since the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, artists were already interested in the issues, with or without a form, or a technique, or a medium, etc., questioning all the major premises of art and criticizing the 'other' modernity. We can observe that artists were interested in 'authorship' in 'pastiche'<sup>106</sup> (as an homage to another 'author' or 'culture') as a technique or searching for a liberation from any kind of limitations like in 'Suprematism'<sup>107</sup> (the supremacy of pure artistic feeling) as a movement etc.

However, when there emerges many micro-criticism by the impact of post-structuralist analysis since the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century as stated, Calinescu determines a sense of stasis in the art world within the era of culture industry by referring to Leonard B. Meyer:

The arts today are characterized by a “fluctuation-steady-state”. Change is everywhere but we live, culturally, in a perfectly static world. The contradiction is only apparent, for stasis “is not the absence of novelty and change- a total quiescence- but rather the absence of ordered sequential change. (Calinescu: 147)

For Calinescu, the sense of stasis has a lot to do with today's understanding of 'time', in his own words, of the modernity's concept of time. He states that as the collocation of modernity and progress seems to be only temporary, the belief in the progress seems to have been largely exhausted; and the future has become almost as unreal and empty as past. He continues:

The widespread sense of instability and discontinuity makes instant enjoyment about the only 'reasonable' thing to strive for. Hence, the desire toward consumption and the whole paradoxical concept of a “throw-away economy”, and more generally, civilization... ( Calinescu: 247)

## 5.2 Perceiving History as Socially Symptomatic:

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106 'Pastiche': (n) literary or artistic work from or imitating various sources (*authors*). In 1919, Pablo Picasso has his first solo exhibition in Paris in thirteen years: *the onset of pastiche in his work coincides with a widespread antimodernist reaction*. (source, The Oxford Desk Dictionary and Thesaurus: American Ed. (1997) and Art Since 1900

107 In 1915 Kazimir Malevich shows his Suprematist canvases at the “0.10” exhibition in Petrograd, thus bringing the Russian Formalist concepts of art and literature into alignment.

In Turkey, the cultural shift indicated by painting in the Western modality was, both in terms of its conception of space and its content, as radical as the cultural revolutions of Renaissance: humanistic subjectivity and the construction of perspectival space. As in many parts of the world, the Ottoman Empire, adopted products of Enlightenment thought, including political forms and institutions as well as the promise of progress and modernity. *However, it often did not adopt in equal measure the ideological traditions, discourses, and conflicts which underpinned the changing formulations of that thought in the modern world.* (Shaw 2011: 6-7)

As it can be remembered, I tried to show in the previous chapters of this thesis that 'autonomy' of 'western cultural institutions' are used as a *stake of struggle* among the ruling elite in both Ottoman Empire and in Turkish Republic by indicating -though not all- but some of the moments. As far as "adopting in *equal measure* the ideological traditions, discourses and 'conflicts' which underpinned the changing formulations of that thought in 'the modern world' " statement of Shaw is concerned; initially the following questions come to mind: With what measure? In comparison to where? Where is 'the modern world'? Is it west? Which west?

Shaw continues that although Ottoman Art in the 'western modality' emerge during the modern era, it has been left 'outside the pale' of art history and it is neither considered to be a part of 'exotic' and 'decorative' Islamic art, which generally 'ends' in 1800 and considers Ottoman art as a sub-category, nor a part of modern art. She states that the construction of three-dimensional perspective has been accepted both as the key shift in art of the modern artistic tradition in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and it has also been understood as the enabling element for the development of the discourse of modernity. Additionally, talking about being aware of the hegemonic discourse of the above-mentioned formal art histories and about hesitating to use 'the art in Western modality' phrase, Shaw states her understanding about the 'shifts' in the art of 20<sup>th</sup> century as following:

Reflective of this *partial* adoption, when perspective came to the empire in the form of painting that made use of spatial depiction- painting in Western modality- it did so without many of the wider connotations that accompanied in the West. *Even if contemporary art no longer generally uses perspective as an intrinsic structure, it nonetheless depends on perspectivalism in a far broader, cultural sense: a 'single' vantage point from which to understand the history of techniques, practices, and styles, and ultimately the very modes in which art functions.* (Shaw 2011:7)

It seems that, according to Shaw, 'partial' adaption causing the exclusion of the Ottoman

art in Western Modality from the art histories; but the 'tree dimensional' perspective<sup>108</sup> – though “no longer” is in use in the 20<sup>th</sup> century of modern/contemporary art- still remains as an “intrinsic structure” and depends on a 'single' vantage point. Hereafter, referring to Dipesh Chakrabarty, she claims that the third world historian is condemned to know 'Europe' as the original home for the 'modern' and s/he perceives the history as something adopted from a foreign timeline and Turkish art historians, intellectuals, and so on do the same. In that case, as she overlooks all the above-mentioned discussions shaking the art and intellectual world to a point where Danto claims that art is now a philosophy, can we conclude that the first world 'art' historian is condemned to know Europe as the only home for the 'modern'? Rather, it seems more likely to think that this “intrinsic structure” is the 'autonomy' or more precisely the 'criticism' of modern subject rather than tree-dimensional perspective.

Therefore suggesting that, as Shaw does, both the dominant element of Islamic visual culture 'Girih'<sup>109</sup> and three-dimensional perspective of Western art tradition have developed from Euclid's 'Elements of Geometry' and therefore the Ottoman art in western modality is the synthesis of both does not solve the problem of 'hegemonic discourse'. We can also ask similar questions like I stated above. Whose's Islamic visual culture? Where?

In 'Introduction to Turkey's History of Visuality', Uğur Tanyeli states that the painting holds a little part in visual culture and picturing a realistic human figure holds even a smaller part in the whole history of painting. According to him, there is an interest in painting in various Islamic societies though in differing ways and rates. Thus, contrary to 'evolutionary' approaches, it makes more sense to suggest that it is not possible to talk about the same kind of synchronous interest in painting in all parts of Europe and in all schools of Christianity. The 'magic' of three dimensional image comes from in its ability to catch the 'moment'- fragmenting 'time', becoming the representation of 'today', of 'modern'- while the other techniques of 'image' narrate a multidimensional, timeless stories. So, depicting the 'realism' of the 16<sup>th</sup> century mural paintings and miniatures as

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108 Three-dimensional image appears in various mediums in ancient cultures in different time periods before the emergence of modern state in Europe. However, Leonardo da Vinci's 'Mona Lisa' (dated roughly 1502) is considered to be the birth of perspective in formal histories as the perfect representation of three-dimension on two dimensional canvas. Source: The Story of Art, E.H. Gombrich.

109 Girih: the potentially infinite surface pattern. (source: Shaw, 2011)

the representation of historical events of Ottoman Empire, as Shaw suggests, does not position the Ottoman Empire into 'Modern'. Therefore, three-dimensional image takes a meaning within an era during which other social events emerge. As I tried to explain in the previous chapters, bourgeoisie, as an emerging class, start documenting its own 'reality' by using three-dimensional representation against sovereign powers and making its rationale hegemonic on society.

On the other hand, in 'Turkish Painting and Its Critic', İpek Düben initially explains that she does not apply Marxist approaches in the book, because she thinks, as an artist, that the artistic production is the revelation of very private and subjective feelings. Then, she imagines 'harmonious and sharing' societies in the Western Culture. For her, there are systematic aesthetic theories about the Western art, because the societies of Western culture are 'civilized' and 'organic'. She suggests that since it is not possible to talk about the existence of a western kind civilized society in the Ottoman Empire, it is not possible to talk about an art that represents such society. According to her, the function of painting in Islamic culture is only limited to entertainment and ornamentation. So, the Turkish Painting and its critic produced between the 1880 and 1950, she says, were basically about familiarizing with the West. We also encounter with such descriptions that suggest, this 'period of familiarization' is mainly about the duplication of the out-dated style of western painting.

Both claiming that we might be living in a 'post-intellectual era', and yet highlighting the names of many scholars and terminologies unknown by most of the audiences, Hasan Bülent Kahraman<sup>110</sup> is dominating the hall of Piramit Art Center with his informational capital. He says :

Our relation with the Western models is emulation, or you can also call it a relation of imitation. Each generation that went to Paris had seen the works of art, which were made by earlier generations and which had already been either classical or conventional, or out of date. For example, is it possible to establish synchronization between the paintings made by the Ottoman generations of 1913 or 1914 and the ones made in Paris? Is it possible to establish synchronization between the paintings made in Istanbul and the paintings made in any metropolis in any part of the world in 1930s? In that case, the problem here stems from the fact that we have not developed *a non-western modernity*. So when you put the matter this way, you take a magnifier and start looking for the projections of the certain movements. So, there is cubism there, a concrete reality. Who is the representative of it in Turkey?

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110 Pannel discussion on February 17, 2011

This painter may be, or the other one probably... See, this relation is the relation of emulation. This has nothing to do with looking at the artwork from inside and grasping its problematic.

