TRACING SITE-SPECIFICITY:
A TRANSNATIONAL CRITIQUE

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ABSTRACT

TRACING SITE-SPECIFICITY:
A TRANSNATIONAL CRITIQUE

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The aim of this study is to redefine the relationship between art and architecture, focusing on their in-between. Site-specificity is introduced as a critical spatial strategy that extends beyond definitions of art, medium, practice, site, space, and architecture. Therefore, it becomes an investigative tool that can magnify the site-art relationship, which would help to analyze shifts, transformations, and mutations of terms, practices, and spaces. The aim is to look into the terms and conditions of critical spatial practice in the expanded field that site-specificity defines, while creating a rich dialogue with existence of contemporary art spaces. The study approaches the history of site-specific art and contemporary art spaces transnationally, shifting the focus from isolated national narratives to practices and spaces that operate within complex layered networks, circulations of art, artists, curators, exhibitions, and architecture. Bridging art history and architecture on this transnational basis, the thesis examines exhibitions such as *Gar* (1995), *Anı/Bellek*

(1991, 1993), *İstanbul Yaya Sergisi* (2002), and the *4th İstanbul Biennial* (1995), combining archival analysis, oral history studies, and visual analysis. By tracing the transformations of art and space in the Turkish context, the study aims to fill a critical gap in scholarship and contribute a new perspective to global discussions on the spatiality of contemporary art vis-à-vis the concepts of liminality, sedentariness, mobility, and place-making.

Keywords: site-specificity, critical spatial practice, expanded field, display spaces, museums

ÖZ

MEKÂNA ÖZGÜLLÜĞÜN İZİNİ SÜRMEK:
ULUSÖTESİ BİR ELEŞTİRİ

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Bu çalışmanın amacı, sanat ve mimarlık arasındaki ilişkiyi yeniden tanımlamaktır, özellikle mekân ve sergilenen nesne kalan alana odaklanmaktadır. Mekâna özgüllüğün; sanat, araç, uygulama, yer, mekân ve mimarlık tanımlarının ötesine geçen eleştirel bir mekansal strateji olarak tanıtılması amaçlanmaktadır. Bu nedenle, yer-sanat ilişkisini büyütebilen bir araştırma aracı haline gelerek terimlerin, uygulamaların ve mekanların değişimlerini, dönüşümlerini ve mutasyonlarını analiz etmeye yardımcı olur. Amaç, mekâna özgüllüğün tanımladığı genişletilmiş alanda, eleştirel mekân pratiğinde şart ve koşullarını incelemek ve çağdaş sanat mekanlarının varlığında zengin bir diyalog oluşturmaktır. Çalışma, mekânsallığa özgü sanatın ve çağdaş sanat mekânlarının tarihine ulusötesi bir yaklaşımla yaklaşır ve odak noktasını izole ulusal anlatılardan, karmaşık ve katmanlı bağlantılar, sanat, sanatçılar, küratörler, sergiler ve mimarinin dolaşımı içinde işleyen uygulamalara ve mekânlara kaydırır. Bu ulusötesi sanat tarihi ve mimariyi birbirine bağlayan tez, *Gar* (1995), *Anı/Bellek* (1991, 1993), *İstanbul Yaya Sergisi* (2002) ve *4. İstanbul Bienali*

(1995) gibi sergileri arşiv analizi, sözlü tarihsel çalışmaları ve görsel analizi birleştirerek incelemektedir. Türkiye bağlamında sanat ve mekânın dönüşümlerini izleyen bu çalışma, akademik alanda önemli bir boşluğu doldurmayı ve çağdaş sanatın mekânsallığına ilişkin ulusötesi tartışmalara, sınırlar, sabitlik, hareketlilik ve mekân yaratma kavramları üzerinde yeni bir bakış açısı kazandırmayı amaçlamaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: mekâna özgüllük, eleştirel mekân pratiği, genişletilmiş alan, sergi mekânları, müzeler

to mom and dad

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

PLAGIARISM iii

ABSTRACT iv

ÖZ vi

DEDICATION viii

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS ix

TABLE OF CONTENTS x

LIST OF FIGURES xii

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS xv

CHAPTERS

1. INTRODUCTION 1

2. HISTORY OF CONTEMPORARY ART SPACES 9

    2.1. To the White Cube 11

    2.2. After the White Cube 21

    2.3. Global White Cube 31

3. SITE-SPECIFICITY AND BEYOND 34

    3.1. Site Specificity is/as Sedentary Model 39

    3.2. Site Specificity is/as Nomadic Model 56

    3.3. Site Specificity is/as Place-Making 65

    3.4. The Site/Space/Place: Reconfigured 71

4. SITE-SPECIFICITY AS A TRANSNATIONAL PROBLEM IDEA 72

    4.1. Turkey as a Transnational Site 72

4.1.1. Liminal Site 76
4.1.2. Sedentary Site 90
4.1.3. Nomadic Site 97
4.1.4. Public Site and Place-Making 109
4.2. Conclusion: Critical Spatial Practice 117
5. CONCLUSION 119
REFERENCES 122
A. TURKISH SUMMARY / TÜRKÇE ÖZET 129
D. THESIS PERMISSION FORM / TEZ İZİN FORMU 140

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 2.1. Timeline according to Giebelhausen's paradigms, drawn by the author. 11
Figure 2.2. Jean-Nicolas-Louis Durand's ideal museum drawings, 1802-5. 13
Figure 2.3. Altes Museum, Berlin, 1822-1830, photograph taken by the author. 14
Figure 2.4. Plans for Altes Museum, Berlin,1830. 15
Figure 2.5. South Court of South Kensington Museum, 1868. 17
Figure 2.6. Exterior of MoMA, 1939. 18
Figure 2.7. Installation view of a display at MoMA, 1936. 19
Figure 2.8. Global History of Contemporary Art Spaces, drawn by the author. 21
Figure 2.9. Exterior of Guggenheim Museum Bilbao. 23
Figure 2.10. Plan (up) and Elevation (down) Drawing of Guggenheim Museum Bilbao by Gehry Partners LLP. 24
Figure 2.11. Exterior of Guggenheim Museum New York, 1992. 26
Figure 2.12. Plan and Section Drawing of Guggenheim Museum New York. 27
Figure 2.13. Interior of Dia: Beacon. 29
Figure 2.14. Louise Bourgeois, *Crouching Spider* inside Dia: Beacon. 30
Figure 3.1. Diagram of/for sculpture. 40
Figure 3.2. Diagrams of/for Expanded Field. 41
Figure 3.3. *Tilted Arc*, located at Federal Plaza, 1989. 43
Figure 3.4. Perspective Section Drawing of *Tilted Arc,* illustrating its surrounding, 1/300 scale, drawn by the author. 45
Figure 3.5. *Spiral Jetty*, 1970. 47
Figure 3.6. Perspective Section Drawing of *Spiral Jetty*, 1/100 scale, drawn by the author. 48

Figure 3.7. People voting for *MoMA Poll*, 1970. 50
Figure 3.8. Perspective Section Drawing of *MoMA Poll*, 1/50 scale, drawn by the author. 51
Figure 3.9. Installation views of *Within and Beyond the Frame*, 1973. 53
Figure 3.10. Perspective Section Drawing of *Within and Beyond the Frame*, 1/200 scale, drawn by the author. 55
Figure 3.11. *A Nonsite (Franklin, New Jersey)*, 1968. 58
Figure 3.12. Perspective Section Drawing of *Nonsites*, 1/50 scale, drawn by the author. 59
Figure 3.13. Illustrations for *Breeze Block Performances*. 61
Figure 3.14. Photographs from the spatial utilization of *Breeze Block Performances*. 63
Figure 3.15. Perspective Section Drawing of *Breeze Block Performances*, drawn by the author. 64
Figure 3.16. *House,* 1993. 67
Figure 3.17. Perspective Section Drawing of *House*, 1/200 scale, drawn by the author. 68
Figure 3.18. *A-Z Prototype for Pocket Property*, floating off the coast of Denmark, 1999. 69
Figure 3.19. Perspective Section Drawing of *A-Z Prototype for Pocket Property*, 1/50 scale, drawn by the author. 70
Figure 4.1. Taksim Art Gallery, Restoration Project Poster. 80
Figure 4.2. *Register II* (up), *Register III* (down) Paintings. 81
Figure 4.3. *Register* Paintings and Their Distinct Display Technique. 82
Figure 4.4. Perspective Section Drawing of *Register* Paintings, 1/50 scale, drawn by the author. 83
Figure 4.5. *Tea Glasses*, illuminated by the window. 86
Figure 4.6. Perspective Section Drawing of *Tea Glasses,* 1/50 scale, drawn by the author. 87
Figure 4.7. Vasıf Kortun's Request of Floor Plans for Anı/Bellek II Exhibition. 89

Figure 4.8. Installation process of *Kurşun Uykusu*. 94
Figure 4.9. Installation Process of *Kurşun Uykusu*. 94
Figure 4.10. Perspective Section Drawing of Ankara Station and *Kurşun Uykusu*, 1/100 scale, drawn by the author. 95
Figure 4.11. Exhibition plan. 96
Figure 4.12. A view of Tophane (with Antrepo warehouses), Cihangir and Taksim districts from Hagia Sophia Museum. 102
Figure 4.13. Guard-booth found on Antrepo No. I's second floor. 103
Figure 4.14. Perspective Section Drawing of *We didn't go outside; we were always on the outside / We didn't go inside; we were always on the inside, situated inside* Antrepo No. I., 1/50 scale, drawn by the author. 105
Figure 4.15. Inside the *We didn't go outside; we were always on the outside / We didn't go inside; we were always on the inside* 106
Figure 4.16. *We didn't go outside; we were always on the outside / We didn't go inside; we were always on the inside* (re)exhibited at Arter Art Gallery, 2019. 108
Figure 4.17. *1:1 City Guide*,2002. 113
Figure 4.18. Perspective Section Drawings for *Alternative Tower*, 1/200 scale, drawn by the author. 114
Figure 4.19. Digitally edited photographs for *Alternative Tower*. 115

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

MoMA Museum of Modern Art

IKSV Istanbul Foundation for Culture and Arts / İstanbul Kültür Sanat Vakfı

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

"What comes into appearance

must segregate in order to appear."[1]

Contemporary art no longer resides in four walls, albeit the claims towards the art from the museums; it travels, adapts, and reshapes the very spaces that seek to contain it. Spaces, along with art, are not defined solely by their physicalities; they are defined by a discourse of site. Therefore, they travel, they move, and migrate. Over the past two centuries, art museum and display spaces have undergone significant transformations, shifting from storage rooms to the supposedly neutral white cube, then to flexible industrial sites, and finally to public nomadic events. This transformation mirrors shifts in art's scale, medium, and locational identity, much like a tideline reshaping the shore.

This indicates a tension between art and architecture of display that extends to a heavily intertwined past. Such tension arises from the power struggle over which should be the most prominent in public view. Historically, architecture has often been positioned as a mere background art.

I aim to challenge this position and elaborate on the entangled histories between art and architecture, illustrating how they can complement one another in varying geographies. The history of contemporary art spaces holds much to discover, with significant portions already historiographically analyzed. However, there

[1] Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, quoted in Robert Morris, "Notes on Sculpture," *Artforum*, February 1966, https://www.artforum.com/features/notes-on-sculpture-211706/ (accessed July 18, 2025).

remains a gap in the literature regarding the phenomenon of site specificity and its impact on the shifts and transformations in display spaces. This influence, which gained momentum after the post-war period, unfolds along different timelines across nations. The research seeks to explore and examine how art disseminates into these diverse environments, thereby enriching the understanding of the display of contemporary art in a multifaceted and inclusive manner.

A key spatial strategy that emerged in this context was site-specificity, a term related to art that gained prominence in the 1960s. Initially associated with Minimalist art and sculpture, and its engagement with the physical characteristics of a given environment, site-specificity challenged the perceived neutrality of gallery and museum spaces. While often theorized in the context of art history, the study will approach site-specificity as a critical spatial practice.[2] Consequently, it actively engages the exhibition site's existing architecture or spatial conditions, redefines the relationship between space and art-viewer, and offers a shifting critique of institutional spatiality adjacent to art. As the relationship between art and site evolves, so does the understanding of what site-specificity means. It shifts from the physical consciousness of Minimalist sculpture to a more symbolic or ideological condition, and eventually into an artistic methodology in itself—a form that may be as mobile and mutable as the contemporary art spaces it engages. The site becomes not only a place, but a politicized context, a community's need, or a discursive network shaped by shifting spatial and institutional forces.

These turns in the site-art relationship correspond with changing theoretical understandings of site-specificity: as a spatial condition, as a mode of critique, as a medium, as a spatial practice, as a discourse. The transformations that art and space undergo through different forms of relationship have been examined in the context of works of art produced in Europe and the US by names such as Rosalyn Deutsche, Jane Rendell, Hal Foster, and Miwon Kwon. The thesis examines these categories and terminologies as they have been theorized by a range of scholars, in order to

[2] The term has been borrowed from Jane Rendell. The term will play a central role analyzing and tracing site-specific works through reaching an outcome on history of contemporary art spaces. Jane Rendell, *Art And Architecture: A Place Between* (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2007), 12-30.

explore how the shifting definitions of site—and the artistic practices associated with them—intersect with and reflect the transformation of architecture of contemporary museums, galleries, and art spaces. Ultimately, the goal is to see how the conditions and discontents of exhibition space have made them not just places of display, but fertile sites— produced, questioned, and redefined through the spatial thinking embedded in contemporary site-specific practices. The reflections of these transformations in other global contexts reiterate certain patterns already discussed by the above-mentioned scholars, yet still differ in relation to how they are framed by historical, social, and cultural contexts and critical discourses. Considered in this light, tracing these transformations in Turkey is of paramount importance.

The period in Turkey in the 1990s, when art in both public and private spaces gained a spatial emphasis, both paralleled the global developments and diverged from them in certain ways. During this period, installation art, as an example of this spatial emphasis in particular, became widespread in the art world in Turkey. Furthermore, artworks in a series of exhibitions that chose alternative venues over traditional exhibition spaces had the opportunity to more freely explore and test the boundaries of their relationships with these alternative spaces. Considering these changes, this thesis examines the reflections of this spatial orientation in the art of Turkey. Focusing on several exhibitions, namely, *Gar* (1995), *Anı/Bellek I & II* (1991,1993), *4th Istanbul Biennial* (*4. İstanbul Bienali*, 1995), and *Istanbul Pedestrian Exhibition* (*İstanbul Yaya Sergisi*, 2002) that attracted attention with their emphasis on site-specificity, the thesis discusses how the relationship between artistic production and spatiality have taken shape in the context of Turkey.

The research acknowledges several limitations that shape its findings and interpretations. The concentration on site-specificity and the architecture of contemporary art spaces means that the primary chronological focus is on the post-war period, when the transformation in spatial practices accelerated significantly. Within this already selective frame, the scope narrows further to examples from the 1990s onwards in Turkey, a focus that offers depth but necessarily omits earlier developments and parallel cases in other geographies. While the study draws on a range of sources, it remains largely grounded in Western art history. I acknowledge

the limitations of this paradigm, whose boundaries and biases are well recognized. The decision to approach architecture from the perspective of art carries both advantages and disadvantages: while it foregrounds the ways in which artistic practice interprets, critiques, and redefines space, it also inevitably shapes the kinds of questions asked and the narratives prioritized. This vantage point influenced the findings, but it also illuminated the transformative power of architecture on art, revealing how spatial conditions can themselves act as catalysts for artistic innovation. Despite the limitation, this research provides a valuable insight into the understanding of the intricate relationship between art and architecture. By analyzing how site-specificity and art have evolved across different examples with the varying locational identities, the study sheds light on how transformation in spaces reflects changes in societies, institutions, politics, cultures, and discourse. These constraints inevitably limit the breadth of the analysis, yet the Turkish case—marked by its unique socio-political character and the liminal presence of its people and artists—offers rare comparative examples that enrich the understanding of site-specificity within a transnational framework.

As a methodology, the study brings together histories of art and architecture, and cultural studies. For the Turkish context, an oral history study was conducted with key artists and curators from the selected exhibitions, including Selim Birsel, Hasan Çalışlar, Hale Tenger, Vasıf Kortun, and Sezin Romi. For the *Gar, Anı/Bellek I & II* and *Istanbul Pedestrian* exhibitions, primary archival materials consisting of information about the exhibitions, artists, exhibition photographs, and documents were obtained from Salt Research's- Vasıf Kortun Archive, and O Zamanlar Konuşuyorduk Archive. IKSV's records provided the documents for the *4th Istanbul Biennial*. Furthermore, the study assembles complementary examples from other cultures and uses secondary literature on these examples in order to make a comprehensive analysis. The thesis scrutinizes the collected data on the features of art and spatial concerns, designs, and arrangements in an interdisciplinary manner and interprets them within the framework of the concept of critical spatial practice. Doing so, the study aims to move beyond architecture's often contentious role as a

mere backdrop. Instead, it focuses on forms of site-specificity that not just highlight, but also transform art and architecture, thereby creating something in-between.

The study approaches the history of the relations between contemporary art and its display spaces transnationally, shifting the focus from isolated national narratives to spaces that operate within complex and layered networks, circulations of art, artists, curators, exhibitions, and architecture. These spaces are continuously shaped and transformed by relations across borders. Rather than viewing these artworks, spaces, and the relations between them as static embodiments of national identity, the study reflects on them as dynamic, mobile, and active participants of cultures, art, and history in cross-border flows. In contrast to the prevailing Eurocentric perspective in the study of the history of art and architecture, this approach will emphasize a history shaped by migration, mobility, temporality, liminality, and their subsequent outcomes.

In addition to textual and visual archival analysis, I developed a series of perspective section drawings to visualize spatial relations that the art developed in relation to a variety of contexts. These drawings will offer an insight into the interplay between art and architecture, the in-between, art and site/space, by removing these spaces from their conventional role as a mere backdrop, thereby facilitating unprecedented exploration of this phenomenon. This approach enables the observation of architectural changes in contemporary art spaces with site-specificity serving as an investigative tool.

The second chapter provides a brief history of the display spaces of art, especially addressing the emergence of the white cube and subsequent contemporary art museum architecture, alongside phenomena such as the rise of large-scale artworks, fragmentation, and adaptive reuse of spaces. It also examined the global turn toward biennials and nomadic art events, which challenge conventional definitions of museum space and its institutional framework. Doing so, the chapter not only examines the mainstream spatial contexts of twentieth century art but also highlights some discontentment with such spaces and institutions, which played a key role in the emergence of site-specific tendencies in art. In order to achieve a

comprehensive understanding of the broader subject, an *entangled history* [3] that considers layered narratives of global art and architecture is necessary. Yet, the majority of the second chapter will concern itself with the art museum institutions of Europe and the US as the site-specific artworks first emerged in the sixties and were subsequently conceptualized in these contexts. On the other hand, the section on biennials and alternative art spaces highlights the global art world at large and also reflects on the issues of art and culture's colonialism within these mobile and temporary events to the extent that they are contemporary to the intensification of site-specific tendencies in the context of Turkey.

The third chapter delves into the definition and dynamics of site-specificity, and its examples from the 1960s and 70s, especially from the United States and Europe. The selection of works from the 60s and 70s, such as Richard Serra, Robert Smithson, Daniel Buren, and Hans Haacke justifies itself by the artists' deliberate definition and production of their works by/in the site, in relation to the dynamics and discontents of their respective sites.

Kwon defines the earliest forms of site-specificity as a discourse of art practices seeking a place-bound identity to reflect on the commodification of art and the institutional framework. However, this definition, rooted in the 1960s, has transformed over time, evolving towards a discourse characterized by transience and deterritorialization. This transformation can be observed in the mutations of land art or public art from the original site-specific art of the 1960s. Over time, it has culminated in the development of fictional relations to the site, which is now understood as more flexible, mobile, and protean.[4]

The fourth chapter analyzes the context of Turkey in the nineties when site-specificity became a visible tendency traced vis-à-vis the privatization of cultural spheres in the 1990s. A great variety of new practices, mediums, curators, and discussions have emerged in this period within the newly emerging spaces dedicated

[3] The term has borrowed from Andrea Meyer and Bénédicte Savoy's article. Andrea Meyer and Bénédicte Savoy, "Towards a Transnational History of Museums: An Introduction," under *De Gruyter eBooks*, 1–16, 2013.
[4] Ibid.

to modern and contemporary art, such as museums, galleries, along public spaces.[5] When viewed under the light of site specificity, the art scene in this period of Turkey reveals both parallels and distinctions in relation to architectural typologies, spatial practices, and the transformation of contemporary art spaces as discussed in the second and third chapters. The importance of liminality in the Turkish context is a recurring theme of this chapter to understanding the conscious emergence of public art, site-specificity, and alternative display spaces. The oral histories conducted with artists, curators, architects, and researchers from the selected exhibitions and the period not only provides key information to analyze this liminality as a concept, but also gives vital clues about the Turkey's art world context of the time, which was dynamic, mobile, and in search of something: to situate and thus belong to somewhere, to some community. In order to trace not just this liminality but also site-specific art's engagement with sedentary and nomadic sites, and its place-making activities, the chapter focuses on four major exhibitions: *Anı/Bellek I & II* (1991, 1993), the *Gar Exhibition* (1995), the *4th Istanbul Biennial* (1995), and the *Istanbul Pedestrian Exhibition* (2002). This selection of exhibitions provides a larger picture of major tendencies in the relationships between art and site in this period in Turkey, while raising the themes of liminality, displacement, and identity. The chapter delves into site-specificity as an expanded field, exploring its potential as a tool for understanding Turkey's contemporary art in new ways. Tracing the interplay of site specificity reveals both similarities and differences in Turkey's art, its development processes, and its societal and governmental perceptions.

To conclude, this study reintroduces site-specificity as a transnational and historically contingent discourse. From the 1960s to today, site-specificity has shifted from its original meaning into a broader sense of association with site, community, time, and context. It has evolved from fixed associations with place to broader engagements with temporality, mobility, community, and context. In this study, a new ground to discuss these works has been established. In the Turkish context, this discourse enables a reframing of early curated exhibitions, public art initiatives, and

[5] Miwon Kwon, *One Place after Another*, (The MIT Press eBooks, 2002).

biennial practices not merely as local phenomena but as active agents within a larger global system of spatial and cultural production. By positioning site-specificity as a conceptual problem and tracing its dissemination into the Turkish contemporary art scene at the turn of the century, the study establishes a critical framework for understanding how art reshapes the relationship between society, space, and architecture. It also opens a platform for Turkish site-specific artworks to be more meaningfully situated within the global discourse, emphasizing their relevance, specificity, and contributions to the evolving definitions of contemporary place-making in art.

CHAPTER 2

HISTORY OF CONTEMPORARY ART SPACES

"...take relationships out of the work and
make them a function of space, light
and the viewer's field of vision."[6]

The transnational history of contemporary spaces holds much to discover, with significant portions already historiographically analyzed. However, there remains a gap in the literature regarding the phenomenon of site specificity and its impact on the shifts and transformations in display spaces. This influence, which gained momentum after the post-war period, unfolds along different timelines across nations. While the examples vary in terms of their timelines and contexts, they have common aspects in terms of their critique of the institutional framework and liberalization of art's definition and what it entails in space, or site.

In order to elucidate the concept of contemporary art spaces, it is imperative to consider the diverse range of locations that fall under this designation. These include, but are not limited to, contemporary art institutions, museums, and galleries such as MoMA or Dia. Additionally, public spaces and natural sites that serve as conduits for the dissemination of art are also encompassed within the purview of contemporary art spaces. The research endeavors to explore and examine how art disseminates into these diverse environments, thereby enriching the understanding of the display of contemporary art in a multifaceted and inclusive manner. The challenge of categorizing these diverse sites and spaces for art display is a complex one, and as such, the present study will utilize the term contemporary art spaces for

[6] Robert Morris, "Notes on Sculpture," *Artforum*, February 1966, https://www.artforum.com/features/notes-on-sculpture-211706/ (accessed Date: July 18, 2025).

general reference. Thus, it will be much less susceptible to misinterpretation than the term 'display spaces', which does not accurately reflect the generality of meaning that is intended in this research.

The study will take its cue from this historical tension and examine the museums and display spaces from the 18th century to the 21st century through three key issues. I will utilize Michaela Giebelhausen's four paradigms to map the timeline of shifts in display spaces. Then, I will investigate the role of institutions in shaping art and its display, particularly their framework and suppressive forces on art and artists. This will lead us to the third analysis, that of the criticisms and variety of newly emerging mediums through the artist's own appropriation and elaboration of space, or site, as alternative display spaces. Accordingly, the chapter will utilize Giebelhausen's paradigms, along with Hal Foster's analysis of modern and contemporary art museums and Elena Filipovic's elaboration of the biennials as the globalization of the white cube. As evident from the relevant literature, the majority of this chapter will concern itself with the Western art world. The occurrence of events within the mainstream art world during this period in Western geography is indicative of the prevailing circumstances. The circulation of these events and art does not provide the necessary coverage of the world's art and cultural history as it overshadows the rich history of Eastern geography and its art. In order to achieve a comprehensive understanding of the subject, it is necessary to consider layered narratives together for creating an *entangled history,* [7] to grasp the broader context. Within this in mind, the last section of the chapter will analyze biennials and the mobilization of art spaces from a more global perspective vis-à-vis Elena Filipovic's studies on the subject. This approach aims to provide a more inclusive picture, especially for the period in which site-specific practices gained visibility in Turkey.

The first part of the chapter will focus on the history of museums from the 18th century to the 20th century. This section ends with a detailed analysis of the white cube of the 20th century and the implications of this style of museum for the display of art. Following this brief survey, the next section concentrates on the initial

[7] Andrea Meyer, and Bénédicte Savoy, "Towards a Transnational History of Museums. An Introduction," in *De Gruyter eBooks*, 1–16, 2013.

challenges and discontents with the white cube format that culminated in the emergence of alternative models. The final section of the chapter will elaborate on the mobilization of the art and exhibitions, especially through expos and biennials. The chapter will also establish the basis of the subsequent chapters to trace and draw parallels between art, space of display, distant geographies, and cultures.

2.1. To the White Cube

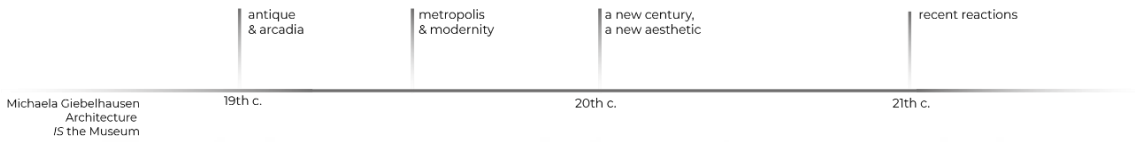


Figure 2.1. Timeline according to Giebelhausen's paradigms, drawn by the author.

In order to study contemporary art spaces, the focus will initially be on the museums as one of the first predecessors of these spaces. According to Giebelhausen, museums can be as essential as religious buildings or as significant as the subject of Foucault's study on prisons.[8] Prisons can be seen as tools for controlling and organizing society, shaping and teaching behavior through the effects of the spatial design and surveillance that can be achieved through their layout.[9] Similarly, museums can serve as active agents in shaping society by organizing and providing knowledge, guiding movement to influence behavior, teaching and developing ways of seeing, and thus acting as a subtle form of social control.

Giebelhausen suggests four paradigms representing different periods in the history of museums or display spaces. Instead of focusing on the continuities, and reoccurrences in history, Giebelhausen emphasizes the disruptions to highlight the shifts in museum history. The first paradigm relates to the late 18th century and early

[8] Michaela Giebelhausen, "Architecture Is the Museum," in *New Museum Theory and Practice: An Introduction*, ed. Janet Marstine (Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 41–63.
[9] Michael Foucault, *Discipline and Punishment: The Birth of the Prison.*, trans. Alan Sheridan, *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, vol. 11 (New York: Vintage Books, 1978).

19th century, a period characterized by the concept of "Arcadia and Antiquity."[10] While Arcadia is defined as ideal/ized, antiquity refers to a key architectural style. Combining these elements, Giebelhausen's paradigm aims to encapsulate the era's aspiration for the ideal museum design, with antiquity serving as the core architectural style. The utilization of Greek and Roman architectural features, such as temple porticos, domes, and colonnades, characterizes these museums, and help distinguish them from other cultural institutions. Antiquity functioned as a source of stylistic inspiration and an ideological function, positioning the museum as the heir of classical culture and a civilizing force. Correspondingly, the collections and architecture of these institutions were viewed as timeless and universal means for education.[11]

Jean-Nicolas-Louis Durand argues that the function and importance of these 18th century museums inheres in how ''[t]hey [museums] are built to conserve and to impart a previous treasure, and they must therefore be composed in the same spirit as libraries.''[12] This assertion encapsulates the museum's fundamental purpose as a storage, venue for educational and display purposes. However, the initial function appears to be the storage of collections whereas their subsequent display to the public was conceived in a very rigid manner. How the display arrangement and the collections would not change or differ through time is a reflection of the conceptualization of the collection as timeless.[13]

[10] Michaela Giebelhausen, "Architecture Is the Museum," in *New Museum Theory and Practice: An Introduction*, ed. Janet Marstine (Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 41–63.
[11] Ibid, 42-47.
[12] Jean-Nicolas-Louis Durand, Antoine Picon, and David Britt, *Précis of the Lectures on Architecture: With Graphic Portion of the Lectures on Architecture* (Los Angeles, United States of America: Getty Research Institute, 2000), 60.
[13] Michaela Giebelhausen, "Architecture Is the Museum," in *New Museum Theory and Practice: An Introduction*, ed. Janet Marstine (Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 41–63.

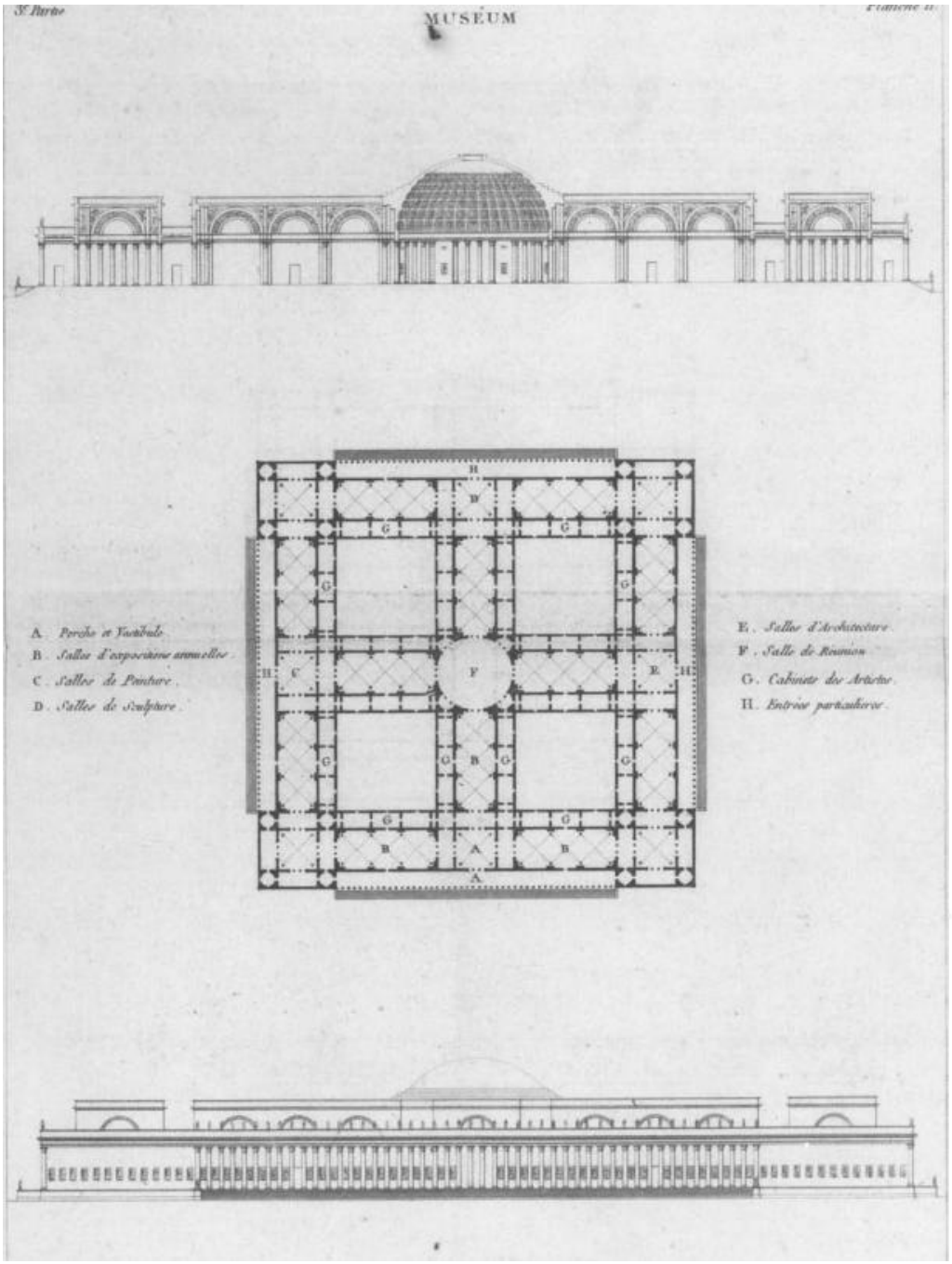


Figure 2.2. Jean-Nicolas-Louis Durand's ideal museum drawings, 1802-5.

Source: Jean-Nicolas-Louis Durand, Antoine Picon, and David Britt, Précis of the Lectures on Architecture: With Graphic Portion of the Lectures on Architecture (Los Angeles, United States of America: Getty Research Institute, 2000), 60, http://ci.nii.ac.jp/ncid/BA52779643.

The ideal museum design of Jean-Nicolas- Louis Durand offered an architectural typology for museums that are repeatable and rational. The design of the building consists of a central rotunda surrounded by four wings for the display, arranged in the shape of a Greek cross plan. The symmetrical entrances provide access to interior spaces. This typology reflects the idealism of classical culture,characterized by its clarity, accessibility, and universality.[14] While accessibility and circulation patterns offer an educational area for behavioral patterns in society, the rotunda, with its spatial hierarchy, serves as a functional repository of knowledge and symbolic civic monument.[15]

This ideal design became a reality in the Altes Museum in Berlin, Germany, by the design of Karl Friedrich Schinkel in 1830, among other examples. A central rotunda was flanked by two symmetrical wings, and the main entrance of the museum was marked by a portico of columns. The building's classicism was meant to reflect the collections of antiquity and paintings. Schinkel aimed to transform the visitor's experiences, allowing them to find traces of Arcadia in the city.[16]



Figure 2.3. Altes Museum, Berlin, 1822-1830, photograph taken by the author.

[14] Jean-Nicolas-Louis Durand, Antoine Picon, and David Britt, *Précis of the Lectures on Architecture: With Graphic Portion of the Lectures on Architecture* (Los Angeles, United States of America: Getty Research Institute, 2000), 60.
[15] Michaela Giebelhausen, "Architecture Is the Museum," in *New Museum Theory and Practice: An Introduction*, ed. Janet Marstine (Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 41–63.
[16] Ibid, 46.

