Today's artist identity as multicultural and hybrid identity

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Abstract

After modernism, the definition of a work of art and the manner in which art is being created has changed. Artists today, no longer being nourished by their cultures alone, not identified as 'genius' or considered to be highly talented. They take part in the new world with their multiple identities. Art, via circulations that exceed the borders of nation states, is being moved away from indigenous values and authentic innocence towards a globalized and monopolized world. Notably, the cold war coming to an end in the 1980s, demolition of the Berlin Wall in 1989, the opening of national borders and globalism which feeds on electronic communication, have been shaping the contemporary world into a new form. All of these factors contribute to the creation of new type of artist, with legitimized hybridity within art. The issue is not the identity itself, but how it is being represented. This is due to the risk of ghettoization, brought along by claiming a culture and identity for oneself. The hybrid identities confronting us are political strategies out to tear down stereotypes such as race, gender, ethnic origin and conventional way of thinking. There is currently an increase in the numbers of artists, who manage to fit a variety of cultures into their lives, reside in a cosmopolitan manner within multiple geographical locations and create in several countries at once. The art world, having been de-centered, away from the West; upon discovering artists from Africa, South America and Asia, and conveying them towards the globalized world, is at the same time harboring a problem of standardization and similitude. The leisure of traveling the earth can be an advantage for an artist; however the lack of having roots and the insecurity caused by a nomadic lifestyle can turn into a disadvantage.

Keywords:multicultural, hybrid identity, contemporary art.

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1. Introduction

Culture consist of all the habits we go through without thinking on, our lifestyles, and all the details whose roots span from the past towards our current daily lives. The notion of culture bears resemblance among others, so long as no political aim is involved. Each culture has similar and collective elements in terms of feeding, sleeping, sheltering, friendship, respectability, suffering, instincts and traditional rites, as we are all human, as species.

Culture, in terms of civilization, is not only an aesthetical issue, but it is rather a materialization of a way of life. "The adrenal glands of the poor are often larger than those of the rich, since the poor suffer more stress, but poverty is not able to create adrenal glands where none exist. Such is the dialectic of nature and culture" (Eagleton, 2000).

Pierre Bourdieu tells that culture is "habitus" (Cegin, Göker, Arlı & Tatlıcan, 2007). Culture indicates emotional habits that make us unconsciously cling to a traditional way of life. Culture is, by definition, open-ended, cannot be shaped; and while it is being experienced, on one hand, it remains partially unknown and unnoticed on the other. Culture is a network of common actions, and it can only progress towards an evolution within the society and therefore within the consciousness of the whole of humanity. A common culture is not one where a minority shapes the values and the majority adopts these and passively lives through them, but one that is shaped and re-defined continuously and collectively by all its members. According to Eagleton (2000), "One can also dub the suppressed capacities 'culture', and the repressive ones 'civilization'. Thus civilization is alienated, shattered and opportunistic, whereas culture is organic, sensory, has a historical process and is nourished by it as well as being non-temporal. The conflicts between these two notions are also present between tradition and modernity; and let us remember that modern art reverted back to mythologies, concepts that date back to prehistoric ages. The "*Magiciens de la Terre*" (Magicians of the World) exhibit at the Centre Pompidou that took place in 1989, was the first major exhibit that artist from Third World Countries were able to make their presence known amidst the centre of the West, in which exoticism was given prominence. To be under the assumption of "Western Culture" is the higher culture, is to deny all other cultures that are not of Western origin. Those who seek notions like highness or lowness within culture are only too glad to hand over the Fine Arts to the monopolization of the West. Whereas art is to be able to reach out and touch the lands of another culture through imagery. "As Theodor Adorno remarked, the ideal of Culture as absolute integration finds its logical expression in genocide. The two forms of culture are also alike in their claims to be non-political: high culture because it transcends such quotidian affairs, culture as collective identity because (in some, if by no means all, formulations) it cuts below politics rather than above them, in the textures of an instinctual mode of living" (Eagleton, 2000). Today, the notion of culture is being perceived as an antidote to politics or a sense of justice that should be granted to minority groups, as if it is related to class… It is as if the meanings of the words civilization and culture are trading places. A Western gaze is laid upon Asian, African and Third World countries as though with a romantic sympathy.

According to Said (1994), "… all cultures are involved in one another; none is single and pure, all are hybrid, heterogeneous, extraordinarily differentiated, and unmonolithic" (p. xxv). Culture is transparent, abstract, and keen on lodging and inhabiting other places, due to its nature. Hybridity can be added to the notions that have already taken their places within social sciences and arts, such as postmodernism, post colonialism, transnationalism, and multiculturalism. An example from cinema is Fatih Akın's movie "*Gegen die Wand*" (Duvara Karşı), which represents two different nations. Both Turkish and German cinemas have embraced the award won by Fatih Akın. Europe has rewarded the 'other', the immigrant within. Because the producer, technical crew, and even the shooting locations are much different than what is largely assumed (Ulusay, 2008).