So, is the problem really about developing a 'non-western' modernity? Are all the artworks produced in Europe as revolutionary as that of cubist movement? The questions I point to Shaw's argumentations are also relevant here. The oxymoron in his narrative creates an inextricable situation. It might mean that we created a 'western' modernity- which does not belong to us- but we were not able to create 'synchronic' art movements. Would it be possible to suggest that these asynchronous art works created by Ottoman 'soldier'<sup>111</sup> painters were in service of creating a 'modern' state, a 'modern' subject? Would introducing cubism to people in Turkey have any value? If there were other 'civil' painters and artists -that Beral Madra talks about an avant-garde woman painter Hale Asaf (1905-1938) for example – can we understand something about the kind of modernity experienced during the Ottoman Empire from their life stories? Can we define the conflictual relations among the ruling elite, the intellectuals and artists?

On the other hand, Sezer Tansuğ, who died in 1988, reconciles the roots of the local contemporary art with Turkish identity that is directly proportional to the period of nation making. According to him, there is pre-Islamic Turkish art tradition which also includes mural paintings that shows the characteristics of '*observation*' and '*realism*'; and therefore reflect and represent some realities of the Turkish societies of the time. This asset of Turkish art, he continuous, has been integrated, varied and interpreted by Islam and incorporated Greek and Byzantine values. As far as the social modernization is concerned, Tansuğ claims that mostly nationalist -regardless of secular or Islamic origin- and partly cosmopolitan efforts have secured the 'modernist restoration' that took place in the Ottoman Empire. For him, the Turkish researches who overlook the quality of 'original' Turkish art and nationalist social movements were stick to difference of the art of painting and sculpture in Islam that does not overlap with the schools of Western Christianity, i.e. affiliated with the naturalist and organic ideals. (Tansuğ 2012: 12-16) However, as I argued before about Shaw's statement, creating such links, i.e. the '*observation*' and '*realism*' of pre-Islamic Turkish art, does not position art in Turkey into

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111 Kahraman continues; “Recently, I wrote a catalog for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The ministry possess thousands of paintings and they made a selection from it. This history starts in 1850s. Are you going to write about the Ottoman soldier painters who supposedly paint by imagination, but in reality by looking at the photographs? Or, are you going to write about the paintings of Ottoman Pashas (the highest military rank) who travel to Paris?” ( Panel discussion on February 17, 2011)

'modern'.

By looking at the above-mentioned narrations, it seems that the three-dimensional perspective and then originality aspect of 'out-dated' formal histories are still shown as the main barriers. Moreover, there seems to be more obstacles to handle. Kahraman<sup>112</sup>, in the same meeting, is also talking about why it is not possible to write the art history of Turkey. And soon enough, he will be leaving the hall before 'Questions Session' starts. He continues:

Writing history, historiography is a matter of consciousness, a matter of expertise. Now, we don't have the expertise to form an art history. Why? The Art history, if the lineage started by the generations of great German art historians considered, is about origins, sources, grounds and starting points.... That is to say, when Winckelmanns, etc. were developing art history, they searched for that kind of origins, didn't they?... When we look at the issue this way, Turkish art does not have the origins, the sources, the roots.

Hearing such claims from very qualified figures that represent the crème de la crème of art field in Turkey suggests that many actors can solely exist by producing the discourse on the deprivation of things and by only addressing to the west. So, it leads one to conclude that they do not have their own 'autonomous' subjectivities. Such argumentation brings to mind one of Marshall Sahlin's<sup>113</sup> analysis who suggests that there is a certain kind of historiography through which the postmodernists and the world systematists share a common ground by designating to the invested history of the West. Sahlin says:

There is a certain historiography that too often takes the “great game” of imperialism (it is the 'top-down revolution in Turkey's case as most people claim) as the only game in town. ... What else can people say about it, except that some people have all the historical luck? When Europeans invent their traditions it is a genuine cultural rebirth, the beginnings of a progressive future. When other peoples do it, it is a sign of cultural decadence, a factitious recuperation, which can only bring forth the simulacra of a dead past. (Borowski, 1994: 380, 381)

According to Shaw, overlooking the enduring local dynamics of the modern has caused an ambivalent sense of doubling in the mind-set of Turkish intellectuals, which is called as 'Systematic Forgetting'. According to her, this phenomenon causes both the artists and the audiences to distance themselves from the legacy of local and from the

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112 Pannel Discussion on February 17, 2011

113 Marshal Sahlin, Goodbye to Tristes Tropes: Ethnography in the context of Modern World History.



acknowledgement of arts as a part of the country's history and as a reflection of social change for nearly two centuries. After Kahraman's departure, Balkan Naci İslimyeli<sup>114</sup> explains what is politely described as 'systematic forgetting' by Shaw. He says:

We socially experience a schizophrenic fragmentation. As you know, there is a condition in psychology called multiple personality disorder. Because of certain traumas, one tends to forget his past experiences, to erase them first, and then, in case of relapse, if he remembers, or if the memory forces him, he transfers them (the traumas) to another model. And consequently we see a pathological situation where one blames everybody, assumes the existence of an army of culprits, and thus assumes himself innocent, though, in fact, being inevitably aware of that s/he is one of those culprits. We, as a society, experience such madness.

Shaw states that seeing the West as the sole producer of modernity is one of the barriers in defining its own subjectivity for the art in western modality in Turkish Republic. According to her, the modernity is, on the one hand, perceived by the Turkish intellectuals, as a progressive change primarily experienced in the distant cultures and on the other it is perceived ad hoc at home. (Shaw 2011: 7) Coşkun's description, "What we call 'modernism' in this country is a movement of defeat, an ideology of defeat" might well be counted as one of the dynamics of the perception about the modernity as a whole. Nearly all the discussions as such has come down to this issue. Just as described by Kortun<sup>115</sup>:

This is an issue of cultural modernism, a version of which has also been produced here. However, did Turkey have its own story? Maybe she has, but we don't know what it is yet. I mean Turkey is not like Eastern Europe or Japan. Maybe, she was like them, but we don't know what.

If we get back to the discussions about the art history of Turkey, Shaw states that the discourse produced within the art history in Turkey lines up with the mainstream artistic cannon. Because of the reasons argued above in addition to understanding 'contemporary' as imperialism, she continues; each generation announces its own better and more accurate rendition of civilized/ Western/global practices without recognizing that in this self promotion they fall into the same trap as their predecessors, acknowledging their segregation for a paradigm even when they claim participation in it. While Shaw almost depicts a battle among generations, Coşkun's<sup>116</sup> narrative confirms

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114 Ibid 11

115 Interview on 25 December 2010

116 Interview on February 9, 2011

her claims. He says:

You develop your own art history, you say here is Çallı<sup>117</sup>, Bedri Rahmi. However there is no such thing as 'cannon' here because of exclusion movement. When the modern is equivalent to the national, 'cannon' is implicitly being considered as 'new' until the 1970s and 80s.

### 5.3 Generations Overlook One Another:

According to Shaw, the starting point for modern art in Turkey emerges with the generations of artists who had challenged the established authorities (i.e. academy and other power structures), and the kind of art in service of creating a nation during the late 1930's and 1940's. She says that firstly, Munich oriented Impressionists were disapproved by older generation, then a debate between accessible academism (by then embraced Impressionism) and Paris oriented Cubism as representing the social-avant-garde opens up the first chapter of modern art in Turkish Republic. These young artists (who were sent by the Ministry of Education to study abroad), were modernist in a sense, she continues, for both challenging the authorities- looking for the autonomy- and for dealing with the social and political problems. As seen below, Kortun<sup>118</sup> uses the concept of autonomy in the sense of artists' breakage from both the established power structures and from the conventional understanding of artistic production.

There is a type of artist created by the state during 1930s. This ideal artist type breaks his ties with Turkish avant-garde with the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War, and besides, he looks at the tradition as French looks at Algeria. This is an archeological point of view. He now accepts that something has died. The engagement between the state and the artist is over by the end of 1940.

However, the synchronicity between Turkish and European art movements has been an important problem for the generations to come. Coşkun's 'exclusion movement' or what Shaw calls 'systematic forgetting' is echoed in the narrations. Ferit Edgü<sup>119</sup> says to Pınar Turanlı in an interview:

Our painting, in the western sense, starts in Paris during the 1860's. This tradition (going to Paris) continues during the 1940's. However, Turkish Painting has a big

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117 İbrahim Çallı (1882-1969: Turkish Impressionist painter. Bedri Rahmi Eyüboğlu (1911-1975): Turkish Painter, ceramist and poet. Source: Eczacıbaşı Sanat Ansiklopedisi.

118 Interview on December 18, 2010

119 Interview with Ferit Edgü, April 19, 2011, [www.lebriz.com](http://www.lebriz.com)

problem. This problem is a-synchronicity. When they (Europeans) do the 'new', what you are doing is the 'old' at the same time. What we do is not synchronic. However, by the 1950's, namely by my generation, both in literature and in painting, what is done here, for the first time, is just like whatever is done in the world.

