

Stillness in Contemporary Art:
Freezing the Moment in Sculpture and Painting

by
ELİF GÜL TİRBEN

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APPROVED BY:

Prof. Dr. Hasan Bulent Kahraman
(Dissertation Supervisor)

Murat Germen

Selim Birsal

DATE OF APPROVAL:

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ABSTRACT

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Freezing the Moment in Sculpture and Painting

Elif Gül Tirben

M.A., Visual Arts and Visual Communication Design

Thesis Advisor: Assoc. Dr. Hasan Bülent Kahraman

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Contemporary society's experience of time is characterized by high velocity of everyday rhythms dominating both public and private realms. In this continually accelerating speed of everyday life, time does not belong to the individual but to a system where the individual is expected to upload himself/herself quickly with constantly changing information and direction coming from both the actual and virtual realms and is left in desperation under these circumstances which forces him/her constantly to catch up with the next and focus on the future rather than the present.

It is argued in this study that stillness in contemporary art today responds to a need in contemporary society to gain control over time and experience an authentic present in an environment where time slips away from the hand of the individual and loses its diachronic order. Therefore, while on a theoretical level the current study attempts to establish a link between the contemporary society's experience of time and its need for stillness, it makes such a link visible by analyzing the practices in painting and sculpture where stillness is provided by freezing the moment.

These practices which can be seen as the reflection of the need for stillness in contemporary society are grouped into two in this study according to their changing method and aim. While the works in the first group freeze the speed and action and therefore make the imperceptible visible, the works in the second group represents a privileged instant in memory and carries it to the present. In this context, *Serkan Özkaya's Sudden Gust of Wind*, which depicts A4 paper flitting in the air, will be analyzed as an example applying the first method in sculpture. Leyla Gediz's works motivated by a search for the *Perfect Moment*, on the other hand, will be examined as examples for the second method, which allows for the individual to establish an immediate subjective relation with the moment and the present.

Keywords: Stillness, Contemporary Society, Speed, Affection, Memory, Contemporary Art, Serkan Özkaya, Leyla Gediz.

ÖZ

Güncel Sanatta Durağanlık: Heykelde ve Resimde Anın Dondurulması

Elif Gül Tirben

Y.L., Görsel Sanatlar ve Görsel İletişim Tasarımı
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Hem özel hem kamusal alana hükmeden yüksek hızdaki günlük ritimler günümüz toplumunun zamanı deneyimleyişini belirlemektedir. Hızı giderek artan ritimlerle örülü günlük hayatta, zaman bireye değil, bireyin kendini hem reel hem de sanal ortamda sürekli değişen bilgi ve yönelimlere göre yenilemesini zorunlu kılan daha geniş bir sisteme aittir. Yeni olanın yakalanmasının zorunlu olduğu, bugün yerine geleceğe odaklı bu sistemde birey çaresizlik hissetmektedir.

Bu çalışma, zamanın kayıp gittiği ve tarihsel düzlemini yitirdiği bu ortamda, güncel sanatta durağanlığı temsil eden çalışmaların, toplumdaki zamana hakim olma ve onu otantik olarak deneyimleme ihtiyacına hem toplumsal hem de bireysel bir karşılık, bir tepki olarak görülebileceğini ileri sürmektedir. Bu nedenle, çalışma teorik açıdan toplumun zamanı deneyimleyişi ile durağanlığa olan ihtiyaç arasında ilişki kurarken, heykelde ve resimde anın dondurulduğu eserleri inceleyerek bu ihtiyacı görünür kılan ve karşılayan güncel sanat pratiklerini öne çıkarmaktadır.

Durağanlığa olan ihtiyacın bir yansıması olarak okunabilecek anın dondurulduğu bu işler, yöntem ve amaç bakımından farklılaşan iki grupta değerlendirilebilir. Birinci gruptaki işler hareketi ve hızı dondurarak, görünemez olanı görünür hale getirirken, ikinci gruptaki işler hafızadaki ya da imgelemdeki ayrıcalıklı anları temsil ederek şimdiye taşımaktadır. Bu bağlamda, Serkan Özkaya'nın bir hareket halinde havada asılı kalmış izlenimi veren A4 kağıtlarından yaptığı çalışması *Ani Bir Esinti*, birinci yönteme örnek olarak incelenirken, Leyla Gediz'in gündelik hayatın içinde *Kusursuz An*'ı aradığı, bireyin anla dolaysız ve öznel bir ilişki kurmasını sağlayan resimleri ikinci grupta değerlendirilecektir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Durağanlık, Güncel Toplum, Hız, Duygulama, Hafıza, Güncel Sanat, Serkan Özkaya, Leyla Gediz.