Beginning with the 20th century, the "ivory tower" myth regarding arts dispersed, the artwork parted from its material, and with Beuys, it moved on from individualism to socialization. The aesthetical order within the modernist art theory gave way, not to the aura of art, the hinder world the work represents nor the form itself, but to the collective space where the art is being produced and exhibited. We are subjected to the broadness of the world, yet at the same time it is quite contracted; the Northern and Southern Hemispheres are experienced so separately, yet they keep influencing one another; the artistic practice becomes more and more urbanized, and we are

experiencing how the familiar traditional aura that we are acquainted with melts away. According to Heartney (2008), the decentralized art world directs some artists to give up the notion of cultural diversity, serving a stylist 'Esperanto' only masters-of-art can understand. Some other artists, who oppose this trend, tend to fetishize the ethnic and national identities in order to defend the 'brand' they represent. Thereby, it's not clear that whether the world develops a global culture or the globalization is solely westernization of non-western cultures.

Art is now accessible by universal masses; it is consumed not only where it was created, both its creation and consummation points are ambiguous. "Isn't art, as Duchamp once said, 'a game among all men of all eras'?" (Bourriaud, 2005). A contemporary artwork can serve as a relational device or machine which paves the way towards collective meetings. The critical and almost destructive function of modern art, and it's nomadic (and if nomadic, partly hybrid) constructs; makes people experience art that is a human activity, as a state of confrontation. With the demolition of the Berlin Wall, the art of the nineties, which is based on interaction, letting human relations substitute the work of art and make such relations a social function of art, leading to collaboration, and making us face reality using a construct that relates to a materialized world, trying to establish a common culture.

Before the modern era, mentions of 'identity' or recognition were not made often. This was not due to a lack of identities, on the contrary, from lack of a need to conceptualize or make a topic out of the identities. Especially after the World War II, a Europe being reconstructed was the host to a flow of migrations, new cultures, and multiculturalism. The development of the concept of modern identity gave way to the development of diversity politics. Our histories, origins, personalities, taste and preferences, the 'unique identities' of each and every one of us became prominent. The uniqueness of individuals and artists lies underneath how they know their own cultural inheritance, as well as how they get acquainted with, accept and interpret other cultures' heritage and legacy. This is because every individual and artist is a conveyor of culture. Culture is not fixed, it is permeable. Therefore, underneath the conception of creative and artist humans making themselves lies the argument of 'individual authenticity'. As Charles Taylor (1994) expressed, we might speak of the emergence of an individualized identity after the end of the 18th century; this individualized identity is particular to the person, and that one discovers it within them. Politics of multiculturalism can take the form of a demand to minimize the risks as a state policy; it may be hegemonic as well. European-centered intellectuals have values and criteria for judging others, which could only be a pretentious and artificial humbleness, praising the other culture for resembling their own and assimilating it. Multiculturalism can turn out to be either a creative or a destructive force for all nations, social unions and cultural congregations, who gradually become more and more dependent to one another. If we try to look at the bright side, the creative side, to be accepted as equal citizens (gender, race, ethnicity), in which a "we" that became "I", as well as an "I" that became "we" are readily present, as Gadamer has called a "fusion of horizons" (Taylor, 1994).

Taylor, while accepting individuals' own authentic identities indeed interact with various cultures, emphasized that a 'predefined social script' should not be carried out during a lifetime. The ideal of authenticity became one of the fundamental arguments of Modernism after Rousseau. The essential thing for each and every one of us is to exist not by imitating lives of others, but remain faithful to oneself. As for the artist, the expectation is to set forth authentic works of art. Taylor's approach (1994), is not akin to postmodernity, trapping such differences within an absolute relativity and ready to declare the end of modernity with a cognitive demeanor; but seeks an answer to the question, how can the critical potential of modernity be enhanced and lead to establishing authentication of individualistic freedom. There is a need for making authenticity a current issue once again. "Artists actively inhabit cultural and social forms. The internet user may create his or her own site or homepage and constantly reshuffle the information obtained, inventing paths that can be bookmarked and reproduced at will" (Bourriaud, 2005). Today's artist is one who makes good use of technology, overlaps imageries, and is good at montage.

2. Hybridization of art from Modernism until today

The all-encapsulating attitude of the contemporary art has affected the object of art as well. The attempt at finding new images brings along subjects, such as identity, multiculturalism, civilization,

technology, means of communication, network and internet, to the table. Artun and Orge commented on this process:

Contemporary art is a means of aristocratic populism; an ideological structure where extreme preciosity and top-level simplicity is intertwined. All sorts of people, whose similarities in terms of class, ethnicity and ideology diverge greatly, are thus propelled to amalgamate within artistic structures (Artun & Orge, 2013).