The painters, Edgü refers to, are the artists who belong to the abstract art movement of Paris School. He suggests that this school of Turkish art starts in 1945 and ends in 1980. Adding that he does not really appreciate the kind of 'conceptual' art produced after the 1970 in Europe, the USA and Turkey. On the other hand, Beral Madra<sup>120</sup> suggests that it was Altan Gürman, who was trying to exceed the limits of conventional ways of art making and who raised the critique to the modernism in Turkey. She recounts:

Let's say from the 1950's to 1985, if the post-modern break happened in 1985. That period is very inactive. The artistic environment is very introverted, limited with a scarce information and communication; it configured itself according to the political divisions. In fact, the breaking point for this period is Altan Gürman. He starts the formal education courses in academy (Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University) at the end of the 60s. And his own works are the critique, the break of modernism in Turkey. His followers, such as Ahmet Öktem, Serhat Kiraz... Believe me, they did the 80's. Thanks to them, the dynamism of the 80's was experienced. And you can't even hear their names today. I mean, I can't believe it.

Recalling the main themes of the art history of the 20<sup>th</sup> century stated above, these two narrations roughly correspond to different but still synchronic canonical movements of this history. As insisting on their 'subjectivity' (however as suggested this subjectivity can only be constructed by addressing to the west and by ignoring the others) and their particular sign, the authorship of their artwork, the members of abstract school Edgü mentions, can be evaluated by the originality principle by Greenberg. However, the 'break of modernism' Madra mentions, designates to many experimental artistic movements that exceeds the limits of art making and its whole rationale up to the point until postmodernist art that decomposes the notions such as 'subjectivity' and 'authorship'.

Nevertheless, it is worth mentioning that a new process, as a universal phenomenon, starts in addition to the symptom of "exclusion movement" and/or of "systematic forgetting in Turkey; that is the perception on 'reality' only becomes contextual, individual and temporary. İstanbul is an ideal place for reality to hide throughout the

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120 Interview on September 12, 2010

foggy skies of Bosphorus. Coşkun<sup>121</sup> recounts:

You observe a sense of euphoria, a relief in the art world; art is set free from the burden of history and ideology since 90s. However when you say 'it is over', a new field is discovered in literature and art. History becomes a source of fantasy as it happens in Orhan Pamuk, Tolkien, etc. And we read Erol Akyavaş, Balkan Naci just from here. History becomes something plundered. Interestingly, the expelled politics reappear as something synthetic just like history in biennials and other artistic events. If history is a material, something that we can plunder; similarly politics and ideology also becomes like plasticine. The fine arts, music, literature are all together read and interpreted.

As Edgü mentions that he does not personally connect to the conceptual art produced after the 1970's, he also suggests that the interest in such art will not live long. But we see the interest seems to last, so does the narrations related to 'systematic forgetting.' For instance, Bedri Baykam<sup>122</sup>, a conceptual artist and a painter of the generation after Edgü's, still produces, but also complains during a panel discussion that they are left outside of the foreign or contemporary art histories written recently. He recounts:

There is a saying, 'the winners in the war write the history', however it seems like either the losers or the unattended write that history. I just like to remind you some of the operations I did. One of them is the manifesto I circulated in San Francisco in 1984. I also talked about how the history of modern art has been shaped through the logic of cultural imperialism and these histories mainly include the five big capitalist western countries in my book 'Apes' Rights to Paint'. However, I reminded in this manifesto, just couple of years after Edward Said's book Orientalism, that all the artists from the third world countries, from developing countries, and from other countries have as much universal rights as the artists of these countries. Nevertheless, I think this manifesto brought a different perspective against Western Imperialism and against its attitude to write the history of modern art for its own sake. Secondly, a curator, who takes the same ten to fifteen names to different countries since the mid 90's, used to try to convince people that he introduced the contemporary art to abroad, everything started with him. And the artists capitulated to these curatorial war as they wanted to get their share from this system. Here, there are two books called 'User's Manual, Contemporary Art in Turkey, 1986-2006', and 'Unleashed, Contemporary Art From Turkey' sponsored by Garanti Bank. So, the young generation that accompany these curators, banks either write or have someone write a history in accordance with their mentality. Now, the Turkish Art history, the beginning of Turkish contemporary art began to be written artificially.

By looking at the above mentioned narrations, it seems that there is no common ground in Turkish art world for understanding the aesthetic modernity as a culture of rupture, as a critique to capitalist modernity. Therefore, each new movement emerging in the art

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121 Interview on January 6, 2010

122 Pannel Discussion on February 17, 2011

field is described as the sole critique in an environment where the local history of modernity is not known. As almost everyone constructs its own existence, its own identity by referring to the west, producing a whole set of discourses on the deprivation on things; it becomes just very unlikely to attribute even these 'actors' autonomous subjectivities. So, cutting off any relation with preceding or following ones, each artistic movement and the 'new' concept introduced by it are treated as a wonders coming from a far. Just like the dichotomies set between the West and Turkey, universal versus local/national, original and new versus outdated, some supposedly comprehensive terminologies are also used as the antonyms; like modern art versus post-modern art, modern art versus contemporary art and so on.

#### **5.4 Conclusion:**

Until far, I have tried to depict the roots of 'aesthetic autonomy' and how it has been challenged since the beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> century. The artists, referring and analyzing the social criticisms raised against the modern capitalist civilization, continued to insist on their 'autonomous' subjectivities by both challenging the formal premises- i.e. the evolution of forms, the technical limitations, etc. - of the artistic field and the outcomes of the disasters created by World War 1 and World War 2. The main theme in my deficient summary of the art history of the 20<sup>th</sup> century that divides the art before and after World War 2, is the overt visibility of the criticisms about 'autonomy'. It becomes thoroughly understood with the spread of mass media that "the power" is not only related with the administrative authorities, but also with all kinds of structures and notions that are personal as well as relational. This basic claim of post-structuralist theory is echoed most radically in postmodern art that question the 'autonomy' of the modern subject. However, a part of questioning "autonomy" in the art field is related to make art and artist more 'autonomous'. This is why Danto says that art becomes a matter of philosophy done by the artistic medium. Nonetheless, Calinescu determines a sense of stasis dominating the art world, although there are significant changes in artistic production. Because, he concludes, the collocation of modernity and progress, in a broader sense, comes to an end as well as the belief in the progress and civilization.

One may argue that the part of the aforementioned arguments on art history and

modernism in Turkey is also related to what Calinescu describes as 'sense of stasis'. Though, this being a part of the phenomenon; what I wanted to emphasize in these discourses is that many of them are mainly built on big generalizations, on the 'deprivation on things' rather than questioning, criticizing, 'de-constructing' the kind of modernity experienced in Turkey. It is always the 'westerners' who create modernity, criticize it, do revolutionary artworks, write history, etc. However, the things produced in Turkey and people who produce them might have some value only if they are synchronous with the 'West'. When there is a sign of 'subjectivity', it is only possible with the emulation to the West. So, it becomes very unlikely to determine 'autonomous' subjectivities. The outcome of which is described as "systematic forgetting", "schizophrenic fragmentation" and "exclusion movement". Therefore, it leads me to conclude that there is no understanding of 'aesthetic autonomy' as a culture of rupture, as a critique to capitalist modernity.

## CHAPTER 6

### 'HISTORICAL' AUTONOMY VERSUS AUTONOMY OF PROFESSIONALISM & TECHNICALITY

As I stated several times that 'aesthetic autonomy' has been a stake of struggle for the 'modern subject' who wants to be 'autonomous' from all the limitations of notions and structures; that is the characteristic of the kind of modernity as a culture of rupture. The subjectivity of modern subject (artist) has always been defined by the degree of his/her being creative, critical and having an artistic skill since Enlightenment. However, as the art field becomes the part of culture industry, there emerges a new kind of subjectivity defined by the degree of "technical" and "professional" knowledge. These two subjectivities oppose one another as do the 'creativity' and the 'professionalism'.

During a conference organized by AICA<sup>123</sup>, Coşkun explains to the audience what criticism means. His interpretation about what I call as the 'subjectivity' defined by creativity, artistic skill and criticism is as follows:

Art is no longer 'techné'. Art and non-art are separated. Even, society is created. People who attended to church and look at the statues felt a divine emotion, not an artistic pleasure. As society develops and the power structures multiply, when the meaning of art changes, consultants are needed to interpret this meaning. Critic emerges as someone to guide the new patron of the art, the bourgeois. There is an expression by Sartre, he says that only the artist knows what he wants to do, however it is only us who know what he creates. Art is loaded with the function of creativity. While people do the routine work, artist is ecstatic. So, there is a transcendent quality in creativity. We should read Sartre from here. Criticism, in some sense, is to evaluate this 'transcendent' quality by means of reason; it is a guide. Modern era attributes creativity to artist; modernism and Cartesian perception attribute creativity to man.