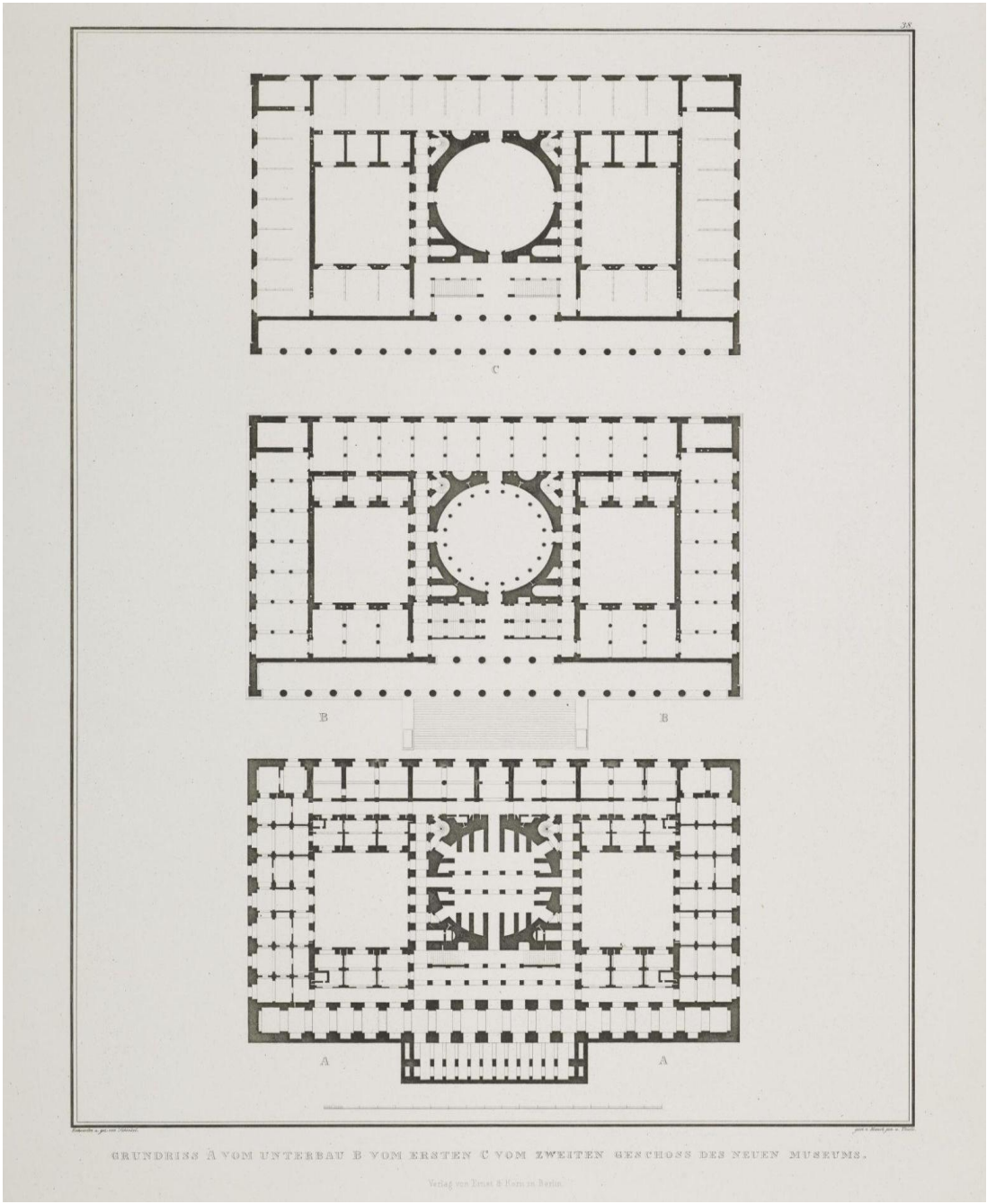


Figure 2.4. Plans for Altes Museum, Berlin,1830.

Source: Karl Friedrich Schinkel, Plans (Plate 38 of 'Altes Museum' from Sammlung Architektonischer Entwürfe), 1822-1830, Purchased by the Patrons of the National Galleries of Scotland 2001. National Galleries of Scotland collection. Photo, National Galleries of Scotland. https://www.nationalgalleries.org/art-and-artists/65369.

With the development of an unique museum understanding in the 19th century, we observe the emergence of modernity and its corresponding metropolis typology. Giebelhausen's paradigm dubs this era "Metropolis and Modernity" and this category symbolizes cultural transformation, industrialization, and modernity. Buildings, such as Berlin's Altes Museum, demonstrated the power of museums to shape society and culture through their educational role and as tools for displaying and performing state authority.

In the late 19th century, there was a significant increase in public display spaces. This trend was driven by the merging of cultural elements within the expanding capitalist framework. As a result, a city's prestige and its influence as a metropolis became linked to the number of museums it had. Similar patterns were observed earlier when urban areas were assessed based on transportation, commercial hubs, and other infrastructure. These developments reflect the strong connection between such regions and aspects like mass culture, consumerism, and crowd management.[17]

Corresponding to the paradigm of metropolis and modernity, iron-glass structures with multi-leveled and galleried spaces became the main design for these museums. This new design tendency can to some extent be associated with the increased issue of surveillance of the artworks and objects on display. Surveillance also became a tool for a control mechanism to sustain the state authority in these spaces and buildings. These 19th-century museums became more accessible to the public, and their transparency reflected this accessibility.[18]

[17] Michaela Giebelhausen, "Architecture Is the Museum," in *New Museum Theory and Practice: An Introduction*, ed. Janet Marstine (Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 47-52.
[18] Ibid, 47-52.



Figure 2.5. South Court of South Kensington Museum, 1868.

Source: Photographs by J. Davis Burton, No. 14 in the London Series, South Kensington Museum, South Court, from west side of Cross Gallery showing altar piece and cartoons for frescoes in the House of Lords, stereoscopic albumen prints, 1868. https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O1055797/south-kensington-museum-south-court-photograph-j-davis-burton/.

South Kensington emerged during this period of the museum boom. The architectural design of the South Court in London, United Kingdom belongs to Francis Fowke. The building embodies a synthesis of the period with its innovative iron-glass roof structure and decorative elements painted on the walls. Such a synthesis successfully integrates the industrial aesthetic of the period with the previous period's tendencies of classical artistry. Not only the architecture of the building, but also its collection reflects the period's criticized growing consumer culture. The building also consists of galleries and balconies that facilitate crowd control and social regulation. Such a symbolic and technological structure housing collections with increased surveillance to protect illustrates the museum's dual function as a site of cultural education and symbol of industrial progress and state authority, thus exemplifying the metropolis and modernity paradigm. [19]

[19] Michaela Giebelhausen, "Architecture Is the Museum," in *New Museum Theory and Practice: An Introduction*, ed. Janet Marstine (Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 47-52.

In the early and mid-20th century, museums became an emblem of culture and national identity. Their new policies involved responding to different visitor groups. Giebelhausen categorized this time as the paradigm of "A New Century, A New Aesthetic,"[20,] and the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) paved the way and named the style of the display for this period. The design of MoMA, located in New York, United States, by the architects Philip L. Goodwin and Edward Durell Stone reflects the minimalist tendencies of contemporary modernism.[21] The exterior façade, composed of industrial materials and horizontal windows, signals technological advancement. The entrance canopy welcomes the visitors on the street level. The overall façade contradicts the brownstone buildings of West 53rd Street. The layout reflects the open floor plan offering flexibility and adaptability that modern art requires, along with movable partitions transforming the space according to the needs of temporary exhibitions.[22]



Figure 2.6. Exterior of MoMA, 1939.

Source: https://www.moma.org/about/mission-statement/history.

[20] Ibid, 53-55.
[21] Ibid, 54.
[22] Michaela Giebelhausen, "Architecture Is the Museum," in *New Museum Theory and Practice: An Introduction*, ed. Janet Marstine (Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 54.

Alfred H. Barr, the first director of MoMA, approached the use of the space and exhibition mode on similar terms, following suit. MoMA established temporality and flexibility as a new vision for the display of artworks. The works were selected and categorized in relation to their historical and cultural context and then arranged according to corresponding display requirements.



Figure 2.7. Installation view of a display at MoMA, 1936.

Source: Installation view of the exhibition "Cubism and Abstract Art," on view at The Museum of Modern Art, March 2–April 19, 1936. The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York. Photo: Beaumont Newhall in Abigail Cain, "How The White Cube Came to Dominate the Art World," *Artsy*, February 24, 2021, https://www.artsy.net/article/artsy-editorial-white-cube-dominate-art.

As a museum of flux, MoMA aimed to shift the idea of the museum from a simple storage to a fluid display of modern art. The temporary exhibitions (such as Figure 2.7.) and works were arranged in a single line within a space of white walls, neutral floors with no architectural decoration, and diffuse lighting. Such supposed neutrality of the space aimed to pose minimum distractions to the version of the linear history of modern Western art proposed by MoMA's specific mode of display. Much later dubbed "white cube" by Brian O'Doherty, this supposedly neutral style

soon became the norm for the design of especially museums of art.[23] Isolated from the external context, place, and time, this style aimed at utter contemplation of the artworks as autonomous objects. What shaped such contemplation was, regardless, an institutional framework, albeit a hidden one under the pretense of neutrality. While the discussions about the autonomy of the artworks and their self-contained nature were appreciated highly during this time, the inclusion of certain mediums, certain artworks, and certain artists, and consequently excluding what is not suitable according to institutions, started to draw criticisms.[24]

Such criticisms posed by the artists toward the suppressive power of the institutions are the reason behind how different mediums and practices have emerged, and in time started to change the institution, its framework, its physical space, and its modes of display. This specific artistic approach first emerged in the mid-20th century with artists such as Daniel Buren, Marcel Broodthaers, and Hans Haacke. These artists challenged traditional notions of art and its institutional contexts. Their oeuvre frequently interrogated the functions of museums, galleries, and cultural institutions, accentuating issues of power, politics, and viewer engagement. During the 1990s, this approach experienced a resurgence of interest among artists such as Andrea Fraser and Fred Wilson, who continued to explore and critique the social, cultural, and political dynamics within art institutions. These artists have been instrumental in challenging the conventional boundaries that delineate the art from its audience and the spaces within which it is exhibited.

The motivation behind these changes' stems from this pivotal point of history, marked by the intense tension between institutions and the artist community, and the increased scale of the byproducts of this tension. By the late sixties, the white cube, with its thought-to-be neutral space with white-washed walls, faced criticism due to this institutional framework that imposed restrictions on art and artists so as to be able to fit into this white cube[25]. The transformation of the art world in this period

[23] Brian O'Doherty, *Inside the White Cube: The Ideology of the Gallery Space* (The Lapis Press, 1986), 53-55.
[24] Ibid, 53-55.
[25] Suzanne Macleod, *Reshaping Museum Space (Architecture, Design, Exhibitions)*, *Routledge eBooks*, 2005.

was also shaped by the emergence of large-scale artworks and new mediums, along with a growing artistic interest in the field, location, and site of the artwork itself, integrating these elements reflexively into the work. The institutional critique and what it would bring as the formation of an alternative space for underrepresented artists defines the period of the late 20th century. Additionally, the size and medium of art altered into something that cannot be housed in these white cubes of the 1930s. While Giebelhausen refers to this period as recent reactions,[26] I will examine this period under the categorization of museum after the white cube.

2.2. After the White Cube

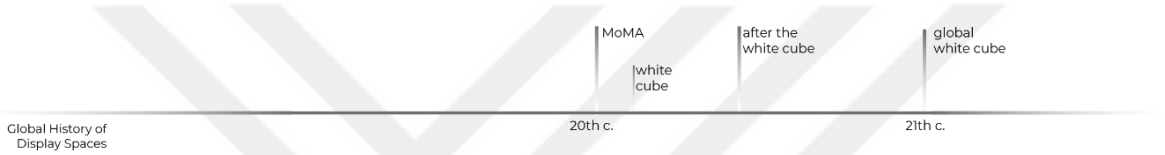


Figure 2.8. Global History of Contemporary Art Spaces, drawn by the author.

The departure from the white cube model began earlier in the seventies, as museums faced challenges from the increasing scale of artworks, experimental mediums, and shifting relationships between art and its context. These transformations are critically addressed by Hal Foster. His characterization of this era as 'after the white cube' signifies a pivotal transformation in the trajectory of art history, akin to Giebelhausen's four paradigms that delineate and scrutinize the period spanning from the 18th to the mid-20th centuries. According to Hal Foster, four areas in which problems emerged need to be highlighted: the variety of the scales of artworks and different spaces needed to accommodate them, expansion of the museums, the concept of museums as icons, and finally, the functions and programs of the museums.[27]

[26] Michaela Giebelhausen, "Architecture Is the Museum," in *New Museum Theory and Practice: An Introduction*, ed. Janet Marstine (Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 41–63.
[27] Hal Foster, "After the White Cube," *London Review of Books* 37, no. 6 (January 1, 2015): 25–27.

First, the increased size of contemporary artworks and the standardization of these consequently required museums for contemporary art to provide flexible and large spaces. To meet these requirements, any museum that integrated contemporary art into its collections had to expand not only their exhibition spaces but also their storage, which becomes another problem that is addressed by Foster. These two problems are intertwined and feed each other, because of the emergence of competition between the huge space and the huge artwork, not to mention the standardization of this scale for art and the incorporation of large and mostly unused atriums into the design of the museums. Transformation of the museum buildings into an assemblage of large-scale (responding to the scale of the majority of artworks), flexible (responding to the large variety of mediums spanning from performance to installation art) spaces creates leftover spaces, especially for museums that also exhibit artworks of more conventional size and mediums along with contemporary ones.[28]

Another identified problem is the new museum architecture and its iconicity with idiosyncratic forms to become landmarks that can invigorate the economy. The Guggenheim Museum Bilbao, with its distinctive architecture designed by Frank Gehry in 1997, has been a subject of critique due to its impact on the city's aesthetic, cultural landscape, and economic makeup with consequences of gentrification. This effect has been termed the Bilbao Effect, a term that underscores the museum's influence on the urban environment. As Foster states ''To achieve this iconicity, the chosen architect is allowed, even encouraged, to model idiosyncratic shapes at urban scale often near poor neighborhoods that are thereby disrupted, if not placed.''[29]

[28] Ibid.
[29] Ibid.



Figure 2.9. Exterior of Guggenheim Museum Bilbao.

Source: https://www.guggenheim-bilbao.eus/en/about-the-museum/the-museum.

The Bilbao effect signified that the institution was built to serve as an architectural symbol, aiming to boost cultural tourism and revitalize a city. As a result, the Guggenheim was constructed with the very purpose that created the effect. The structure is notable for its boldness, innovative design, and eccentricity, which have contributed to its iconic status. Such iconic designs fulfill their intended role, significantly impacting the economies of the respective cities. However, they often become spectacles that overshadow what is displayed inside them. In some ways, the architecture has become a larger and more popular art form than the art within these famous museums.[30]

[30] Hal Foster, "After the White Cube," *London Review of Books* 37, no. 6 (January 1, 2015): 25–27.

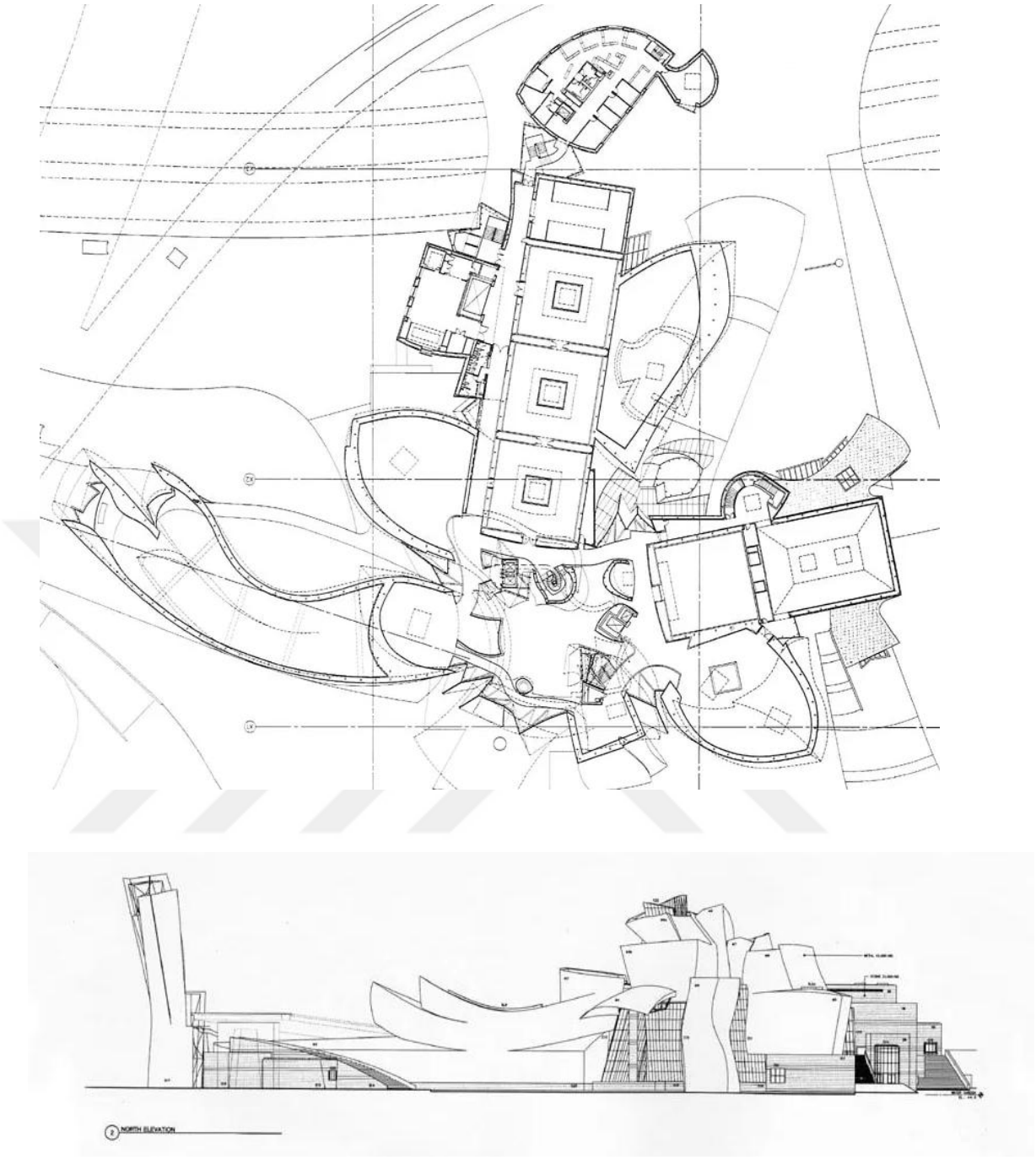


Figure 2.10. Plan (up) and Elevation (down) Drawing of Guggenheim Museum Bilbao by Gehry Partners LLP.

Source: https://www.inexhibit.com/mymuseum/guggenheim-museum-bilbao/.

Lastly, Foster elaborates on the background of the function and program of the museums. Since the 20th century became a society of spectacles with an

economy based on experience, museums have become increasingly defined by entertainment. While acknowledging the importance of better engaging visitors of art museums, Foster takes a critical stand on entertainment becoming the primary goal of the museum.[31] Foster's criticality elucidates a warning about the risk of reducing artworks and spaces to mere props and audiences to passive consumers, disguised as active viewers for the sake of entertainment and experience. By engaging in an endeavor of combining entertainment and criticality in the design and programming of the museum, it can work against the constraints of consumerism and political perspectives. Therefore, museums can have the potential to quietly reshape, as they once functioned, how society works.[32]

Foster's analysis of the current affairs of museums (especially those of contemporary art) is crucial for the literature on the subject for its critical scrutiny of the new tendencies in the design of such spaces in relation to the contemporary socio-historical context. Adding new perspectives to some of the problems addressed by Foster, Susanna Sirefman mentions the expansions that illustrate themselves in the form of fragmentation of the museum space across the city.[33] This fragmentation for expansion can manifest itself with horizontal or vertical layering, which means growth in another location for the museum or adding additional high-storey buildings to the existing museum.[34] Moreover, Sirefman explains that expansions can occur with adaptive reuse, which is the case with the utilization of old manufacturing buildings for their respective height and flexibility.[35] Sirefman criticizes the expectation from museums to spatially expand at the same speed. She highlights how architectural predictions for programs for these buildings, together with expansion capacities, cannot keep up with the fast-paced changes of the art world. According to Sirefman, the unpredictable expansion expected from the museum spaces makes them lose their characteristics, becoming more like 'airports'.[36]

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[31] Ibid.
[32] Ibid.
[33] Susanna Sirefman, "Formed and Forming: Contemporary Museum Architecture," *Daedalus* 128, no. 3 (1999): 297–320, https://www.jstor.org/stable/20027576.
[34] Ibid, 303-307.
[35] Ibid, 303-307.
[36] Ibid, 304.

A closer look at the Guggenheim Museum in New York provides us with a good example of this phenomenon of fragmentation across the city. Designed by Frank Lloyd Wright in 1939, the original museum, with its ramped gallery around an open atrium space, offered a new typology for museums. One of the most important features of this new typology is the reflection of the innovative interior space on the exterior façade and its visibility from the outside. Between 1990-92, a ten-storey annex was added to the museum that provided vertical layering to the original design. In 1992, Guggenheim SoHo, designed by Arata Isozaki, also opened (only to be closed in 2001), which expanded the museum horizontally across a different location of the city. Through this new location and new high-storey annex, Guggenheim elaborated its spatial expansions both horizontally and vertically.[37]



Figure 2.11. Exterior of Guggenheim Museum New York, 1992.

Source: The exterior of the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, lit up for the exhibition *Dan Flavin*, June 22–August 27, 1992. Photo: David Heald. https://www.guggenheim.org/about-us/architecture/frank-lloyd-wright-and-the-guggenheim.

[37] Ibid, 302-303.

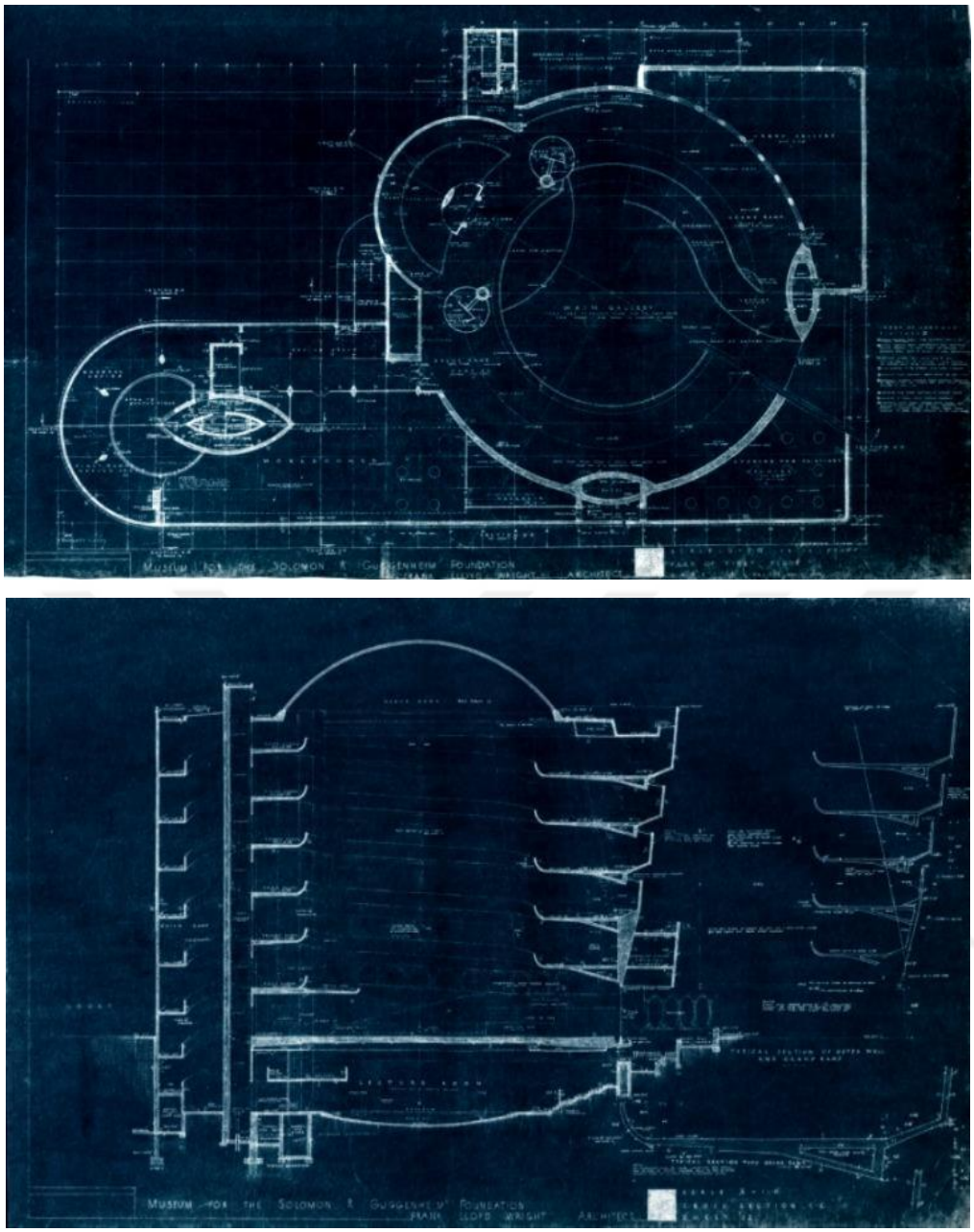


Figure 2.12. Plan and Section Drawing of Guggenheim Museum New York.

Source: Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum Archives, New York, NYnCopyright © 2017 Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation, Scottsdale, AZ. All rights reserved. Photo: Kristopher McKayn. https://www.guggenheim.org/articles/checklist/illuminating-details-from-frank-lloyd-wrights-guggenheim-blueprints.

Another issue concerning the design of contemporary art spaces emerges in the relations between the museums and their sites, which transpire in the form of a design concern for a certain sense of transparency in the inside and outside

differentiation. In other words, hinting at the museum interior through the external skin or form becomes a major design consideration for contemporary museums. For instance, Guggenheim NYC reflects its interior ramp structure through its exterior wrapping shell form. The Center Pompidou, with its transparent design, purportedly democratizes the museum experience with its lack of a barrier between inside and outside. Therefore, by blurring the differentiation of inside and outside, the distinction between container and contents gets shattered.[38]

To emphasize the impact of institutional critique and the practice of different mediums detached from the white cube display aesthetic on the transformations, Dia Art Foundation will be discussed. This foundation was established in 1974 under Charles Wright's directorship and Richard Gluckman's architectural contributions on creating what Hal Foster dubs the 'Dia aesthetic'.[39] What is very noteworthy about this foundation is the aim of addressing the institutional criticism through displaying art without museum's physical restrictions. This was largely done through the funding of site-specific and land art works located outside the confines of museums and even urban contexts in many cases (only for the documentation of these works in the form of photographs, texts, and videos to be subsequently displayed in more conventional exhibition spaces). Another notable aspect is the creation of a 'Dia aesthetic' of industrial-looking, large-scale open exhibition spaces as a counter thesis to the white cube. This type of design utilizes abandoned industrial buildings through adaptive reuse of their open and flexible spaces. Dia: Beacon, a renovated box-printing factory just outside of New York City, provides us with such a case in point.[40]

[38] Susanna Sirefman, "Formed and Forming: Contemporary Museum Architecture," *Daedalus* 128, no. 3 (1999): 303-307.
[39] Hal Foster, "Chapter 7: Minimalist Museums," in *The Art-Architecture Complex* (Verso, 2011), 104-29.
[40] Ibid, 104-29.

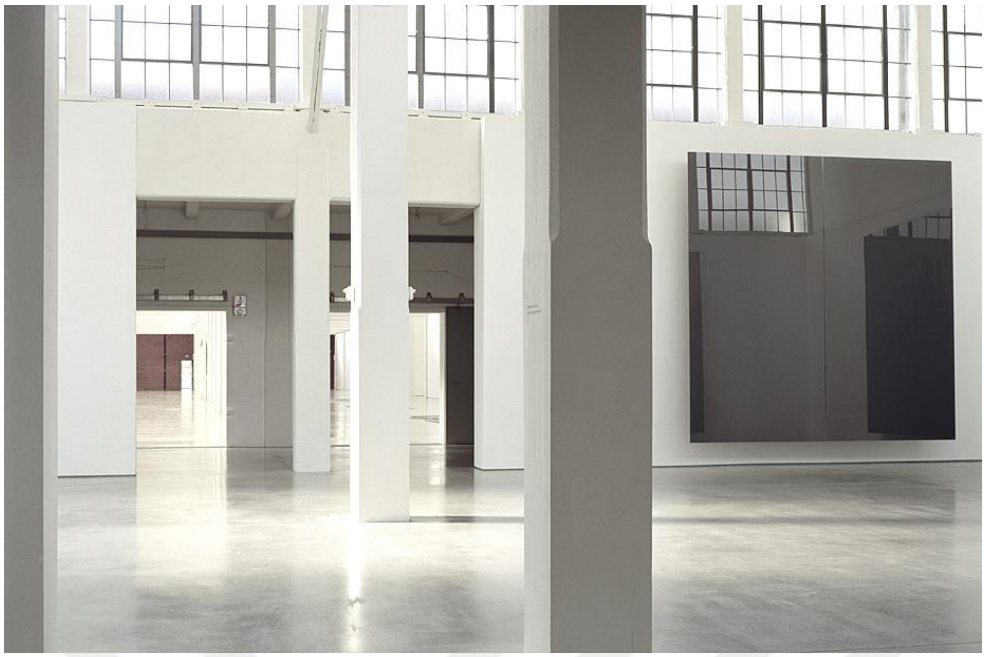


Figure 2.13. Interior of Dia: Beacon.

Source: Partial View, Richter's, Six Gray Mirrors No.884/1-6. © David Joseph. https://ricelipka.com/work_detail.php?id=3.

During the shift from industrial to post-industrial economy in the seventies, New York underwent a drastic change as the unused production spaces in the form of ateliers and factories inside the city center started to proliferate. These spaces became available for relatively cheap rent prices for artists who transformed them into large-scale loft studios. These new workspaces allowed artists a certain sense of freedom to experiment with the scale and medium of their works while also questioning the locational identity of their art. The socio-economic changes in the makeup of the city (which functioned as a self-identified center for the art world at the time) thus benefited the artists to develop their criticism toward the spatial, curatorial, and institutional restrictions of museums. While the Dia aesthetic and its dissemination across multiple locations in New York under Dia Art Foundation addressed such issues, it was also criticized for its minimalist approach. Critics argued that the interplay of expansive spaces and large-scale art often obscured historical context, favoring heightened viewer experience over interpretation.



Figure 2.14. Louise Bourgeois, *Crouching Spider* inside Dia: Beacon.

Source: Louise Bourgeois, *Crouching Spider*, 2003. Courtesy Cheim & Read and Hauser & Wirth. © The Easton Foundation/Licensed by VAGA at Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York. Photo: Bill Jacobson Studio, New York. https://www.diaart.org/collection/collection/bourgeois-louise-crouching-spider-2003-l-2007-012

The Dia: Beacon exemplifies such a shift in museum spaces, reflecting how the increased scale of art transformed museums into environments that prioritize spectacle and immersion rather than critical engagement. Nevertheless, this reflects a broader departure from the neutrality of the white cube, marking a transition to embedded locational identities, where the relationship between site and artwork becomes inextricable. The industrial setting carries the allure of the obsolete and the aesthetics of a factory, inflecting Minimalist works with a sense of historical and material resonance. The former Nabisco box factory with its vast, column-free halls, high ceilings, and abundant natural light directly complements the monumental scale and material presence of works by artists such as Richard Serra, Dan Flavin, and

Michael Heizer, producing an experience reimagined here at an industrial scale. This relationship between art and site reverses the traditional aesthetic of tense reciprocity and the neutrality associated with the white cube. Instead, it encourages viewers to become attuned to the interplay between each work's formal qualities and the monumental industrial space that contains it, rendering the site itself an inseparable part of the art's meaning. Dia: Beacon exemplifies this transformation, where the museum space itself becomes an active participant in shaping the art's meaning, bridging the shift from neutral display spaces to site-conscious art.[41]

2.3. Global White Cube

The search for flexible, non-institutionalized spaces gave rise to biennials and large-scale exhibitions, which emerged as alternatives to traditional museum spaces. These formats aimed to provide visibility to underrepresented artists while embracing diverse cultures, histories, and regional qualities of their locations, display modes and techniques, and artistic practices.[42] Employing temporary exhibitions with changing locations blurs the importance of static, eternal art spaces of the white cube and introduces a dynamic, nomadic framework for art and display. The proliferation and spread of this idea, which manifested itself in the number of cities organizing these large-scale events, can be understood as the need and acceptance of alternatives to the museum.[43]

While biennials and large-scale exhibitions often claim to distinguish themselves from traditional museums, they frequently replicate the white cube's rigid structures—clean geometries, stark white walls, and windowless spaces. Even when these events step beyond museum boundaries, the same aesthetic persists, creating what Marc Augé describes as a 'non-place'[44]—a universal, detached environment that feels identical regardless of location. However, these exhibitions

[41] Ibid.
[42] Elena Filipovic, "The Global White Cube," ONCURATING, n.d., https://www.on-curating.org/issue-22-43/the-global-white-cube.html.
[43] Ibid.
[44] Marc Augé, "Non-places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity," *Capital & Class* 20, no. 3 (October 1, 1996): 144–45.

aim to reflect the unique cultural or geographic identity of their host cities, their reliance on standardized display formats, and broad, recurring themes with generalized titles blur distinctions between events in Dakar, Taipei, or Venice. Occasional efforts to engage with local spaces or contexts often remain peripheral, leaving the core exhibitions detached from their surroundings. This paradox underscores how the global systems these events critique simultaneously shape and homogenize their structures, challenging their claims to genuine site-specificity.[45]

One notable example is Manifesta, the European Biennial of Contemporary Art that was established in 1996, in the context of post-wall Europe. The intent behind Manifesta was to represent and illustrate, not only an alternative to the museum but also an alternative to the biennial format. Changing the location to a new European city every time a Manifesta edition was held constitutes a focus on European artists, questioning form and specificity with an emphasis on homelessness, borders, and immigration.[46]

Another important example of an exhibition was the Documenta at the Museum Fridericianum, in the hopes of creating a healthier image of postwar Germany in 1955. New display techniques and the political content of art and displays aimed to challenge the white cube model. What was interesting in the case of Documenta was the broadcasting of the documented experience on the radio and the internet, and these documentations becoming an archive for the future. The media representation and archives highlight the Documenta's quality of diverse cultural production that is accumulated by political artworks and their accompanying curatorial texts. Therefore, Documenta stands as a criticism of Western imperialism and its promotion of modernity.[47]

Lastly, the Gwangju Biennial was the first large-scale contemporary art event in East Asia. Founded with the aims of globalization and diversity, it introduced voices from non-Western regions, challenging the dominance of Western modernity in art and display. In the 2000 edition, the organizers aimed to highlight the

[45] Elena Filipovic, "The Global White Cube," ONCURATING, n.d., https://www.on-curating.org/issue-22-43/the-global-white-cube.html.
[46] Ibid.
[47] Ibid.

biennial's focus on global artistic diversity by unveiling a new multistory exhibition complex. Despite this effort to promote inclusivity and innovation, the design of the structure followed traditional Western exhibition practices. The galleries, though flexible, were based on the familiar white cube layout rather than reflecting the diversity the event sought to emphasize and the departure the event sought to initiate.[48]

Over the past two centuries, museum spaces have undergone significant transformations, moving from storage rooms to the supposedly neutral white cube, then to flexible industrial sites, and finally to public nomadic events. This evolution, traced throughout the chapter, mirrors shifts in art's scale, medium, and locational identity, much like a tideline reshaping the shore. The extant literature on the subject has been reviewed, addressing the historiography of the white cube and contemporary museum architecture, alongside phenomena such as the rise of large-scale artworks, fragmentation, and adaptive reuse of spaces. It also examined the global turn toward biennials and nomadic art events, which to some challenge conventional definitions of the museum space and its institutional frameworks while at the same time often reiterating some existing models.