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INTRODUCTION

Contemporary life is characterized by the high velocity of everyday rhythms. Time does not belong to the individual but to a system which divides and manipulates the time of the individual and leaves no space for authenticity. Both in public and private sections of this fragmented time, the individual is expected to upload himself/herself quickly with constantly changing information and direction in both the actual and virtual realms. It is no surprise that the ordinary individual is left in desperation under these circumstances which forces him/her constantly to catch up with the next and focus on the future rather than the present. However, the contemporary capitalist system also produces and reproduces the strategies to manage this existential blankness that is created by the loss of the present.

There are three visible strategies that the contemporary capitalist system suggests as an alternative to the experience of an authentic present: pastiche, namely living the nostalgic past as the present; practices of immediacy through advanced telecommunication and virtual presences; and instant pleasure of consuming pre-selected goods and services. As it will be discussed in the first chapter, pastiche is a mutation of the past that invades the present and by definition kills the possibility of any experience of the authentic present. It confuses the mind of the subject by installing in the mind a schizophrenic perception of time, where the realities of past and present are intertwined.

Immediacy is another strategy which creates an illusion of multiple presents by adopting the most recent developments in telecommunication technology. Instead of creating a space for an authentic experience of time, immediacy serves for multiplication of identity in different virtual environments which alienates the individual from the relatively slow pace of actual reality. As Aceti explains, in that system “stillness is pitted against the speed of self-replication and telepresence. The multiplicities of contemporary digital identities are contrasted with the slow pace of existence of a time firmly set in the past.”¹ Therefore, stillness, as an issue of the past, is

¹ Lanfranco Aceti, “Stillness: A Violence to the Evolutionary Fluidity of Digital Media?” Unpublished article, Sabancı University, 2009.

lost within the multi-layered virtual realm where present immediately becomes past and the future immediately becomes present.

The third strategy is servicing of time to the market as a commodity as spare time. Within the capitalist system, the individual is expected to consume this fragment of time by purchasing the pre-selected goods and services which are advertised ironically by the motto of “living the moment” or “living the present”. These activities of spectacle however, as analyzed by many social theorists in various places, only creates a temporary satisfaction and quickly becomes part of the past, snapshots of which functions to prove the others how spectacular the spectacle was. Moreover, what the motto of living the present also implies is a kind of life style which provokes consumption without carrying any responsibilities for others or other generations.

Therefore, Pastiche, Immediacy and the Spectacle are three inventions served in the system as an alternative to authentic time which has been already lost for the non-bourgeois classes since the emergence of industrialization. The question however is “what can be the strategies of resistance to prevent the fakeness of immediacy, nostalgic fetishism of the past and dependency on the spectacle?” and “what are the possibilities of creation of a consciousness about time and authentic experience of time?” It is suggested in this study that some examples of the captured moment in contemporary art gives us glimpses of an authentic encounter with time by enabling us to have an immediate relationship with the moment depicted.

Just like the contemporary capitalist system produces and reproduces strategies to control time, counter-strategies are also reproduced to resist domination on time. “Slow movement” is one of these counter strategies firstly developed as production of cultural cuisine in eco-regions, which later went on to organizing some towns in Italy as slow cities in 1999. Since then, the movement has been growing all around the world with the lastly inclusion of Seferihisar as the first Cittaslow in Turkey in November, 2009. As Parkins explains slow living in general is closely connected to the mindful experience of time: “Implicit in the practices of slow living is a particular conception of time in which ‘having time’ for something means investing it with significance attention and deliberation. To live slowly in this sense, then, means engaging in ‘mindful’ rather than ‘mindless’ practices which make us consider the pleasure or at least the purpose of each

task to which we give our time.”² Of course, the movement faces the risk of commercialization and becoming another spectacle, however, it is significant in showing that people all around the world are taking actions to create a consciousness about time and resist the capitalist system’s domination on it.