Coşkun designates to the disposition of artist and the critique; his interpretation of Sartre evokes what Bourdieu calls ideal-typical opposition between Douanier Rousseau (1844-1910) and Marcel Duchamp (1887-1968). The naïve painter Rousseau, Bourdieu

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Colloquy held on November 6, 2010

argues, is the painter as object, who does something other than what he thinks he is doing, does not know what he does, because he knows nothing of the field he stumbles into. He is made by the field, a 'creator' who has to be 'created' as a legitimate producer by a critique. However, Bourdieu claims, the emergence of an artist like Duchamp means that, now, there is a type of artist who is capable of thinking several moves ahead, producing art objects in which the production of the producer as artist is the precondition for the production of these objects as works of art. Duchamp, Bourdieu continues, invents the 'ready-made', a manufactured object promoted to the dignity of an objet d'art by the symbolic authority of artist. (Bourdieu 1993: 61)

On the other hand, Duchamp also raises an ontological question about art, asking if the signature of an artist was sufficient to make a ready-made an art object. He, like many artists of his generation and their successors, integrates the intellectual movements into their works, overtly refers to the sources of their work, to the early artistic movements, questions the main premises of the field and brings the transcendent artist down to earth. Moreover, Bourdieu suggests, such works bring the artist's work closer to that of the 'intellectual', and makes it more dependent on 'intellectual' commentaries. The consecrated authors, he continues, dominate the field of production also dominate the market. Therefore, according to Bourdieu, these authors are the artists as intellectuals and intellectuals as artists; and the field of cultural production is the closed circuit for the cultural capitalists, i.e. the advocates of 'art for art's sake'.

However, as I stated in the previous chapters, the power of financial capitalist has increased so much since the 1970s, for economist Don Thompson, the last critic who can either grace or disgrace an artist is the American critic Clement Greenberg. This kind of power, he continues, passes into the hands of collectors and dealers by the end of 1960's. (Thompson: 313) Nonetheless, it does not seem very possible to imagine the art field without artists, critics, and connoisseurs. Because, neither are the borders among these areas of expertise so distinct, nor is it possible to think a contemporary art field without intellectual commentaries and conceptual frames.

During a month at SALT's organization office on İstiklal Avenue, I had the opportunity to have interviews with Kortun twice. Each time I made a request- for example an access to the archive- from the stuff, his permission was asked. I felt that my presence



there was more legitimate during the times he was in the office since my demands were easily met. In the second interview held in the meeting room, he<sup>124</sup> tells me:

Now, we all do things we could never ethically think of doing twenty years ago. It was unthinkable for a former gallery owner to become a museum manager or a collector to determine the art works for an exhibition. There was never the case of museum curators doing consultation for private collectors.

Moreover, as the techniques that artists use oversteps the conventional mediums of art making and as they become more interested in 'Mass/Popular' Culture by the post-structuralist turn, people from the other occupations would have a say on the field of cultural production.

At that time, Coşkun was also airing a program called 'Life, Lie, Goods, Real'<sup>125</sup> at a radio channel next to his other occupations. He seems well adapted to being a multi tasking actor required by the 'new era'. He<sup>126</sup> says:

With globalization and massification, it is currently accepted that what is happening here and now also has value. No one would allow me (someone who studied international relations and political science) or a sociologist to make judgments about art twenty years ago. The value setters of cultural activity are increased. Then, we did not think it is related to Postmodernity. Actually, this concept had a pejorative meaning. Postmodernists did not know they were postmodernists. We found ourselves in a very different place. The 80's mean a rupture; cultural climate changes. Previously, liberalism (in fact it is called *liboş*<sup>127</sup>), pragmatism, etc. were considered as blasphemy, but now they are accepted as the signs of reason and intelligence. They changed the way we perceive modernity.

Therefore, it seems that as the borders between 'high culture' and 'mass/popular culture' become foggy and both being the part of culture industry, this new era demands a new 'subjectivity' defined by the degree of 'technical' and 'professional' knowledge that also encloses artists, intellectuals, curators, collectors, etc. When I say 'technical' and 'professional' knowledge, I mean the emergence of a new type of 'actor' who not only knows how the industry work and what the 'trends' are in the market, but also who is somehow capable of managing the theories projected about the human condition. In this

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124 Interview on December 25, 2010

125 In Turkish, 'Hayat, Yalan, Eşya, Gerçek'.

126 Interview on February 9, 2011

127 *Liboş* (slang): a person aiming to get rich, defends liberal politics and economy and sees everything permissible and rejects all kinds of value judgements. (TDK, June 13, 2012)

chapter, I will try to show how 'autonomy', earlier defined by creativity, criticism and skill, became to be established with the technical and professional knowledge; and how art field, as a part of culture industry, is technically constructed like one. It seems that museum, art history, criticism have been constructing themselves as one historical bureaucracy by relying on 'autonomous aesthetics'; market, corporations, state have currently been constructing itself as the new bureaucracy by relying on 'autonomous' professionalism and technicality within this new reconfiguration of the art field.

### **6.1. “From Criticism to Critique to Criticality”<sup>128</sup>:**

In the era of culture industry, one of the most prominent parties of art field is the curator who possess 'technical' and 'professional' knowledge. By giving an example from an independent exhibition called 'My name is Casper, the Friendly Ghost'<sup>129</sup> organized without a curator, Coşkun<sup>130</sup> tells me that it is not possible to be publicly visible without such professionalism and a prominent institution. He continues:

'Godlike' creative artist is no longer alone. There is something called collective production, something produced within the system and art is not independent from it. If we remember Sartre, a new curator type appears, partakes in production and organizes it. Now, we can say things out loud, like biennials. You could have an ethical stance; however you do it through the capital. This is why we don't see inhibitions that much, because it does not threaten the system. The contribution of advisor curator to artist is knowledge. He has nothing to do with the creativity of the artist. As knowledge becomes important, artist becomes a technician. So, the curator usurps the critical quality of the art work.

If we depart from Coşkun's analogy referring to Sartre, curator now takes over the critique's role of the previous generations; however dissolves the critical quality of art – i.e. what I defined as the subjectivity defined by the degree of creativity, skill and criticism- because s/he takes positions in this reconfigured 'culture sector'. Therefore, as I claim, his/her autonomous 'technical' and 'professional' subjectivity forestalls the

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128 Article by Irit Rogoff Irit Rogoff, “From Criticism to Critique to Criticality”, 2003, [eipcp.net/transveral/0806/rogoff1/en](http://eipcp.net/transveral/0806/rogoff1/en)

129 Coşkun is referring to a parallel exhibition 'My Name is Casper?' organized during the 11<sup>th</sup> İstanbul Biennial, 'What Keeps Mankind Alive?' between September 11 and November 8, 2011. The Biennial was realized by the collective of Croatian curators WHW (What, How, and for Whom). 'What Keeps Mankind Alive?' is the theme quoted from Marxist writer Bertolt Brecht's 'The Threepenny Opera.' The Opera is based on the assertion that “a criminal as a bourgeois and a bourgeois is a criminal'. WHW also did shows for the 152<sup>nd</sup> Anniversary of the “Communist Manifesto” in 2000 and 2001. ([www.bienal.iksv.org](http://www.bienal.iksv.org))

130 Interview on January 6, 2011

previous one; i.e. the autonomous subjectivity defined by the degree of creativity, skill and criticism.

The suggestions of Jens Hoffman, who was the curator of the 12<sup>th</sup> İstanbul Biennial and the editor of 'The Exhibitionist No.6'<sup>131</sup>, corresponds to what I claim. According to him, what emerges from many of the texts (of curators) is the *necessity for curators* to regard role of exhibition-making as something beyond *the display of autonomous work of art*, and more of a foray into the social and political claims. During a panel, artist Bedri Baykam<sup>132</sup> angrily says, “We see that the curator names the exhibition, gives interviews, designs catalog, presents the exhibition. He uses artists as his color pallet!”

By the same token, the critique and the curator Maria Lind<sup>133</sup> suggests that the curatorial, as a multidimensional role, should include critique, editing, education and fundraising. The curatorial, she continues, occurs in the diverse connections and layers, in which they are orchestrated to challenge the status quo. According to her, if the curatorial is understood in this way, it can operate with Chantal Mouffe's notion of the political.

According to professor of English Robert T. Tally Jr<sup>134</sup>, Mouffe's notion of the political is the way, i.e. called a 'game' by Tally, that can lead societies to pluralist democracy. Mouffe's 'agonistic' approach is established against that of 'antagonistic' one by conservative theorist Carl Smith. For Smith, there is no place for pluralism in democracy and only hegemonic society can work. So, his understanding of democracy is always based on 'we' and 'they' opposition. On the other hand, for Mouffe, 'agonism' should be protected in societies to produce politics and to make democracy work; however it should be prevented to become an 'antagonism' not to destroy the political association, i.e. parliamentary institutions. Therefore, she envisages a conflictual consensus providing a common symbolic space among opponents. Therefore, for Maria Lind, (cosmopolitan) artistic events should be organized with this pluralistic approach and contribute to the understanding of liberal, plural democracy. Though, as Tally Jr.