In essence, these developments illustrate the transition from conventional exhibition spaces to alternative venues that provide platforms for voices historically excluded from mainstream institutions. This shift often embraces political art, which seeks freedom from institutional constraints, and replaces the permanence of the museum with a nomadic model that engages with temporality, adaptability, and fluid spatial identity in more inclusive and dynamic environments. Ultimately, this study underscores the changing relationship between art and its display spaces, highlighting tensions between tradition and contemporaneity, static and nomadic formats, and permanence and temporality, while critically examining how these shifts emerge from the interplay between art, architecture, and site in a global context.

[48] Ibid.

CHAPTER 3

SITE-SPECIFICITY AND BEYOND

''One can't anticipate what artists will do in relation to architecture. Art has always found ways to intervene, to critique architecture, to transform and to transgress space…''[49]

In the previous chapter, I discussed the historical development of museum spaces. As outlined, these spaces have been continually reshaped by artists who critiqued and questioned the institution—its spatial frameworks, its power structures, and the architectural conditions it imposes. Through these critiques, new mediums, expanded scales, and diverse social and political issues found their way into the museum context. This transformation not only altered the function of the museum from within but also led to the emergence of alternative exhibition models and spatial frameworks. In a sense, it became increasingly important to enter the museum as well as to challenge, bypass, or reimagine its architectural and ideological logic.

A key spatial strategy that emerged during this transformation was site-specificity, a term related to art that gained prominence in the 1960s. Initially associated with Minimalist art and sculpture, and its engagement with the physical characteristics of a given environment, site-specificity challenged the perceived neutrality of gallery and museum spaces. While the term is often theorized in the context of art history, this chapter approaches site-specificity as a critical spatial

[49] Hal Foster, "A Conversation with Richard Serra," in *Richard Serra: The Matter of Time* (Bilbao: Guggenheim Museum, 2005) in Art-Architecture Complex.

practice[50] that actively engages the exhibition site's existing architecture or spatial conditions, redefines the relationship between space and art-viewer, and offers a shifting critique of institutional spatiality. In doing so, I aim to reframe the contemporary art spaces not simply as a backdrop to artistic practice, but as a spatial and/or architectural typology that continually reconfigured through such interventions.

This typology is defined by spatial fluidity, evident in the flexibility and flow of volumes, circulation, geometry, and the configuration of display spaces. Its physical attributes further reflect adaptability in permanence and richness of variety: it may offer light-filled galleries, uninterrupted enclosed spaces, reuse materials through adaptive strategies, engage with public spaces to alter their functions and meanings, utilize natural materials and sites in the middle of nowhere, or employ advanced structures and materials that become civic emblems, attracting attention through novelty. This spatial/architectural typology at times complements the art and is, in turn, complemented by it, fostering a harmonious and cohesive environment. At other times, it engages—though not invariably—in a competition with art to assert its own artistic merits, a dynamic that enables the emergence of qualities, discussions, critiques, trends, and phenomena that might not otherwise arise.

The examination of architecture and art, in their capacity as a critical spatial practice, is a pursuit that holds the potential to be both. This perspective is, I believe, a hopeful one. As the relationship between art and site evolves, so does the understanding of what site-specificity mean. It shifts from the physical consciousness of Minimalist sculpture to a more symbolic or ideological condition, and eventually into an artistic methodology in itself—a form that may be as mobile and mutable as the contemporary art spaces it engages. The site becomes not only a place, but a politicized context, a community's need, or a discursive network shaped by shifting spatial and institutional forces.

[50] The term has been borrowed from Jane Rendell. The term will play a central role analyzing and tracing site-specific works through reaching a outcome on history of museum spaces. Jane Rendell, *Art And Architecture: A Place Between* (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2007), 12-20.

These turns in the site-art relationship correspond with changing theoretical understandings of site-specificity: as a spatial condition, as a mode of critique, as a medium, as a spatial practice, as a discourse. In this chapter, I will examine these categories and terminologies as they have been theorized by a range of scholars, in order to explore how shifting definitions of site—and the artistic practices associated with them—intersect with and reflect the transformation of architecture of contemporary museums, galleries, and art spaces. Ultimately, the goal is to see how the conditions and discontents of exhibition space have become not just places of display, but fertile sites—produced, questioned, redefined through the spatial thinking embedded in contemporary site-specific practices.

During this thesis study, I have recognized the importance of defining the term site-specificity. In this chapter, I will explain the emergence of site specificity as discourse, not to become vague, but to clarify the set of rules in practice. However, these phenomena remain to be contested; the set of rules is still unclear and unstable. Continuing the discussion on site specificity as discourse, I utilize the concept of 'expanded field,' as coined by Rosalind Krauss, as the basis of discussion. It appears more conclusive to explore these historiographies of site-specific art and museum spaces as a critical spatial discourse within the expanded field, enabling connections to other disciplines to uncover the histories. I will endeavor to showcase as many varieties of site/space, site-art relationships, their understanding, and commentary as possible to present an inclusive study. It has been established that site-specific history and its association with site and space are predominantly informed by Western art and architecture. The present chapter will proceed by following the course of Western history, whilst the subsequent chapter seeks to identify analogous in Turkish contemporary art.

As explained in the previous chapter, the founding of the Dia Art Center and the favor towards single-artist installations emerged as one of the reactions to the white cube. The conversion of old factory buildings into artists' studios (especially in New York City), with open structure, flexible space arrangement, and high ceilings, paved the way for the Minimalist line of art, which, in turn, gave rise to the reuse of

industrial spaces, this time, as display spaces.[51] To trace these changes through site-specificity, one needs to focus on the understanding of the site in Minimalist art and its artists.

Modernist art viewed the exhibition space as a consistent physical reality that often serves as a non-beneficial, backdrop to the art until the sixties, when initial signs of an interest in the sites of art display emerged.[52] We can trace site-specificity in art, that is artists' consideration of their work in relation to the space surrounding them, as far back as Minimalism's efforts in the sixties to challenge the modernist conception of the artwork as an autonomous aesthetic entity. With the prevalence of installation art, the site has assumed greater significance in terms of space arrangement in contemporary examples of installation art. This has given rise to inquiries regarding the role of site/space in the creation, process, and display of art, as well as in the artist's studies. Questions regarding the role of site/space in the creation, process, and display of art can be detected in the minimalist sculpture when it dispenses with the sculptural pedestal to sit directly on the ground, and starts to interact with the viewer differently and more directly. Looking at a sculpture up on the pedestal and looking at a sculpture on the ground that is directly affecting the circulation and maybe eye level viewing is an interruption to the regular ways of viewing the space and the art as well as using the space.[53] Therefore, what was previously seen by many modernist artists as the neutral backdrop of architectural space started to gain importance as an opportunity to push the boundaries of the viewer's experience of art and the space. Robert Morris, for instance, sought to "take relationships out of the work and make them a function of space, light, and the viewer's field of vision."[54] For example, in *Untitled*, the spectator's experience of the L-beams as visually distinct had to be reconciled with the fact that they were identical. In the wake of minimalism after the second half of the 20th century, site-specific works transformed the modernist paradigms of art to be transportable,

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[51] Hal Foster, "Chapter 7: Minimalist Museums," in *The Art-Architecture Complex* (Verso, 2011), 104–29.
[52] Miwon Kwon, *One Place After Another*, *The MIT Press eBooks*, 2002.
[53] Ibid, 11.
[54] Robert Morris, "Notes on Sculpture," *Artforum*, February 1966, https://www.artforum.com/features/notes-on-sculpture-211706/.

critical in themselves, social, and discursive.[55] For these new qualities of site-specific works and other art practices as well, this period required escape from the white cube's empty, white-washed, artificially-lit bland architectural spaces with their supposed neutrality, power, and typical dogmatic display style.[56]

In the subsequent sections of this chapter, I will examine site-specificity under three headings. Although the chapter is not presented in chronological order, it serves as a framework for the historiography of art and architecture, and the in-between, from the 20th century to the beginning of the 21st century. The initial step in the analysis is to consider site-specificity as a fixed, static, and immovable definition. The second section traces its transformation into a dynamic, nomadic definition. The first two sections will focus on how this shift to a flexible definition occurred over time. The third section explores the site-specificity in terms of its potential and ability to create space, as a place-making practice, thereby establishing a strong bridge between art and architecture.

As I proceed through these sections, I will utilize particular works of art as examples. These examples were selected on the basis of their significance in emphasizing the site/art relationship and their entangled transformations. The analysis will be supported by drawings developed in order to observe the interaction and transformation between these works of art and their respective spaces. These drawings will offer an insight into the interplay between art and architecture, the in-between, art and site/space, by removing these spaces from their conventional role as a mere backdrop, thereby facilitating unprecedented exploration of this phenomenon. This approach enables the observation of architectural changes in contemporary art spaces, emphasizing that these changes do not necessarily entail purely physical alterations, with site-specificity serving as an investigative tool.

[55] Ibid.
[56] Ibid.

3.1. Site-Specificity is/as a Sedentary Model

This section delves into the scholarly conceptualizations of site-specificity. Based on the analyses offered by Miwon Kwon, Nick Kaye, Tatja Scholte, Rosalind Kraus, Rosalyn Deutsche, and Jane Rendell, the section then explores different spatial practices developed in regard to understanding the site-art relationships. One of the earliest and landmark conceptualizations of the site/art relationship and its location between architecture and landscape belongs to Rosalind Krauss. Krauss formulated the term expanded field to define the new sculptural tendencies that could no longer easily conform to the conventional definitions of the medium. Formerly either architecture nor landscape, sculptural works could now be defined according to the varying relationships they establish with human-made and natural sites.[57]

Tracing the transformation of sculpture in time, Krauss argues that the monumental logic of sculpture, that is, marking a particular site and saying something about this specific location, began to shift in the late nineteenth century. From then on, modernist sculpture came to be defined by its abstractness, homelessness, and self-referentiality. Demarcating an ideal space rather than establishing concrete ties with its specific exhibition site (physical spaces of architecture and/or natural spaces of landscape), modernist sculpture became so abstract (and perhaps indistinct) that, it came to be delineated by its negative relation to its exhibition space, that is, by being not-architecture and not-landscape.[58]

[57] Rosalind Krauss, "Sculpture in the Expanded Field," *October* 8 (January 1, 1979): 30–44.
[58] Ibid.

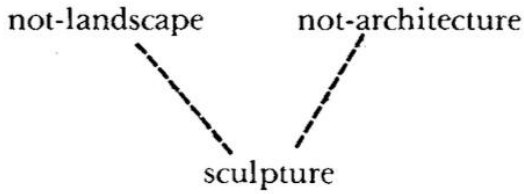


Figure 3.1. Diagram of/for sculpture.

Source: Rosalind Krauss, "Sculpture in the Expanded Field," *October 8* (January 1, 1979): 36.

Yet, in the sixties, modernist sculpture began to showcase yet another shift whereby sculpture began to once again relate to their sites in specific ways. In order to explicate these new tendencies while still retaining them within the bounds of the medium of sculpture, Krauss used a semiotic analysis that expanded the conventional conceptualization of the medium. In order to do so, a Klein group diagram was utilized to pose sculpture as not-architecture and not-landscape against its negatives, namely architecture and landscape. Through this expansion to understand and define sculpture, different fields that are akin to but also different from conventional sculpture emerged. Therefore, the concept of expanded field made it possible to contain within the definition of medium more complicated peripheral possibilities of sculptural practices such as marked sites, site-constructions, axiomatic structures.[59] In Krauss's model, marked sites are formed by transforming the site without building on it, whereas site construction involves building on a natural site. Krauss's axiomatic structures involve physical and often sculptural intervention into an existing building or space.

[59] Ibid, 30-44.

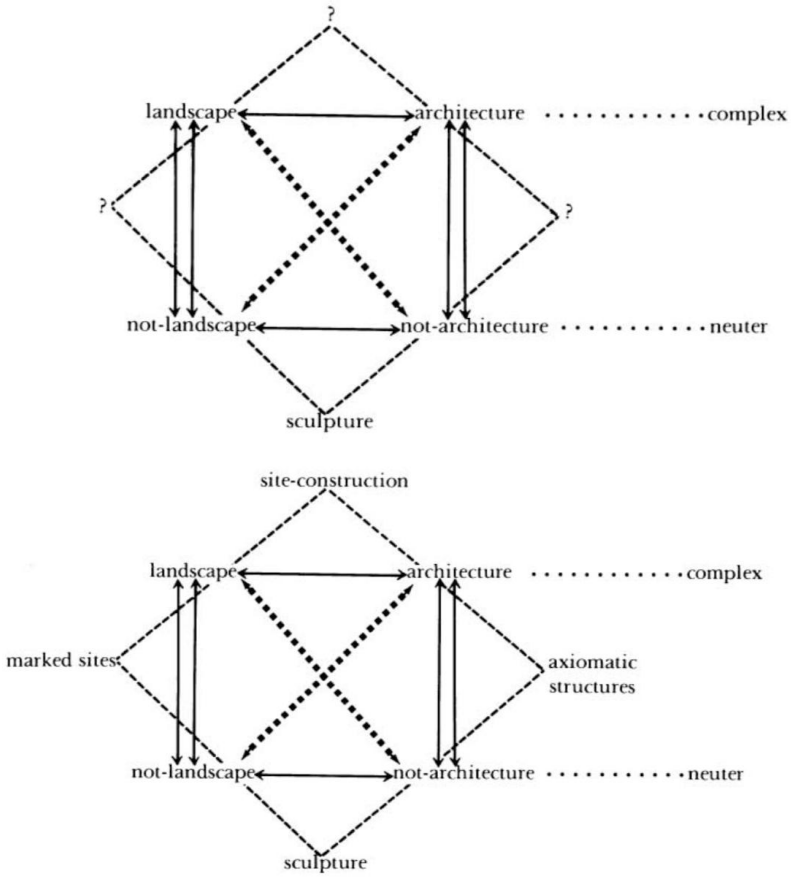


Figure 3.2. Diagrams of/for Expanded Field.

Source: Rosalind Krauss, "Sculpture in the Expanded Field," *October* 8 (January 1, 1979): 37-38.

Through this section, I will dwell on axiomatic structures, marked sites, and site constructions as these provide us with apt categories to illustrate both different spatial qualities standing between negative and positive manifestations of architecture and landscape, as well as the mutation of definitions regarding site-specificity. Additionally, these categories open up many possibilities to define practices in the expanded field, since they offer more flexibility and interdisciplinarity in defining and analyzing practices and boundaries, or rules that are open to being challenged.

In the case of axiomatic structures formed between architecture and not-architecture, we encounter an aspect of the expanded field defined by an architectural spatiality that nevertheless lacks exact building definitions. One of the best examples

of axiomatic structures can be the artworks of Richard Serra, since they alter the characteristics of the exhibition or public spaces into which they intervene with a wall-like element. Serra's site-specific works, or to be in line with Krauss' expanded field, his axiomatic structures were consciously critical in their commentary about their site and spatial environment. *Tilted Arc* (1981), a sculptural intervention, for instance, which was commissioned by the U.S. General Services Administration for Federal Plaza in front of the Jacob K. Javits Building, and the US Court of International Trade Building,[60] offers new spaces through changing the plaza's enclosure, visibility level, and its pattern of circulation and accessibility. Approximately 3.6 m high, with 36 m long axiomatic structure of steel that stands diagonally along the plaza, *Tilted Arc* was created specifically for the Federal Plaza based on its spatial qualities and spatial interaction with its users.[61]

[60] Miwon Kwon, *One Place After Another*, *The MIT Press eBooks*, 2002, 57.
[61] Ibid.



Figure 3.3. *Tilted Arc*, located at Federal Plaza, 1989.

Source: Federal Plaza, New York. Collection U.S. General Services Administration, Washington, D.C. Destroyed by the United States Government, March 15, 1989. Photo: Ann Chauvet. https://metropolismag.com/viewpoints/conversations-about-sculpture-excerpt-foster-serra/.

Years before, Serra already stated his rejection of art, especially sculpture, that perfectly aligns with the architectural space within which it stands in, as opposed to the tendency:

> There seems to be in this country [United States] right now, especially in sculpture, a tendency to make work more which attends to architecture. I am not interested in work which is structurally ambiguous, or in sculpture which satisfies urban design principles. I have always found that to be not only an aspect of mannerism but a need to reinforce a status quo of existing aesthetics… I am interested in sculpture which is non-utilitarian, non-functional… any use is a misuse.[62]

Here, Serra offers a definition of sculpture (and site-specificity) that delienates the conflicts and contradictions that exist as a given site of installations rather than hiding them by perfectly conforming with the space. In the case of *Tilted Arc*, Serra indeed highlighted the contradictions regarding the plaza's spatial qualities, user interaction, and natural elements by proposing a steel sculpture that goes across the full length of the plaza, preventing direct visual and physical connection between opposite sides of the space. This caused people to change their pattern of circulation within the plaza and, in turn, become more aware of their surroundings and discover alternative spatial qualities, such as its magnitude, emptiness, abundance of hard surfaces, lack of greenery, and inability to offer a quality pastime for its users. Serra's approach, in this respect, aimed to uncover the discontents and dysfunctionality of the so-called 'public' spaces that corporations supposedly offer in front of their sky-high buildings, a public space which the public never uses except for the workers of the building during lunchtime.[63] However, *Tilted Arc* encountered a notably complex and controversial reception that ultimately caused it to be removed in 1989 by a decision made in court.

[62] Richard Serra, ''Rigging,'' interview with Gerard Hovagymyan, in *Richard Serra: Interviews, Etc. 1970-1980* (Yonkers, N.Y.: Hudson River Museum, 1980), 128.
[63] Miwon Kwon, *One Place After Another*, *The MIT Press eBooks*, 2002.

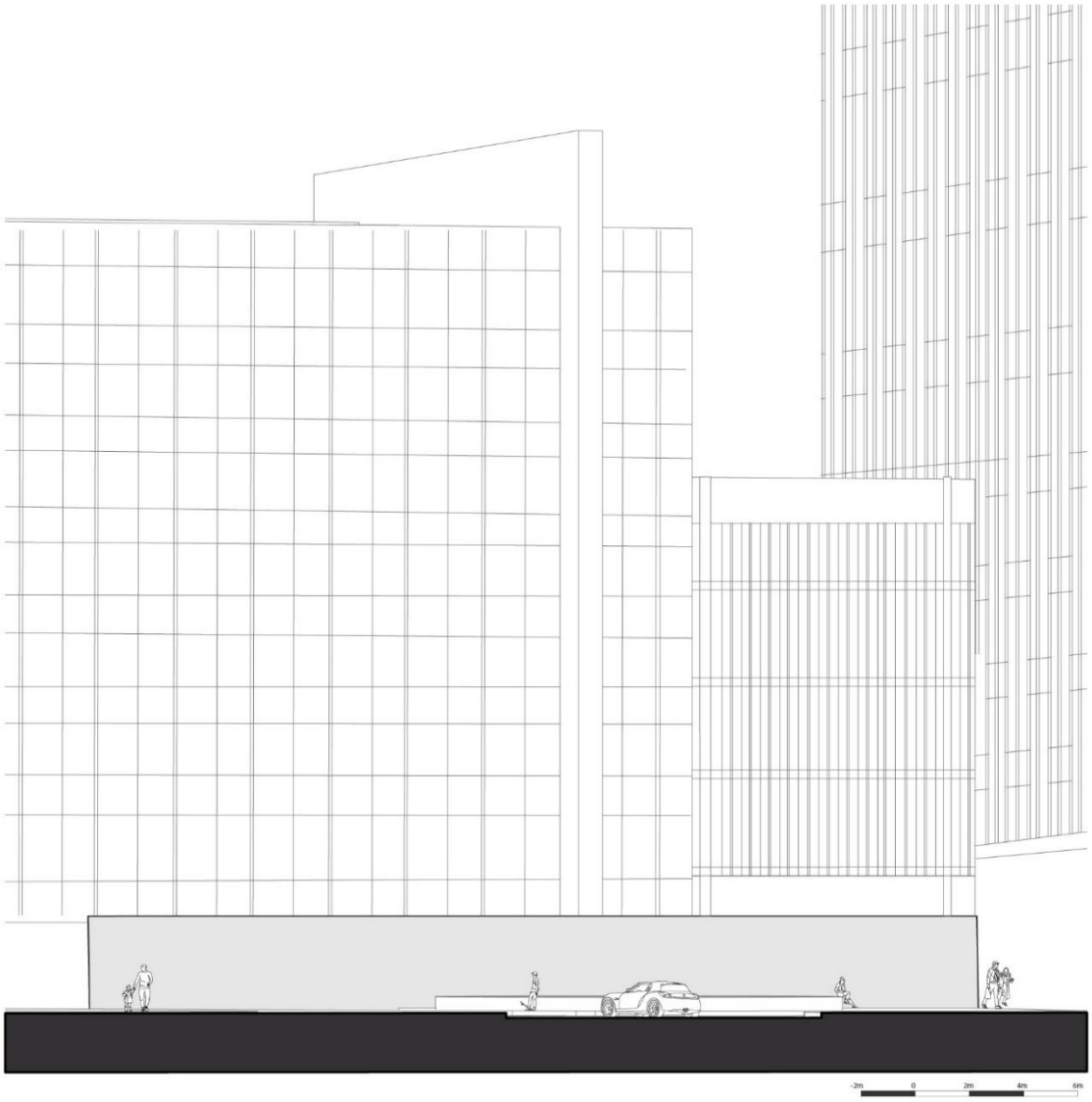


Figure 3.4. Perspective Section Drawing of *Tilted Arc*, illustrating its surrounding, 1/300 scale, drawn by the author.

Complaints from neighbors and people working in the surrounding offices about how the sculpture prevented the previously supposedly valued qualities of the plaza in terms of accessibility and pedestrian circulation sparked the controversy about *Tilted Arc*. Because the artwork was a publicly funded piece placed in a public space, this controversy gave way to a court case about its fate. During these discussions, the sculpture's removal and relocation to a better-suited environment in a rural site where it cannot prevent the visuality and physicality of its

users was raised.[64] To this proposal, Serra responded by asserting that because *Tilted Arc* was specifically created for that very location, its removal would amount to its destruction, therefore offering an early definition of site-specificity.[65] The assertion found intense support from artists, scholars, and critics alike; however, the court ruled in favor of the immediate users of the plaza, resulting in the destruction of the artwork. Since March 15, 1989, *Tilted Arc* no longer exists as an artwork, yet the ensuing discussions around the definition of public space, site-specificity, and censorship still continue to this day. While based on an understanding of site-specificity as a sedentary practice that establishes a relation with one specific site, the artwork has sparked a dispute with a domino effect that spans the conceptualization of the site as a static entity to the site becoming more flexible to allow nomadic practices among different sites.

In continuation of the discussion of the site-art relationship with static characteristics, but with a shift from the site of public space to natural space, I will examine Robert Smithson's *Spiral Jetty*. By explaining this work, I will also demonstrate the diversity in the extended lives of site-specific works. While *Tilted Arc*'s existence lasted a definite 8 years, *Spiral Jetty*'s life expectancy is left to natural and entropic processes rather than human-related ones. *Spiral Jetty* was constructed in 1970 on the Great Salt Lake in Utah. It was a spiral coil, curling counterclockwise into the lake like a harbor. Such an enormous work required 6650 tons of basalt rock and earth.[66]

[64] Tatja Scholte, *The Perpetuation of Site-Specific Installation Artworks in Museums*, 2021, 48-53.
[65] Richard Serra in Weyergraf-Serra, Clara, Martha Buskirk. "Introduction by Richard Serra." In *The Destruction of Tilted Arc: Documents*. MIT Press eBooks, 1991, 13. https://ci.nii.ac.jp/ncid/BA13236921.
[66] Robert Smithson, "The Spiral Jetty," *Arts of the Environment,* edited by Gyorgy Kepes, 1972.



Figure 3.5. *Spiral Jetty,* 1970.

Source: Robert Smithson, *Spiral Jetty* (1970), 2019. © Holt/Smithson Foundation and Dia Art Foundation/Licensed by VAGA at Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York. Photo: Victoria Sambunaris.

While Richard Serra's sculptures represent a more urban and institutionally situated form of site-specificity—physically anchored and resistant to relocation—*Spiral Jetty* introduces a different dimension. Although similarly unmovable, Smithson's work is situated in a remote, natural setting, entirely outside the physical framework of museums or public art institutions, even though it was funded by Virginia Dwan Gallery of New York.[67] Its physical detachment from institutional oversight allows it to engage with its site more autonomously, forming a relationship that is less mediated by the cultural, spatial, and political constraints typically found in urban or institutional contexts.

[67] "Biography- Robert Smithson," Holt/Smithson Foundation, n.d., https://holtsmithsonfoundation.org/biography-robert-smithson (accessed July 1, 2025).

An examination of Smithson's work also reveals its position to Rosalind Krauss' expanded field—not exactly landscape but still carrying the formal and conceptual qualities of one. Standing between landscape and not-landscape in the formulation, *Spiral Jetty* can be considered a marked site. Rather than disrupting the land, it aims to draw attention to it, framing natural processes like sedimentation, water level fluctuation, and entropy as part of the work's ongoing meaning as these processes transform the work's formal qualities and even its visibility from time to time. At the same time, *Spiral Jetty* directly addressed the specific properties of its location. For instance, the spiral form referenced a mythical whirlpool that was said to exist in the lake, as well as the molecular shapes of the salt particles in the water.

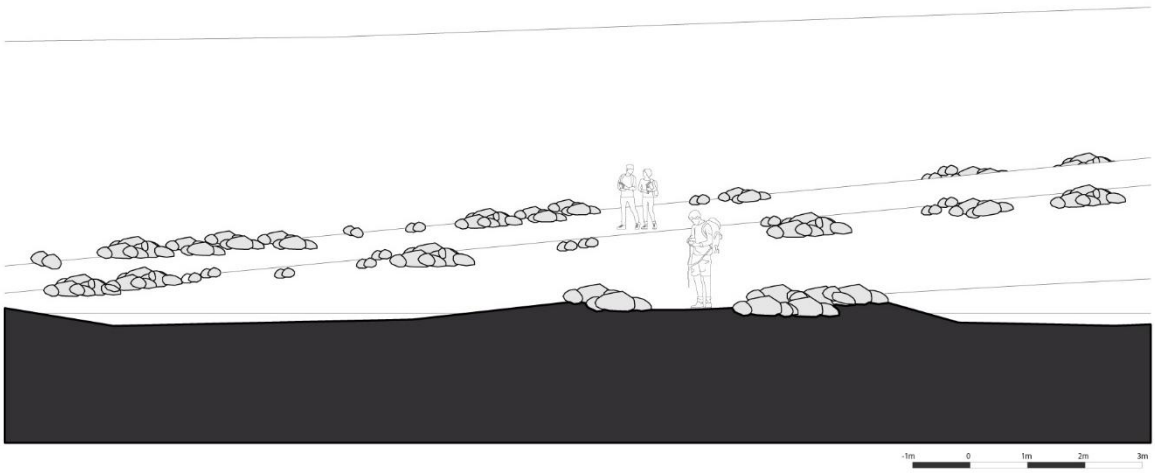


Figure 3.6. Perspective Section Drawing of Spiral Jetty, 1/100 scale, drawn by the author.

These two examples of site-art relationships reflect artistic strategies that operate outside at least the physical confines of the museum in order to either escape from institutional constraints or express their criticism thereof. Some artists pursued this form of institutional critique—perhaps even a kind of escapism—by seeking refuge in alternative spaces for the display of their work. Others, however, chose to engage the institution from within, using the museum itself as a framework for their critique. This internal positioning generated significant discussion, especially in cases where artists deliberately exposed or subverted institutional structures. In the

rest of this section, I will examine artworks that aim to challenge and redefine the role of the museum, not by leaving it, but by confronting it directly. This recalls the familiar idea that change must come from within, a notion that may explain why such works often face censorship or resistance from the very institutions they critiqued. I will focus on the practices of Daniel Buren and Hans Haacke, both of whom resisted the binary between inside and outside by staging their critique within the museum walls. Their work represents a key moment in what has come to be known as the institutional turn in the history of site-specific art.[68]

The institutional turn adopts a more political character in Hans Haacke's art. Haacke incorporated controversial political and social contexts, especially as they define the museum institutions, into the formulation of the artwork. His approach to site-art relationship was based upon producing challenging questions to reveal hidden and often hypocritical operations of museums, such as their claims to material and political neutrality. The *MoMA Poll* (1973) was an artwork designed as a public opinion survey, featuring two transparent ballot boxes for yes and no votes alongside a statement poster. It aimed to gauge how the museum's political affiliations, particularly those of its trustees, shaped visitor perceptions. By revealing the political dimensions of the museum, the work also underscored its direct impact on art and artists, thereby fueling the institutional critique movement. With this work, Haacke revealed the truth about the museums' supposed neutrality that, in reality, relies on social hierarchies and power dynamics. The type of site-art relationship in such works of institutional critique is based on criticality, institutional questioning, and demanding the change of power relations in the art world by being the change in the art.[69]

[68] Miwon Kwon, *One Place After Another*, *The MIT Press eBooks*, 2002, 1-10.
[69] Nick Kaye, *Site-Specific Art: Performance, Place and Documentation*, 2000, http://ci.nii.ac.jp/ncid/BA52654240.

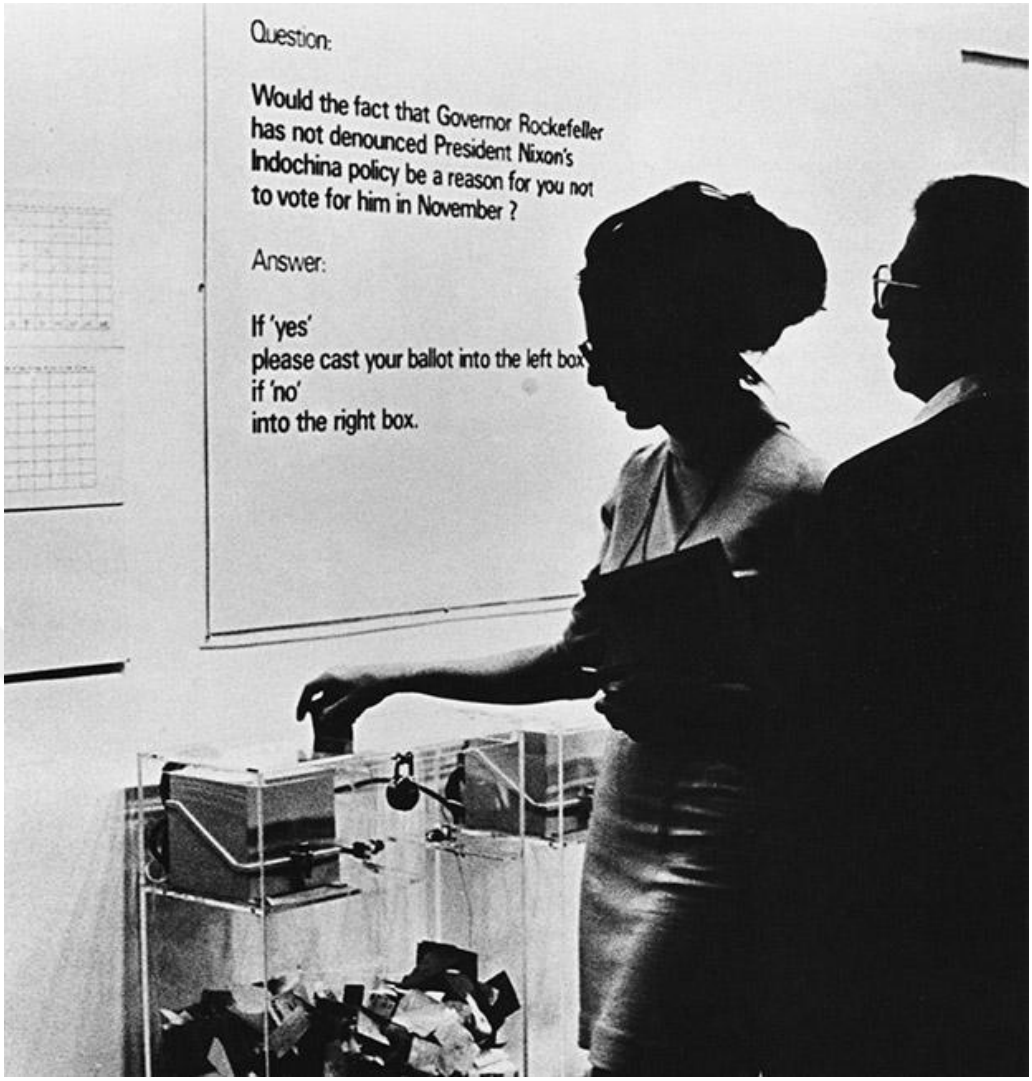


Figure 3.7. People voting for *MoMA Poll,* 1970.

Source: Hans Haacke, *MoMA Poll*, 1970, Installation view, *Information*, Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1970. © Hans Haacke / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York. Retrieved from https://kunstkritikk.com/art-for-much-more-than-arts-sake/.

Despite the fact that Krauss employs the principle of negatives and positives of architecture and landscape in the formulation of the expanded field, Haacke's poll does not appear to align with the formulation. A deeper understanding of the expanded field shows its perspective of opening discussions and pushing limits regarding sculpture, other mediums of art, and architecture. Consequently, it can be argued that *MoMA Poll* does not fit into categorizations emerging in Krauss'

expanded field diagram, yet it is an artwork that challenges all, thereby displaying a similar case to that of Buren. We can argue that it still belongs in the sculpture's expanded field to the extent that the theoretical framework offered by the diagram provides us with the means to examine the work.

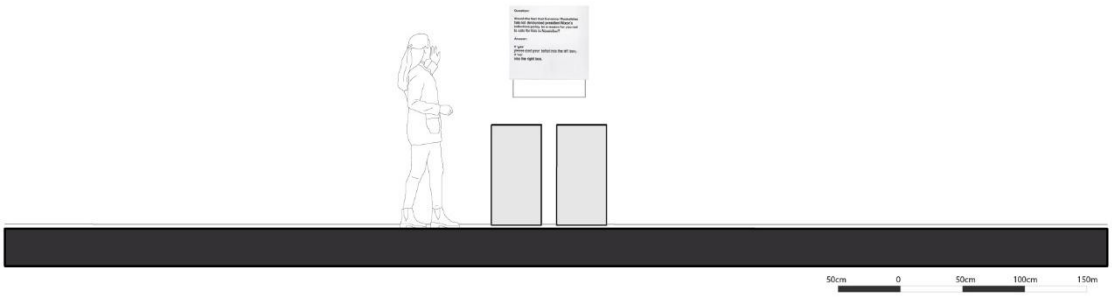


Figure 3.8. Perspective Section Drawing of *MoMA Poll*, 1/50 scale, drawn by the author.