Stillness as freezing the moment is another strategy (rather a more spontaneous one) that might be suggested as a response to this flow of time that escapes from the control of the individual. It allows the artists and the viewer to be more aware of time and even provides a space for contemplation in the hustle of everyday life in which the individual directly faces the moment represented or embodied in the work of art. In contemporary art today we come across with various works which intend to carry to the “perceptible present”³ the privileged moment or privileged duration which would otherwise be lost within the speed of everyday life.

There are two ways through which stillness allow us to capture time by freezing the moment: by freezing the speed of action and therefore making the imperceptible visible; and transforming what is lost in memory to the present. The first of these ways is achieved through capturing of the movement of an object in space such as a golf player’s movement in the air while hitting the ball, collapse of a building, any sort of explosion or the image of a bullet shot on the air. (These examples will be demonstrated in the second chapter of the study). These works either as a painting, a photograph or a sculpture gives us the pleasure of seeing the imperceptible in normal speed and therefore attracts our attention.

The second way that enables the audience to establish a relationship with the moment is representation of the moment as part of the memory or imaginary. Since the speed of everyday life prevents us from being in contact with the past and the present, we loose connection with our memories and therefore with our subjectivities. As Milan Kundera explains in his 1993 novel *Slowness*, there is a close link between speed of life and our memories:

There is a secret bond between slowness and memory, between speed and forgetting. Consider this utterly commonplace situation: a man is walking down the street. At a certain moment, he tries to recall something, but the recollection

² Wendy Parkins, “Out of Time,” *Time and Society* 13 (2-3) (2004): 364.

³ Ibid. 8-9.

escapes him. Automatically he slows down. Meanwhile, a person who wants to forget a disagreeable incident he has just lived through starts unconsciously to speed up his pace, as if he were trying to distance himself from a thing still too close to him in time.

In existential mathematics, that experience takes the form of two basic equations: the degree of slowness is directly proportional to the intensity of memory; the degree of speed is directly proportional to the intensity of forgetting.⁴

Kundera explains the need to speed up in order to forget and the need to slow down in order to remember in a humorous way. And he goes on to say through the end of the book that the contemporary civilization forces us to forget our memories, even forget the period we are in:

our period is given over to the demon of speed, and that is the reason it so easily forgets its own self. Now I would reverse that statement and say: our period is obsessed by the desire to forget, and it is to fulfill that desire that it gives over to the demon of speed; it picks up the pace to show us that it no longer wishes to be remembered; that it is tired of itself; sick of itself; that it wants to blow out the tiny trembling flame of memory.⁵

The works addressing collective memory by representing a privileged moment (real or imaginary) therefore, allow us for a moment to experience “stillness” to reestablish our relation with our subjectivities.

The word "still" is defined in the Oxford English dictionary as "Motionless; not moving from one place, stationary; also, remaining in the same position or attitude, quiescent".⁶ Stillness, on the other hand, is “absence of movement or physical disturbance; motionlessness.”⁷ What the definition reveals epistemologically is the impossibility of explaining stillness without any reference to movement since stillness is inevitably defined by the absence of movement. Throughout this study therefore, it

⁴ Milan Kundera, *Slowness* (New York: Harpers Collins Publishers, 1997), 39.

⁵ Ibid. 135.

⁶ Still, a. and n.2, in Oxford English Dictionary, <http://www.oed.com/> (accessed March 2009).

⁷ Stillness, in Ibid.

should be kept in mind that movement is fundamental in understanding stillness and still works that reflect a captured moment.

As it is stated earlier, this study will concentrate on particular works in contemporary art where the flow of reality or the flow of image is interrupted by freezing the moment in order to provide the audience with a moment of stillness in which s/he can establish a more immediate relationship with the instant depicted or represented in the work. By capturing the authenticity of a particular moment in everyday life and sharing it with the audience, the aim of the artist is to reveal the beauty concealed in the moment. Moreover, by capturing the moment in different mediums, the artist brings what is supposed to be a past event to the present. This present however, is not the present in which we experience the events as a flow, but a “still” present for which we imagine a past and a future. Therefore, although the stillness reflected in the works selected are ontologically made of still images and objects, what they inevitably construct in the viewer’s mind is a flow; or movement.