131 [www.the-exhibitionist-journal.com](http://www.the-exhibitionist-journal.com)

132 Panel Discussion on February 17, 2011

133 Maria Lind 'The Curatorial' [www.strenberg-press.com/index.php?pageld=1293&bookld=188&1=en](http://www.strenberg-press.com/index.php?pageld=1293&bookld=188&1=en)

134 Robert T. Tally Jr 'The Agony of the Political' <http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/pmc/v017/17.2tally.html>.

suggests, the playground of Mouffe's political is hardly identifiable<sup>135</sup>; artistic institutions and events are the spaces of such a game for cultural producers.

In this case, 'criticism' in its present form will serve to pluralism. In the article 'From Criticism to Critique to Criticality', Professor of Visual Culture Irit Rogoff talks about how criticism, just like art, has been transformed according to recent theoretical claims. According to her, in the project of 'criticism', we are mainly preoccupied with the application of values and judgements, operating from a barely acknowledged humanist index of measure sustained in turn by naturalized beliefs and disavowed interest. The project of 'critique', which negated that of 'criticism' through numerous layers of post-structuralist theory and linked spheres of sexual difference and post-colonialism, has served an extraordinary examination of all of the assumptions and naturalized values and thought structures that have sustained the inherited truth claims of knowledge. Within a relatively short period, Rogoff adds, we have been able to move from criticism to critique to criticality -from finding fault to examining the underlying assumption that might allow something appear as a convincing logic, to operating from *an uncertain ground* which, while building on critique, wants nevertheless to inhabit culture in a relation other than one of critical analysis, other than one of illuminating flaws, locating elisions, allocating blames.

On the other hand, for curator, dance and performance critique Martin Spangberg<sup>136</sup>, this *uncertain ground* for evaluation does not actually give way to positive consequences. He says:

Since critique has been replaced by criticality, the ethical version of the ideologically saturated notion of critique, *criticality* is like a touch pad, the theatrical version of pure navigation, the entrepreneur's variation of risk performing the endless shifts of neo-liberal governance... In the land of criticality, everything is fine. It's Prozac for cultural producers, personal without passion, skepticism without fundament, the epitome of opportunism. (Spangberg: 2011)

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135 Tally Jr. indicates that Mouffe's theory is established against the argumentations claiming that we came to the end of history. For Mouffe, these claims are based on the idea that the world has become unipolar. However, she conceives a multipolar world system; i.e. the USA and Europe. Tally says it does not seem very possible to 'play' Mouffe's game in the recent global political context; because her theory is mainly based on the already existing democracies. So, Tally Jr. asks, would a multipolar system enable multiple playgrounds for playing? Who would or would not be allowed to play? Who would decide?

136 Taken from his book 'Spanbergianism'. It is indicated that this book is designed as performance.

'Criticality', in one respect, gives an opportunity to cultural producer to 'play' the game of pluralistic democracy; and it does so by sanitizing the radical contents of artworks. However, what is more important here is that the autonomy of cultural producer defined by what I call 'professionalism' and 'technicality' has preceded the 'autonomy' of artist and intellectual defined by criticism, creativity and artistic skill. The same thing applies to a new type of artist as a cultural producer. During a panel about 'Art History', Art Historian Sevil Dolmaci<sup>137</sup> gives an example of such an artist. She is talking about the inventor of 'the 12 Million Stuffed Shark', the artist Damien Hirst. She continues:

He said, "my assistant Rachel does my paintings better than I do. I only sign them. I work like a factory; I have about 40 assistants." He continued that he has no time to do that kind of work (craft), but the ideas, the concepts and the signature belong to him. And, that is what matters.

So, by looking at the above-mentioned data, it seems that the long-going modernism as a culture of rupture is bound by both the limitations of industry and 'criticism' in its present form. As the kind of autonomy defined by criticism (and creativity and artistic skill) is imprisoned by such a 'docile' definition of the 'political' – to continue with the example of Mouffe- within the art field; the art field itself has become more sophisticated, intellectualized as a result of its conflation with technicality. Art attracts the attention of many field by its immense capacity to 'represent' and to 'transform' with its variety of methods.

## **6.2 Technicality Becomes the Discourse of Compromise:**

'Contemporary Art and Anthropology'<sup>138</sup> is a book by artists and scholars searching for the affinities between these two fields. It is stated that the aim of the book is to associate art and anthropology with each other as two fields of representational practices, and to show how contemporary artists use anthropological methodology and how anthropology could find new ways of practice by using methodologies such as photography, film, etc. in order to depict the bodily or temporal forms such as dance, music and theatre that are not reducible to language, to 'sign' or 'discourse'. Similarly, Jens Hoffman points out the rapprochement of curator and social theorist. Contemporary curating is almost like an

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137 Pannel Discussion on February 17, 2011

138 'Contemporary Art and Anthropology', Arnd Schneider and Christopher Wright (editors), (2006), New York: BERG

anthropology, he continues, for the curators in the sense that anthropologist and the curator are both self-reflexive and self-conscious producers of culture. They are aware that, he concludes, they themselves are operating within a dynamic that actively creates a new understanding of what is being shown, seen or represented.

However, the interpenetration of the fields is not really welcomed by everyone. According to art historian Hal Foster, the involvement of art history with the disciplines like anthropology, visual culture, etc. indicates a shift from history to culture and it may promote either a post-historical reduction or multi-historical complication. Referring to Marshall Sahlins, Foster talks about two epistemologies of anthropology: the one focusing on the symbolic logic, with the social observed in terms of exchange system and the other favoring practical reason, with the social seen in terms of material culture. Foster utters how these approaches are put into practice in the art field as follows:

In this light anthropology, already participates in the two contradictory models, that inform much art and criticism today: in the old ideology of the text, the linguistic turn that refigured the social as symbolic order and/or cultural system and advanced “the dissolution of man,” “the death of the author,” and so on, and in the recent longing for the referent, the experiential turn to identity and community that often rejects the old subject critiques and text paradigms. With a move to this split discourse, then, artists and critics can resolve these contradictory models magically: they can take up the guises of cultural semiologist and contextual fieldworker, they can continue and condemn critical theory, they can relative and recenter the subject at the same time. In our state of theoretical ambivalences and political impasses, anthropology becomes the compromise discourse of choice. (Foster 1995:106)

As I tried to outline in the previous chapters, in Foster's argument, we can follow the footsteps of the major criticisms against modernism as a stage of capitalist civilization and how they changed the artistic field. Very roughly, 'the death of the author', 'the linguistic turn' gets into the artistic movements, especially postmodern art, of the late twentieth century with their direct references to analysis of Foucault and Derrida (his reading of Kant's essay 'the Critique of Judgement'); and the approaches favoring practical reason put emphasis on the identities, such as gender, ethnicity, regionalism, etc. So, Foster suggests that the artists and other cultural producers who use these two conflicting approaches denounce the critical theory, i.e. the Neo-Marxist philosophies that point to class conflict and seek ways to liberate human beings. So, it seems that the subjectivity of these new type of cultural producers, whose 'autonomy' defined by their 'technical' and 'professional' knowledge overshadows the 'autonomy' that has been long

defined by the degree of 'creativity', 'criticism' and 'artistic skill'. In other words, the art that has been a symbol of modernism as a culture of rupture has been instrumentalized; or if I put it in Foster's conceptualization, it has been reduced to a discourse of compromise. According to Art critique Jackie Wullshlager<sup>139</sup>:

Having lived largely abroad since 1990, I had missed experiencing Cool Britannia, and took time to accommodate to the wonderland where the Turner Prize<sup>140</sup> had recently been won by an artist switching a light on and off, and a potter more celebrated for *transvestism* than for potting. "The Turner Prize no longer means anything," an artist who had won the prize in the 1990s reassured me.

Wullshlager's account is a good example of show how a gender issue, which can be interpreted endlessly due to what Foster says 'culturalist' turn, prevents the autonomy defined by artistic skill, creativity and criticism. It is possible to establish analogies between this and Coşkun's<sup>141</sup> assessments. He says:

Modern Art was critical, but criticism today can only be produced within the system. The criticism of Modern Art now is synthetically political. If everything is political, nothing is political; as we see it at Şükran Moral's work.

Artist Şükran Moral's one time performance 'Amemus'<sup>142</sup> is the local version of the one Wullshlager talks about. In a gathering organized by AICA, sociologist Ebru Yetişkin<sup>143</sup> talks about how the issues of representation has been approached in such performances. She recounts:

Spivak deals with the term 'representation', and gives two definitions:1) Representation in art means the representation of the one's self. 2) Other one is the representation used in political arena where 'the other' is represented; spoken on the behalf of the other. The one's self covers identity and ego. However, it seems like the artists in Turkey do not differentiate these two. All these issues of modernity and contemporaneity need to be considered with the issue of art's becoming tool for politics. The artists do not create 'forms', but 'representation'. Especially, the video art. When artist expresses him/herself with 'identity', the problems emerge. Does

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139 Jackie Wullshlager, 'Beyond the froth and jargon', November 24, 2012 [www.ft.com](http://www.ft.com)

140 Turner Prize, named after the painter J.M.W. Turner, is given annually to an artist under 50 years old since 1984. The organization is done by Tate Gallery and stated at Tate Britain. [www.tate.org.uk](http://www.tate.org.uk)

141 Interview on January 6, 2010

142 Amemus (lat): first-person plural present active subjunctive of amō: 1. may we love, 2. may we be fond of, may we like, 3. may we be under obligation to; may we be obliged to. Moralı demonstrates a lesbian intercourse in December 2, 2012 at gallery Casa Dell Arte for selected 150 guests, most of whom were the members of mainstream media.(source Wictionary)

143 Colloquy organized by AICA on November 6, 2010

s/he represent or introduce? When it is representation, the audience has no chance to do multiple reading. It becomes a form.