In the expanded field, such institutional critique was elaborated by Kwon as a change in the site-art relationship. The definition of the site, and more specifically that of museum space, is to be shifted from physical conditions to its environment of social, cultural, and political associations. This institutional turn in the elaboration of space was seen by Kwon as discourse in regard to site-specificity, definition, and understanding of site.[70] The analysis of the site as discourse is the direct result of Haacke's institutional critique. Site-specificity is no longer tethered to a fixed location, but it is produced through political questioning. For this reason, art frames the museum, but being inside the museum confines makes the artwork framed in the process.[71] In this sense, the work exposes the spatial and political assumptions of the

[70] Miwon Kwon, *One Place After Another*, (The MIT Press eBooks, 2002).
[71] Nick Kaye, *Site-Specific Art: Performance, Place and Documentation* (Taylor & Francis e-library, 2006), 192-198.

museum, while simultaneously operating within the museum. Rosalyn Deutsche expands on this by interpreting Haacke's work not merely as an institutional reflection but as a socially and politically constructed site, one that actively engages with broader systems of power, class, and governance.[72]

Daniel Buren, another artist associated with institutional critique, is famous for his 8.7 cm striped vertical bands that he locates in what could be considered unusual places of display. Heavily influenced by Marcel Duchamp's readymades in the use of already existing striped fabric as the artworks themselves, Buren tried to diminish the works' self-referential autonomy in a systematic scheme that could be reiterated arbitrarily to a point of manifesting varying characteristics and boundaries in relation to each new display.[73] The utilization of gallery walls, architectural façades, risers of stairs, spaces between buildings, on advertisement boards as display spaces can be interpreted as the rejection of fixed meanings to artworks regardless of their exhibition spaces and conditions. The repetitive use of these vertical stripes highlights the role of display spaces in producing meanings of the supposedly self-referential artworks, thereby pointing to the ideological functions of these spaces. Buren's employment of these strategies is indicative of an attempt to achieve formal neutrality.[74] Although it would never be truly neutral or formal within the boundaries of the white cube's supposed neutrality and spatiality, it manages to test the formal neutrality of choosing arbitrary repetition in the rarely used and never-before-used display spaces of museum architecture. The fact that the work cannot be categorized in terms of medium is also another part of Buren's systematic scheme. While the use of readymade fabric brings to mind abstract painting, Buren challenges this medium by not hanging the works on walls, and with the declaration that no painter would accept this as a painting. Therefore, even though Buren accepts

[72] Rosalyn Deutsche, "Evictions: Art and Spatial Politics," *Choice Reviews Online* 34, no. 09 (1997).
[73] Nick Kaye, *Site-Specific Art: Performance, Place and Documentation* (Taylor & Francis e-library, 2006), 184-192.
[74] Daniel Buren, *Five Texts*, Saint-Martin Bookshop (New York, United States of America: John Weber Gallery, Jack Wendler Gallery, 1973).

that his work might be classified under a medium, this medium remains ambiguous as it gets to be defined in relation to the site of display.[75]





Figure 3.9. Installation views of *Within and Beyond the Frame,* 1973.

Source: https://blogs.uoregon.edu/danielburen/2015/02/16/within-and-beyond-the-frame-exhibition-john-weber-gallery-1973/

[75] Nick Kaye, *Site-Specific Art: Performance, Place and Documentation* (Taylor & Francis e-library, 2006), 184-192.

Buren's *Within and Beyond the Frame* (1973), exhibited at the John Weber Gallery, stands as a key example of site-specific work that critically engages with the spatial and institutional conditions of its display. For this work, Buren suspended a series of his stripes from a wire that spans the gallery space and the street in front of it. The word "frame' within the title refers to the aesthetic framework that the museum space establishes to designate objects as artworks. Within that framework, the stripes function as art on display, while outside, they become simple banners hanging above the street. Buren's practice in this work stands as a key example of site-specific work that critically engages with the spatial and institutional conditions of its display. As Nick Kaye notes, "it is in these contexts that Buren proposes that not only must the site be revealed as implying the identity of the art object, but the object must act as a critical mirror to the ground on which it stands."[76] In this way, the gallery is no longer a neutral container for autonomous artworks, but—following Buren's proposition—a conceptual and discursive site in itself.[77] This framing challenges the assumed neutrality of institutional space, opening up questions about the ideological frameworks embedded within it.

Buren's intervention in *Within and Beyond the Frame* does not attempt to escape the institution but rather to expose and destabilize it from within. The work remains to be, undeniably, art, yet resists clear categorization—neither fully painting, sculpture, nor installation. The work seems to be neither architecture nor landscape. According to the formulation of the expanded field, it is supposed to be a sculpture, between not-architecture and not-landscape. However, it is not a sculpture, and it is difficult to categorize it as any medium, according to Buren as well. Nevertheless, it seems fitting to include it in the expanded field: it is not architecture, yet it has spatiality; it is not landscape, yet it shapes the urban site; it is not sculpture, yet it has form; it is not painting, yet it has a painted surface. While not exactly fitting the categorizations of the expanded field diagram, the terms that define the field make it easier to critique the work and uncover its potential. Therefore, it might be more

[76] Nick Kaye, *Site-Specific Art: Performance, Place and Documentation* (Taylor & Francis e-library, 2006), 191.
[77] Ibid, 191.

accurate to describe Buren's work as a critical spatial practice operating within the expanded field.

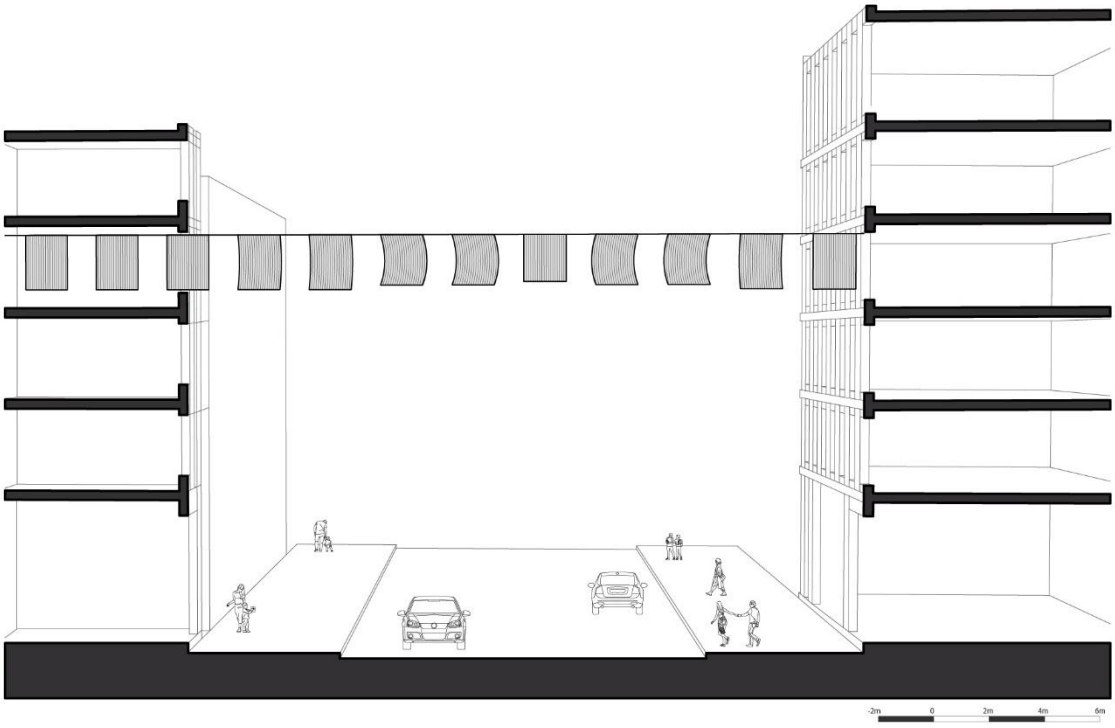


Figure 3.10. Perspective Section Drawing of Within and Beyond the Frame, 1/200 scale, drawn by the author.

Buren turns the object itself into a critique, raising questions such as: What does a museum do with a work that refuses to conform to disciplinary or spatial expectations? How can such a work be excluded when it so clearly performs as an artwork on the museum's terms?[78] This approach aligns with Miwon Kwon's model of the discursive site, which redefines site-specificity as no longer tied to a fixed location, but shaped through institutional, textual, and social networks.[79] This way, Buren's work foreshadows the nomadic, adaptable, and flexible kinds of work that constitutes the focus of the next section. While his stripes only acquire meaning in relation to the specific sites they are installed and thus are sedentary as a whole within their particular contexts, as pieces of fabric adaptable to multiple contexts

[78] Ibid, 191.
[79] Miwon Kwon, *One Place After Another*, (The MIT Press eBooks, 2002).

they acquire mobile characteristics. However, this expanded definition has also drawn criticism. T. J. Demos argues that Kwon's discursive site becomes so abstracted to a point that it becomes difficult to apply critically or practically.[80]

Up until this point, I have explained that site-specificity is/as a sedentary model, a more-or-less static entity that produces and highlights varying (phenomenological, social, political, etc) relationships with their display site that often push beyond the established physical, socio-cultural, and/or institutional boundaries of the museum. These examples align with an understanding of site-specificity not as a fixed medium, but as a form of critical spatial practice[81]—one that engages with various spaces, including those beyond the physical boundaries of the museum, including even natural environments. Rather than being categorized alongside sculpture, installation, or public art, site-specificity in this context is defined by its capacity to interrogate the conditions of its site—social, political, and architectural—through spatial engagement. In the continuing section of the chapter, I will elaborate on the site-specificity is/as a nomadic model with traveling artworks, artists, or related mobile works.

3.2. Site-Specificity is/as Nomadic Model

Over the years, many artists delved into an in-depth search for site-specificity and pressured its limits as a way to establish alternative relations of more freedom and flexibility in museums and move beyond their physical confines. This freedom and flexibility over time became not just a characteristic that they searched for in their relationship with spatial and institutional contexts, but a necessity of the very spatial qualities that the artworks formulated. In the emerging years of site-specificity, artists deeply associated their works with their display space, be it museum confines, public spaces, or natural sites. However, over the years, some artists' site-specific works were incorporated into new spaces of display – a practice that questioned such immobility as the works acquired new site-specific significance

[80] T.J. Demos, Review of *Rethinking Site-Specificity*, by Miwon Kwon. *Art Journal* 62, no. 2 (2003): 98–100. https://doi.org/10.2307/3558510.
[81] Jane Rendell, *Art And Architecture: A Place Between* (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2007).

in relation to each new site. This new tendency was also a result of the prevalence of biennials and traveling exhibitions as well. Deeply associated site works were later requested for display in different spaces of display. Even though these works were once seen as inseparable from their original site and considered unmovable to the point where moving equaled destruction, establishing new connections to each new display space as the artwork becomes a nomadic entity would ironically introduce more depth to site-specificity. Therefore, relocatable and reproducible works began to represent a new form of prevalent site-specificity in the art world.

The original meaning of site-specificity came from its radical approach to the particular place and moment in time where and when the work was installed. Artists and their art become detached from one particular site to gain qualities of transferability and mobility in the exhibition circuit of the art world, yet they still relate to a certain site (of production, exhibition, and/ or re-exhibition). Once challenging the commodification of art through its immobility, site-specificity yet again becomes an artistic model that is open to being bought, sold, and shown anywhere. To be exact, while artists defined their works as site-specific, their specificity no longer lay in their exact relationship to one particular site, but in the idea of the relationship with the site, which was the exact thing that made it repeatable and relocatable.[82] Despite these discontents, this shift -from functioning as site-specificity to signaling of site-specificity- has led to expanded definitions of site-specificity that have pushed the previous limits to offer itself more field, visibility, and preference to be exhibited.

In this section, I will examine such mobile site-art relationships, namely Smithson's *Nonsites* (1968) and Station House Opera's *Breeze Block Performances* (1980-). These examples demonstrate the shift from a static to a mobile definition of both the site and the relationship established with it. Because of their ability to raise a series of questions on the definition and transformation of a site and its probable mobility, they enrich the field opened by the works analyzed in the previous section. The latter challenges the autonomy of the artwork and its ideological functions while

[82] Miwon Kwon, *One Place After Another*, (The MIT Press eBooks, 2002), 33-55.

still producing a self-referential and hardly immutable entity in the form of art-site relationship, and the former conceptualizes site-specificity as a nomadic performance that mutates according to each site.



Figure 3.11. A Nonsite (Franklin, New Jersey), 1968.

Source: Robert Smithson, A Nonsite (Franklin, New Jersey), 1968. Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, Gift of Susan and Lewis Manilow. © Holt/ Smithson Foundation/ Licensed by Artists Rights Society, New York. https://holtsmithsonfoundation.org/provisional-theory-nonsites

Smithson's *Nonsites* may provide a proto-example of such a nomadic tendency that later came to almost fully dominate site-specificity. *Nonsites* was a documentation series culled from selected sites around New Jersey. One of these works, called *A Nonsite (Franklin, New Jersey),* was exhibited as part of the Earthwork exhibition in the Dwan Gallery in 1968. The work consists of materials such as rocks, soil taken from locations and deposited within trapezoidal bins. It was exhibited together with maps, photographs, and texts referencing the site of the materials and displayed on the wall beside the bins.[83] Such documentation gives clues that can be traced back to the site of origin; however, it would not be possible to find the exact location. This is because once these materials are taken from their sites, they will never belong there again. Consequently, they can belong anywhere. The displacement and appropriation of any and every site as their site of display would result in the mobility of the site-specific works.

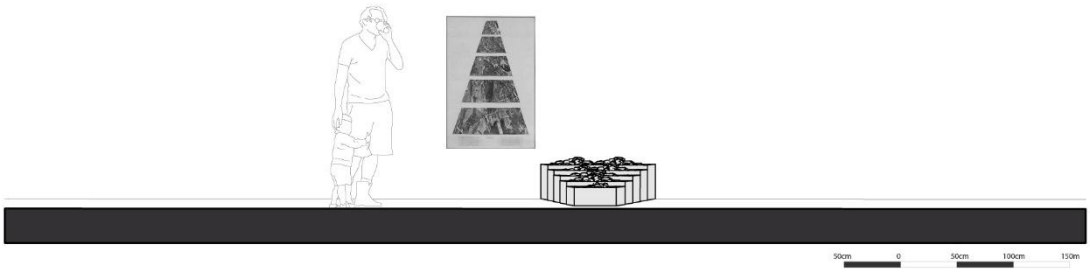


Figure 3.12. Perspective Section Drawing of *Nonsites,* 1/50 scale, drawn by the author.

For this work, Smithson introduced the concept of non-sites, which also gave the artwork its name. The concept marked a key moment in analyzing site-specificity, as it challenges the traditional notions of what constitutes a site and what

[83] Phyllis Tuchman, "Robert Smithson, 'A Nonsite (Franklin, New Jersey)' (1968)." *Holt/Smithson Foundation: Scholarly Texts* Chapter 1 (May 2020). https://holtsmithsonfoundation.org/robert-smithson-nonsite-franklin-new-jersey-1968.

belongs and what does not belong to it. Smithson aimed to explore autonomy to break the illusion of neutrality in museum and display spaces.[84] By taking outer coordinates with open limits and inner coordinates with closed limits of its non-sites, it creates a reversal with a back-and-forth rhythm between indoors and outdoors.[85]

Nick Kaye asserts the importance of this artwork for its paradox of representation. While *Nonsites* refer to a site outside itself, they also transform their site into objects and maps through documentation. This creates a paradox of representation, as it erases the actual site by confining it within institutional boundaries.[86] This contradictory situation is significant in critical spatial practice. According to Rendell, the paradox reveals the space as an active entity involved in constructing, framing, and ideologically charging it. This relocation and displacement are not just about referencing a place but also demonstrate architecture as a medium of critique. The work reveals how space, art, and their relationship influence understanding.[87] Furthermore, Rendell explores site and non-site theory, along with Robert Smithson's artwork, to develop her concept of critical spatial practice and to use art as a tool for analyzing space.

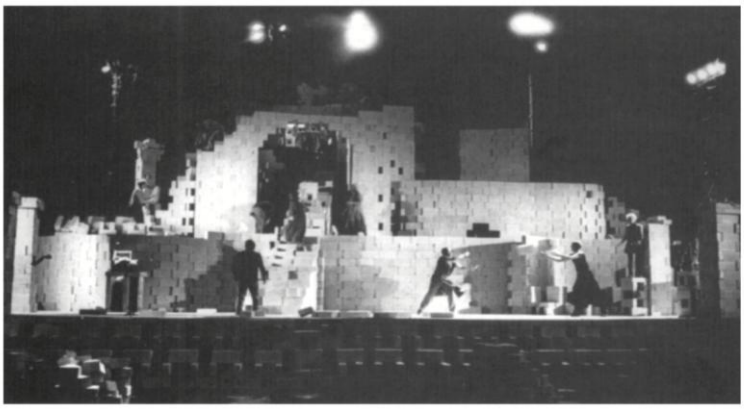
Such use of art as a tool of critiquing space and spatial qualities proves the starting point of this thesis and its motivation: to trace the art to work, to reach, to critique contemporary art spaces, and display techniques for their spatiality. Additionally, the work and the concept of Smithson perfectly encapsulate the displacement as it becomes a quality of site-specificity, while still maintaining its critique in spatiality and specificity. Now, I analyze a different practice of relocation in site-art relationship that is changed and performed in different places while still maintaining specificity to these sites and their locational identity.

Station House Opera is a British theater company founded in 1980 by Julian Maynard Smith in London. They developed unique performances utilizing objects and transforming them into a narrative. Additionally, they also incorporated

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[84] Robert Smithson, "The Spiral Jetty," *Arts of the Environment,* edited by Gyorgy Kepes, 1972.
[85] Ibid.
[86] Nick Kaye, *Site-Specific Art: Performance, Place and Documentation* (Taylor & Francis e-library, 2006), 92-99.
[87] Jane Rendell, *Art And Architecture: A Place Between* (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2007), 40-56.

performers, audiences, and their multiple performing stages into these narratives at each performance.[88] This has brought out a possibility of analyzing the mobility of the company and their performance as they relate to different sites at each iteration. Their movement among multiple sites became the very material and metaphor for analyzing the spatiality and specificity of each of these sites.



Into this symmetrical and hierarchical space with its staircase leading up to the cathedral spire, come disturbances…

The man in the wall is unbuilt by the Virgin Mary who clasps his limp body to her chest. On the other side, another deposition, derived from a brawl. Two piétas, one born from order and the other from chaos, one ending in resurrection and the other in a coffin: a success rate of 50%.

He walks off the edge. Climbing back up the stairs, he is half-swallowed by them. Pulled out, he is thrown further down. Above him, she dives from the wall and a bath appears. Her cat becomes a book and is read from. As she relaxes, a hand comes through the wall to caress her face. She is overcome and the wall becomes her tomb.

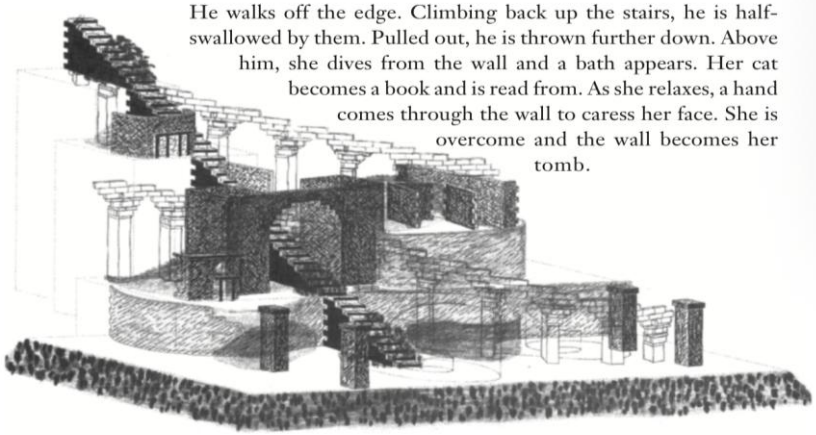


Figure 3.13. Illustrations for *Breeze Block Performances*.

Source: Nick Kaye, *Site-Specific Art: Performance, Place and Documentation* (Taylor & Francis e-library, 2006), 197.

[88] Nick Kaye, *Site-Specific Art: Performance, Place and Documentation* (Taylor & Francis e-library, 2006), 163-181.

Kwon elaborates on site-specificity is/as a nomadic model in the case of repetitive display of artworks by displacing or relocating them.[89] However, the Station House Opera highlights a significant case of a nomadic site-art definition for its incorporation of such a performative aspect with a critical understanding of space. It utilizes the space not just as a performing ground but as a performing volume that can be used for its 3 dimensionality as well as its planimetry.

They contested the spatiality and inherent limitations of the site through the incorporation of breeze blocks into the performance as its primary objects, thereby challenging the conventional boundaries of spatial organization. The performance's narrative is further enriched by the incorporation of movement, audience participation, and the dynamic interplay between performers and their surroundings. This has resulted in their extreme utilization of spatiality and its characteristics to the point where they have become a material in their own right. The concept can be comprehended through the incorporation of actions such as flying into their performance, thereby enabling the utilization of the Z-direction. It is acknowledged that this action would be subject to specific requirements in terms of height, capacity, weight, and cable construction, which would vary between sites. Consequently, it would be necessary to adapt the implementation of this action according to the particular characteristics of each site. Therefore, the analysis focuses on the Z-direction in terms of performance to identify the most effective performance strategy. This approach involves the utilization of planimetry and the two-dimensionality of a site. The theatre company, therefore, analyzed, utilized, materialized, and eventually metaphorized their site.[90]

[89] Miwon Kwon, *One Place After Another*, (The MIT Press eBooks, 2002), 1-10.
[90] Ibid, 105.

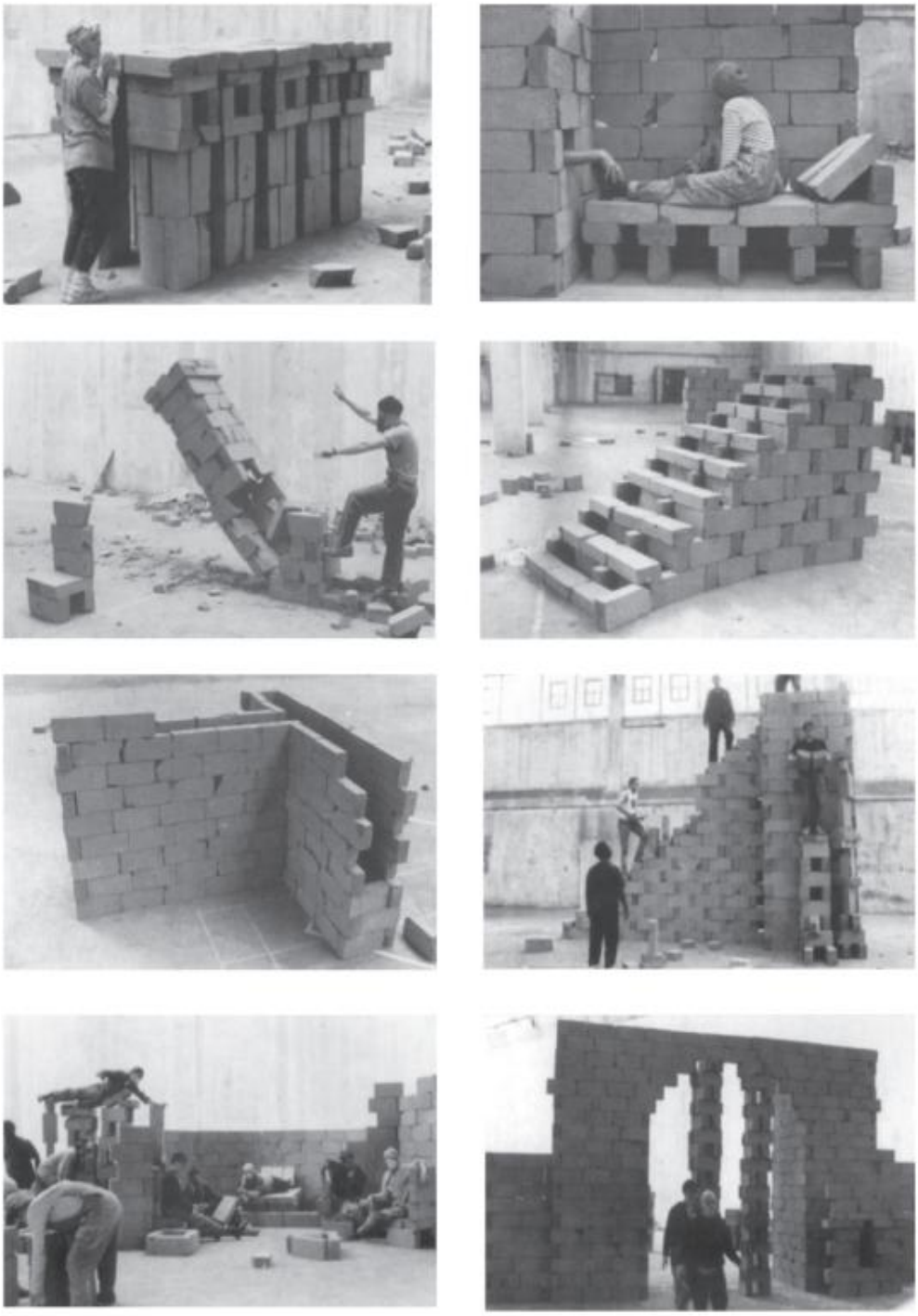


Figure 3.14. Photographs from the spatial utilization of *Breeze Block Performances*.

Source: Nick Kaye, *Site-Specific Art: Performance, Place and Documentation* (Taylor & Francis e-library, 2006), 192.

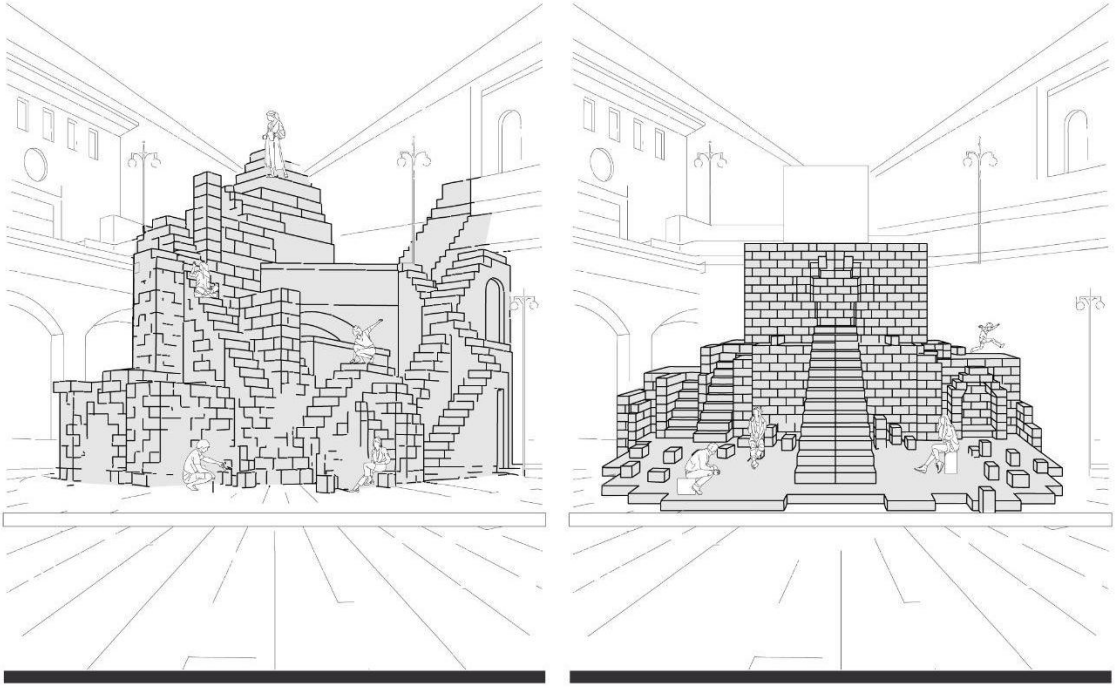


Figure 3.15. Perspective Section Drawing of *Breeze Block Performances*, drawn by the author.

Fiona Wilkie similarly notes that Station House Opera's performances resist the traditional definition of site by embracing movement, mobility, fragmentation, and transitory spatial encounters.[91] Thus, as she suggests, it offers a fluidity to their performance that becomes play-specific. This term is used to explore different specificities of each performative iteration. Furthermore, it comes from the specificity of each play that they performed while creating through objects spatial enclosures needed. They implemented these objects into their performance and released them from being just a decor in the background by utilizing them to create spatial enclosures and spatial elements such as stairs, walls, towers, and so on. This play-specificity became the fundamental element of performing at multiple sites and a variety of spatial stages. Their performance became specific to each play, but the repetition also made the performances site-specific in a nomadic way that also references site-specificity as an idea.

[91] Fiona Wilkie, "The Production of 'Site': Site-Specific Theatre," in *A Concise Companion to Contemporary British and Irish Drama*, ed. Holdsworth and Luckhurst, 2007, 85–106.

Another way of looking at these performances is to see them as, again, a tool to critique space. It stands as an intermediary between art and architecture, pushing the limits of spatiality in theatrical stages. It utilizes space not just as a planimetric and a 2-dimensional area, rather as a 3-dimensional entity. In their critical approach to conventional spaces of theatre and performance, Station House Opera's artworks constitute a form of critical spatial practice.

3.3. Site-Specificity is/as Place-Making

In this section, I will take Henri Lefebvre's *The Production of Space* as a point of departure to conceptualize site-specificity as a strategy for place-making. I will use architectural examples and analyze them in relation to their critical approach to space as well as site-art relationships. I will be following the strategies employed by Jane Rendell in constructing a theory of critical spatial practice in order to discuss the in-between of art and architecture. Consequently, the selection of architectural examples of art installations, with profoundly invested site criticism, would engender a domain in which to discern the possibilities of and to deliberate on such in-betweenness.

Henri Lefebvre published the book *The Production of Space* in 1974. The philosopher's purpose was to identify the lack of a singular definition of space that would bring together varying conceptualizations of it offered by different disciplines, such as mathematics and philosophy. To formulate such a definition, he proposed to look at space as a product and a process of production. These processes of production are not just physical but also, and more importantly, social. Lefebvre dwells on a tripartite formula that categorizes space as perceived, representation of, and representational space. While perceived space would emerge in the form of spatial practice (lived and experienced space), the representational space exists as a phenomenological component of space constituted by the accumulation of the lived experience in regards to that space. Representation of space, on the other hand, refers to the conceptualizations of space in a myriad of disciplines. For Lefebvre, the effort of offering a singular, unitary definition with these accompanying three subsets to

respond to a variety of professions is the pivotal aspect of theorizing space, which was neglected previously.[92]

Another significant aspect of Lefebvre's conceptualization of space is the emphasis he places on the two-way relationship between social relations and space: social relations produce space, and space produces the social relations. I have chosen Rachel Whiteread's *House* and *Prototype for A-Z Pocket Property* (also known as the *Island*) by Andrea Zittel as examples for a discussion of how certain site-specific practices would generate social relations through their spatiality and vice versa. I will argue that these kinds of works, through their site-specificity, put specific emphasis on social relations as producers and products of spatiality. Therefore, I suggest following along, creating a connection, and adding a new layer to Lefebvre's Production of Space: site-specificity can be considered as a tool, a strategy for place-making, and an approach to architecture from an artistic perspective.

Rachel Whiteread's *House* (1993) exemplifies a powerful manifestation of site-specific art as place-making, transforming absence into presence and memory into structure. The work involved casting the interior volume of a condemned Victorian terrace house at 193 Grove Road, East London, using concrete, before the structure's outer shell was demolished. What remained was a monumental, ghostly imprint of domestic place — the void solidified, the intangible made tangible. Positioned in a park facing three churches, *House* stood as a stark anomaly, embodying both an anti-monument and a critique of urban erasure.[93]

[92] Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, *Economic Geography*, vol. 68 (Blackwell, 1992), https://doi.org/10.2307/144191.
[93] James Lingwood, "Introduction," in *House* (Phaidon Limited Press, 1995), https://www.artangel.org.uk/house/making-house/.



Figure 3.16. *House,* 1993.

Source: Rachel Whiteread, *House*, 1993, Photograph by John Davies. Retrieved from https://www.artangel.org.uk/project/house/.

This area of East London was undergoing a regeneration process that systematically displaced working-class communities to make room for profitable redevelopment. Before the demolition, the row houses on 193 Grove Road stood tall, housing the working class and their stories, new and old. Yet, the houses are tangible with intangible volumes, spaces inside them that are the exact place playing a part in those new stories occurring. Once the area went under regeneration, and houses were demolished, one was permitted to become temporarily an art project by the Bow Neighborhood.[94] Whiteread, who requested the permission, valued the place for its potential for place-making. Once, this house could be categorized under perceived,

[94] James Lingwood, "Introduction," in *House* (Phaidon Limited Press, 1995), https://www.artangel.org.uk/house/making-house/.

and representational spaces. By creating a cast, *House* now embodied the missing subset of Lefebvre's concept: representation of space with a structural technique heavy on its spatiality, site awareness, and artistic endeavor. The interior cast of the house not only carried the imprint of the house's architectural elements but also the minute remnants of its past inhabitants, thereby underlining the histories and memories of a certain space.[95]

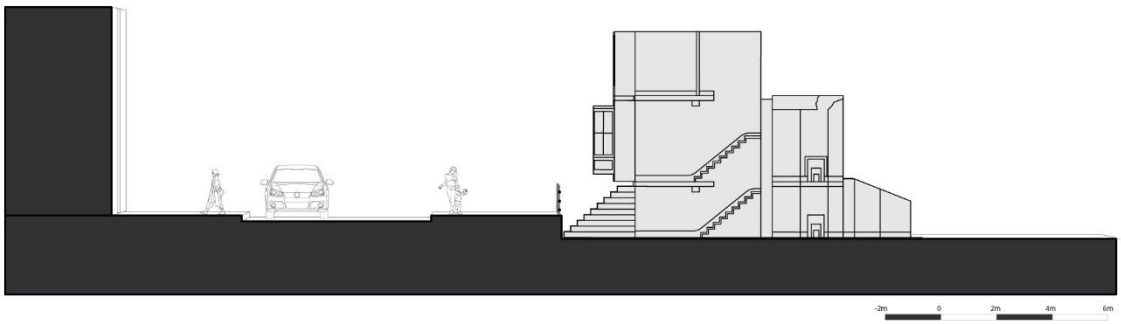


Figure 3.17. Perspective Section Drawing of *House*, 1/200 scale, drawn by the author.

The act of casting the void transforms the emptiness left by gentrification into a new space of social relations, reviving and re-inscribing meaning onto the site. Rather than being a neutral or aesthetic object, *House* is deeply relational: it provoked public debate, drew crowds, and ignited questions about class, memory, and urban transformation. In this way, it exemplifies Lefebvre's conceptualization of space and offers an alternative reality for the area, even just for a second. On November 23, 1993, two contrasting decisions were made simultaneously in separate parts of London: while the Tate Gallery jury awarded Rachel Whiteread the Turner Prize, the Bow Neighbourhood Council voted for the immediate demolition of the *House*.[96]

[95] Marija Cetinic, "House and Field: The Aesthetics of Saturation | Mediations | Journal of the Marxist Literary Group," Mediations Journal, n.d., https://mediationsjournal.org/articles/house-and-field.
[96] James Lingwood, "Introduction," in *House* (Phaidon Limited Press, 1995), https://www.artangel.org.uk/house/making-house/.

In contrast, but resonant in theme, Andrea Zittel'**s** spatial exploration, *Prototype for A-Z Pocket Property* (1999), addresses **s**ite-specificity through the lens of isolation, autonomy, and critical responses to consumerism and individualism. Constructed as a self-sufficient, concrete and steel floating island off the coast of Denmark, the project reflects Zittel's interrogation of how built environments are shaped by, and perpetuate, the values of capitalist modernity.[97] While the former artwork comments on transforming and thus illustrating the space, and/of dynamics inside the place, the latter artwork comments on modern civilization's another aspect, which is individualism and consumerism pressured into the space, and/of dynamics inside the space.



Figure 3.18. *A-Z Prototype for Pocket Property*, floating off the coast of Denmark, 1999.