The sensation created by the artwork and its relation to movement is also fundamental in understanding the frozen moment in contemporary art. As Flaxman suggests "Deleuze considers all art to be movement insofar as sensation moves thought; sensation is the *vis elastica* that explains movement."⁸ Therefore it is possible to say that, even if the image, let us say a painting or a photograph does not directly depicts motion such as in an Herold Edgerton photograph, it stimulates our senses to make us think-rather unconsciously-of the motion that contains the still moment. Flaxman goes on to say that "Deleuze describes painting as a "sequence or a series" of sensations that play along the nervous system” and “he describes literature as the movement of becoming, a "passage of Life that traverses both the livable and the lived."⁹ By stimulating thought therefore, what the painter or the author does is to make us experience motion as an idea.

On the other hand, freezing the moment is framing and as Deleuze explains “framing is limitation”.¹⁰ By freezing the moment, the photographer frames the movement both spatially and temporally. What the director does by freezing a particular

⁸ Ibid. 77.

⁹ Ibid. 78-79.

¹⁰ Ibid. 13.

scene is emphasizing the framing. What the installation artist does by freezing the moment is framing a movement in a three dimensional environment. In all cases, by freezing the moment, the movement is captured in a frame; therefore it is captured in a "closed set" as Deleuze calls it, with a continuous reference to the previous and future images of the object in the frame.

In order to understand the relationship between movement and the image, we need a more general understanding on the role of the image and our perception. Image is the intermediary that allows us to have an idea in our mind about the matter. Visual image is constructed through visual perception. The discussion on visual perception that would be functional in this study can be grounded on two pillars; an ontological discussion on the nature of visual image and a physical explanation on our perception of visual reality.

Bergson is the first philosopher who establishes a new understanding in the study of images by limiting the ontological inquiry at the level of visual perception. In *Matter and Memory*, he states that as soon as we open our eyes in the morning we enter in the world of images: "...images perceived when my senses are open to them, unperceived when they are closed. All these images act and react upon one another in all their elementary parts according to constant laws which I call the laws of nature."¹¹ By stating that, he defines a new ontological universe independent of the discussions on the ontology of matter. Elements of this universe are visual images and their existence is dependent on human perception. An ordinary observer which has the central position in the universe perceives the matter and its image as equal:

We place ourselves at the point of view of a mind unaware of the disputes between philosophers. Such a mind would naturally believe that matter exists just as it is perceived; and, since it is perceived as an image, the mind would make of it, in itself, an image. In a word, we consider matter before the dissociation which idealism and realism have brought about between its existence and its appearance.¹²

¹¹ Henri Bergson, *Matter and Memory* (London: John Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1911), 17.

¹² *Ibid.* xii-xiii.

Our perception of the material world is through the universe of images. Bergson suggests that “Matter, in our view, is an aggregate of ‘images’.”¹³ Transferred back to the language of ontology, “by ‘image’ we mean a certain existence which is more than that which the idealist calls a representation, but less than that which the realist calls a thing, an existence placed half-way between the ‘thing’ and the ‘representation’.”¹⁴ In that sense, although it is the only way we perceive the material world, it fails to reflect the hypothetical qualities the thing-in-itself carries and inevitably leads to misrecognition. Therefore, Bergson has two fundamental approaches on the status of the image: first, a human-centric approach which suggests that the matter as equal to its image since human knowledge is based on perception, and second a philosophical approach that situates the image as an intermediary between the matter-as-itself and the ideal.

Based on Bergsonian grounds, Gilles Deleuze further defines two systems of references that the image belongs to: a system of images-namely the position of the image related to other images- and the subjective perception of the image:

The thing and the perception of the thing are one and the same thing, one and the same image, but related to one or other of two systems of reference. The thing is the image as it is in itself, as it is related to all the other images to whose action it completely submits and on which it reacts immediately. But the perception of the thing is the same image related to another special image which frames it, and which only retains a partial action from it, and only reacts to it mediately. In perception thus defined, there is never anything else or anything more than there is in the thing: on the contrary, there is 'less'. We perceive the thing, minus that which does not interest us as a function of our needs. By need or interest we mean the lines and points that we retain from the thing as a function of our receptive facet, and the actions that we select as a function of the delayed reactions of which we are capable. Which is a way of defining the first material moment of subjectivity: it is subtractive. It subtracts from the thing whatever does not interest it. But, conversely, the thing itself must then be presented in itself as a complete, immediate, diffuse perception. The thing is image and, in this respect, is perceived itself and perceives all the other things inasmuch as it is subject to their action and reacts to them on all its facets and in all its parts.¹⁵

¹³ Ibid. xiii.

¹⁴ Ibid. xi-xii.