“The artist in Turkey do not differentiate these two -definitions of representation-” statement of Berk is very related to what I claimed in Chapter 5; that is how many intellectuals in Turkey are not able to stand as 'autonomous' identities without referencing to the West. Although, there are multiple narratives claiming how there is no critique in Turkey, how we just recently learned about the recent theories, etc.; what is more relevant here, if we remember Wullshlager's narrative, the confusion created by the post-structuralist and culturalist turn seems to be quite a 'global' symptom.

As of “all these issues of modernity and contemporaneity need to be considered with art's becoming tool for politics” statement of Yetişkin is concerned, what she means is that an artist should not be creating representations of gender politics; they should not be involved in real-politics. So, I think, what she looks for is the trans-ideological character in the art work and an 'autonomous' artist who might be transsexual, lesbian, satanist, etc., yet 'autonomous' enough from his/her 'identity' and tell us something that most of us have ever even think of.

Moreover, as far as I understand, what is considered to be a difference between 'modernity' of art and 'contemporaneity' of art is related to whether it creates forms or not. This is how the 'modern' and 'contemporary' art are differentiated from one another. Then, she continues her narrative by talking about how MOMA is trying to document performing arts that are by definition one time artworks and how they experience a paradox by thinking about it. Therefore, for her, creating 'forms', 'artistic skill' per se means dictating a meaning. So 'artistic will' is preferable to 'artistic skill'; because remembering Bourdieu, the skill may serve bourgeoisie's taste for ornamentation. However, the art of the instant is not necessarily the sign of the contemporary art either. Many avant-garde movements in the first half of 20<sup>th</sup> century did not create forms, rather they longed for destroying it. Let's say abstract art still creates 'form'; but the reason they are abstract is not to condition the meaning. So, what is the difference? As well as the preference for 'artistic will', another difference appears to be the signature, the style of the author that is distinguishable in some of these 'unique' art movements.



However, what happens to this author is that s/he is launched to space, because we have come to realize the 'fact' that all of us are bound by both the kind of knowledge created before us and the social environment in which we live and by our 'identities'. It comes to a point where none of us can do anything with our own 'actions'. Determinism takes the lead, erodes the subjectivity of 'subject', fragmentize the social. So, the author dies a few times. This is where, if we remember Foster's argument, the post-historical confusion take place. Although, many artistic movements of the modern period were searching for the ways to destroy the boundaries between life and art; the art of this period is considered by Yetişkin, like many, as equal with the modernity of the capitalist civilization with its main premises, claiming 'universality', 'progress', civilization, etc. Just like another informant says in the same meeting, the modernist artists were creating forms to offer better lives and better societies.”

Therefore, it seems, this is how the autonomy defined by the degree of artistic skill, creativity and having 'critical' quality is replaced by the autonomy defined by professionalization and technicality. Remembering Danto, the *justification of discourse* needs new subjectivities, new cultural producers of every kind that should possess some knowledge of these technical knowledge with professionalism and under the name of institution. Moreover, as it seen in the above mentioned arguments, the 'autonomy' defined by professionalism and technicality tries to re-write art history by looking at the current situation. Therefore, it seems that de-historicising becomes to be the founding element for the new bureaucracy of state, market and institution trio.

### **6.3 Autonomy of a New Bureaucracy Takes Over the Historical Autonomy:**

I don't want to get into the issue of criticism; it is a model of 18<sup>th</sup> century. There were huge annual 'The Salon Exhibitions' in Paris and London. There were critics and there were also different pamphlets of many critiques from the beginning. It was that much effective and important. The criticism as such continues up until the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century, but it doesn't anymore.

Though, Kortun's<sup>144</sup> remarks appear to be pointing to a state of an intellectual; these words make more sense within the different dispositions of 'autonomies' dissenting each other. Although, he continues his thought by saying that he, as a professional working for a private organization, has always positioned himself with the artists; there are

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144 Interview on December 18, 2010

opposing arguments emphasizing that the organization of the art by the private sector is itself a specific condition. According to Ali Artun, for example, while Arteaucrats<sup>145</sup> (art professionals) manage to articulate the cultural policies of art corporations-global firms-they implicitly determine the criteria for begin an artist, aesthetics and taste.

Albeit, I do not focus on the particulars relating Turkey in this section; the local dimensions you will encounter are both related to the issues mentioned in the previous chapters and to how, according to informants, 'autonomy' of the art field perceived even by the liberal patrons in Turkey. However, what is important here is that, the following argumentations will emphasize how 'autonomy' constructed by the market, state and private sector dislocate the 'historical autonomy' and how it affects every subject in the field. For example, known as the curator of major privately organized art events Madra says, “the infrastructure supporting the art criticism and the artist has slowly collapsed. Everything is too much controlled by the private sector<sup>146</sup>”.

Moreover, the trio which I call 'new bureaucracy' is so powerful that, some people claim no one can exist without the support of an institution. For example Coşkun<sup>147</sup> says:

One can only exist through following a rising value, something that is not ‘me’. This is why representing an institution is important. You say, ‘You know, there is a biennial in Venice, this is what I represent’. You see the exhibition, ‘From Traditional Contemporary’<sup>148</sup>, see how people grumble about it. There is a *corporate structure* there. We don’t say ‘why we are not there’, but ‘this can’t be done like this’. In the current situation, the hierarchy between institution and subject, and the one between institution and art represent the distance between the local and the international. If an institution supports me, then I am something; if not, I am nothing no matter how brilliant and successful I am indeed. If no one buys a work of Haluk Akakçe in the world, nor does anyone here. If you get a passport from the global village, then you are worth something locally.

On the other hand, a renown artist Kutluğ Ataman<sup>149</sup>, “who possess a passport from the global village” suggests that though the *critical quality* of the art is accepted both in

145 “Arteaucrat’ is driven from 'art' and 'bureaucrat'. (source: [www.e-skop.com/skopdergi/sunus-istanbul-sanat-isletmeleri/384](http://www.e-skop.com/skopdergi/sunus-istanbul-sanat-isletmeleri/384))

146 Interview on September 12, 2010

147 Interview on September 9, 2011

148 From Traditional to Contemporary Exhibition held in Istanbul Modern Museum in February 17, 2010 and June 20, 2010. [www.istanbulmodern.org](http://www.istanbulmodern.org)

149 Kutluğ Ataman, the 5<sup>th</sup> Session 'The Role of Turkey and Istanbul as Laboratories for Europe' in “A Soul for Europe' Forum.

Europe and in many countries to the east of Turkey and he is supported by the *agencies* from the countries of Europe, the Arab Emirates, Singapore and Hong Kong, the situation is not like that in Turkey. He emphasizes that not only the state but also the private sector censors the art for ideological reasons when he was talking about a memory of his relating to the first exhibition organized in İstanbul Modern. He continues:

The concept was chaos, dynamism of chaos, etc... In fact, it was something very beautiful and based on the daily life of people who live in İstanbul. The sponsor of this exhibition was a Turkish bank. Naturally, when they heard the world 'chaos', they instantly said 'what are you talking about. Can ever the banking sector and the 'chaos talk' come together? No, no... We withdraw our sponsorship'. So, the first exhibition of İstanbul Modern was about to be unrealized. *But 'fortunately' there was a pragmatic curator equipped with the experience of Venice (Biennial),* and the name of the exhibition instantly transformed to 'Center of Gravity'. So, the bank very happily gave many thousand dollars for the exhibition. Artists did not change, neither did the concept. However, I did not understand how the 'chaos' became the 'center of gravity' and decided to withdraw from the exhibition. (A Soul for Europe 2010: 152)

These narratives contain many interpretations about the particulars in Turkey; nevertheless, I want to draw attention to the sentence marked in italics; that is “there was a pragmatic curator equipped with the experience of Venice (Biennial).” Considered with the above-mentioned arguments, Ataman's narrative is a good example to show how concepts can be manipulated by professionalism and technicality and how this new bureaucracy can impose its 'autonomy' on curators and censor the artists.

Another informant, Artun<sup>150</sup> describes what had happened while searching for a permanent place for AICA i.e. the branch of international association for art critics. He says that he requested from the chair of the board of a museum that it would be nice for a museum to show a place for the critics. However, the respond he got was that “Oh, I'm sorry. Unfortunately, criticism is not sponsored”. Then, Artun complemented his story by giving an example from a big conglomerate in the USA that supports an academic who harshly criticize the aesthetics of the building and the architect of a private museum that is owned by the very conglomerate itself. Then, he adds, similar processes also take place in Western countries; however, the way it appears in Turkey demonstrating all its vulgarity.