Source: https://art21.org/read/andrea-zittel-pocket-property/.

Zittel's structure acts as both a physical shelter and a conceptual container. It encapsulates the contradictions of a world that celebrates personal freedom yet

[97] This information was taken from the interview view with Andrea Zittel by Art21. Art21, "Pocket Property," 2011, https://art21.org/read/andrea-zittel-pocket-property/ (accessed August 14, 2025).

breeds alienation. Her artistic method challenges the assumptions behind privatized domestic spaces — questioning whether safety, autonomy, and individuality truly lead to well-being or instead deepen social fragmentation and psychological enclosure.[98]The work critiques consumerism's promise of freedom through privatization. The island's design exposes the tensions between safety and seclusion, control and vulnerability. Its spatiality is deliberately limited: the site becomes a tool for examining how isolation, marketed as freedom, can in fact reproduce emotional constraint and alienation. The artist embraces the risks of structural failure and discomfort, turning them into elements of lived critique.[99] Its site-specificity is a commentary on the situation of the capitalist systems, consumerism, and individualism in the form of place-making practice.

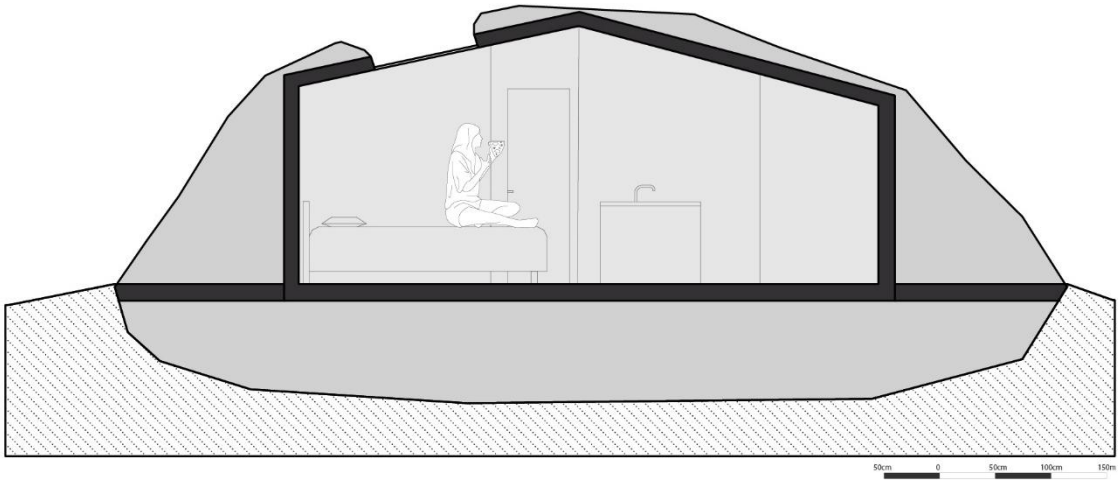


Figure 3.19. Perspective Section Drawing of A-Z Prototype for Pocket Property, 1/50 scale, drawn by the author.

As a place-making practice, *A-Z Pocket Property* manifests site-specificity not through architectural permanence but through inhabitation, experimentation, and lived experience. Like Rachel Whiteread's *House*, which physically embodies the

[98] Allan McCollum, Simona Vendrame, and Andrea Zittel, Andrea Zittel Diary #01, published by Tema Celeste Editions, Milan, Italy, 2002
[99] Art21, "Pocket Property," 2011, https://art21.org/read/andrea-zittel-pocket-property/ (accessed August 14, 2025).

memory of a demolished home and critiques gentrification's erasure of place, Zittel's island explores place as a condition shaped by/and resisting capitalist spatial logic. Both works reimagine place not as a static location, but as relational and performative, aligning with Lefebvre's notion of space as a product of, and producer of, social relations.

3.4. The Site/Space/Place: Reconfigured

In her book, Jane Rendell meticulously articulates her deliberate use of the terms site, place, space, and location. She attempts to use these terms to explain their involvement and development of critical spatial practice. While she employs the concept of space in connection to social relations (a notion that aligns with Lefebvre's concept of space), she uses place with reference to fostering cultural encounters. She utilizes the site with a focus on aesthetic production, and location to define physical locations.[100]

I observed a similar attitude in my exploration through site-specificity. As I developed this chapter and the accompanying perspective section drawings, I realized my utilization of these terms follows a similar pattern. I generally tended to use the site for the more flexible areas of display spaces, and space for more defined and strict display spaces. While I utilize the term place for the more intimate and private elaboration of the domesticity-influenced works, location to state the geographical setting of works.

My aim was to move beyond architecture's often contentious role as a mere backdrop. Instead, the focus was on celebrating forms of site-specificity that not just highlight, but also transform art and architecture, thereby creating something in-between, whose full meaning may only become apparent over time. While this chapter has been grounded in Western art history, I acknowledge the limitations of this paradigm. In order to further the study of art and architecture, I place significant value on transnational perspectives. Consequently, the next chapter will address site-specificity in Turkey from the 1990s onwards.

[100] Jane Rendell, *Art And Architecture: A Place Between* (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2007).

CHAPTER 4

SITE-SPECIFICITY AS A TRANSNATIONAL PROBLEM IDEA

4.1. Turkey as a Transnational Site

This chapter examines a variety of manifestations of site-specificity in the art scene of Turkey in the 1990s by focusing on a series of international art exhibitions that attracted attention with their emphasis on space and spatiality. In the context of Turkey, the discourse of site-specificity can be traced vis-à-vis the privatization of the cultural spheres in the nineties.[101] A great variety of new practices, mediums, curators, and discussions have emerged in this period within the newly emerging spaces dedicated to modern and contemporary art, such as museums, galleries, along with public spaces.[102] During this period, installation art with a spatial emphasis, in particular, became widespread in the art world of Turkey. Furthermore, a series of

[101] Site-specificity, especially when considered through the lens of space-making and spatial practices, requires acknowledging that as early as the 1950s significant explorations of spatial practice were already underway in the sculpture studio of the Academy of Fine Arts (DGSA). Within the framework of the *Synthesis of Plastic Arts* and Turkish *Group Espaz*, artists such as Ali Hadi Bara, Zühtü Müridoğlu, İlhan Koman, and Şadi Çalık emphasized transcending traditional disciplinary boundaries between sculpture, architecture, and painting, instead arguing for the active creation of space. Their work, which engaged with *Le Groupe Espace* in Paris and related circles in other European cities, demonstrates that the discourse on spatial practice has deeper roots in Turkish art history. While this thesis approaches site-specificity primarily from an architectural and spatial perspective that extends beyond artistic themes and mediums, it is important to underline that I remain aware of these earlier practices that emerged well before the 1990s. On this subject, Ömer Koyunoğlu's doctoral dissertation offers an important resource. Ömer Eren Koyunoğlu, "Türkiye'de Heykel Sanatının Çağdaşlaşma Süreci 1950-1980 the Modernization Process of Sculpture in Turkey 1950-1980" (Phd Dissertation, Mimar Sinan Güzel Sanatlar Üniversitesi, 2018), https://tez.yok.gov.tr/UlusalTezMerkezi/tezDetay.jsp?id=lF4sfKaNsMYkn8zFPVKBLA&no=j4JC-heWap4hNx-llSp6gQ.

[102] It would be more precise to state that this statement was originally formulated by the author with reference to certain countries, which excludes Turkey. However, upon closer consideration, I believe that it is also applicable to the Turkish context, which I find particularly relevant for this thesis. Miwon Kwon, *One Place After Another*, (The MIT Press eBooks, 2002), 1-10.

exhibitions opting for alternative venues over traditional exhibition spaces continued a trajectory in which artworks could more freely explore and test the boundaries of their relationship with these sites. Aiming to offer a new perspective on the relationship between art and spatiality, in the context of nineties Turkey, the chapter analyzes how these exhibitions define and question the concept and practices of site-specific art.

When viewed through the lens of site specificity, the art scene in this period of Turkey reveals both parallels and distinctions with its Western counterparts in relation to architectural typologies, spatial practices, and the transformation of contemporary art spaces. While site specificity as a trend accelerated in Turkey, majorly in the nineties, decades later than its global counterparts, the study assumes a transnational approach that scrutinizes the case of Turkey in relation to the concept's emergence and transformation elsewhere.[103] This chapter situates the increasing prevalence of site-specificity in the 1960s as a response to art's institutional contexts and commodification. In Turkey, the chapter focuses on the developments from the 1990s onward, including privatization efforts, while noting that new art practices and discussions had already been emerging prior to this period. Tracing from a transnational perspective the similarities and differences of the case of site-specificity in Turkey in relation to its much-discussed counterparts in Europe and the US, the chapter analyzes the transformations and nuances of the interplay of art and space in Turkey within this specific period.

Kwon traces the origins of site-specificity in the artistic practices and discourses that sought a place-bound identity to reflect on the commodification of art

[103] For instance, as early as the 1950s, transnational exchanges shaped spatially aware artistic practices in Turkey. The founding of *Groupe Espace* in Paris in 1951 by André Bloc quickly expanded across Europe and beyond, with local groups forming in countries including Belgium, Switzerland, England, Sweden, Finland, Tunisia, Italy, and Turkey. In 1955, Hadi Bara, İlhan Koman, and architect Tarık Carım established the Turkish *Groupe Espas*, working closely with Bloc and advocating for a synthesis of the plastic arts through abstract, spatially engaged approaches. For more information about this encounter between Turkish artists and Andre Bloc, see Ömer Koyunoğlu's thesis. Ömer Eren Koyunoğlu, "Türkiye'de Heykel Sanatının Çağdaşlaşma Süreci 1950-1980 the Modernization Process of Sculpture in Turkey 1950-1980" (Phd Dissertation, Mimar Sinan Güzel Sanatlar Üniversitesi, 2018), https://tez.yok.gov.tr/UlusalTezMerkezi/tezDetay.jsp?id=lF4sfKaNsMYkn8zFPVKBLA&no=j4JC-heWap4hNx-llSp6gQ.

and the institutional frameworks. However, this place-bound approach, rooted in the 1960s, has transformed over time, evolving towards a discourse characterized by transience and deterritorialization, leading to liberating effects.[104] This liberating transformation can be observed in the mutations of land art or public art from the original site-specific art of the 1960s. Over time, the transformation of site-specific art has culminated in a more mobilized and often symbolic and discursive relationship to the site, transcending its physical boundaries to exist anywhere, everywhere, and nowhere.[105] Kwon's book is vital not only for examining site-specificity in the Western context but also for understanding site-specific approaches in Turkey's art scene in the nineties to the extent that it provides essential concepts into the economic, social, and institutional conditions influencing the art world. A similar methodology that analyzes the nineties art scene in relation to the socio-cultural context may allow us to understand both the conditions under which site-specific tendencies emerged as well as the different types of approaches that characterized this period.

The effects and aftermath of the 1980 military coup had a great impact on the nineties Turkey and its art scene. While the emergence of privately owned institutions in Turkey began decades earlier, this process especially intensified in this period with the multiplication of private galleries and museums as well as alternative spaces of display. [106] This privatization of the cultural sphere had negative effects in terms of further commercialization of the art scene, yet it also allowed the emergence of new display techniques and mediums owing also to a heightened interaction with the global art world.[107] A more-or-less common occupation of artworks produced in this context was to reflexively question and criticize their own definitions, practices, and spaces. Such an awareness in the art world that would take display spaces as one of the bases for its own ontology and production would pave the way for the emergence of site specificity in Turkey.[108] Redefining the artistic sphere of nineties

[104] Miwon Kwon, *One Place After Another*, (The MIT Press eBooks, 2002), 1-10.
[105] Ibid, 165.
[106] Levent Çalıkoğlu, *90'lı Yıllarda Türkiye'de Çağdaş Sanat: Çağdaş Sanat Konuşmaları - 3*, (Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2008).
[107] Ibid, 7-16.
[108] Ibid, 7-16.

Turkey through the lens of site-specificity, this chapter analyzes how site-specificity as a concept and tool helped to criticize the institutional framing and socio-political context of art in Turkey, that is, the very context that paved the way for the emergence of such art practices in the first place.

Accordingly, the chapter closely analyzes a variety of exhibitions, their artworks, and venues from the nineties: *Anı/Bellek I & II* (1991, 1993), the *Gar Exhibition* (1995), the *4th Istanbul Biennial* (1995), and the *Istanbul Pedestrian Exhibition* (2002). The chapter uses a dual approach: it places these exhibitions within the wider international contemporary discourse on site-specificity and examines their direct connection to the local, spatial and political contexts. Close visual scrutiny of the works in these exhibitions is supported by primary archival documents as well as oral history interviews conducted with artists, curators, architects, and researchers involved in these key exhibitions of the time. These oral histories help provide insight into Turkey's shifting position within the global art world, characterized by a desire to belong, to situate oneself, and to connect with broader artistic communities.

While the previous scholarship on these exhibitions focused on their certain features that singled them out such as being the first exhibition to have an acknowledged curator or being a significant instance of public art and exhibition in Turkey, my approach emphasizes their site specificity from a transnational perspective that positions them in dialogue with the global art world. Rather than framing these exhibitions as derivatives of or in opposition to the Western art historical canon, I treat them as complementary, offering alternative yet equally significant perspectives on exhibition-making, artistic production, and spatial experience. [109] This transnational reframing of the period's important exhibitions through the lens of site-specificity allows us to not only position the art world of Turkey vis-à-vis the global art scene but also explicates the lasting impact of site-specific works, and thus the concept of spatiality, in shaping Turkey's contemporary

[109] A similar transition within the methodology can be found in Hans Belting, "From World Art to Global Art: View on a New Panorama," trans. Elizabeth Volk, in *The Global Contemporary and the Rise of New Art Worlds*, ed. Belting, Andrea Buddensieg, and Peter Weibel (Karlsruhe: ZKM; Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2013), 178.

art. At the same time, a close analysis of these exhibitions provides us with clues as to how society, governmental bodies, and the private sector (by organizing events) perceived and interacted with art and architecture at the time.

Replicating the structure of the previous one, this chapter categorizes the tendencies of site-specificity in these exhibitions as sedentary, nomadic, and place-making in order to bring into focus the continuities and breaks with the previous histories of site-specificity within the contexts of Europe and the US. The notion of liminality will also serve as a recurring lens to understand better the emergence of public art, site-specific practices, and alternative display spaces in the nineties Turkey. Marked by transition, mobility, and cultural negotiation, the complex stake of affairs in the sociocultural scene of this period in general and the key exhibitions in question can be better apprehended through the concept of liminality. To illustrate this, in the next section I analyze *Anı/Bellek I & II* exhibitions through this particular framework of liminality. Together, these exhibitions reveal how contemporary art in Turkey engaged with global discourse while negotiating its own identity, raising questions around mobility, displacement, and belonging in both physical and conceptual spaces.

4.1.1. Liminal Site

Turkey's unique geographical location and power dynamics give it a liminal presence. I associate this liminal presence with the mobile demographic structure after the Republican Era, including the population exchange, internal urbanization, and international mobility.[110] While each of these forms of movement has shaped experiences of belonging and identity in distinct ways, my focus here will be on those migrating abroad for education and employment. These individuals often occupy a dual position, navigating cultural and professional contexts both abroad and in Turkey, whether or not they intend, or are able, to return. This experience resonates with diasporic and transnational identity approaches, which emphasize the negotiation of belonging across multiple locations and the continuous (re)construction of identity in conditions of mobility that ultimately results in a

[110] Faruk Yalvaç, "Return Migration to Turkey: Identity Problem and Changes in the Concept of Nation," 2011, https://hdl.handle.net/11511/20979.

liminal sense of identity and one's relationship to place.[111] The experience of such mobility and the threshold position it creates also leads to a search for a sense of belonging. However, no matter what people create to find that sense of belonging, there will always be others who oppose or deny it. Such opposition to a subjective feeling makes it even harder to create a sense of belonging when leaving one's homeland and/or familiar environment. Such a tension between mobility and belonging also manifests itself in the art scene of the nineties in Turkey, particularly in the exhibitions in question here. Not only did these exhibitions and their artworks thematically deal with the issue of liminality that arose from such tensions but also adopting site-specific approaches at alternative venues they occupied a liminal position in relation to the mainstream art practices of that time in Turkey.[112]

One of the significant moments that signals such a liminal presence within Turkey's contemporary art scene constitutes one of the country's earliest curatorial practices:[113] the exhibition series *Anı/Bellek I* (1991) and *Anı/Bellek II* (1993), curated by Vasıf Kortun following his return to Turkey after completing his doctoral studies in the United States. According to Kortun, the conceptual framework for these exhibitions began to take shape during a train journey from Stuttgart, itself a moment of mobility that resonates with the exhibition's focus on memory, identity, and spatial narrative.[114]

This series of exhibitions is notable for its experimental use of spatial arrangement, display techniques, and exhibition design. Their significance lies in how they engaged with space as a conceptual and physical medium—an approach that had not yet been widely adopted in Turkey's institutional art scene. This

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[111] Eveline Reisenauer and Jürgen Gerdes, "From Return-Oriented to Integration-Related Transnationalisation: Turkish Migrants in Germany," *Revue Européenne De Migrations Internationales* 28, no. 1 (March 1, 2012): 107–28, https://doi.org/10.4000/remi.5797.
[112] Vasıf Kortun, *10*, e-publication (SALT, 2014), 81-92, https://saltonline.org/tr/828/10.
[113] Beral Madra is widely recognized as the first curator of contemporary art in Turkey. Since the early 1980s she has curated pioneering exhibitions that provided platforms for contemporary artists, including the first and second Istanbul Biennials (1987 and 1989). She also established BM Contemporary Art Center in 1984, which functioned as one of the earliest independent art spaces in Turkey. Melis Boyacı, "Çağdaş Türk Sanatında Küratörlük Olgusu : Beral Madra/ Curating in Contemporary Turkish Art: Beral Madra" (MA Thesis, Anadolu University, 2009), https://tez.yok.gov.tr/UlusalTezMerkezi/tezDetay.jsp?id=ITHtUBGVDt8VYfgto_CFuQ&no=CcgM7kKHTnY_3pqaoWgZpw.
[114] Ibid, 81-92.

difference is partly due to the relatively limited number of museums and exhibition spaces with contemporary collections at the time, until then, most of which operated under state authority. The country's cultural infrastructure, shaped both by the Republican period and by earlier Ottoman artistic traditions, reflects a complex layering. Alongside non-figurative practices such as calligraphy and marbling, Ottoman miniature painting and, from the mid-19th century, Western-style easel painting (culminating in the works of the "1914 Generation") formed important components of this artistic heritage.[115]

In this context, Kortun's curatorial practices utilized methods that were more commonly seen in Western contemporary art exhibitions, such as non-standard display techniques, site-specific installations, and spatially informed curations of exhibitions. We may apprehend the prevalence of such approaches in Turkey as a divergent, yet related trajectory shaped by not only cross-cultural exchange but also different political, religious, and cultural dynamics in Turkey. This is different than conceiving it as a late arrival of a certain approach that suggests a linear development of art history whereby developing countries follow the approaches and tendencies emerging in First World countries. The shift toward privatization and neoliberal reforms in Turkey's art sector began in the 1970s, with notable examples including the establishment of İKSV in 1973 and the emergence of private collectors and bank-sponsored exhibition spaces. By the 1990s, these private initiatives expanded further,

[115] These works were often collected by non-state actors, reflecting early forms of cultural patronage and taste formation. According to Güler Bek, in the 1970s, the proliferation of state galleries, foreign cultural centres, private galleries, and banks expanded exhibition venues and sparked a growing awareness of art collecting as an institutional and social practice. For this, see Güler Bek, "1970 - 1980 Yılları Arasında Türkiye'de Kültürel Ve Sanatsal Ortam / Cultural and Artistic Milieu in Turkey Between the Years" (PhD Dissertation, Hacettepe University, 2007), https://tez.yok.gov.tr/UlusalTezMerkezi/tezDetay.jsp?id=FyYFkwIvOgYI702uu_rpzg&no=aq18LMJMsisSURBF-0hZOg&utm. While these traditions did not necessarily limit art production, they did frame the parameters of value and institutional recognition for experimental practices. By contrast, the 1990s saw a new dimension of private-sector collection and cultural investment. The rise of art collections transforming into private museums, such as those foundations including Proje 4L, Platform Garanti, Sabancı Museum, İstanbul Modern, and Pera Museum, and evolution reflective of shifting cultural infrastructure towards privatized, globalized cosmopolitanism. For this, see Ebru Nalan Sülün, "Türkiye'de Çağdaş Sanat Koleksiyonculuğu (1990-2010) / Contemporary Art Collecting in Turkey (1990-2010)" (PhD Dissertation, Akdeniz University, 2018), https://tez.yok.gov.tr/UlusalTezMerkezi/tezDetay.jsp?id=hZpUbI836pBziQ877e4FoQ&no=sAJMCahOGAiK6KzioD_u5w&utm.

enabling a broader and more diverse art sector.[116] Exhibitions such as *Anı/Bellek* played a critical role in this transition by opening new possibilities for a novel engagement with space, memory, and display.

Anı/Bellek I took place in Taksim Sanat Galerisi in 1991. It was planned as a series of exhibitions that aimed to illustrate the myths of the Turkish Republic from a deconstructivist point of view.[117] The first exhibition contained artists such as Halil Akdeniz, İpek Aksüğür Duben, Hüseyin Alptekin & Richard Morris, Selda Asal, and Gülsün Karamustafa.[118] This curated exhibition (as well as its sequel) focused on the notion of memory/recollection, as its title suggests. The first exhibition examined the contradictory nature of a memory that was erased even though it was meant to endure the longest.[119] *Anı/Bellek II*, following its predecessor, would stand in this terrain of memory and recollection, yet with a shift toward the incorporation of conceptualization and theorization of its practices.[120]

Taksim Art Gallery was located in Taksim, adjacent to Gezi Park, was restored in 1991 by Han Tümertekin and the Architects' firm, one of the prominent architectural offices of Turkey. In the explanation of the restoration project, the firm described their aim as expanding the gallery and making it respond to the necessities of a contemporary art gallery. Furthermore, they enlisted these necessities as 1.a close relationship between the management and contemporary art, 2. spatial qualities required for the display of contemporary artworks, and 3. technical infrastructure that would allow the display and even production of works on site in the gallery. Especially the last two aims highlight the given importance to site-specificity, which envisions the future of space not just as a backdrop but as the essential element or even basis for the art. Accordingly, the firm outlined how their architectural solution

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[116] Güler Bek, "1970 - 1980 Yılları Arasında Türkiye'de Kültürel Ve Sanatsal Ortam / Cultural and Artistic Milieu in Turkey Between the Years" (PhD Dissertation, Hacettepe University, 2007), https://tez.yok.gov.tr/UlusalTezMerkezi/tezDetay.jsp?id=FyYFkwIvOgYI702uu_rpzg&no=aq18LMJMsisSURBF-0hZOg&utm.

[117] Ali Akay, Selim Birsel, Burak Delier, Vasif Kortun, and Emre Zeytinoğlu, *O Zamanlar Konuşuyorduk*, (Salt, 2013) https://saltonline.org/tr/603/o-zamanlar-konusuyorduk.

[118] Vasif Kortun, "Anı/Bellek I," Anı/Bellek I, 1993.

[119] Ibid, 5.

[120] Şeyma Barlas Bozkuş, "Çağdaş Sanatın Kentle Buluşması: 1980 Sonrası Türkiye'de Çağdaş Sanatın Mekansal Dönüşümü," Marmara İletişim Dergisi (2013), 80-97.

consists of a neutral space where visitors can engage with works. Yet, rather than white cube's conventional nondescript and white-washed neutrality, they defined their space as one that would gain an identity through its interaction with the works, rather than merely existing as walls, floors, and a ceiling.[121]



Figure 4.1. Taksim Art Gallery, Restoration Project Poster.

Source: "İstanbul Büyükşehir Belediyesi Taksim Sanat Galerisi Yenileme Projesi", Salt Araştırma, https://archives.saltresearch.org/handle/123456789/199641.

[121] "İstanbul Büyükşehir Belediyesi Taksim Sanat Galerisi Yenileme Projesi", Salt Araştırma, https://archives.saltresearch.org/handle/123456789/199641.

While the restoration was being completed, Vasıf Kortun requested to hold the exhibition in the space, on the condition that he would have complete freedom over how it was used. In return, he promised to leave the space exactly as he found it. With this freedom, Kortun drilled into the walls and installed the artworks according to his particular vision of how the exhibition should look and unfold.[122] At the time, it wasn't possible to hang art on museum or gallery walls by drilling holes; instead works were hung using hooks. The use of temporary walls within exhibition spaces was also not very common. Kortun's particular hanging strategy that defied existing practices became a reference point for future display techniques.[123]

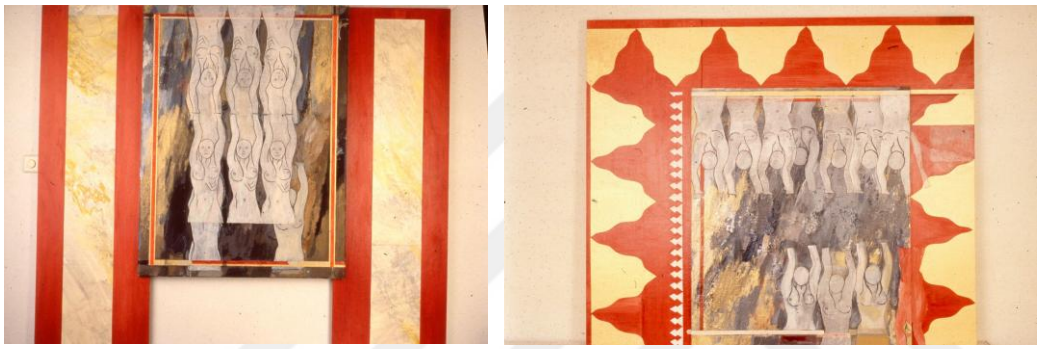


Figure 4.2. *Register II* (up), *Register III* (down) Paintings.

Source: "İpek Duben, "Register II", "Anı/Bellek I" sergisi, Taksim Sanat Galerisi, 1991 - İpek Duben, "Register II", "Memory/Recollection I" exhibition, Taksim Art Gallery, 1991", Salt Araştırma, https://archives.saltresearch.org/handle/123456789/199685. / "İpek Duben, "Register III", "Anı/Bellek I" sergisi, Taksim Sanat Galerisi, 1991 - İpek Duben, "Register III", "Memory/Recollection I" exhibition, Taksim Art Gallery, 1991", Salt Araştırma, https://archives.saltresearch.org/handle/123456789/199682.

[122] This information was obtained through an oral history interview with Vasıf Kortun, one of Turkey's prominent curators. Vasıf Kortun, semi-structured interview by Emine İnci Şahin, July 1, 2025.
[123] Ibid.



Figure 4.3. *Register* Paintings and Their Distinct Display Technique.

Source: "Anı/Bellek I" sergisi, Taksim Sanat Galerisi, 1991 - "Memory/Recollection I" exhibition, Taksim Art Gallery, 1991", Salt Araştırma, https://archives.saltresearch.org/handle/123456789/199701

Another important novel display technique that Kortun used for this exhibition was the discarding of traditional eye-level display for paintings. Eye-level display style was one of the distinct characteristics of the white cube whereby artworks would be lined up on the walls according to a height that would supposedly best accommodate an ideal viewer's eyesight. However, in this exhibition, Vasıf Kortun experimented with such standardized display methods opting to install two works near the ceiling and one near the floor (İpek Duben's *Register I, II, and III*). The lower placements suggested a gesture of reverence, resembling the act of bowing, while the elevated position encouraged an upward gaze, similarly evoking respect. These spatial arrangements aimed to explore alternative forms of representation and display through variations in viewing angles.[124] At the same, their

[124] Vasif Kortun, "#1 Vasıf Kortun," interview by Zeynep Nur Ayanoğlu and Abdullah Ezik, *İpek Duben: Ten, Beden, Ben* by Salt, *Spotify*, May 21, 2024, accessed July 18, 2025, https://open.spotify.com/episode/4W4M8X0Q6Tp7bUNqbzp6dm?si=73fa67433a1340ef.

deviation from standard practice makes the viewer more aware of the spatial context of the artworks as well as both the artworks' and their own particular relations with this site.

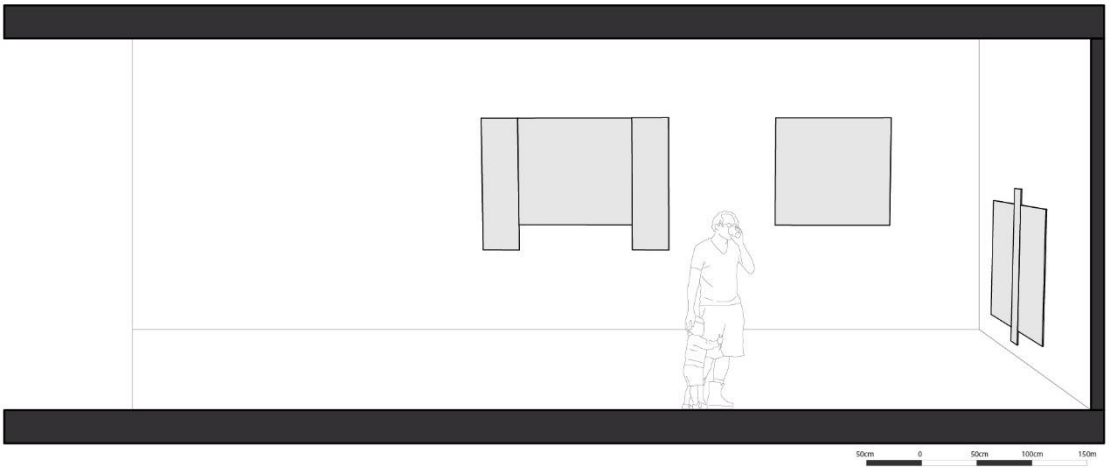


Figure 4.4. Perspective Section Drawing of *Register* Paintings, 1/50 scale, drawn by the author.

We may associate such an experiment on shifting the eye-level display with the rejection of not merely the white cube's standard display techniques but also this type of space altogether to the extent that Kortun selected an alternative space that does not share the same characteristics of the white cube. According to Kortun, these alternative spaces as well as their use by curators and artists alike emerged as a reaction and response to mainstream art spaces (museums, galleries). Yet, in Turkey, these mainstream art spaces devoted to modern and contemporary art were very few to consider the existence of other spaces, such as Taksim Sanat Galerisi (or other spaces that I will mention in continuation of this chapter, such as Akaretler Number 50, a train station, a street, and old custom warehouses) as alternatives. Kortun also brings attention to the nature of alternative spaces as small establishments that emerge, and then quickly disappear, which makes it harder to categorize them in number, to comment on their existence or lack thereof.[125]

[125] This information was obtained through an oral history interview with Vasıf Kortun. Vasıf Kortun, semi-structured interview by Emine İnci Şahin, July 1, 2025.

The concept and theme of the exhibition focus on finding the zero point, the beginning to be able to work and reflect on the accumulation of memory and its recollection, thus also evoking themes of identity. This thematic focus also affected the selection of the display space. To find the zero point, Kortun searched for a space without any past, without any memory. Such a search of space reveals the significance of space to the exhibition, not as a simple backdrop but as a crucial constituent of the curatorial practice. Kortun indeed emphasizes how his practice, rather than taking the exhibition space as a decor or a background, has always and intensely associated with space to the extent of becoming site-specific. At that point, Taksim Art Gallery was newly restored, and it had not yet housed any exhibitions. So, in terms of its display history, it was a space without a memory and a past. Kortun conceptualized the exhibition as a resetting project to construct history with a clean slate. This, according to Kortun, is also a reference to the establishment of the Turkish Republic, which was founded on the grounds of the Ottoman Empire with its official discourse of a putatively fresh beginning for the project on establishment of a modern society.[126]

This act of resetting and subsequently recollecting memory is closely tied to the notion of liminality as experienced by both the curator and the participating artists. Notably, both Vasıf Kortun and İpek Duben had been residing in the United States prior to the exhibition series, where they grappled with questions of identity and belonging across transnational contexts. Their experiences of mobility and displacement resonate with the conceptual framework of the exhibition series, which sought to reconstruct memory by initiating a dialogue from new spatial and cultural starting points.[127]

The sequel of this exhibition, namely *Anı/Bellek II* (1993), also aimed to engage with memory and recollection, and their spatial associations and ramifications. Kortun noted that while *Anı/Bellek I* focused on "resetting" memory, this second exhibition shifted toward "reconstructing" memory and recollection. In this sense, the project served as a reflection on the Republic's cultural mission to

[126] Vasıf Kortun, semi-structured interview by Emine İnci Şahin, July 1, 2025.
[127] Ibid.

elevate the nation toward modern civilization.[128] This exhibition's choice of site was Number Fifty, Akaretler neighborhood in Beşiktaş, İstanbul, again a conscious choice on the part of Kortun to reflect on and reconstruct the layers that constitute urban memory. The exhibition opened on the 4th of May in 1993, including the works of Vahap Avşar, Taner Ceylan, İsmet Doğan, Güven İncirlioğlu, Aydan Murtezaoğlu, Lerzan Özer, Eliza Proctor, Bülent Şangar, and Emre Zeytinoğlu.[129] The apartment, Number 50, is located at the intersection of the main streets of Spor and Şair Nedim in Akaretler. As Vasıf Kortun emphasizes, the site represented a layered memory of the city, government, and space,[130] due to its ownership by Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi (CHP) as a significant political actor in the history of Turkey with a major role in the institutional memory of the Republic.

Historically, the Akaretler row houses were annexes to the Dolmabahçe Palace and initially served as housing for palace workers. These row houses are unique among Istanbul's constantly shifting urban fabric; the house numbers of these buildings—unlike most in the city—remained unchanged for over a century, reinforcing a sense of permanence and historical continuity. Number 50, in particular, embodies a striking trajectory through Turkish history. From 1896 to 1909, it served as the home and studio of Fausto Zonaro, the court painter of Sultan Abdülhamid II. Zonaro used the space to exhibit and teach art until he was exiled by the Committee of Union and Progress after the fall of the monarchy. Decades later, the building became the Beşiktaş District Office of the CHP until the 1980 military coup. During this period, it also functioned as an educational and cultural hub, offering preparatory courses and events that contributed to the sociocultural construction of a new generation. Thus, the space is not a neutral white-cube gallery but one charged with accumulated historical and ideological significance. Its use in a

[128] Ibid.
[129] Ali Akay, Selim Birsel, Burak Delier, Vasif Kortun, and Emre Zeytinoğlu, O Zamanlar Konuşuyorduk, 2013, 11-52. https://saltonline.org/tr/603/o-zamanlar-konusuyorduk.
[130] Ibid.

contemporary art exhibition thus reactivated its past, making it a site of critical reflection and memory reconstruction.[131]



Figure 4.5. *Tea Glasses*, illuminated by the window.

Source: "Eliza Proctor, Çay Bardakları (Tea Glasses), 1993", Salt Araştırma, https://archives.saltresearch.org/handle/123456789/9737.

[131] From Vasıf Kortun's Elli Numara: Anı/Bellek II Katalog Yazısı. Ali Akay, Selim Birsel, Burak Delier, Vasif Kortun, and Emre Zeytinoğlu. O Zamanlar Konuşuyorduk, 2013, 11-52. https://saltonline.org/tr/603/o-zamanlar-konusuyorduk.