¹⁵ Deleuze, *Cinema 1*, 63.

Namely, similar to cinema, what visual perception does is taking the image of the thing which is based on subtraction. Subtraction in that sense is similar to framing in cinema and in other visual arts and finally is “limitation”¹⁶. Subtraction is a subjective process and dependent on the subjects point of view, or standing point and his/her interests. That is to say, any still image or freezing the moment is simultaneously a subtraction and a subjective construction.

As stated earlier, still images construct in the mind of the audience an idea of movement as well. We know that images are categorized as still and moving, similar to still and moving objects in the universe. We also that all objects and images are either in motion or they create an imaginary movement in the mind. Specifically, the image is always in motion also because the matter that the image represents is always in a constant change. With reference to Bergson, Flaxman states that to open our eyes means “is not to find static objects qua representations but a dizzy swirl of moving images; indeed, the image is by definition a moving image insofar as it does not "resemble an object that it would represent.”¹⁷ That is to say, since the matter is always in a change, the image is never an exact representation of the object. However, in terms of the reflection of movement, Deleuze argues that cinema is the closest representation to reality which gives immediate movement:

There may be privileged instants in the cinema, but these exist within the flow of material sections to which each instant, however spectacular or ordinary, is immanent. In other words, the cinema does not give us a succession of frames but real movement, and this is because cinematographic images are not "strung together" or "corrected" by an intellectual "above"—rather, the process of projection is their stringing together, and this takes place "at the same time as the image appears for the spectator and without conditions."¹⁸

¹⁶ Ibid. 13.

¹⁷ Gregory Flaxman, *Brain is the Screen: Deleuze and the Philosophy of Cinema* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 14-15.

¹⁸ Ibid. 18.

In this sense, Deleuze's the understanding of "the universe as cinema in itself, a metacinema" is a valid one in terms of the similarity in our perception of actual and virtual reality in terms of movement.¹⁹

The distinction Deleuze makes between "movement image" an "time image" concerning the moving images in cinema is instrumental in understanding the still image and the three-dimensional work whose subject is the frozen moment. In *Cinema 1*, Deleuze uses the term "movement image" "to describe films in which time was subordinate to movement. In this style of filmmaking, time was rendered indirectly. Put another way, time was edited to fit the story...time is condensed."²⁰ Hollywood action movies, for instance, are these types. In these movies, the natural flow of daily time is replaced by the time of the story-line. For this purpose, only the moments that include the details that would be fundamental in creating a flow in narration are kept and rest of the "duration" is treated as an empty space that would cause the audience to loose concentration.

Time images, on the other hand, "record the passing of time in and for itself, rather than editing out moments of time deemed extraneous to the development of the narrative of heroic individuals."²¹ European cinema after the World War two shows such examples of time image. In these movies, time is not subordinate to movement but it is "a glimpse of time in and for itself, of duration."²² Duration, namely our actual experience of time and events, are not treated as blank spaces to be cut out, but as an indispensable characteristic of our everyday existence. This way, existence, as the main problematic of philosophy in Europe after the war, was also reflected in cinema by the time image. These relatively slow scenes without much action allowed the audience to associate themselves with the everyday psychology of the protagonist. Jones argues that

Although he never said so particularly directly, Deleuze saw the effect of the war on Europe reflected in the inability of protagonists of the time image to influence their situation positively. By contrast, the cinema of the now triumphant

¹⁹ Deleuze, *Cinema 1*, 59.

²⁰ David Martin Jones, "Movement-Images, Time-Images and Hybrid Images in Cinema," in *Deleuze Reframed*, Damian Sutton and David Martin-Jones, (London: I.B. Tauris, 2008), 91.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 94.

²² Damian Sutton and David Martin-Jones, *Deleuze Reframed* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2008), 89.

superpower the United States had no such problem; hence the Hollywood movement image was populated by individualistic heroes who had no difficulty reacting to their circumstances.²³

Emergence of the time image as a common expression in cinema shows the link between human condition and visual expression. Stillness as freezing the moment has a similar function to the time image in contemporary society. It enables the audience to confront the human condition by concentrating on a particular instant in the still image. In these types of works, the audience like in the time image has the chance to concentrate on time itself, not this time through the duration but through the instant. While the time image makes the duration visible, the art work depicting the moment makes the instant visible. This way, the human condition which escapes from perception in the hustle of everyday life or within the speed of the movement image reveals itself through the moment captured in an instant. Moreover, as stated before in this chapter, since the frozen instant also gives an idea of previous and following moments, it also gives an idea of the duration.