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150 Interview on December 4, 2010

#### **6.4. Conclusion:**

In the light of forgoing arguments, we may suggest that there are two bureaucracies within which 'autonomy' is used as a stake of struggle. The 'autonomous' subjectivity defined by the degree of creativity, artistic skill and criticism is the founding factor of what I call 'historical bureaucracy' consisting a three-leg structure: art history, museum and criticism. And, the autonomous 'subjectivity' defined by the degree of 'professionalism, technicality' is the founding factor of what I call 'new bureaucracy' consisting the mentality of the market, state and corporations.

In this chapter, I tried to show how 'autonomy' has been used as a stake of struggle between these two bureaucracies as both are the elements of the art field. Considering with the arguments in the previous chapter, the modernity as a culture of rupture of the 'modern' subject, which corresponds to 'autonomy' of art that is renamed as an issue of philosophy by Danto, seems to be besieged by the 'autonomy' defined by the professionalism and technicality. As "justification of discourse" produced by professionalism and technicality, the field becomes more and more intellectualized and the 'new' bureaucracy' seem to be constructing itself by de-historicization; which can be read by what is called as 'sense of stasis' by Calinescu in the previous chapter.

While taking into account the globalization of corporate liberalism and technological developments, it seems urgent to scrutinize the 'autonomy' of this 'new' bureaucracy - if we are to say more about the recent human condition other than producing the versions of 'determinism' - in terms of re-pondering the politics of the culture of rupture, the politics of the subject, the class, the culture and the identity.

## CHAPTER 7

### CONCLUSION

An historical concept ... cannot be defined according to the formula *genus proximus, differentia specifica*, but it must be gradually put together out of the individual parts which are taken from historical reality to make it up... We must, in other words, work out in the course of the discussions, as its most important result, the best conceptual formulation of what we understand by the spirit of capitalism, that is the best from the point of view which interests us here. The point of view ... is, further, by no means the only possible one from which the historical phenomena we are investigating can be analyzed. Other standpoints, would, for this as for every historical phenomenon, yield other characteristics as the essential ones.... This is a necessary result of the nature of historical concepts which attempt for their methodological purposes not to grasp historical reality in abstract general formulae, but in concrete genetic sets of relations which are inevitably of a specifically unique and individual character.

Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (Calinescu:311)

One theme that I wanted to underline through out this thesis that 'autonomy' has been an important notion in the formation of modern state in Europe. Thus far, trying to approach to the notion from a Weberian perspective, I attempted to demonstrate how, on the one hand, the discourse of 'autonomy' has contributed to the formation of the modern state, the West and the art market and how, on the other hand, 'autonomy' has been a issue of struggle between the two different perceptions of modernism. Within these two perceptions, it seems that 'disinterestedness, trans-ideological quality' of art has become to be the symbol of the critical perceptions against the kind of modernism created by capitalist civilization.

Remembering Bourdieu, 'autonomy' (disinterestedness, trans-ideological quality) of artistic field creates the self-sufficient art world and 'universally' recognized disposition principle locates the artistic field – of artists and intellectuals- against (haute)

bourgeoisie and the popular/mass culture and its definition becomes the object of struggle. However, it seems more reasonable to suggest that not the definition of art is an object of struggle but rather its endless re- definition is the outcome, the issue of social and class struggle.

Furthermore, Bourdieu puts an emphasis on the world of art for art's sake. In other worlds, for him, the powerful in 'informational capital'<sup>151</sup>; i.e. the artists and intellectuals, has been creating a 'privileged' field for itself; and its 'basic reason' for supporting the 'artistic revolutions' is the anxiety for the 'purity, purification' and the refusal of (haute) bourgeoisie taste for ornament.

However, in Bourdieu's conception, these 'artistic revolutions' are considered to be completely devoid of from their social and political contexts. In other words, he seems to ignore that 'autonomy' principle has been a stake of struggle and re-defined each time to preserve its critical quality against the kind of modernity created by capitalism. This principle, 'strategically' defined to be independent from the values of ancient regime and the principle of profitability of modern capitalism since Kant, is trapped into a mere elitism. That is why, as stated in Chapter 6, Bourdieu interprets Marcel Duchamp's 'ready-made' as an act to consolidate the symbolic authority of the artist. He disregards the perspective that the 'ready-made' is also an act of criticism against the art market and takes no further interest, for example, in why Duchamp had abandoned art, or why many social scientists had attributed a 'privileged' quality to 'high' art or many others had dealt with the 'autonomy' principle.

Same stagnation applies to his definition of 'objectified capital'; e.g. absolute primacy of form of art objects, books, theories, critiques of theories, conceptual or problematic systems, etc. Within the framework of Bourdieu's conceptualization, it seems that modernism, as a culture of rupture, compiled under the term 'objectified capital', only reinforces the class distinction in capitalist civilizations. Moreover, the idea that 'absolute primacy of form' has been at the center of the field is highly questionable. As I tried to show in the body of this thesis, the artistic field has been dramatically changed since the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. And the quest to be 'formless' and the effort to unite art with life have been an important part of this history. In other words, 'autonomy'

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151 Ibid 3

of artistic field seems to be re-defined many times throughout this process as artistic movements find powerful analytical allies to create a field of representation that does not speak on behalf of his master's voice. From this perspective, the 'autonomy' of art has also been the symbol of the de-commodification of knowledge and culture.

Autonomy's being a stake in struggle has become more visible by the globalization of economic liberalism. This is a parallel process with handing over art and knowledge production to market reasoning and impoverishment of welfare states. It seems that two main outcomes of this process are privatization of cultural institutions and re-feudalization of 'public spheres and public places' of the countries according to their particular conditions. While these issues are taken into account within the problem of political representation in 'liberal' democracies; it seems that the process of privatization and re-feudalization emerge as the exercises of a totalitarian regime in Turkey's case.

As art becomes a part of culture industry, there appears a significant resentment between the supporters of 'autonomy' that is identified by the art history, criticism and museum and the 'autonomy' of industry defined and constructed by professionalism and technicality. The expressions of resentment that are especially coming from what I call 'Historical Bureaucracy' include important criticisms about anthropological approaches and new social disciplines. According to Hal Foster, who strongly opposes to digitalization of art by the monopolies like Getty Images, there is a shift from art to visual and history to culture. He says:

Yet the immediate source of the ethnographic model in visual culture remains cultural studies. Along with new historicism, cultural studies has prompted the turn from hierarchies of high and low art, or major and minor forms, to tabulation of images deemed more or less equal in value (whether aesthetic or cognitive, documentary or symptomatic). The challenge to elitist hierarchies and traditional canons is important, but the transformation of art history into image history is also problematic... So, too, its dismissal of aesthetic autonomy as retrograde, and its embrace of popular forms as progressive, is too automatic.... Just as anthropological assumptions and social imperatives govern the shift from history to culture, so psychoanalytic assumptions and technological imperatives govern the shift from art to visual. (Foster 1996:104)

As stated in Chapter 6, Foster also talks about how anthropology has been used as a guardian discourse in art production that overshadows the critical quality of art and the critical theories. He also adds that art history was involved with anthropology and some

critical historians redefined artistic production in anthropological terms as treating artworks as social documents of different 'artistic wills' of cultures and concerning with 'lowly' forms like textile ornaments, etc. in order to recover the 'culturalist dimension in early art history. (Foster 1996, 104) Though the implications of such an argumentation are too broad and exceed the limits of this thesis, it seems that there is an urgency for sociological and anthropological inquiry to contribute these discussions in order to address the power structures within which these histories are built upon. Moreover, it seems that today's anthropology should not be indifferent both to the early art histories constructed on early anthropological assumptions that are treating 'other' cultures as the missing link in 'cultural evolution' and to the knowledge producers who still pursue such assumptions as 'social/cultural realities'.

As seen in the case of Shaw, having a good intention when writing the art history of Ottoman Empire and early Turkish Republic does not prevent her to suggest that 'three-dimensional perspective' (remembering that it has been the tool of the evolution of art for Gombrich) has been the 'mental structure' of 'western' art. Or, while suggesting that intellectuals in Turkey overlook the local dimensions of sibling modernism experienced in Turkey, she seems to be doing just the same by calling the 'image' as a treat in Ottoman Art, etc. As also seen in the other examples designated in the previous chapters; i.e. Düben, Kahraman, etc., it seems urgent for sociological and anthropological inquiry to intervene to such knowledge production in the artistic field that are the reflection of a 'post-occidental' mentalities.

I think, above-mentioned Foster's argumentation is somewhat crosscut with some of the theoretical discussions, e.g. a debate emerged about Christoph Brumann's article 'Writing for Culture'<sup>152</sup> among the parties who are for the usage of the concept 'culture' and those who are against it, taken place in anthropology questioning the usage of the concept 'culture' with the idea that it corresponds to a 'boundedness' of a 'culture' and lead to an 'essentialism'. Or, Susan Wright's article 'The Politicization of 'Culture' '<sup>153</sup> -in which she states 'culture' has been used as an agent by both cultural racism and multiculturalism since the 1980s- is another example indicating this issue. Considering

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152 Christopher Brumann, February 1999, 'Writing for Culture: Why a Successful Concept Should not be Discarded' in *Current Anthropology*, Vol 40

153 Susan Wright, February 1998, 'The Politicization of 'Culture' in *Anthropology Today*, Vol 14, no: 1



the above-mentioned arguments, it seems unlikely that anthropology can remain indifferent to Foster's claim that it (anthropology) has become a discourse of compromise in the artistic field.