Eliza Proctor's contribution to the *Anı/Bellek II* exhibition reflects Michel de Certeau's notion of space as a "practiced place"—one shaped by lived experience and memory.[132] Proctor's previous installation, *Serotonin II*, which is 3rd Istanbul Biennial involved filling tea glasses that each represented a factory worker (as a reference to Gazhane, a gas factory building where the exhibition took place) with tea and placing them in the windows of the exhibition space. As time passed, the tea became darkened by dust in the air, metaphorically capturing the accumulation of time and labor. For the *Anı/Bellek II* exhibition, these glasses were enclosed within a large, transparent muslin bag printed with traces of the human body, which became visible via under natural light from the window of the site in front of which the work was placed. The muslin, resembling a filter or sieve, gently dispersed the light while suggesting the sorting or retention of memory. The weight of the tea glasses pulled the fabric downward, evoking a symbolism not only of the burden of the past but also of the emotional weight carried into the future.[133]

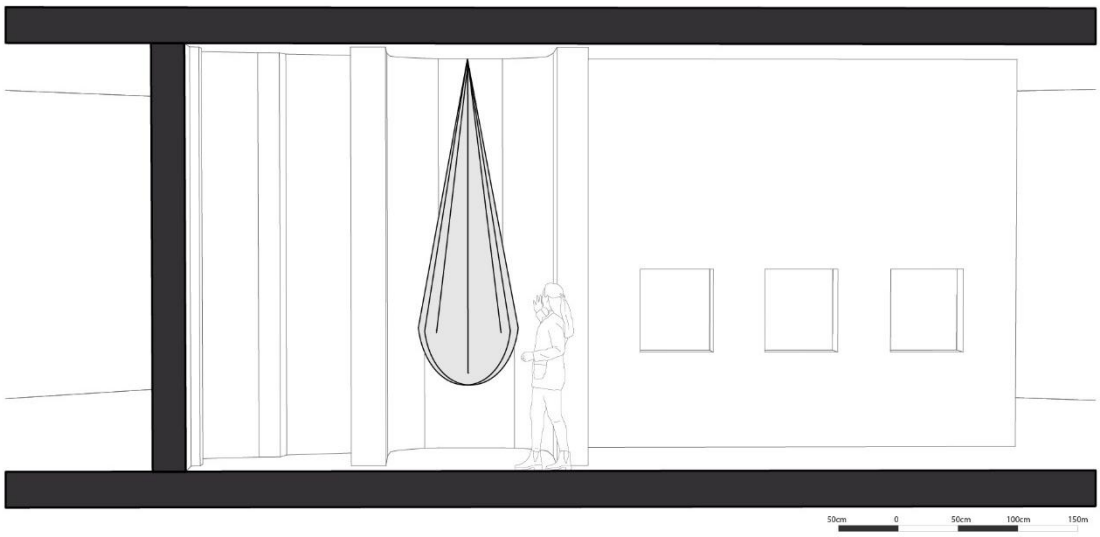


Figure 4.6. Perspective Section Drawing of *Tea Glasses*, 1/50 scale, drawn by the author.

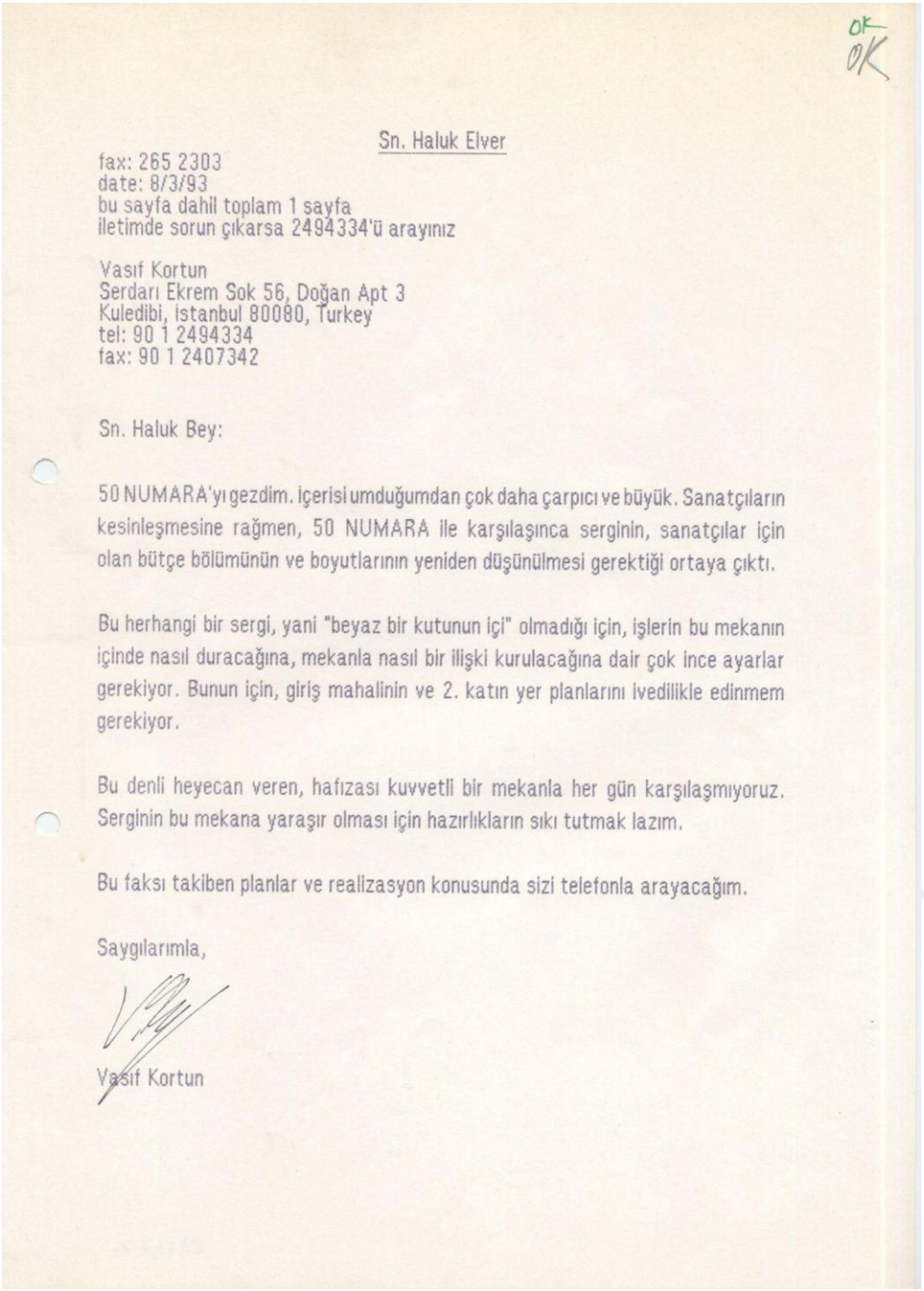
This installation demonstrates site-specificity through its responsiveness to the architectural and historical character of space. Proctor's central question, "How

[132] Ibid.
[133] Ibid.

does one return to a space that is no longer in use?" resonates deeply with the exhibition's theme of recovering and reconstructing memory within a space left abandoned and neglected in the aftermath of the military coup, readily apparent in the condition of the walls and the ceiling on which the work was hung. In the broader context of early 1990s Turkey, a time marked by cultural transformation and growing transnational exchange, Proctor's work reflects a state of liminality. As an artist with international mobility, her piece addresses feelings of displacement and estrangement while reactivating the exhibition space as a site of collective remembrance.[134]

As the work by Proctor also attests, the space of the exhibition, Number Fifty Akaretler, according to Kortun, is not a neutral 'white cube' for display.[135] It is a space where works could relate themselves to the specific conditions of the building, and therefore blur and redefine the boundaries of its spatial definitions. Together with the criticism of institutions, politics, modernism, medium, and traditionalism that these works have raised, this exhibition can be considered a reconstruction of collective memory as it relates to a specific and alternative site. The second exhibition of Vasıf Kortun, *Number 50: Anı/Bellek II*, closed down earlier than planned in protest against the removal of the exhibition poster. It was replaced by another poster for Democrat Party's celebration of 14th of May as the Democracy Day. as a response from and to politics. The closing down of the exhibition was briefly mentioned in the newspapers at the time as "DP's Stance Against Art."[136]

[134] Ibid.
[135] Ibid.
[136] From Vasıf Kortun's Elli Numara: Anı/Bellek II Hakkında writing. Ali Akay, Selim Birsel, Burak Delier, Vasif Kortun, and Emre Zeytinoğlu. O Zamanlar Konuşuyorduk, 2013, 11-52. https://saltonline.org/tr/603/o-zamanlar-konusuyorduk.



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Sn. Haluk Elver

fax: 265 2303
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bu sayfa dahil toplam 1 sayfa
iletimde sorun çıkarsa 2494334'ü arayınız

Vasıf Kortun
Serdarı Ekrem Sok 56, Doğan Apt 3
Kuledibi, İstanbul 80080, Turkey
tel: 90 1 2494334
fax: 90 1 2407342

Sn. Haluk Bey:

50 NUMARA'yı gezdim. İçerisi umduğumdan çok daha çarpıcı ve büyük. Sanatçıların kesinleşmesine rağmen, 50 NUMARA ile karşılaşınca serginin, sanatçılar için olan bütçe bölümünün ve boyutlarının yeniden düşünülmesi gerektiği ortaya çıktı.

Bu herhangi bir sergi, yani "beyaz bir kutunun içi" olmadığı için, işlerin bu mekanın içinde nasıl duracağına, mekanla nasıl bir ilişki kurulacağına dair çok ince ayarlar gerekiyor. Bunun için, giriş mahalinin ve 2. katın yer planlarını ivedilikle edinmem gerekiyor.

Bu denli heyecan veren, hafızası kuvvetli bir mekanla her gün karşılaşmıyoruz. Serginin bu mekana yaraşır olması için hazırlıkların sıkı tutmak lazım.

Bu faksı takiben planlar ve realizasyon konusunda sizi telefonla arayacağım.

Saygılarımla,

Vasıf Kortun

Figure 4.7. Vasıf Kortun's Request of Floor Plans for *Anı/Bellek II Exhibition*.

Source: "50 Numara hakkında izlenimler: Vasıf Kortun'un Haluk Elver'e yolladığı faks - Number Fifty impressions: Fax sent from Vasıf Kortun to Haluk Elver", Salt Araştırma, https://archives.saltresearch.org/handle/123456789/8728.

Both of these exhibitions by Vasıf Kortun were held at liminal sites, as an alternative to the art museums (albeit few in number) that are under state governance. In both cases, these liminal sites offered the freedom to experiment with and present something different from what had previously been done in Turkey in terms of display techniques, mediums, and curatorial practice, which also involved placing objects and working collectively with artists on site. The selection of distinct spaces that do not resemble the 'white cube' is significant, in the former case due to the display techniques employed, and in the latter due to the building's history. These experiments with display and the attention to exhibition space resulted in site-specific criticalities, apparent in both the curatorial practice that actively engaged with spaces (through display techniques), and their histories (through thematic emphasis) as well as the relationships that the artworks established with the site, whether to a small or large extent.

4.1.2. Sedentary Site

As the previous chapter has discussed, the sedentary approach of site-specificity is usually grounded in a direct and often physically association of the artwork with the site and its inseparability from the said site. This intense connection formed through the very constitution of the work as well as the associations it engenders with its site makes it impossible to detach, temporarily move, or completely relocate the artwork.

Such an idea of site-grounded definition of site-specificity is illustrated by its sedentariness can be evidently located in Turkey during the 1990s. Gar Exhibition, as the period’s first collective exhibition held at a public space, Ankara train station, demonstrates such an approach to site that also lent the exhibition its very name. Clearly, there were instances of site-awareness before this period; however, the significance of the Gar exhibition and the other selected exhibitions lies in their role in intentionally producing contemporary art engaging with site-specificity.

The selection of a public space for the exhibition indicates a conscious move beyond the physical and institutional boundaries of the art museum, many of which

were state-controlled and subject to censorship and nationalist perspectives. Additionally, another reason for choosing the Capital's station as a display site was due to limited number of museums available at that time.[137] Kortun suggests that the phenomenon of moving away from museums and the seeking alternatives depends on the existence of museums themselves.[138] However, unlike the situation in Turkey during the 1990s, a careful and nuanced perspective is required from the Western art world when considering such supposed alternatives. Since there is no available counter-example, the present endeavor to explore the relationship between public space and art relies on the possibility of holding an exhibition in this specific setting, as demonstrated by the 1990s exhibition in Turkey.[139] Elaboration of this concept in this manner helps to recall the period and the reasons behind the move away from museum boundaries from various perspectives.

The curation of the *Gar Exhibition* was undertaken by an amateur collective, with the objective of producing an exhibition that would provide a critical reflection on the contemporary sociopolitical context of Turkey. The exhibition was inaugurated on 3 May 1995 and was hosted at the TCDD Station and the Station Gallery of Ankara.[140] The amateur collective consists of Vahap Avşar, Selim Birsel[141], Cengiz Çekil, Paul Donker Duyvis, Ayşe Erkmen, Hasan Bülent Kahraman, Claude Leon, Aydan Mürtezaoğlu, Ladan Shohrahk Naderi, Füsun Onur, Joseph Semah, Paolo Vitali. Even though the exhibition was not designed by a curator, as stated by Selim Birsel, it is apparent that he was the initiator and organizer artist of the collective.[142] The exhibition was curated as part of the *Art and Taboos* symposium organized by the Ankara Sanart Association. The challenge

[137] This information has been obtained from the oral history study. Selim Birsel, semi-structured interview by Emine İnci Şahin, April 11, 2025.
[138] Vasıf Kortun, semi-structured interview by Emine İnci Şahin, July 1, 2025.
[139] Ibid.
[140] From Selim Birsel's Dün Gar Yarın Belirsiz writing in O Zamanlar Konuşuyorduk publication. Ali Akay, Selim Birsel, Burak Delier, Vasif Kortun, and Emre Zeytinoğlu, O Zamanlar Konuşuyorduk, 2013, 56-68.
[141] Ayşe Selen and Şehsuvar Aktaş have contributed to the production of Selim Birsel'sn Uykusu.
[142] This site-specific exhibition was documented for archiving, again, in 2013 by SALT/ Garanti Kültür AŞ. This information has been taken from the Dün Gar Yarın Belirsiz, Gar Hakkında (Selim Birsel), Gar (written by Burak Delier) articles from the O Zamanlar Konuşuyorduk archieve article/study. Ali Akay, Selim Birsel, Burak Delier, Vasif Kortun, and Emre Zeytinoğlu, O Zamanlar Konuşuyorduk, 2013. https://saltonline.org/tr/603/o-zamanlar-konusuyorduk.

posed by the artworks in the exhibition through subjects considered taboo in the contemporary sociopolitical atmosphere (which also formed the theme of the symposium) led to the closure of the exhibition and also highlighted the difficult situation in Turkey. It is important to note that during this period, Turkey was engaged in armed conflict with Kurdish guerrilla forces. The escalation in violence, which commenced subsequent to the coup of 12th of September, was extensively documented in both television and print media. During this period of profound significance, characterised by the media's extensive coverage of the deaths of guerrilla fighters and Turkish soldiers, the distinction between the two groups was starkly delineated. The latter were eulogised as martyrs, a term that underscores their heroic status in the national consciousness. This event, therefore, had a significant impact on the nation, and the emotional weight it carried was profoundly felt by all. It is imperative that this exhibition was situated in the train station, given that the majority of soldiers travelled by train to the east, and that the majority of military supplies were sold under the bazaar located under the train station. Located in the country's capital city, the station took upon the role of a transitory space for the military service whereby young people were sent to eastern locations to become soldiers, to kill and to become a martyr. The choice of this particular public space for the exhibition intensified the relationships between the site and the work as well as the exhibition's criticality toward and disturbance of the official discourses on the conflict.[143]

As Burak Delier states, the artworks within the exhibition established intense connections with "the history and iconicity of Ankara Station, together with the social body that fills, utilizes this station and feeds on the symbolism it carries, and lastly its existence in the blink of an eye…".[144] At the same time, the artists fabricated their artworks at their display spots in the station, thereby juxtaposing the production and exhibition of the artwork at the very same time. The collaborative creation of the works in their display spaces resulted in their close relationship with

[143] Zeynep Arıkan, "Türkiye'de 1990'lı Yıllarda Çağdaş Sanatta Eleştirel Yaklaşımlar" (MA Thesis, Yildiz Technical University, 2011), 120-124.
[144] From Gar article of Burak Delier in O Zamanlar Konuşuyorduk. Ali Akay, Selim Birsel, Burak Delier, Vasif Kortun, and Emre Zeytinoğlu, O Zamanlar Konuşuyorduk, 2013, 74-84.

the space. Selim Birsel attests to this simultaneous production and display in the Gar spaces in his *Dün Gar Yarın Belirsiz*[145] article in *O Zamanlar Konuşuyorduk*: "The train station had turned into a workshop for all of us, becoming a space where works were both created and exhibited." This can be interpreted as site-specificity emerging while working on site, with the site. Due to this close relationship, the exhibition was comprised of site-specific installations as a whole to the extent that the works on display intensely engaged with Ankara's train station as a physical, social, and political site.[146] Even though the train station is a site that implicates mobility and travel, the particular site-specificity that unfolded in this exhibition was a sedentary one in as much as the intense relationship that the works established with the site would make them lose their meaning if displayed in any other way at a different location.

This relationship to the site is readily apparent in Selim Birsel's work, *Kurşun Uykusu*. This artwork consisted of twelve moulded paper bodies. The 'workshop' and the work were located at the exit of the restaurant on the first platform of the Ankara Station.[147] The moulds were constructed by Selim Birsel with the help of Şehsuvar Aktaş and Ayşe Selen. The process consisted of producing casts from modeling and then their moulding. This paper moulded lying bodies next to each other on the floor represented a deep sleep. Influenced by Nietzsche's philosophy of stupidity, it raises the questions regarding the armed conflict in South East.[148] Whether these bodies belong to Turkish soldiers or killed guerrillas, which media often publicized as captured dead, is not clear. Here, Birsel reflected on the nature of 'capturing' dead both as theme for the artwork itself as well as an act of killing.[149]

[145] Ibid, 56-68.
[146] Ibid, 56-68.
[147] Ibid, 56-68.
[148] From Gar article of Burak Delier in O Zamanlar Konuşuyorduk. Ali Akay, Selim Birsel, Burak Delier, Vasif Kortun, and Emre Zeytinoğlu, O Zamanlar Konuşuyorduk, 2013, 74-84.
[149] This information has been obtained from the oral history study. Selim Birsel, semi-structured interview by Emine İnci Şahin, April 11, 2025.



Figure 4.8. Installation process of *Kurşun Uykusu*.

Source: "Kurşun Uykusu kurulurken - Installing Lead Sleep", Salt Araştırma, https://archives.saltresearch.org/handle/123456789/46947



Figure 4.9. Installation Process of *Kurşun Uykusu*.

Source: "Kurşun Uykusu kurulurken - Installing Lead Sleep", Salt Araştırma, https://archives.saltresearch.org/handle/123456789/46947.

Birsel idenfies his specific approach to the site as an intervention into the daily and habitual state of affairs of a ritual area. For him, the experimentation on and hands-on intervention into the site rendered it a playground that he utilized to make the society question and criticize the artwork as well as themselves, and in the process, develop a critical position in relation to their place and geography.[150] Located at the transitory space of the station, which played a role in the armed conflict that defined the contemporary sociopolitical context of Turkey, the work demonstrates a sedentary form of site-specificity to the extent that its removal or relocation would empty out its meaning. As if to defy such prospect of removal, the work looks and feels heavy like an actual body (or a rock you have swallowed), even though it is only a lightweight paper shell, a mold of bodies, but not the body itself.[151]

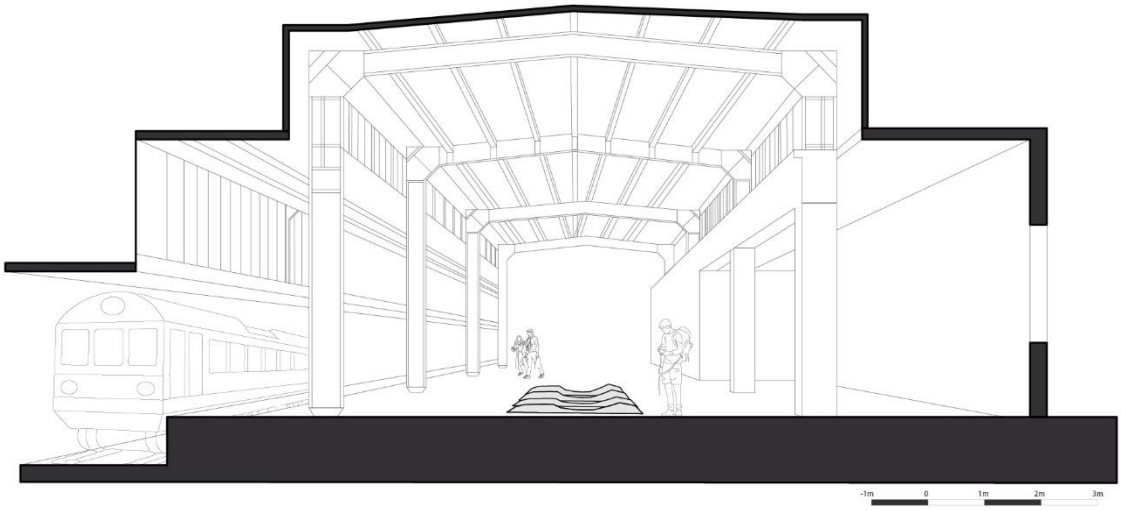


Figure 4.10. Perspective Section Drawing of Ankara Station and *Kurşun Uykusu*, 1/100 scale, drawn by the author.

The intensely public character of the exhibition space led to the high visibility of the *Gar* exhibition. The theatricality and performative aspect of the production of

[150] Selim Birsel, semi-structured interview by Emine İnci Şahin, April 11, 2025.
[151] Ibid.

the artworks in front of the crowds that populated the train station further intensified such visibility. This intense visibility, coupled with the exhibition's take on the taboo themes that underlay the socio-political context, led to a distorted and biased perception by the public and their subsequent complaints.[152] The exhibition closed one day after its opening, on the 5th of May, on the account that the public found the exhibition, and especially *Kurşun Uykusu* too disturbing. Such censorship was part and partially a result of the exhibition's close relation with its site, surroundings, and context.[153]

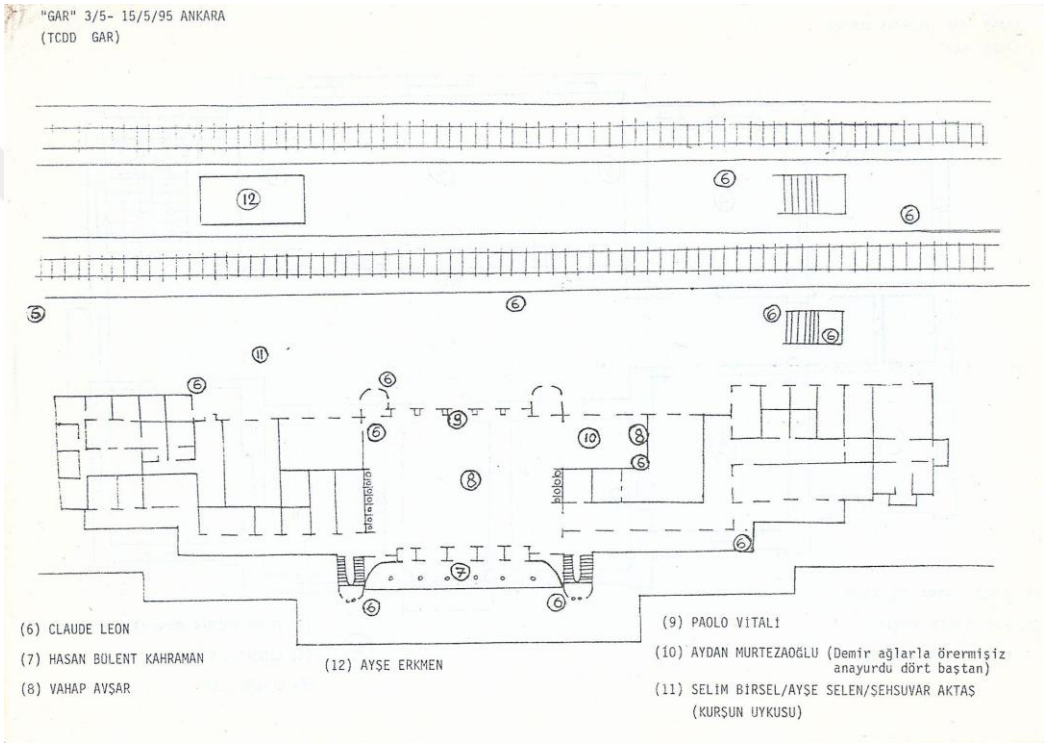


Figure 4.11. Exhibition plan.

Source: "Sergi planı - Exhibition plan", Salt Araştırma, https://archives.saltresearch.org/handle/123456789/46930.

[152] Ali Akay, Selim Birsel, Burak Delier, Vasif Kortun, and Emre Zeytinoğlu, O Zamanlar Konuşuyorduk, 2013, 56-68. https://saltonline.org/tr/603/o-zamanlar-konusuyorduk.
[153] Şeyma Barlas Bozkuş, "Çağdaş Sanatin Kentle Buluşmasi: 1980 Sonrasi Türkiye'de Çağdaş Sanatin Mekansal Dönüşümü," Marmara İletişim Dergisi (2013), 80-97.

At the *Gar* exhibition, the artists dealt with their production and exhibition space as not just a physical, but also a social and political site through the conscious decision of using the station as their workshop of creating works , that, at the same time, addressed the sociopolitical significance of that very space. This significant emphasis on their place of both production and exhibition defining the majority of the works render the exhibition noteworthy in terms of initiating discussions about site specificity and preparing the ground for future practices of site specificity. Since most of these works can be called site-specific, due to their production on site, yet sometimes lack a place-bound identity, their site-specificity emerge as a characteristic of the installations.

4.1.3. Nomadic Site

Building on the notion of the sedentary site in Turkey in the *Gar* Exhibition and the liminal transformations observed in the *Anı/Bellek* exhibitions, this section extends the previous chapter's discussion on nomadic site-specificity. In the Western context, the relationship between site and art has been explored through physical and performative forms of displacement and mobility, as exemplified by Robert Smithson's *Nonsites* and Station House Opera's performances. A parallel yet distinct articulation of this mobilized definition of site can be observed in 1990s Turkey. In this context, however, the concept of the nomadic site acquires a distinctly discursive dimension. This is closely linked to the socio-cultural dynamics of the period, marked by privatization, globalization, and heightened mobility among artists and curators for education and employment opportunities. These structural shifts, often encouraged by global neoliberal agendas imposed on developing countries, framed mobility as both a necessity and a defining condition for younger generations. As a result, this era is characterized by a liminal and displaced sensibility that shaped not only the everyday lives of artists but also the nature of their artistic production.[154]

This shift in understanding the site itself as a nomadic space is closely linked to the new mobility patterns among Turkish artists. The development of these

[154] Şeyma Barlas Bozkuş, "Çağdaş Sanatin Kentle Buluşmasi: 1980 Sonrasi Türkiye'de Çağdaş Sanatin Mekansal Dönüşümü," Marmara İletişim Dergisi (2013), 80-97.

patterns has been facilitated by Turkish artists' international movements. Globalization and the rise of biennials are key factors contributing to the emergence of new mobility behaviors. Especially after the establishment of the Istanbul Biennial, artists in Turkey began to engage more frequently and intensely with their international peers.[155] As a result, Turkish artists participating in the series of Istanbul biennials gained recognition and received invitations to exhibitions at other international biennials and galleries. Within this context, the art scene of Turkey also witnessed the emergence of itinerant artists whose travels among international exhibition locales are an ineluctable part of their artistic production.[156] The mobile practices of artists have led to the conceptualization of art itself as a mobile, the particular relationships of which were discursive, flexible, and often temporary rather than physical, fixed, and permanent. Here, the site was conceived as a mobile entity open to transformation and reconstruction.

The *4th Istanbul Biennial* focused on the production of art in Turkey and the East at large as compared to Western culture. It was held between the 10th of November and the 10th of December in 1995 under the theme of ‘‘Orient/ation: The Vision of Art in A Paradoxical World.”[157] Fulya Erdemci, the director of the biennial, relates this theme to Alice in Wonderland. In the story, a dialogue between the cat and Alice reveals that walking and mobility are inherently aimed at reaching somewhere. This destination may or may not align with where one intends to go, but it will be reached eventually. This is because a place does not exist independently, but in relation to other places and directions. Similarly, the theme suggests that having a direction and the will to go are ultimately the factors that define the sense of belonging to a place.[158]

The biennial was curated by the German gallerist René Block. The selection of Block as the curator of the biennial exhibition is a pivotal moment in the

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[155] Ibid.
[156] Miwon Kwon, *One Place After Another*, (The MIT Press eBooks, 2002).
[157] *Bienal: 4. Uluslararasi İstanbul Bienali*, 1995. https://catalogues.iksv.org/4B-Istanbul-Biennial-Catalogue.pdf.
[158] From Fulya Erdemci’s writing in the catalogue of 4th Istanbul Biennial. Erdemci was the director of this biennial. *Bienal: 4. Uluslararasi İstanbul Bienali*, 1995, https://catalogues.iksv.org/4B-Istanbul-Biennial-Catalogue.pdf.

organization's history, with profound implications for the event as a whole. Prior to his involvement with the Istanbul Biennial, Block had already acquired substantial experience in the field of curation, having served as a gallerist and curator in Germany. As a collectionist, he amassed an extensive collection of artworks by Fluxus artists. In 1974, he relocated to New York in the company of Joseph Beuys, where he established a gallery that showcased works by the latter, including the well-known performance *I Like America and America Likes Me* (1974). During the 1990s, Block also visited Turkey and Istanbul and initiated the collection of newly emerging Turkish contemporary art from younger artists.[159] Consequently, his curatorial practice in question was itself an inevitable mobile undertaking that moved across a variety of locales to both collect and curate. In the biennials he curated, consistent themes of mobility and cross-cultural exchange emerge, despite his geographical shift from countries in the West (Hamburg 1985, Sydney 1990) to those in the East (Istanbul 1995, Gwangju 2000, Cetinje 2004, Belgrade 2006). Block describes his practice as being antithetical to the Orientalist discourse and as a search for aesthetic continuity between tradition and modernity.

The selection of Block as the curator was at least initially celebrated in Turkey's cultural sphere for the possible visibility and publicity his curatorship would bring to the Istanbul Biennial. Indeed, as the first foreign curator of the biennial, he played an instrumental role in popularizing it and elevating its status to that of a prestigious biennial. However, despite genuine efforts to avoid orientalist and colonialist vantage points, the execution of the biennial still showed signs of cultural colonialism. This is partly due to how Istanbul and other geographical areas, such as the Balkans, were depicted in the exhibition. While these portrayals avoided the traditional stereotypes of the Orient as defined by Western or Occidental perspectives, the biennial's approach often still framed them as peripheral or transitional spaces, instrumentalized as sites for cultural exploration from a Western

[159] Vasıf Kortun offers the following commentary on the Turkish collection of Block during that period: "While Turkish collectionists and institutions disregarded or neglected these works, Block collected them with great passion and displaced them, rendering them prisoners of mobility." Kortun expresses a desire for these works to be returned to Turkey to be appreciated within their geographical context of origin. Nevin Aslı Can, "René Block Ve 1990 Sonrası Türkiye Çağdaş Sanat Ortamında Otorite Ve Dil Kurguları," ed. Ali Artun, *Skopdergi*, no. 1 (September 2011).

viewpoint.[160] A further salient point about Block pertains to the repudiation of the Venice Biennial model, opting instead for a single-curator model. The selection of artists for the biennial exhibition was the prerogative of a single curator, rather than that of multiple curators from different institutions. This endowed Block with the necessary authority to exercise control over the biennial, raising the risk of monopolization.[161]

In a geography positioned to the east of Europe and broadly categorized as Eastern, Block reframes the biennial audience's perception of the East. He effectively instructs viewers on where to orient themselves, implying not just a physical direction but a conceptual and ideological gaze. Block's curatorial strategy constructs a form of tolerant orientalism, rendering the East visible through a Western framework of observation and authority. By adopting the term orientation, the *4th Istanbul Biennial* inevitably invokes clichéd representations of Istanbul: as a cultural crossroads, a point of convergence and dispersion, a symbolic bridge between continents, and a site embodying the East–West binary. Block's statement that "Istanbul is Turkey's art center because it is a city with a long history of cultures melting together to form a mosaic"[162] reiterates these well-worn tropes—long used as branding slogans to market Istanbul as a hybridized, global city.[163]

As Brian Wallis argues in his article "Selling Nations: International Exhibitions and Cultural Diplomacy", such narratives are often internalized as countries construct artistic identities around locality to position themselves within the global cultural economy. This process often reinforces exoticizing Western perspectives.[164] In this context, Beral Madra offers a critical perspective on the 4th

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[160] Burcu Pelvanoğlu, "1980 Sonrası Türkiye'de Sanat: Dönüşümler" (Phd Dissertation, Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University, 2008), 273-275.
[161] Ibid, 273-275.
[162] This was taken from the conversational text was provided by İKSV under the archived materials for the 4th İstanbul Bienial as the curatorial text. René Block, 4th İstanbul Biennial: Conversation with Osman Constantinos, nd. Exhibition curatorial text (accessed January 9, 2024). https://bienal.iksv.org/tr/bienal-arsivi/4-uluslararasi-istanbul-bienali
[163] Nevin Aslı Can, "René Block Ve 1990 Sonrası Türkiye Çağdaş Sanat Ortamında Otorite Ve Dil Kurguları," ed. Ali Artun, *Skopdergi*, no. 1 (September 2011), https://www.e-skop.com/skopdergi/ren%C3%A9-block-ve-1990-sonrasi-turkiye-cagdas-sanat-ortaminda-otorite-ve-dil-kurgulari/414.
[164] Brian Wallis, "Selling Nations: International Exhibitions and Cultural Diplomacy," in *Routledge eBooks*, 2004, 285–302.

Biennial's conceptual framing. Drawing attention to the general elections held in the same year, she notes that the term orientation loses its connotations of Orient in Turkish, translating instead into a vague notion of giving direction. As such, it becomes a weak and ambiguous thematic anchor for a biennial. Madra's critique resurfaced during the elections, which were widely interpreted as pivotal for Turkey's potential shift toward the West. Like the election itself, however, the biennial failed to provide any clear answers to this cultural and political question.[165]

These terms gain importance and also, in time, blur, since the biennial took place in Istanbul, which was positioned as a threshold for these terms. Participants from all over the world, together with nineteen artists from Turkey, aimed to produce different mediums of works in the settings of Antrepo I, Basilica Cistern, and Hagia Irene. Additionally, a complementary exhibition featuring Joseph Beuys and Fluxus was exhibited at the Atatürk Culture Center. This complementary exhibition consisted of the collection that Block has amassed over time. The main exhibition space of the biennial, Antrepo No. I, was a former customs warehouse used for shipping and loading activities. Located in Topkapı, Salıpazarı area, this customs warehouse, along with others, was built in 1955. Since the coastal strip in Salıpazarı is very narrow, there was not enough space for infrastructure. To address this, piles were driven into the ground, and the land was filled from the sea. Sedad Hakkı Eldem designed the warehouse, while at the same time opposing the large number of warehouses that blocked the sea view. Without a railway infrastructure, the warehouses heavily depended on the cargo port, ultimately becoming an unprofitable investment that only lasted for twenty years. Given these unique characteristics of the location near the sea, the space was left for private development, leading to the eventual construction of a sea-blocking structure called the Galataport shopping center. Historically, this area featured public spaces and significant buildings such as Tophane Nusretiye Mosque, Tophane Palace, and the Clock Tower. Now, however, it is dominated by largely private structures that block Istanbul's skyline and the sea view. The choice of this space as the main site for the biennial foregrounds the issues

[165] Beral Madra was one of the first curators of Turkey. Burcu Pelvanoğlu, "1980 Sonrası Türkiye'de Sanat: Dönüşümler" (Phd Dissertation, Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University, 2008), 273-275.

of repurposing of existing light and heavy industrial buildings as contemporary art spaces[166] in the postindustrial period, paralleling the discussions of the second chapter.