Artists, critics and curators, due to the lack of a distinct model to follow, have set off to pursue a novel future. Later, they gave up on the historic responsibility this pursuit would bring about, and had settled with bestowing the present we happen to be in, rather than pursuing a distinct path. Cultural interpretations hint contemporary art's aspiration towards being the preview of the future. It is crucial to grasp today, first. Gombrich has suggested that the work of art will be conceived by itself if one experiences the age. The art of the Modern Age prompts us to see, while the art of the Postmodern Age prompts us to touch, watch and even smell. This property of contemporary art is due to its moderate and all-encapsulating attitude. The virtual setting that we are in; technology, media and fashion; places us all within a mold of congeneric human model. Within this context, it is as if we're dragged into an existential experience that we are not truthfully within. Baudrillard states: "Art interests me as an object, from an anthropological point of view: the object, before any promotion of its aesthetic value, and what happens after" (Baudrillard, 2005).

Modernism's effort to sever its ties from the past, and its clash with the aesthetical values determine the way it deals with the concepts of time and memory. Modern thought's characteristic of alienation from tradition provides for its belonging to the future, as a plan. As for postmodern conceptualization of time; even if a plan exists, a belief in future does not. Utopias that belong to the Modern has transformed into dystopias. The ambiguity of the future and the disappearance of plan destroy the possibility of a past, which would set its standards, to be sought. 'Modern' as disengagement from past; 'Postmodern' as disengagement from plan and future; point at the present. The perception of time and space being stuck in the present becomes the foundation for Postmodern. How will be the response, in the arts, to time and space being stuck? If a crisis in the representation of time and space exists, the necessity for novel ways of thought and perception has begun to manifest. The tension created by disengagement from the history and the origins of the individual, is sought in objects of memory. The individual wants to reanimate the lost feeling of historicity. Within the context of the novel global society that identifies with contemporary art, rich individuals who had lost their prerogatives, the role of upholding the industry and trade to the CEO bureaucracy; try to obtain a certain citizen identity via aesthetic 'charity' (Artun & Örge, 2013).

Art's multiple-potentiality production media and large scale art productions brought forth a generation brand-name artists. The artist, like the contemporary subject, opted into becoming a part of the system, and objectifying themselves. From now on, a cultural and artistic environment with multiple dynamics exists. The artists of the 21st century make use of many intertwined media in its art which, in general, can be termed installation. The art of installation, whose first instances go back to conceptual art and before that, Marcel Duchamp's readymades and Kurt Schwitters' works in the beginning of the 20th century, is a hybrid style of contemporary art that was supported by architecture and many other visual arts such as performance. Essentially, as the practice of installation progressed, the diversity of the works it applied to its elasticity ceased being a term peculiar to it and became a general one. In turn, artists will present the materials used in the creation of a new work and their new inventions to us. This hybrid type -the art of installation- makes use of contemporary problems while utilizing unlimited methods and materials. While restriction only applies to defined spaces, unrestrictedness is endless within the layers of thought. In this sense, the artist, who is obliged to come to terms with unlimited freedom of expression on one hand and the idiosyncratic reality of restricted space on the other, has a hard time being sincere, as it were. In this respect, the art of installation, regarding its mode of production, is the typical hybridization example of our age with its artist and artwork. The new economy of this flexible capitalism, as a result of its own entity, will deterritorialize its source.

Today, we can talk about an elastic collage in large metropolises comprised of restaurants located at the same street serving up a variety of world's cuisines; clothing articles from different eras piled in shop windows; or files belonging to covers of music previously listened to as well as the originals themselves, archived within the computer memories. This overlapping temporality and spatiality

represents a sort of pluralism. In this eclectic panorama, the individual and collective search for identity seems to necessitate looking for a safe harbor in the changing postmodern world.

3. Conclusion

Today, there is a necessity to examine concepts we discuss in terms of identity, culture, and art; with a special focus on hybrid artist identity, beginning from the 1980s. Instead of accepting the whole of today's art (modern, contemporary art) under the umbrella term 'art and identity', we need to voice our criticism. In the aftermath of the cold war, the demolition of the Berlin Wall in 1989, the dissolution of borders, international interactions, telecommunication facilities, in other words globalism, started to shape art and the world anew. The age of multitude that spans from the 1990s until today is characterized by competing theories that are for the most part disputed and contradictory (poststructuralist theory, feminism, multiculturalism, etc.). Today, when the global scope of art and the mobility of the artist are considered, an organization based on geographical differences cannot be observed. More than one-third of the artists whose name appears in international exhibits and biennales spend majority of their time outside the borders of the country they were born in (Hicks, 2014). This migration can be real as well as virtual. As the world globalizes, the identities get more hybrid. Differences in works of art give way to similarities, while genuineness and authenticity are replaced with imitations. Works that are 'like art' that are not genuine works of art finding themselves places in today's art environment. As the art critic Arthur Danto (1997) indicates, such developments were the poor results of the attempts to get the art market back on track, after its near-complete annihilation. Whilst the artists who roam the earth experience the difficulties attached to a nomadic lifestyle, they happen to benefit from the advantages and face the contradictions within the hybrid identities, simultaneously.

Acknowledgements

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