In this context, the first chapter of the study draws a theoretical framework to establish a link between the contemporary society's schizophrenic experience of time and the need for stillness through freezing the moment. In the first part of the chapter there will be a discussion on rhythms of everyday life explaining how the individual time is sacrificed to alienation and commodification. In the second part of the chapter, attention will be given to blinding effect of "visual noise" in the media and its impact on the individual and contemporary civilization. In the third part Deleuzian concepts of "affect" and "variation", namely the response the individual gives to outside stimuli and the effect it creates on our power of existence will be evaluated. In the following part the connection between affection and memory will be established via their relation with moment. It will be argued throughout the chapter that contemporary capitalist system with its strategies on time results in the loss of the present on both social and individual levels. Stillness in contemporary art, in this sense, allows for the individual to reestablish a link with time and the present affection when she/he encounters with the work of art representing a frozen moment.

²³ David Martin Jones, "Movement-Images, Time-Images and Hybrid Images in Cinema," 97.

The second chapter of the study demonstrates examples in various disciplines in contemporary visual arts that depict a frozen moment. The works in this chapter are divided into two parts according to Robertson's categorization of the works dealing with the issue of time. Following this categorization, the first part deals with the still images and still works that "represent" time as a frozen moment. Here, examples range from Harold Edgerton's strobe lighting photography to Cai Guo Qiang's installations with stuffed animals. The second part, on the other hand demonstrates the video works that "embodies" time as a medium of the work such as Andy Warhol's *Empire* or Fischli and Weiss's *Der Lauf Der Dinge (The Way Things Go)*. In the third part of the chapter, the Bullet Time Effect will be analyzed as a method of slowness the Hollywood cinema employs to create Movement-Images.

The third chapter focuses specifically on stillness in sculpture and Serkan Özkaya's *A Sudden Gust of Wind*, an installation that constructs the frozen moment that demonstrates a group of A4 papers were caught flitting on the air as a result of a sudden wind. While the first part of the chapter gives a selective summary of the issue of time and movement in sculpture since the early modern period, the second part deals with the creation of the "immersive mode", a concept developed by Ina Blom in installation with reference to works of Borre Saethre. The final part of the chapter analyzes Serkan Özkaya's work as an example showing what is imperceptible in normal speed.

The first part of the last chapter of the study on painting discusses the issue of movement and time in painting with reference to E. H. Gombrich's 2009 article *Moment and Movement in Art* with reflections on contemporary painting. The second part, on the other hand, investigates the role of the image in Pop Art. Finally the third part "What is A Perfect Moment" concentrates on Leyla Gediz's works. In this part, it will be claimed that Leyla Gediz's works by illustrating perfect moments from everyday life as the "privileged instants" directly addresses our collective memory and therefore successful in establishing a relationship with the audience through affection.

CHAPTER 1

Contemporary Society and Need For Stillness

Introduction

In contemporary media, freezing time for a moment seems like an effective strategy for making a particular moment “visible” and “perceptible” in an era where the individual is paralyzed with the amount of visual information almost to the degree of “visual blindness”. In contemporary art as well, stillness is almost a mainstream instrument today especially in painting, sculpture and installation for framing time and directing the attention to a particular moment which is characterized by different layers of meaning.

Development of freezing the moment as a strategy of visibility is inevitably related to the contemporary society’s experience of time as something which escapes from control, something which is commoditized. Therefore, subjective time in this era turns up as a phenomenon that has to be reevaluated within the context of everyday rhythms of capitalism. The outcome of such an evaluation, as it will be discussed in this chapter, suggests that the velocity of everyday rhythms and commodification of time (namely understanding of time in terms of its market value) alienate the individual from subjective time and prevent any authentic perception and experience of it.

Besides, the individual today experiences a “schizophrenic present”, a present which does not have a proper place in the linear understanding of history. That present is embedded with bad replicas of the past and experienced as “synchronic immanence”, namely as both past and present. Moreover, it is also served as a fetishized commodity in today’s society as if it is an alternative to the fast flow of everyday life and timelessness.