Figure 4.12. A view of Tophane (with Antrepo warehouses), Cihangir and Taksim districts from Hagia Sophia Museum.

Source: "Ayasofya Müzesi'nden Tophane, Cihangir ve Taksim bölgesinin görünümü - A view of Tophane, Cihangir and Taksim districts from Hagia Sophia Museum", Salt Araştırma, https://archives.saltresearch.org/handle/123456789/7044.

One of the artists from Turkey featured in the biennial was the then newly emerging artist Hale Tenger. After contributing to the 3rd Istanbul Biennial with a work titled *I Know People Like These II*, Tenger was invited to the 4th Istanbul Biennial by René Block. Prior to the biennial, the curator organized a site visit to Antrepo No. I for a group of artists, including Tenger. As with most abandoned warehouses in the Salıpazarı area in Topkapı, Antrepo No.I was extremely dirty and

[166] Haydar Karabey, "Kıyıya Ulaşamayan Kente Dair: 'Pera'da Denize Sıfır' Sergisi," *Mimarlık Dergisi*, no. 396 (June 2017).

out of shape at the time. During this time, on the second floor of the warehouse, Tenger discovered a wooden guard booth that would normally be placed outside, but was located inside due to the building's function as a customs warehouse. This sparked the idea for the work she produced for the biennial titled *We Didn't Go Outside We Were Always Outside/ We Didn't Go Inside We Were Always Inside* (1995). From its very conception, then, Tenger's work for the biennial was site-specific, engaging with the given conditions of the exhibition space.[167]



Figure 4.13. Guard-booth found on Antrepo No. I's second floor.

Source: *"We didn't go outside; we were always on the outside / We didn't go inside; we were always on the inside*", 1995-2015, Courtesy of Hale Tenger and Galeri Nev İstanbul.

Tenger surrounded this guard booth with a fence made of barbed wire. In this new configuration, the piece asked visitors to trespass, therefore encouraging them to violate a non-existent no-entry sign.[168] Inside the guard booth, the walls were

[167] This information has been obtained from the oral history study. Hale Tenger, semi-structured interview by Emine İnci Şahin, June 30, 2025.
[168] Ari Akkermans, "A Rebuilt Installation of Barbed Wire and Blurred Reality," Hyperallergic, June 13, 2015, https://hyperallergic.com/213654/a-rebuilt-installation-of-barbed-wire-and-blurred-reality/.

covered with calendar pages featuring kitschy pictures of nature, animals, and flowers. Blocking out the outside world, these pages emphasized the boundaries between the interior and exterior realms. Taking its name from Edip Cansever's "Oteller Kenti," the title of the work itself (*We Didn't Go Outside We Were Always Outside/ We Didn't Go Inside We Were Always Inside*) emphasized not only such boundaries but also permeability. Such an engagement with physical, conceptual, and psychic borders enriches Hale Tenger's spatial and site-specific occupations in this work and others. Employing physical borders to evoke feelings that delineate the outside and inside, the work highlights how borders do not merely carve out physical spaces but also affective and conceptual ones. By setting these boundaries, Tenger also highlights the irony and contradiction of a border within borders, and the manner in which this operates to create a space. The artist has employed the technique of doubling the borders on borders, as a reference to her other exhibition, once again addressing the themes of outside and inside, as well as the dichotomy between the two.[169] Here, issues such as the presence of both sides of the border, thesimultaneity of being inside and outside the border, and the fact that these sides are not fixed since they can be reversed become apparent.[170]

[169] Hale Tenger, semi-structured interview by Emine İnci Şahin, June 30, 2025.
[170] Ari Akkermans, "A Rebuilt Installation of Barbed Wire and Blurred Reality," Hyperallergic, June 13, 2015.

Another important aspect of this work is its engagement with the context of Turkey. Tenger's body of work has always been politically inclined, and her previous work was sued for censorship and considered insulting to the Turkish flag. The piece she created for the biennial is indeed also site-specific in its reflection on Turkey's political situation. Acting as a microcosm of Turkey, the work comments on issues of borders and mobility, emphasizing that you can be inside or outside, yet it makes little difference since you can never truly escape or exist freely. [171]

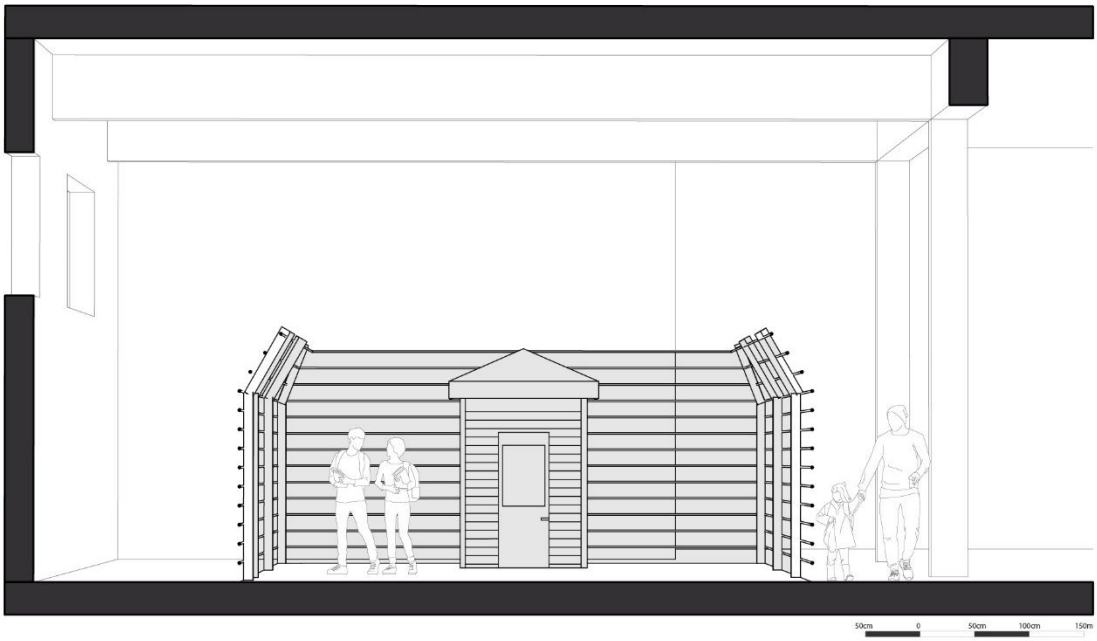


Figure 4.14. Perspective Section Drawing of *We didn't go outside; we were always on the outside / We didn't go inside; we were always on the inside,* situated inside Antrepo No. I., 1/50 scale, drawn by the author.

[171] *Bienal: 4. Uluslararasi İstanbul Bienali*, 1995, https://catalogues.iksv.org/4B-Istanbul-Biennial-Catalogue.pdf.

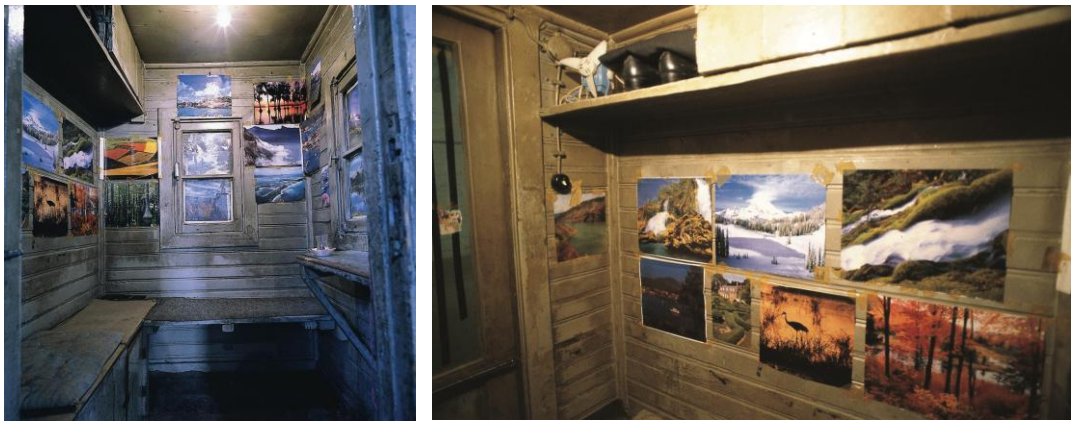


Figure 4.15. Inside the *We didn't go outside; we were always on the outside / We didn't go inside; we were always on the inside*.

Source: *"We didn't go outside; we were always on the outside / We didn't go inside; we were always on the inside*", 1995-2015, Courtesy of Hale Tenger and Galeri Nev İstanbul.

As mentioned above, according to Tenger, space is not just constituted through physical volumes comprising walls, ceilings, and floors, but it is also a highly mental phenomenon. Instead of being based only on physical and architectural characteristics, the relationship between the artwork and the site is also shaped by mental associations, such as memory, which are at the core of how the space is conceptualized.[172] This approach to space not just as a physical but also a mental construct challenges the concept of site as fixed and sedentary, making the displacement and reinstallation of the artwork elsewhere possible.[173] While in sedentary cases of site-specificity, heavily based on and attached to their initial site, the mobilization is not a possibility; in nomadic cases, the site itself is protean and dynamic, allowing mobility. Even though the work may engage with certain distinctive aspects of a given site, it also acknowledges the possibility of transformation not just of the initial site, but also for the future sites of exhibition. This becomes possible by the work's own flexibility, adaptability, and layered and multifaceted nature. Over time, this complexity can develop, leading to a change in how work is perceived and understood. The flexible definition of site-specificity still

[172] Miwon Kwon, *One Place after Another*, (The MIT Press eBooks, 2002), 33-55.
[173] Hale Tenger, semi-structured interview by Emine İnci Şahin, June 30, 2025.

maintains the connection between the site and the art, albeit a tenuous and highly adaptable one.

Such adaptability and mobility of *We Didn't Go Outside We Were Always Outside/ We Didn't Go Inside We Were Always Inside* readily apparent in its subsequent exhibitions in New York with Protocinema, in Russia as part of the industrial biennial, and at the Arter Art Gallery, Istanbul. Tenger's work was first (re)exhibited in 2015 in New York for Protocinema's traveling, temporary exhibition under the curatorship of Mari Spirito. Tenger sought similar spatial characteristics to those found she found in the Salıpazarı warehouse, and the basement of the Wesbeth Building was chosen for its confined nature, historical importance as a former industrial building, and current state of neglect. The historic Westbeth building was home to Bell Laboratories as one of the world's pioneering research centers for almost a century. A variety of significant telecommunication systems and elements were innovated and developed in this laboratory.[174] For the re-appropriation and search of a new site/art relationship to be established in the (re)exhibition of the work, Tenger's recreated work (owing to the flexible and mobile nature of its site-specificity) remains strikingly relevant. In light of ongoing global issues like press censorship and state control, *We Didn't Go Outside We Were Always Outside/ We Didn't Go Inside We Were Always Inside*'s revival underscores how human rights concerns from the 1990s persist today, reaffirming the power of mobilized site-specific art to reflect and respond to current conditions.[175]

The work was (re)exhibited again in *What Time Is It?* (2019) with Emre Baykal and Eda Berkmen as the curators of the exhibition. This exhibition was held at the Arter Art Gallery, a contemporary art museum in Turkey that was established in 2010.[176] This exhibition and Tenger's work were visited by Istanbul's then mayor in 2019, which added a further layer to the significance of the work. Engaging with

[174] "Hale Tenger," by Protocinema, accessed August 4, 2025, https://www.protocinema.org/tr/exhibitions/hale-tenger.
[175] Ibid.
[176] "HALE TENGER, 'We Didn't Go Outside; We Were Always on the Outside / We Didn't Go Inside; We Were Always on the Inside', 1995-2015," by Galeri Nev Istanbul, Galeri Nev İstanbul, accessed August 5, 2025, https://www.galerinevistanbul.com/tr/artists/39-hale-tenger/works/9438-hale-tenger-disari-cikmadik-cunku-hep-disardaydik-iceri-girmedik-1995-2015/.

the themes of internal and external boundaries, and the dissolution of meaning that accompanies the experience of being confined within them, strikingly resonates with the former mayor's current situation as a detainee. Another (re)exhibition of this work took place in Russia, Yekaterinburg, for the 6th Industrial Biennial in 2021. This time, the work was located on the ground floor of the Ural Optical and Mechanical Plant (part of Rostec state corporation), specializing in optical products for the military and healthcare sectors. It is evident that work has taken on a similar yet distinctive meaning at its new site, yet again, within such a protected, high-security building in Russia.[177]

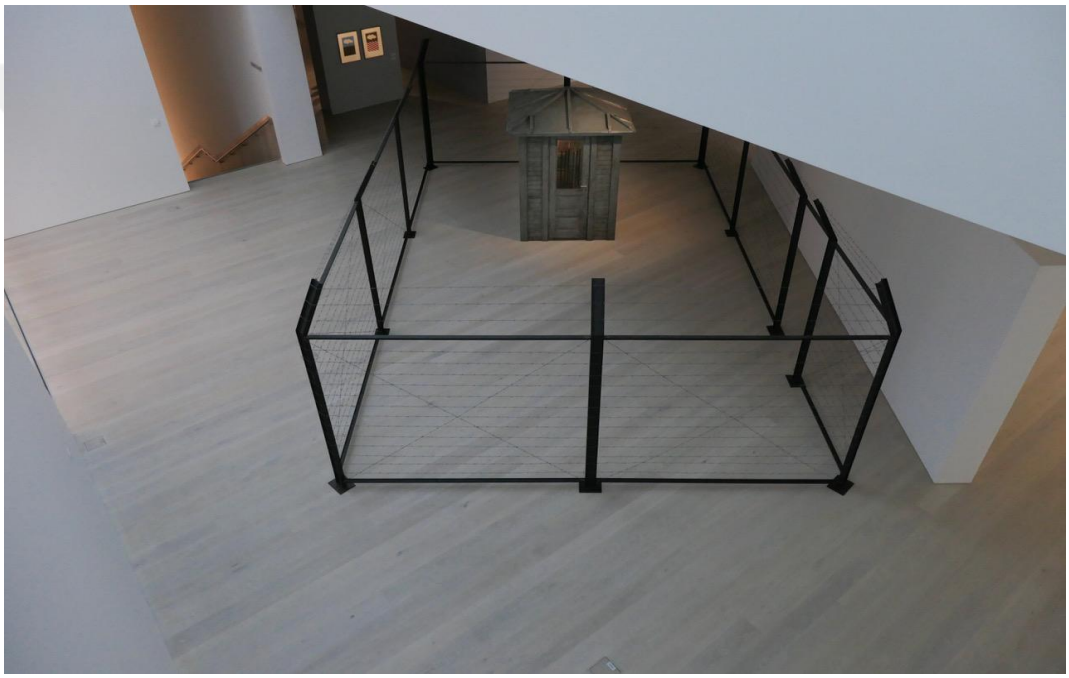


Figure 4.16. *We didn't go outside; we were always on the outside / We didn't go inside; we were always on the inside* (re)exhibited at Arter Art Gallery, 2019.

Source: *"We didn't go outside; we were always on the outside / We didn't go inside; we were always on the inside*", 1995-2015, Courtesy of Hale Tenger and Galeri Nev İstanbul.

[177] "The 6th Ural Industrial Biennial of Contemporary Art Announces List of Artists for Main Project," by Biennial Foundation, February 10, 2022, accessed August 5, 2025, https://biennialfoundation.org/2021/09/the-6th-ural-industrial-biennial-of-contemporary-art-announces-list-of-artists-for-main-project/.

Overall, the 4th Istanbul Biennial and We *Didn't Go Outside We Were Always Outside/ We Didn't Go Inside We Were Always Inside* raised questions on Turkey's locational identity through its controversial themes as well as the site-specific works it featured. This was because the exhibition aimed to reflect the mechanisms and dynamics of 1990s Turkey. The scope and approach to this topic can also be interpreted as a shift in the discourse of site specificity toward issues of transience, temporality, and mobility.

4.1.4. Public Site and Place-Making

After exploring the concept of nomadic site-specificity as a response to mobility, displacement, and globalization, this chapter now turns to the notion of public space and place-making. As discussed in the previous chapter, as a response to the institutional commodification of art in the sixties, artists in the Western contexts tried to establish their site-specific practices in different settings other than galleries and museums. This shift in the use of spaces resulted in the dissemination of art into public spaces in the 1970s. This phenomenon produced the interdisciplinary cooperation of artists with architects and urban planners in the refurbishment of public spaces.[178] Additionally, concerns regarding the accessibility and functionality of these artworks were raised since a distinct outcome of these artworks was their interaction with the community using the public spaces. Therefore, this situation gave rise to discussions regarding art's relationship to functionality and aesthetics. This was happening both in the art world and within communities affected by the artworks without any shared understanding.[179]As site-specific and spatial practices underwent further development, artists began to engage more frequently with urban environments, perceiving these not only as physical settings but also as socially produced spaces. This transition is of particular pertinence within the Turkish context, where the 1990s witnessed rapid urban

[178] Miwon Kwon, *One Place after Another*, (The MIT Press eBooks, 2002), 100-137. https://doi.org/10.7551/mitpress/5138.001.0001.
[179] Ibid., 100-137.

transformation, heightened visibility of art in public life, and a rethinking of collective memory and civic presence.

In the 1990s, a shift from site-oriented to community-oriented artworks emerged under the name 'new genre public art'.[180] This term defines the artists' desire to be freed from traditional spaces of production, to work in places of belonging to the community, and for the community, addressing their social and daily problems. The term also describes the tendency of art to stand out and be temporary rather than ordinary, typical, and permanent.[181] In *One Place After Another*, Kwon explores this new genre for its inclusivity of community as a subject, a producer, or an audience.[182] As Kwon's statement ''It is now not only for the 'public' but by the 'public'.'',[183] suggests, this tendency aims to involve the public in the production process, if not as active producers then at least as a more active audience. Here, we can detect an undeniable hope of making art familiar and accessible to a broader range of people. This idea of inclusivity was also valued by Rendell, who viewed facilitation of dialogue and interaction between disciplines as a critique of the capitalist system and its commodification of art. Rendell considers public art as a manifestation of these interactions in material form.[184]

In the context of Turkey in the nineties, a significant thread in contemporary art involves a complex negotiation between the domestic and public spheres. Unlike in Western Europe and the US, where "private" and "public" are often framed as a binary opposition, these categories are not as clearly defined in the Turkish context due to the region's layered historical traumas. The term "public" does not align neatly with its Turkish counterpart, and instead of "private," expressions like "domestic/private" are used to indicate a distinct cultural phenomenon. Hence, instead of depending on definitions based on Western norms, there is a need to develop new terms that accurately reflect the specificity of this context.[185] While

[180] Ibid.,100-137.
[181] New Genre Public Art was defined by Suzanne Lacy. Suzanne Lacy, ed., *Mapping the Terrain: New Genre Public Art* (Bay Press, 1995), https://doi.org/10.5860/choice.32-4881.
[182] Miwon Kwon, *One Place after Another,* (The MIT Press eBooks, 2002), 100-137. https://doi.org/10.7551/mitpress/5138.001.0001.
[183] Ibid., 107.
[184] Jane Rendell, *Art And Architecture: A Place Between* (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2007).
[185] Vasıf Kortun, *10*, e-publication (SALT, 2014), https://saltonline.org/tr/828/10.

similar debates to those of the European and the US contexts—such as the privatization of public space, welfare state models, or the rise of experience economies in global cities—are relevant, other dynamics that are in play for the case of Turkey are equally critical. These include the transformation of rural areas through rapid urbanization, the tension between traditional and urban lifestyles, and the emergence of conservative-Muslim urban orders. Such forces shape not only spatial configurations but also how bodies are regulated and how objects circulate in the social sphere.[186]

One of the most prominent examples of the use of public space as an exhibition venue in the nineties is the Istanbul Pedestrian Exhibitions. This exhibition was curated by Fulya Erdemci with collaborators from different fields. The collective public art exhibition with the theme of 'Personal Geographies, Global Maps' took place from the 29th of September to the 28th of October 2002 in cooperation with Şişli Municipality.[187] This project aimed to highlight the importance of civic initiative, public and pedestrian needs, and requests in a globalized world where cities tend to lose their ties to the human scale and spaces become intensely privatized. Artists such as Kutluğ Ataman and Ayşe Erkmen, the collective artist group of Bağımsız Fason Hareketi, architects such as Nevzat Sayın, Hasan Çalışlar, and Kerem Erginoğlu, and many others contributed to the exhibition, with works produced in a variety of mediums such as sculpture, video, and performance.[188] The contributors placed their artworks along the streets of Nişantaşı, and these works, whose production and placement took into account the characteristics of the site, were created with the expectation of the public as participants.[189]

The works under discussion extend beyond the physical reality of spatiality, engaging with the social, psychological, and experiential dimensions of space production. In doing so, they navigate and reinterpret circulation patterns, opening up

[186] Vasıf Kortun, semi-structured interview by Emine İnci Şahin, July 1, 2025.
[187] From the catalogue text of Istanbul Pedestrian Exhibitions. Fulya Erdemci, İstanbul Yaya Sergileri 1: Nişantaşı, İstanbul, 2002, Exhibition catalogue (accessed January 9, 2024).
[188] Elif Başak Varol, "İnsan-Çevre Etkileşimi Açısından Kamusal Mekanda Sanatın Rolü," (Master's Thesis, Istanbul Technical University), 2004, 90-96.
[189] Ibid., 90-96.

possibilities for reimagining the relationships between producers, products, and the spatial practices of society. This perspective is consistent with Henri Lefebvre's conceptualization of space as a social product, rather than a mere passive container. Space, according to Lefebvre, is a dynamic medium through which social relations are formed and expressed, and which in turn shapes those very relations.[190] In this sense, place-making becomes a political and cultural act, whereby the spatial is always tied to social experience and transformation.

In the works Kerem Erginoğlu and Hasan Çalışlar proposed and produced for the exhibition, the focus on site-specificity as a tool and the tendency to become place-bound are central issues. Their project *1:1 City Guide* transformed urban pavements into navigational aids, offering participants an alternative, embodied mode of orientation within the city.[191] The idea behind this work was to provide an alternative experience without reliance on printed materials at hand.[192]

[190] Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, *Economic Geography*, vol. 68 (Blackwell, 1992).
[191] Text explanation written by Hasan Çalışlar and Kerem Erginoğlu for their works in the exhibition. Fulya Erdemci, İstanbul Yaya Sergileri 1: Nişantaşı. İstanbul, 2002, 122-127, Exhibition catalogue (accessed January 9, 2024).
[192] This information has been obtained from the oral history study. Hasan Çalışlar, semi-structured interview by Emine İnci Şahin, July 29, 2025.

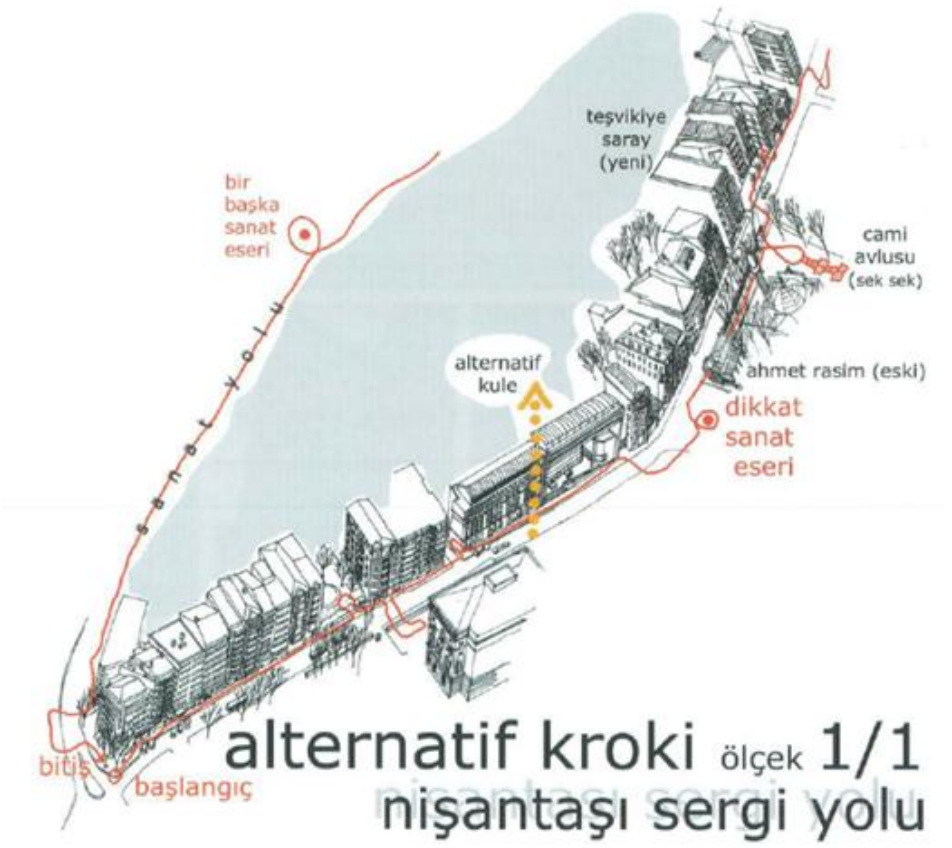


Figure 4.17. *1:1 City Guide*,2002.

Source: Fulya Erdemci, İstanbul Yaya Sergileri 1: Nişantaşı. İstanbul, 2002, 122-127, Exhibition catalogue (accessed January 9, 2024).

The other contribution of the architectural office was their alternative tower proposal located at Bayer Apartment, which includes a clinic on the first floor, and a shopfront on the ground floor.[193] This installation, called *Alternative Tower*, critiqued Istanbul's verticality of urban experience and spatial perception. and sought to answer the question of how we perceive the spaces we walk through from a different perspective, from a different altitude. Using cameras placed in upper levels and screens placed in shopfront windows, the work offered pedestrians a new view

[193] Hasan Çalışlar, semi-structured interview by Emine İnci Şahin, July 29, 2025.

of the street—this time from elevated, displaced perspectives—encouraging re-engagement with urban space and disrupting habitual ways of seeing.[194]

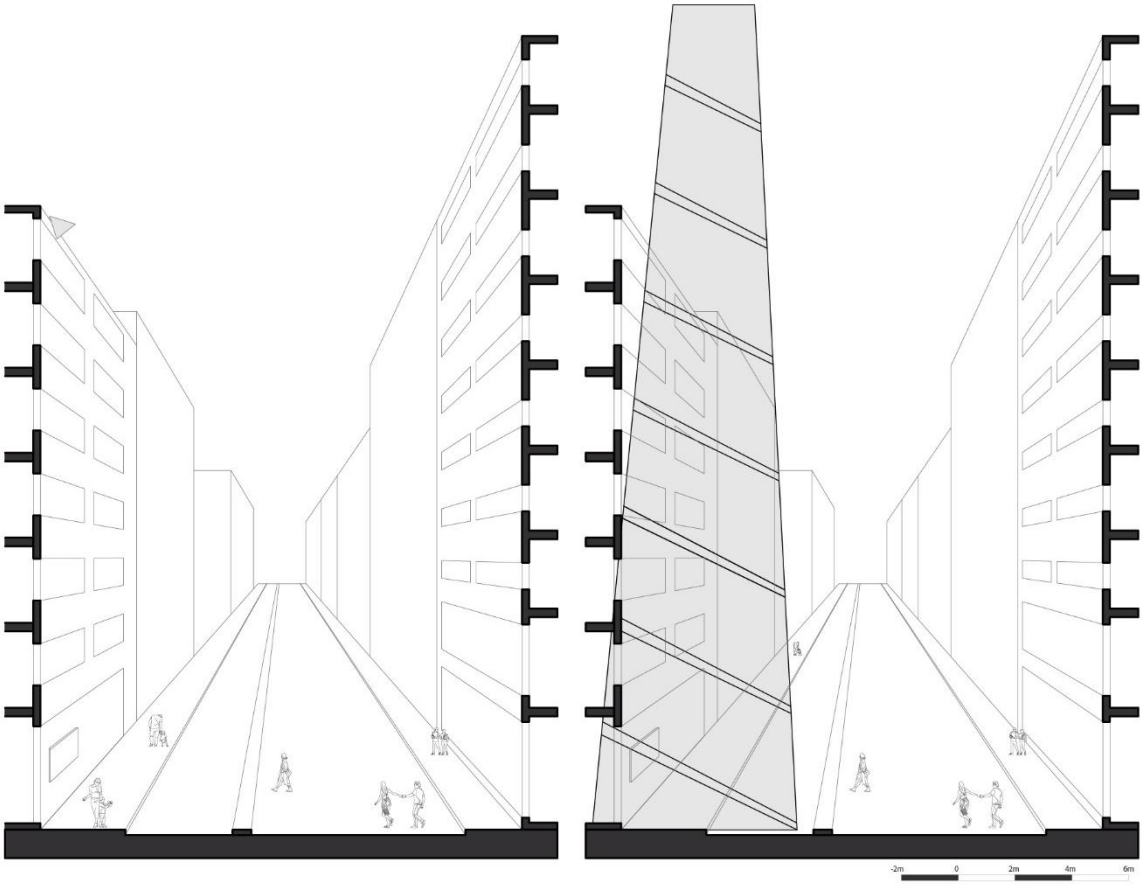


Figure 4.18. Perspective Section Drawings for *Alternative Tower*, 1/200 scale, drawn by the author.

The installation thus served as a critical spatial intervention into the logic of standardized, globalized city development, and offered a psychological spatiality as an alternative to a material one. In their own words:

> We brought a bio-spherical city perception to screens placed at various points on a 1/1 map. We tried to encourage the pedestrians to look around themselves, to re-regard their surroundings, and to perceive it differently. For

[194] Ibid.

this space belongs to the pedestrians, and only when they claim this space shall we find the city with the standards we long for.[195]

These projects exemplify Lefebvre's theory of space, wherein space is not fixed or abstract, but socially constructed and experienced. Here, place-making emerges not from formal design alone, but from social interaction and embodied perception, reclaiming space for the everyday user.



Figure 4.19. Digitally edited photographs for *Alternative Tower*.

Source: Fulya Erdemci, İstanbul Yaya Sergileri 1: Nişantaşı. İstanbul, 2002, 122-127, Exhibition catalogue (accessed January 9, 2024).

[195] Fulya Erdemci, İstanbul Yaya Sergileri 1: Nişantaşı. İstanbul, 2002, 122-127, Exhibition catalogue (accessed January 9, 2024).

These discussions of site-specificity in Turkey and the world at large raise questions about the public's perspective on the production, dissemination, and exhibition of artwork. New genre public art and community-oriented art from the 1970s and onwards in the nineties have faced a certain level of ambiguity in the meaning and usage of the term 'community.' Similarly, in the art scene of Turkey at the turn of the century, the relationship between public art and the public remains uncertain. This is due to the confusion in the use of the term 'public,' which relates the community to different expectations and perceptions of the artists and their art. Therefore, community-specificity stands on a contradictory field of different levels of interaction, expectations, and services between artists and their community of reach.[196]

In this context of ambiguity, Rendell focuses on the public through its differentiation from the notion of private. However, these differentiations were not based on clear definitions or neutral limitations.[197] Therefore, they hold different meanings in relation to the sociohistorical contexts of their use and interpretations. Such interpretations could lead to their use of concepts related to protected isolation or unwelcome containment, intrusion or invitation, and exclusion or segregation.[198] However, the uncertainty of the term's boundaries would cause them to rely on each other for defining and transforming these ideas through mutual influence. Within the context of Europe and the US, the traditional use of these two terms as binary opposites is discursive and does not necessarily reflect how the space is socially produced, lived, and experienced. Similarly, such a discursive opposition of these two terms does not readily align with the case of Turkey. Besides, the terms do not have clear-cut equivalents in the Turkish language. This is due to the multi-layered meanings contained in the definitions of these two terms being greatly influenced by the history, beliefs, and culture that define Turkey. Discursively positioning these terms as opposites serves to erase the lived experiences that constitute the histories of spaces. For instance, the definition of public involves the pursuit of the common

[196] Miwon Kwon, *One Place after Another*, (The MIT Press eBooks, 2002), 100-137.
[197] Jane Rendell, *Art And Architecture: A Place Between* (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2007), 15-20.
[198] Ibid.

good and principles of communal living.[199] In the case of Turkey's art scene, the term largely revolves around the confusion of the public and public benefit. This confusion reflects itself in the acceptance of war and victory monuments and Atatürk's memorials over alternative artistic approaches in the 20th century.[200] The placement of these sculptures that reflect the state's official ideology in public spaces, putatively for public benefit, complicated the definition and expectations from, and thus the development of site-specific public art in Turkey.[201]

To explore site-specificity in Turkey, it is essential to place these dynamics in conversation with Western art historical frameworks, to both understand the cross-cultural exchanges and influences as well as recognizing their unique and distinctive qualities. Examining them side by side allows for a more nuanced history of the Turkish contemporary art scene in Turkey—one that foregrounds spatial transformation, cultural specificity, and political conditions. Public space in Turkey cannot be understood merely as a setting for art, but rather as an active site of meaning-making and place-making where art becomes a tool for negotiating identity, memory, and power. It is precisely through this lens of place-making that Turkish public art can be recontextualized—not as a derivative or reactive form of Western models, but as a distinct spatial practice shaped not only by its own cultural and political milieu, but also in dialogue with production in other geographies.

4.2. Conclusion: Critical Spatial Practice

This chapter, on one hand, situated several site-specific exhibitions and artworks from Turkey in the 90s within the broader international contemporary discourse on site-specificity, while, on the other hand, a parallel approach considered them in direct relation to their immediate, spatial, and political contexts. Doing so, the study examined the enduring influence of site-specific works, highlighting their contribution to the formation of Turkey's contemporary art scene. Analyzing how artists and curators in Turkey mobilized space and created discourse of space both

[199] Vasıf Kortun, *10*, e-publication (SALT, 2014), https://saltonline.org/tr/828/10.
[200] Şeyma Barlas Bozkuş, "Çağdaş Sanatın Kentle Buluşması: 1980 Sonrası Türkiye'de Çağdaş Sanatın Mekansal Dönüşümü", Marmara İletişim Dergisi (2013), 80-97.
[201] Ibid., 80-97.

physically, and conceptually, they constructed new modes of place-making, cultural memory, and public engagement in the nineties. Accordingly, the study delves into site specificity as an expanded field, exploring its potential as a tool for understanding Turkey's contemporary art in new ways. Tracing the interplay of site specificity reveals both similarities and differences in Turkey's art, its historical processes, and its societal and governmental perceptions.