In a similar manner, it seems that anthropology and sociology should be also attentive to the perceptions about the history in the context of art, society and culture that are in question. In such a field nested in social theories, argumentations claiming that the production of discourse and knowledge creates “post-historical reduction” or “multi-historical complication” are important issues. Anthropology, as I tried to do in this thesis, does not fix that 'history'; but it can provide some clues about how the discourses and actions regarding the issue of 'history' has been shaped within a 'context'.

When it comes to the issue of jigsaw puzzle occupying my mind mentioned in the Introduction, I was not quite able to make sense of why the artistic field in Turkey has been too fragmentized even though it is mainly created by well-educated and critical individuals in a 'modern' setting. To claim that the conflict of interest among the parties for obtaining a position in this relatively small field creates such a situation is one of the short-cut answers. However, if we are to accept that the sources of its 'autonomy' is about creating a cultural and political field of resistance against power; it does not seem very possible to detach the artistic field from the social and political history of Turkey.

It seems that the field of discourse in Turkey has been manipulated in such a way that separates modernism and its representation, the modern state and its ownership from their social and economical roots, from the 'public' and the artistic field just seems to be embedded in such manipulation and did not create an 'autonomous' and 'modern' existence to itself. At this point, it may be worth saying that one of the reasons of such fragmentation is the differences among the actors in terms of their positioning according to 'real-politics'. In other words, most of them seem not to be able to reach to a consensus to create an artistic field that is per se 'trans-ideological' and critical. In a place where the history of modernity is unknown, the objective of 'hostile' modernity is thoroughly blurred. In other words, modernity is not accepted as a culture of rupture. So, this seems to be one of the biggest obstacles of writing the history of art in Turkey. As seen in many of the afore-mentioned narratives in the previous chapters, the discourses produced in the artistic field are produced only positioning themselves next to 'western'

art or 'against' it.

On the other hand, I tried to display that the cultural and artistic institutions of modernity have been the site of struggle since Ottoman Period by focusing on a couple of moments. However, as politicization and socialization have often been produced by 'practical reason', – if we put it in anthropological terms- it seems hardly possible to suggest that there is, in Bourdieu's conceptualization, an 'objectified capital' created by the knowledge production about such moments of struggle and a 'collective belief' or 'social convention' about it.

Remembering the universal conditions of re-configured 'artistic field', i.e. being a part of culture industry, the homogenization of artistic production, its creating systems of representation that affirms the hegemony of dominant class and therefore its being a part of control mechanisms are the 'universal' problems. However, the conflicting processes observed in the artistic field in Turkey, also point to something else. We need to talk about a historical and recursive process within which 'modernist' and 'traditional' cultures, as a whole, have been the subjects of speculation. The institutions of culture and art obtaining legitimacy by short-term rhetoric of 'publicness' seem to have been the battlefields, the sites of 'symbolic struggle' among the ruling elite within which there is no notified public.

At this point, it seems appropriate to pass on the latest rumors about Galata Pier that is mentioned in Chapter 3. I had ended that section by saying that Galata Pier will be privatized as a whole and it is not possible to predict the future of two buildings; one is the home of Istanbul Modern Art Museum and the other is Istanbul Painting and Sculpture Museum that is under construction. In a meeting gathered in February 3, 2013 to determine some strategies against the liquidation of a 'public art collection' (collected in 2007) of Santral Istanbul Modern Art Museum of İstanbul Bilgi University, a curator said that even if the temperature of the storage they are kept in is about 45-50°C<sup>154</sup>, he is hoping that we will finally have a kind of frame of art history of Turkey when Painting and Sculpture Museum is complete. An art historian added that though the newest painting in the collection is dated to 1975, they will rename it as Contemporary Art

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154 The museum standard temperature for keeping paintings safe is 20° C ± 1 source: [www.nga.gov.au](http://www.nga.gov.au) (accessed on February 8, 2013)

Museum if they (government) open it, and this just means to break the ties with the social memory. And somebody else stated, he heard that the 3<sup>rd</sup> building in Galata Pier is allocated to a corporation known to be close to the government and it will be a Museum of Modern Calligraphy (Hat).

It appears that these narratives also remark to some other things next to cultural and artistic institutions' being site of symbolic struggle. The dichotomies produced by knowledge makers in the artistic field, as stated in the previous chapters, are bound by the dominant discourse. Nevertheless, it does not seem very possible to estimate what their point of reference will be since their expertise are almost never recognized. I had mentioned in Chapter 5 that the terminologies such as 'Modern Art', 'Contemporary Art' and 'Actual Art' are used as antonyms. Now, we need to add this 'equation' the terminology of 'Contemporary Art' that will be given to a body of artwork produced in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Therefore, it becomes just impossible for an ethnographer to determine 'etic' and 'emic' categories in an environment where almost all the terminologies are instantly shuffled.

However, there is an artistic field in Turkey, and there are artists, art historians, curators, collectors, etc., and İstanbul is one of the 'hot-spots' of art world. However, it does not seem possible to suggest that, again in Bourdieu's terminology, this field is a 'self-sufficient' world for 'art for art's sake.

This study is an attempt to delineate the general conditions surrounding the glocal artistic field in Turkey. Albeit this study generated more questions than answers, I tend to suggest that the construction of 'autonomous' artistic field seems quite depend on the construction of the social history of modernity in Turkey.

### **7.1. Restrictions of Research and Suggestions:**

In this research, though the definitions of their professions are not clear cut, I mainly focused on professionals, who hold mediatory position, and who- in a large extend- contribute to knowledge production of art in Turkey. Though some of the informants, whose voice are also partially heard in this paper, are also artists; their contribution is only limited with their relevance to the framework of the paper. Generally, the voices of

audiences, artists, collectors are not heard in this study. As I constructed the thesis within the frame of 'autonomy of artistic field' and modernism; I tried depict a general frame that affect all the parties in the artistic field.

However, an important issue I have not included in this thesis is that almost all the actors in the artistic field in Turkey, including the 'prominent' informants, are one way or the other exposed to labor exploitation within this structure. There are narratives indicating that artists and other actors are obliged to be at work between 8 am. and 17.00 pm. in many private culture institutions operated like a factory; that the intellectual labor is generally considered as having no monetary value, etc. Another important element related to this subject is that artist's right for royalties are not largely recognized by Turkish Law. A research is needed that focus on the working conditions of people who create the artistic field in Turkey.

Nonetheless, the data I used in this paper is just a part of the whole data I collected during the course of the field. One important issue that I did not enclose in this study is the issue of media that might have been selected as a cardinal matter when doing an inquiry about a field like this one. A study about art field centering the issue of 'media' would have include many dimensions other than the representation via media; because art might well be considered as a part of whole media, since it is also a means of representation. Having said that, I should remark, the perspectives developed by the disciplines like Cultural Studies; i.e. in a sense developed as a respond to Frankfurt School's distinction between 'high culture' and 'popular culture', that emphasize the elements of resistance in Mass/Popular Culture are partially mentioned here, though there is a wide range of important literature there. Moreover, the representation of art and artistic field in the conventional media is also a part of this issue that I did not enclose here. Another important matter related to this is the impact of culture industry upon 'folk/traditional' art in Turkey, since the state is failing to invest in this area.

Besides, the great impact of rapidly developing and spreading new media technologies on artistic field is just mentioned as a factor; however it does not seem very possible to predict how these new technologies, especially internet, will lead our lives, the way we produce knowledge and art.

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## APPENDIX

### TEZ FOTOKOPİSİ İZİN FORMU

#### ENSTİTÜ

Fen Bilimleri Enstitüsü	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü	<input type="checkbox"/>
Uygulamalı Matematik Enstitüsü	<input type="checkbox"/>
Enformatik Enstitüsü	<input type="checkbox"/>
Deniz Bilimleri Enstitüsü	<input type="checkbox"/>

#### YAZARIN

Soyadı : Aydın  
Adı : Ceren Can  
Bölümü : Sosyal Antropoloji

**TEZİN ADI** (İngilizce) : 'Autonomy' of Artistic Field: The Case Study of  
İstanbul

**TEZİN TÜRÜ** : Yüksek Lisans  Doktora

1. Tezimin tamamından kaynak gösterilmek şartıyla fotokopi alınabilir.
2. Tezimin içindekiler sayfası, özet, indeks sayfalarından ve/veya bir bölümünden kaynak gösterilmek şartıyla fotokopi alınabilir.
3. Tezimden bir bir (1) yıl süreyle fotokopi alınamaz.

**TEZİN KÜTÜPHANEYE TESLİM TARİHİ:**