To conclude, this study reintroduces site specificity as a transnational and historically contingent discourse. From the 1960s to today, site-specificity has shifted from its original meaning into a broader sense of association with site, community, and context. It has changed from fixed associations with place to broader engagements with temporality and mobility. In the context of nineties Turkey, this discourse enables a reframing of early curated exhibitions, public art initiatives, and biennial practices not merely as local phenomena but as active agents within a larger global system of spatial and cultural production. By positioning site specificity as a conceptual problem and tracing its dissemination into the Turkish contemporary art scene at the turn of the century, the study establishes a critical framework for understanding how art reshapes the relationship between society and space. It also opens a platform for Turkish site-specific artworks to be more meaningfully situated within the global discourse, emphasizing their relevance, specificity, and contributions to the evolving definitions of contemporary place-making in art.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

"The architect's only option is to find a course for revolutionary praxis outside the traditional boundaries of his field."[202]

This thesis concludes by emphasizing the significance of understanding dynamic relationship between art and architecture. By tracing its emergence in the 1960s to the turn of the century, the transnational analysis conducted shifts, transformations, and mutations of art, site-specificity, site, space and architecture across different geographies. A particular resonance in Turkey's art scene in 1990s reveals how site-specificity depends upon while actively shaping the spatiality of contemporary art spaces. The analysis has demonstrated that site-specific practices are not simply bound to the physicality of site and space but are engaged in a reciprocal dialogue and discourse with the architectures that host them. Each discussed artwork in the thesis contextualized in its unique site, becoming particular in relation to the historical, social, political, natural sites. Each perspective section drawing developed for the site-art relationship helped to understand and interpret its layered context.

The complementary analysis of site-specificity across borders and nationalities underscores the spatial strategy that operates at the intersection of artistic, architectural, and institutional. This repositioning of site-specificity as an investigative tool of tracing transformations in architecture reveals unique associations between art and architecture. Such an interdisciplinary approach to the

[202] Joan Ockman, *Architecture, Criticism, Ideology* (Princeton Architectural Press, 1995), 10-11.

study, the term, and history enables us to detect the thresholds of change such as the mobilization of art and its given site, or development of place-making capacity of art. Therefore, site-specific artworks do more than occupy a predetermined space; they interrogate its boundaries, challenge its hierarchies, and sometimes disrupt its intended functions. In the artworks that are analyzed, artists used spatial qualities—such as scale, circulation, visibility, or materiality—not merely as a backdrop but as active components of the work. In doing so, they questioned the neutrality of the display environment and redefined the visitor's relationship to both art and architecture.

A key insight of this thesis declares itself in this point as the architecture hosting site-specific art are not passive containers but co-actors in the meaning-making process. A close examination of Western and Turkish site-specificity showed how architectural settings became integral to the works' concepts and understandings, whether through deliberate incorporation of their material features, engagement with the histories, or activation of the public functions of these settings. In these cases, architecture did not disappear behind the art but maintained its visibility, remained present, and dynamic in shaping the encounter.

The critical analysis will focus on several exhibitions that took place in 1990s Turkey, including the collective Gar Exhibition (1995), curated Anı/Bellek Exhibitions (1991, 1993), public art of İstanbul Pedestrian Exhibition (2002), and the 4th Istanbul Biennial (1995). These exhibitions and their complementary study on a transnational basis provided a foundation for discussing contemporary art and architecture through Kwon's site-specific lens.

By realizing such an encounter, it became impossible to treat contemporary art spaces as solely institutions. Therefore, the study treats contemporary art spaces as a spatial typology that has its formal, functional, symbolic, relational, and site-specific qualities that shape the art as well. This perspective allows contemporary art spaces to be read alongside other architectural spaces, recognizing their fluidity as spaces that have shifted from storage rooms to white cubes, industrial conversions, and nomadic or temporary structures. In this expanded typological view, contemporary art spaces become an active architectural agent whose evolving design

both responds to and influences artistic practice. The transformed typology of contemporary art spaces is defined by spatial fluidity, evident in the flexibility and flow of volumes, circulation, geometry, and the configuration of display spaces. Its physical attributes further reflect adaptability in permanence and richness of variety: it may offer light-filled galleries, uninterrupted enclosed spaces, reuse materials through adaptive strategies, or employ advanced structures and materials that become civic emblems, attracting attention through novelty. This architectural typology complements the art and is, in turn, complemented by it, fostering a harmonious and cohesive environment. At times, it engages—though not invariably—in competition with art to assert its own artistic merits, a dynamic that enables the emergence of qualities, discussions, critiques, trends, and phenomena that might not otherwise arise.

To sum up, by reframing the museum as a spatial typology, highlighting the critical engagement of site-specific art with architectural conditions, repositioning site-specificity as a spatial strategy, and asserting the agency of architecture within these practices, this thesis contributes to a richer, more integrated understanding of the art–architecture relationship. It situates site-specificity as a tool for critical spatial practice, capable of revealing how spaces for art are continuously produced, contested, and redefined.

The study methodically synthesizes a range of examples from disparate cultural contexts to facilitate a thorough and nuanced analysis. In this manner, it analyzes the collected data on the features of art and spatial concerns, designs, and arrangements in an interdisciplinary manner and interprets within the framework of the concept of critical spatial practice. Therefore, the objective of this study is to transcend the conventional, often controversial role of architecture as a mere backdrop. Instead, the focus is on the celebration of transnational forms of site-specificity that not only highlight, but also transform art and architecture, thereby creating something in-between, whose full meaning may only become apparent over time, with further studies.

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APPENDICES

A. TURKISH SUMMARY / TÜRKÇE ÖZET

Çağdaş sanat artık dört duvar arasına sıkışmış değildir; ne kadar müzelerin sanata yönelik sahiplenme iddiaları olsa da sanat hareket eder, uyum sağlar ve kendisini barındırmaya çalışan mekânları yeniden şekillendirir. Sanat ve mekânlar, yalnızca fiziksel varlıkları ile tanımlanamaz; onları tanımlayan şey aynı zamanda bir mekân söylemidir. Dolayısıyla hem sanat hem de mekânlar göç eder, taşınır ve değişir. Son iki yüzyılda, sanat müzeleri ve sergi mekânları önemli dönüşümler geçirmiştir; depolama alanlarından sözde nötr beyaz küp (white cube) mekânlarına, ardından esnek endüstriyel mekânlara ve nihayetinde kamusal göçebe etkinliklere evrilmiştir. Bu dönüşüm, tıpkı bir gelgitin sahili şekillendirmesi gibi, sanatın ölçeği, mecrası ve mekânsal kimliğinde meydana gelen değişimleri yansıtır.

Bu durum, sanat ile sergi mimarisi arasında derinlemesine iç içe geçmiş bir gerilimin varlığını göstermektedir. Bu gerilim, hangi öğenin kamusal görünürlükte öncelikli olacağına dair güç mücadelesinden doğar. Tarihsel olarak mimarlık çoğu zaman yalnızca bir arka plan sanatı olarak konumlandırılmıştır. Bu çalışma, bu konumu sorgulamayı ve sanat ile mimarlık arasındaki iç içe geçmiş tarihleri ortaya koymayı amaçlamaktadır; ayrıca, farklı coğrafyalarda birbirlerini nasıl tamamlayabileceklerini göstermek de hedeflenmektedir.

Çağdaş sanat mekânlarının tarihi hâlâ keşfedilecek çok şey barındırmakla birlikte, önemli bölümleri tarihsel olarak analiz edilmiştir. Ancak literatürde, mekâna özgüllük olgusunun ve sergi mekânlarındaki dönüşümlere etkisinin kapsamlı biçimde ele alındığı bir boşluk bulunmaktadır. Bu etki, özellikle savaş sonrası dönemde ivme kazanmış ve farklı uluslarda farklı zaman çizelgeleri boyunca açığa çıkmıştır. Araştırma, sanatın bu çeşitli mekânlara nasıl yayıldığını ve sergilenme süreçlerini

nasıl dönüştürdüğünü incelemeyi amaçlayarak, çağdaş sanatın çok katmanlı ve kapsayıcı biçimde anlaşılmasını zenginleştirmeyi hedeflemektedir.

Bu bağlamda ortaya çıkan temel mekânsal stratejilerden biri mekâna özgüllük olmuştur. 1960'larda öne çıkan bu kavram, başlangıçta Minimalist sanat ve heykelle ilişkilendirilmiş ve belirli bir mekânın fiziksel özellikleri ile etkileşim kurmayı temel almıştır. Mekâna özgüllük, galeri ve müze mekânlarının algılanan nötrlüğüne meydan okumuş ve onları yeniden düşünmeye zorlamıştır. Sanat tarihi bağlamında sıklıkla teorize edilse de bu çalışmada mekâna özgüllük eleştirel bir mekânsal pratik olarak ele alınmaktadır. Bu doğrultuda, sergi mekânının mevcut mimarisi veya mekânsal koşulları ile aktif biçimde etkileşime girer, mekân ve sanat izleyicisi arasındaki ilişkiyi yeniden tanımlar ve kurumsal mekânsallığa yönelik sürekli değişen bir eleştiri sunar. Sanat ile mekân arasındaki ilişki evrildikçe, mekâna özgüllüğün anlamı da değişir; bu kavram, Minimalist heykelin fiziksel bilincinden daha sembolik veya ideolojik bir duruma, nihayetinde kendi başına sanatsal bir yöntem ve hatta medyum haline evrilir—çağdaş sanat mekânları kadar hareketli ve değişken bir form kazanır. Mekân artık yalnızca bir yer değil, politikleşmiş bir bağlam, bir topluluğun ihtiyacı veya mekânsal ve kurumsal güçlerin şekillendirdiği bir söylemsel ağ hâline gelir.

Mekân ile sanat arasındaki bu dönüşümler, mekâna özgüllüğün değişen kuramsal anlayışlarıyla örtüşür: mekânsal bir koşul, eleştirel bir yöntem, bir mecra, mekânsal bir pratik ve bir söylem olarak. Sanat ve mekânın farklı ilişki biçimlerinde geçirdiği dönüşümler, Avrupa ve ABD'deki sanat eserleri bağlamında incelenmiştir. Bu eserler, Rosalyn Deutsche, Jane Rendell, Hal Foster, Elena Filipovic, Michaela Giebelhausen ve Miwon Kwon gibi akademisyenlerin çalışmaları aracılığıyla ele alınmış, mekâna özgüllüğün ve buna bağlı sanatsal uygulamaların çağdaş müze, galeri ve sanat mekânlarının mimarisinin dönüşümü ile nasıl kesiştiği ve yansıdığı analiz edilmiştir. Nihai amaç, sergi mekânlarının yalnızca birer sergileme alanı olmaktan çıkarak, mekâna özgüllük uygulamaları aracılığıyla üretilmiş, sorgulanmış ve yeniden esnek tanımlanmış değişken ve akışkan mekânlar hâline gelmelerini görmektir.

Bu dönüşümlerin Türkiye bağlamındaki yansımalarını incelemek ise ayrı bir önem taşımaktadır. 1990'larda Türkiye'de kamusal ve özel mekânlarda sanatın mekânsal bir vurgu kazanması hem küresel gelişmeleri takip etmiş hem de belirli açılardan onlardan ayrışmıştır. Bu dönemde özellikle mekânsal vurgu taşıyan yerleştirme sanatları Türkiye sanat dünyasında yaygınlık kazanmıştır. Ayrıca, alternatif mekânları tercih eden bir dizi sergide eserler, bu mekânlarla olan ilişkilerini daha özgür biçimde keşfetme ve sınama fırsatı bulmuştur. Bu bağlamda, bu çalışma, Türkiye'deki mekânsal yönelimlerin sanatta nasıl yankı bulduğunu inceler. Mekâna özgüllüğe vurgu yapan sergiler odaklanarak, sanat üretimi ile mekânsallık arasındaki ilişkinin Türkiye bağlamında nasıl şekillendiğini tartışır. Böylece Türkiye bağlamında mekânsal değişim ve dönüşümün izini, kısa bir periyod içerisinde bile olsa, sürmeyi sağlamaktadır.

Araştırma, bulguları ve yorumları şekillendiren çeşitli sınırlamaları da kabul etmektedir. Mekâna özgüllük ve çağdaş sanat mekânlarının mimarisi üzerine yoğunlaşmak, kronolojik olarak esas odaklanmanın savaş sonrası dönemde olduğunu göstermektedir; bu dönem, mekânsal uygulamalardaki dönüşümün önemli ölçüde hızlandığı bir süreçtir. Bu seçici çerçeve içinde, kapsam daha da daraltılarak Türkiye'de 1990'lardan sonraki örneklere odaklanmıştır; bu yaklaşım derinlik sunsa da daha önceki gelişmeleri ve diğer coğrafyalardaki paralel vakaları doğal olarak dışarıda bırakmaktadır. Çalışma, çeşitli kaynaklardan beslenmekle birlikte büyük ölçüde Batı sanat tarihi temelli kalmaktadır; bu paradigmanın sınırlılıkları ve önyargıları iyi bilinmektedir. Bir diğer kısıtlayıcı da mimarlığı sanat perspektifinden ele alma kararıdır. Bu strateji hem avantajlar hem de dezavantajlar taşımaktadır: sanatsal pratiğin mekânı nasıl yorumladığını, eleştirdiğini ve yeniden şekillendirdiğini ön plana çıkarırken, aynı zamanda hangi soruların sorulacağını ve hangi anlatıların öncelikli olacağını da şekillendirmektedir. Bu bakış açısı bulguları etkilemiş, fakat aynı zamanda mimarlığın sanata dair dönüştürücü gücünü ortaya koymuş, mekânsal koşulların sanatsal yeniliğin katalizörü olarak nasıl işlev görebileceğini göstermiştir.

Yöntem olarak çalışma, sanat ve mimarlık tarihleri ile kültürel çalışmaları bir araya getirir. Türkiye bağlamında, seçilen sergilerden önemli sanatçılar ve

küratörlerle, örneğin Selim Birsel, Hasan Çalışlar, Hale Tenger, Vasıf Kortun ve Sezin Romi ile sözlü tarih çalışmaları yürütülmüştür. Gar, Anı/Bellek I & II ve İstanbul Yaya sergileri için, sergiler, sanatçılar, sergi fotoğrafları ve belgeler hakkında birincil arşiv materyalleri Salt Araştırma'nın Vasıf Kortun Arşivi ve O Zamanlar Konuşuyorduk Arşivi'nden elde edilmiştir. 4. İstanbul Bienali belgeleri ise İKSV kayıtlarından sağlanmıştır. Ayrıca, çalışma diğer kültürlerden tamamlayıcı örnekler derleyerek ve bu örneklerle ilgili ikincil literatürü kullanarak kapsamlı bir analiz gerçekleştirmiştir. Toplanan veriler, sanat ve mekânsal tasarım, düzenleme ve yerleşim özellikleri açısından disiplinler arası olarak incelenmiş ve eleştirel mekânsal uygulama çerçevesinde yorumlanmıştır. Bu sayede mimarlığın çoğu zaman tartışmalı bir arka plan olduğu senaryoyu ve bu senaryodaki rolünü aşmak hedeflenmiştir. Çalışma, sanat ve mimarlığı öne çıkaran mekâna özgüllük biçimlerine odaklanarak aradaki ilişkiyi ortaya koymaktadır. Bu sayede çağdaş sanat mekânlarını bir mimari tipoloji olarak, geçirdiği dönüşümleri de içine alan bir tanımlama yapmayı sağlamaktadır. Bu tanımlama mimarlık tarihi yazımıyla birlikte mimarlık ve sanat arasındaki dönüştürücü ve devingen ilişkiyi ortaya koymaktadır.

Çağdaş sanat ile sergi mekânları arasındaki ilişkilerin tarihine ulusötesi bir perspektiften yaklaşmak, odaklanmayı izole ulusal anlatılardan, karmaşık ve katmanlı ağlara, sanatçı, küratör, sergi ve mimarlık dolaşımları içinde işleyen mekânlara kaydırmaktadır. Bu mekânlar sürekli olarak sınırlar ötesi ilişkilerle şekillenmekte ve dönüştürülmektedir. Eserleri, mekânları ve bunlar arasındaki ilişkileri yalnızca ulusal kimliğin statik tezahürleri olarak görmek yerine, bu tez çalışması onları kültürler, sanat ve tarihin sınırlar ötesi akışları içinde dinamik, hareketli ve aktif katılımcılar olarak ele alır. Bu yaklaşım, sanat ve mimarlık tarihi çalışmalarında egemen olan Avrupalı merkezli perspektifin aksine, göç, hareketlilik, zamansallık ve sınırda olma durumlarının ve bunların sonuçlarının tarihsel bir perspektifle ele alınmasını vurgular.

Metin ve görsel arşiv analizine ek olarak, sanatın farklı bağlamlarla ilişkisinde geliştirdiği mekânsal ilişkileri görselleştirmek için bir dizi perspektif kesit çizimi geliştirilmiştir. Bu çizimler, sanat ve mimarlık arasındaki etkileşimi, aradaki

ilişkiyi, sanat ve mekân/alan ilişkisini inceleme fırsatı sunmaktadır; böylece mekânları yalnızca arka plan olarak görme alışkanlığı ortadan kaldırılmış ve bu olgunun önceden görülmemiş bir biçimde araştırılması sağlanmıştır. Bu yaklaşım, çağdaş sanat mekânlarındaki mimari değişimlerin gözlemlenmesini mümkün kılmakta ve mekâna özgüllüğü araştırma aracı olarak kullanmaktadır.

Tezin ikinci bölümü, sanatın sergileme mekânlarının kısa bir tarihini sunar; özellikle beyaz küpün ortaya çıkışı ve ardından gelen çağdaş müze mimarisini, ayrıca büyük ölçekli sanat eserlerinin yükselişi, parçalanma ve mekânların uyarlanarak yeniden kullanımı gibi olguları ele alır. Bölüm aynı zamanda bienallerin ve göçebe sanat etkinliklerinin küresel yükselişini de inceler; bu gelişmeler, müze mekânının ve onun kurumsal çerçevesinin geleneksel tanımlarına meydan okur. Altes Museum, Museum of Modern Art, New York Guggenheim ve Bilbao Guggenheim müzeleri ile Dia: Beacon, ayrıca Documenta, Manifesta ve Gwangju Bienali incelenmiştir. Böylelikle bölüm, yalnızca yirminci yüzyıl sanatının ana akım mekânsal bağlamlarını ele almakla kalmaz, aynı zamanda bu mekânlar ve kurumlarla ilgili anlaşmazlıkları da öne çıkarmaktadır. Bu anlaşmazlıklar, sanatta mekâna özgül yönelimlerin ortaya çıkışında kritik bir rol oynamaktadır. Konunun daha kapsamlı bir şekilde anlaşılabilmesi için, küresel sanat ve mimarinin katmanlı anlatılarını dikkate alan iç içe geçmiş bir tarihe ihtiyaç vardır. Bununla birlikte, ikinci bölümün büyük bir kısmı kendisini Avrupa ve ABD'deki sanat müzelerine odaklanmaktadır; zira mekâna özgül sanat eserleri ilk olarak 1960'larda bu bağlamlarda ortaya çıkmış ve sonrasında kavramsallaştırılmıştır. Öte yandan, bienaller ve alternatif sanat mekânları üzerine olan kısım, küresel sanat dünyasını daha bütüncül yansıtmaktadır ve aynı zamanda bu hareketli ve geçici etkinliklerin sanat ve kültürün sömürgeciliği ile ilgili sorunlarını da ele almaktadır. Bu etkinlikler, Türkiye'de mekâna özgül eğilimlerin yoğunlaşmasına denk düşen dönemde çağdaş sanat ortamının önemli bir parçasını oluşturmaktadır.

Tezin üçüncü bölümü, mekâna özgüllüğün tanımı ve dinamiklerine ve özellikle 1960'lar ve 70'lerden ABD ve Avrupa'daki örneklere yoğunlaşır. Richard Serra, Robert Smithson, Daniel Buren ve Hans Haacke gibi sanatçıların eserleri, seçilmiş örnekler olarak, bu sanatçıların eserlerini doğrudan mekân tarafından

tanımlayarak ve mekân içinde/ile üreterek, kendi mekânlarının dinamikleri ve anlaşmazlıklarıyla ilişkili kıldıklarını ortaya koyar. Richard Serra'nın *Tilted Arc* eseri ile Robert Smithson'ın *Spiral Jetty* çalışması, mekâna özgüllüğün durağan tanımını örneklendirirken; Hans Haacke'nin *MoMA Poll* ve Daniel Buren'in *Within and Beyond the Frame* işleri, mekâna özgüllüğün durağan ve hareketli tanım eşiğinde gelişen kurumsal eleştiriyi örneklendirir. Station House Opera'nın *Breeze Block Performances* çalışmaları ve Robert Smithson'ın *Nonsite* serisi, kendi mekânlarından koparak hareketliliğin ve taşınabilirliğin karakterini sunar; öyle ki, her yeni mekândaki hareketlilikleri aracılığıyla yeniden özgüllük kazanırlar. Rachel Whiteread'in *House* adlı işi ile Andrea Zittel'in *Prototype of A-Z Pocket Property* çalışması ise mekâna özgüllüğün yalnızca sanat değil, aynı zamanda bizzat mimarlık haline gelerek yer-inşa etme kapasitesini ortaya koyar. Bu eserler sanat ile mimarlık, sanat ile mekân ilişkisine dair daha bütüncül bir yaklaşımı ortaya koymakta ve mekâna özgüllük tanımının dönüşümünü yansıtarak çağdaş sanat mekânlarının ve mimari tipolojilerin dönüşümüne işaret etmektedir.

Bu noktada önemli bir literatür sağlayan Miwon Kwon'un *One Place After Another* adlı kitabından faydalanılmaktadır. Kwon, mekâna özgüllüğün en erken biçimlerini, sanatın metalaşmasına ve kurumsal çerçevesine yönelik bir refleksiyon amacıyla, mekâna bağlı bir kimlik arayışı olarak tanımlamaktadır. Ancak 1960'larda köklenen bu tanım, zaman içinde dönüşmüş; geçicilik ve mekândan kopma (deterritorialization) ile karakterize edilen bir söyleme kaymıştır. Bu dönüşüm, arazi sanatı veya kamusal sanattaki değişimlerde, 1960'ların özgün mekâna özgül sanatından türeyen mutasyonlar şeklinde gözlemlenebilmektedir. Zamanla, bu süreç, artık daha esnek, hareketli ve değişken (protean) olarak anlaşılan mekânla kurulan kurgusal ilişkilere evrilmektedir.

Tezin dördüncü bölümü, Türkiye'nin 1990'lar bağlamını kapsamlı bir şekilde analiz etmektedir; bu dönemde mekâna özgüllük, kültürel alanların özelleşmesiyle birlikte daha görünür bir eğilim haline gelmiştir. Bu süreçte, müzeler, galeriler ve kamusal alanlar gibi modern ve çağdaş sanata adanmış yeni mekânlarda çok çeşitli pratikler, mecralar, küratörler ve tartışmalar ortaya çıkmıştır. Mekâna özgüllük bağlamında incelendiğinde, Türkiye'nin bu dönemdeki sanat ortamı, mimari

tipolojiler, mekânsal pratikler ve çağdaş sanatın dönüşümü açısından hem paralellikler hem de farklılıklar sergilemektedir.

Türkiye bağlamında eşiksellik, kamusal sanatın, mekâna özgüllüğün ve alternatif sergileme mekânlarının bilinçli ortaya çıkışını anlamak için yinelenen bir tema olarak öne çıkmaktadır. Seçilmiş sergiler ve bu dönemden sanatçılar, küratörler, mimarlar ve araştırmacılarla yürütülen sözlü tarih çalışmaları, yalnızca kavramın analizine dair önemli bilgiler sunmakla kalmaz; aynı zamanda 1990'lar Türkiye sanat dünyasının dinamik, hareketli ve dönüşen bağlamına dair hayati ipuçları da vermektedir. Bu dönem, sanatın ve mekânın daha esnek ve mobil tanımlarını arayış içerisinde olduğu, bir yere ve topluluğa ait olma ihtiyacının öne çıktığı bir süreçtir. Eşikselliği ve mekâna özgül sanatın hem yerleşik hem de göçebe mekânlarla ilişkisini ve yer inşası faaliyetlerini izleyebilmek amacıyla bölüm, dört temel sergiye odaklanmaktadır: Anı/Bellek I & II (1991, 1993), Gar Sergisi (1995), 4. İstanbul Bienali (1995) ve İstanbul Yaya Sergisi (2002). Bu sergi seçkisi, Türkiye'de bu dönemde sanat ve mekân arasındaki ilişkilere dair ana eğilimleri kapsamlı bir şekilde sunmakta; aynı zamanda eşiksellik, yerinden edilme ve hareketlilik bağlamında kimlik temalarını da gündeme getirmektedir. Bölüm, mekâna özgüllüğü genişletilmiş bir alan olarak ele almakta ve bu yaklaşım, Türkiye'nin çağdaş sanatını yeni perspektiflerle anlamak için önemli bir araç sunmaktadır. Mekâna özgüllük ile mekân arasındaki etkileşimin izini sürmek, Türkiye sanatındaki benzerlikleri ve farklılıkları, gelişim süreçlerini ve toplumsal ile kurumsal algıları ortaya koymaktadır.

Eşiksellik kavramıyla paralel olarak incelenen Anı/Bellek sergileri serisinde, Vasıf Kortun'un teşhir stratejileri ve sergi mekânını ele alış biçimi, mekâna özgüllük bağlamında değerlendirilmiştir. Statik mekâna özgüllük örneklerine, mekânı atölye olarak kullanan bağımsız bir grup sanatçının bir araya gelerek gerçekleştirdiği ve büyük yankı uyandıran Gar Sergisi gösterilmektedir. Bu bağlamda, Selim Birsel'in *Kurşun Uykusu* adlı işi, mekânıyla doğrudan ilişki kurarak ve mekânından türeyen bir dialektik üzerinden gündemle bağlantılı bir soru üreterek gar peronuna yerleştirilmiştir. Statik bir tanımdan mobil tanıma evrilen mekâna özgüllük,4. İstanbul Bienali'nde açıkça gözlemlenebilmektedir. Bu durum, enternasyonal sanatçı

grubunun bir araya gelmesiyle birlikte, Türk sanatçıları ve sanatı için tanınırlık açısından önemli bir sergi olmasını sağlamıştır. Hem enternasyonal sanatçıların katılımı hem de Rene Block'un serginin başında yabancı bir küratör olarak bulunması, sergide yer alan eserlerin hareketli mekâna özgül nitelik kazanmasına katkıda bulunmuştur. Ayrıca, bu sergide yer alan Hale Tenger'in *We Didn't Go Outside, We Were Always Outside / We Didn't Go Inside, We Were Always Inside* adlı eseri, sonrasında Amerika, Rusya ve Avustralya gibi farklı coğrafyalarda ve mekânlarda yeniden sergilenmiş; Türkiye'deki mekâna özgü sanat eserlerinin hareketlilikleri ve her seferinde yeni bir mekânla kurdukları ilişki açısından önemli bir örnek teşkil etmiştir. Kamusal alan ve yer-inşa (place-making) etme kabiliyeti açısından, Fulya Erdemci'nin İstanbul Yaya Sergisi incelenmiş; bu bağlamda Erginoğlu & Çalışlar Mimarlık ofisinin gerçekleştirdiği *Alternatif Kule* ve *Şehir Kılavuzu* çalışmaları da değerlendirilmiştir. Bu örnekler, mimarlık pratiğinin sanatla kurduğu ilişkileri ve mekânı alternatif yöntemlerle yeniden yaratabilme potansiyelini göstermesi açısından önem arz etmektedir.

Çalışma mekâna özgüllüğü ulusötesi ve tarihsel olarak koşullara bağlı bir söylem olarak yeniden sunmaktadır. 1960'lardaki ilk anlamından günümüze, mekâna özgüllük, mekân, topluluk, zaman ve bağlam ile daha geniş bir ilişki anlamına kaymaktadır. Mekâna özgüllük, mekânla sınırlı ilişkilerden, zamansallık, hareketlilik, topluluk ve bağlamla daha geniş etkileşimlere evrilmektedir. Türkiye bağlamında, bu söylem, erken küratöryel sergiler, kamusal sanat girişimleri ve bienal uygulamalarını yalnızca yerel fenomenler olarak değil, daha büyük bir küresel mekânsal ve kültürel üretim sistemi içinde etkin ajanlar olarak yeniden çerçevelemeyi mümkün kılmaktadır. Mekâna özgüllüğü kavramsal bir problem olarak konumlandırarak ve 2000'lerin başında Türkiye çağdaş sanat dünyasına yayılımını izleyerek, sanatın toplum, mekân ve mimarlık arasındaki ilişkiyi nasıl yeniden şekillendirdiğini anlamak için eleştirel bir çerçeve oluşturmaktadır. Bu ayrıca, Türk mekâna özgül sanat eserlerinin küresel söylem içinde daha anlamlı bir şekilde konumlandırılmasını sağlamakta ve bunların çağdaş mekân yaratımı tanımlarına katkılarını vurgulamaktadır.

Bu tez, sanat ve mimarlık arasındaki dinamik ilişkiyi anlamanın önemini ortaya koyarak sonuçlanmaktadır. 1960'larda ortaya çıkışından yüzyılın sonuna kadar olan süreci takip eden ulusötesi analiz, sanatın, mekâna özgüllüğün, mekânın ve mimarlığın farklı coğrafyalar boyunca geçirdiği dönüşüm, değişim ve çeşitlenmeleri görünür kılmaktadır. Türkiye sanat sahnesinde 1990'larda ortaya çıkan belirli bir yankı, mekâna özgüllüğün çağdaş sanat mekânlarının mekânsallığına hem bağımlı olduğunu hem de onu etkin biçimde şekillendirdiğini ortaya koymaktadır. Analiz, mekâna özgül pratiklerin yalnızca mekânın ve yerin fiziksel boyutlarına bağlı kalmadığını; aynı zamanda onları barındıran mimarilerle karşılıklı bir söylem ve diyalog içerisinde olduğunu göstermektedir. Tezde ele alınan her bir yapıt kendi özgün mekânında bağlamsallaşmış, tarihsel, toplumsal, siyasal ve doğal bağlamlara göre özgül bir nitelik kazanmaktadır. Mekân-sanat ilişkisinin her bir perspektif çizimi bu katmanlı bağlamı anlamaya ve yorumlamaya yardımcı olmuştur.

Mekâna özgüllüğün ulusal sınırları aşan tamamlayıcı analizi, sanatsal, mimari ve kurumsal olanın kesişiminde işleyen mekânsal stratejiyi görünür kılmaktadır. Mekâna özgüllüğün dönüşümleri izlemek için araştırma aracı olarak yeniden konumlandırılması, sanat ile mimarlık arasındaki benzersiz ilişkileri açığa çıkarmaktadır. Bu disiplinler arası yaklaşım kavramı, tarihi ve olguyu çalışmaya imkân tanıyarak sanatın hareketliliği ile verili mekânının değişim eşiğini ya da sanatın yer-inşa kapasitesinin gelişimini tespit edilmesini sağlamaktadır. Bu nedenle mekâna özgül yapıtlar yalnızca önceden belirlenmiş bir mekânı işgal etmekle kalmamakta; onun sınırlarını sorgulamakta, hiyerarşilerini sarsmakta ve kimi zaman öngörülmüş işlevlerini bozmaktadır. Analiz edilen yapılarda sanatçılar ölçek, dolaşım, görünürlük veya maddesellik gibi mekânsal nitelikleri yalnızca bir arka plan olarak değil, yapıtın etkin bileşenleri olarak kullanılmaktadır. Böylece sergileme ortamının tarafsızlığını sorgulanmakta ve izleyicinin hem sanat hem de mimarlıkla ilişkisini yeniden tanımlamaktadır.

Bu tezin temel bir bulgusu, mekâna özgül sanatı barındıran mimarinin pasif bir kap değil, anlam üretme sürecinde etkin bir ortak olmasıdır. Batı'daki ve Türkiye'deki mekâna özgüllüğün yakından incelenmesi, mimari bağlamların yapıtların kavramlarının ve anlamlarının ayrılmaz bir parçası haline geldiğini

göstermektedir; ister maddesel özelliklerin bilinçli biçimde dahil edilmesiyle, ister tarihsel bağlamla ilişkiye girerek, isterse bu mekânların kamusal işlevlerinin etkinleştirilmesiyle. Bu örneklerde mimarlık sanatın arkasında kaybolmamış, görünürlüğünü koruyarak deneyimi şekillendiren dinamik bir varlık olarak kalmıştır. Bu karşılaşmalar sayesinde çağdaş sanat mekânlarını yalnızca kurumlar olarak görmek imkânsız hale gelmiştir. Dolayısıyla çalışma, çağdaş sanat mekânlarını, sanatı da şekillendiren biçimsel, işlevsel, simgesel, ilişkisel ve mekâna özgül niteliklere sahip bir mekânsal tipoloji olarak ele almaktadır. Bu perspektif, çağdaş sanat mekânlarının akışkanlığını kabul ederek onları diğer mimari mekânlarla birlikte okumayı mümkün kılar; depolama alanlarından beyaz küplere, endüstriyel dönüşüm yapılarından göçebe veya geçici yapılara uzanan dönüşümlerini görünür kılmaktadır. Bu genişletilmiş tipolojik bakış açısında çağdaş sanat mekânları, tasarımıyla sanatsal pratiğe hem yanıt veren hem de onu etkileyen etkin mimari özneler haline gelmektedir. Çağdaş sanat mekânlarının dönüşmüş tipolojisi, mekânsal akışkanlıkla tanımlanır; hacimlerin, dolaşımın, geometrinin ve sergi mekânlarının düzeninin esnekliğinde görünür hale gelmektedir. Fiziksel özellikleri ise kalıcılıkta ve çeşitlilikte uyarlanabilirliği yansıtır: ışık dolu galeriler sunabilir, kesintisiz kapalı mekânlar sağlayabilir, uyarlayıcı stratejilerle malzemeleri yeniden kullanabilir ya da yenilik aracılığıyla dikkat çeken gelişmiş yapılar ve kamusal semboller ortaya koyabilir. Bu mimari tipoloji sanatı tamamlar ve aynı zamanda onun tarafından tamamlanır; uyumlu ve bütünlüklü bir ortam yaratır. Zaman zaman sanatla yarışarak kendi sanatsal değerini ortaya koymaya girişir; bu dinamik, başka türlü ortaya çıkmayacak niteliklerin, tartışmaların, eleştirilerin, eğilimlerin ve olguların belirmesine olanak tanımaktadır.

Özetle, müzeyi bir mekânsal tipoloji olarak yeniden çerçeveleyerek, mekâna özgül sanatın mimari koşullarla eleştirel etkileşimini vurgulayarak, mekâna özgüllüğü bir mekânsal strateji olarak yeniden konumlandırarak ve mimarinin bu pratiklerdeki etkinliğini öne çıkararak, bu tez sanat–mimarlık ilişkisini daha bütünlüklü ve zengin bir biçimde anlamaya katkıda bulunmaktadır. Mekâna özgüllüğü, sanat için ayrılan mekânların nasıl sürekli üretildiğini, tartışıldığını ve

yeniden tanımlandığını ortaya çıkaran eleştirel bir mekânsal pratik aracı olarak konumlandırmaktadır.

Çalışma, farklı kültürel bağlamlardan örnekleri sistematik biçimde sentezleyerek kapsamlı ve incelikli bir analiz yürütmüştür. Bu şekilde, sanata ilişkin verileri mekânsal kaygılar, tasarımlar ve düzenlemelerle birlikte disiplinler arası biçimde çözümleyerek, bunları eleştirel mekânsal pratik kavramı çerçevesinde yorumlamaktadır. Dolayısıyla, bu çalışmanın amacı, mimarlığın çoğunlukla tartışmalı biçimde yalnızca bir arka plan olarak konumlandırıldığı geleneksel yaklaşımı aşmaktır. Bunun yerine, ulusötesi biçimleriyle mekâna özgüllüğü vurgulamakta, sanat ve mimarlığı yalnızca görünür kılmakla kalmayıp dönüştüren, arada bir şeyler yaratan bir süreç olarak kutlamaktadır. Bu aradalığın tüm anlamı ise ancak zaman içinde, daha ileri çalışmalarla bütünüyle açığa çıkabilecektir.

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