In this context, freezing the moment in contemporary art may serve for two purposes. First, it allows the viewer to experience immediacy not as a schizophrenic present but as a moment visible and perceptible. Second, it creates an illusion of individual ability to cope with the speed of everyday rhythm and inconceivable totality in postmodern condition. Interestingly, modernity and post-modernity not only

dominate subjective time but also equip the individual with the tools to oppose such domination. Invention of tube colors which enabled the artist to work outdoor and depict the moment in nature as “impressions” and invention of photography are the developments in 19th century that allowed for the individual to construct subjective time by capturing the moment. Correspondingly today, digital photography enables an ordinary individual to capture any moment and materialize it as subjective and collective memory.

How then, the specificity of a particular moment is decided and what kind of a relationship do we establish with the work of art that depicts a particular moment? Deleuze’s concept of affection is functional in understanding what a “privileged moment” is and how the artist or the audience is influenced by it. Drawing upon the concept of affection, it will be argued in this chapter that the way we are affected from external stimuli and the variation this affection creates in our power of existence determines the specificity of the moment we experience. Individual memory plays an important role here since the subject’s reaction to the external stimuli is decided by the characteristics of the subject affected rather than the characteristics of the effecting body. What the artwork does in that sense is to make visible the moment that is captured by the artists as a result of a subjective process and open it to collective experience.

In this context, the first two parts of this chapter concentrates on the sociological reasons behind the need for freezing the moment in contemporary society. The following parts, on the other hand, focuses on how a frozen moment is constructed subjectively as a privileged instant through affection, variation and memory.

2. 1. Rhythm and Schizophrenia

Lefebvre states that at the modern era, which comes after the French revolution “a new society was installed: that socio-economic organization of our urban-State-market society.”²⁴ In this society, “The commodity prevails over everything. (Social) space and

²⁴ Henri Lefebvre, *Rhythmanalysis: Space, Time and Everyday Life* (New York:

(Social) time is dominated by exchanges, become the time and space of the markets; although not being things but including rhythms, they enter into products.”²⁵ The rhythm therefore, becomes an important factor of how we establish our relationship with the thing which is commoditized within the existing system of relations of production. The rhythm dictates itself on everyday life and as a result everyday life becomes a function of “hourly demands”, “systems of transport,” and “repetitive organization”.²⁶ As a result, everyday organization of the time of the individual is commoditized and becomes a function of the larger rhythm surrounding the society. To put it differently, relying on the Marxist theory of alienation which suggests the final alienation of the individual to his/her own life as a result of alienation to the production process and to the commodity produced, Lefebvre emphasizes that just like the thing which lost its authentic value, the time also escapes from the control of the individual, loses its authentic value and meaning and becomes subordinated to the larger rhythm of everyday life. In this system, “Things matter little; the thing is only a metaphor, divulged by discourse, divulging representations that conceal the production of repetitive time and space. The thing has no more existence than pure identity (which the thing symbolizes materially). There are only things and people.”²⁷ That is to say, the metaphor and discourse around the thing makes us blind to the rhythm and its repetition through representation which makes impossible the authentic relationship between the individual and the thing.

In the postmodern period as well, the value of time and “the identity of the thing” is equated with its commodity value shaped by repetitive time and space.²⁸ Moreover, To Jameson, the postmodern culture today “has become fully integrated into community production in general, annulling its oppositional and critical stance.”²⁹ The understanding of time, however, changes in two different levels. Bertens states that in

Continuum, 2004), 6.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid. 7.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Frederic Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*. (Durham, NC: Duke University Press. 1991), 4, quoted in Sean Homer, *Frederic Jameson*. In *Postmodernism: The Key Figures*, edited by Johannes W. Bertens, Hans Bertens and Joseph Natoli, (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002), 184.

Postmodernism and Consumer Society, Jameson defines two different characteristics about time in the postmodern period; first we lost our sense of history and second our perception of temporality became schizophrenic. On the first level, namely on history, Jameson problematizes our perception of the present and the past by looking at the movies with contemporary settings and nostalgic references. He argues that, in several films he analyzes, although the films are reflecting the present, their content and narrative structure is very much an imitation of a nostalgic past without any “satiric impulse”.³⁰

Jameson suggests that films such as *Body Heat* or *Chinatown* are examples of pastiche since they imitate an “eternal ‘30’s...beyond history” in a Film Noire narrative.³¹ He finds the juxtaposition of the past and the present in these movies as an important symptom showing that the postmodern society lost its sense of history:

...we were unable today to focus our own present, as though we have become incapable of achieving aesthetic representations of our own current experience. But if that is so, then it is a terrible indictment of consumer capitalism itself-or at the very least, an alarming and pathological symptom of a society that has become incapable of dealing with time and history.³²

On the second level, he suggests that this confusion about the understanding of history is similar to schizophrenic perception of temporality. Deploying Lacanian definition of Schizophrenia as a failure to enter into the symbolic order, he shows that the postmodern perception of temporality is fractured like a schizophrenic’s experience of temporality. The schizophrenic who can not position himself as an I in the symbolic order (or language), with reference to the Name of the Father, also fails to place past, recent and future in a linear order and therefore experiences both past and present as the present. The postmodern experience of time in that sense is also fixated to the present and “twin features of pastiche and schizophrenia result in postmodernism’s pervasive

³⁰ Sean Homer, “Frederic Jameson,” in *Postmodernism: The Key Figures*, edited by Johannes W. Bertens, Hans Bertens and Joseph Natoli (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002), 113.

³¹ *Ibid.* 116-117.

³² *Ibid.* 117.

flattening of space and the displacement of diachronic time with synchronic immanence.”³³

In *End of Temporality*, Jameson goes on to argue that “This situation has been characterized as a dramatic and alarming shrinkage of existential time and the reduction to a present that hardly qualifies as such any longer, given the virtual effacement of that past and future that can alone define a present in the first place.”³⁴ By existential time Jameson means the time of the modern era in which the bourgeois subject reaching for its existential presence in everyday experience. In the postmodern era however, the existential time evolves into multi-presents where the mass population is now perceived as the Other.³⁵

Together with the unevenness in economic development around the world and centrifugal spatial structure that divides the world into cores and peripheries, this multi-presents multiplies and comes to a point where each individual experiences a unique time oriented toward becoming, different than the existential time which presumes the being of the Cartesian subject.³⁶ As a result, the present in the postmodern period is experienced more intensely and more diversely due to the departure from the existential time and the schizophrenic perception of temporality.³⁷

The discourse on “living the moment”, therefore is a product of the postmodern period, where individual existence is reduced to the present. Interestingly but not surprisingly, as Jameson puts it, this reduction of time into present inevitably implies a

³³ Sean Homer, “Frederic Jameson,” 182-183.

³⁴ Frederic Jameson, “The End of Temporality,” *Critical Inquiry* 29(4) (Summer, 2003): 708.

³⁵ *Ibid.* 709.

³⁶ Referencing Withrow, Radstone argues that, “In the nineteenth century...interest focused on ‘becoming,’ rather than on ‘being’ and ‘the idea of temporal succession came to assume greater importance in human life and thought than ever before’, giving rise to ‘the evolution of the novel and a spate of autobiographies.’ (1988, 171) in Susannah Radstone, *The Sexual Politics of Time: Confession, Nostalgia, Memory* (London: Routledge, 2007), 5.

³⁷ Homer states that what was lacked in Jameson’s analysis “was any indication or analysis of the group, institutional, regional, or national forms of mediation that might intervene between them, that is to say, forms of mediation that at once shape individual identities and subjectivity and at the same time provide the space for political resistance to the otherwise relentless logic of reification.” in Homer, “Frederic Jameson,” 186.

stress on the body and the bodily pleasures. However, it is also never possible for human beings to only experience a continuous present, since they are far from enjoying such phenomenological immediacy like animals:

...the historical tendency of late capitalism-what we have called the reduction to the present and the reduction to the body-is in any case unrealizable; human beings cannot revert to the immediacy of the animal kingdom (assuming indeed the animals themselves enjoy such phenomenological immediacy). There is a resistance to this pressure, which I hesitate to call natural for political as well as philosophical reasons, for the identification of such a tendency and the organization of resistance to it are not matters to be entrusted to any confidence in humanist reflexes.³⁸

Therefore, the human being, because of his/her mental capacity or consciousness is not familiar with such immediacy. Moreover, the “dialectic relation between immediate perception and inconceivable totality”³⁹ forces the postmodern individual to catch up with new immediacies which is behind the limits of human capacity.

In this context, freezing the moment in contemporary art may serve for two purposes. First, it allows the viewer to experience immediacy by not reducing it to a schizophrenic present but making the moment visible and perceptible. Second, it creates an illusion of the ability to cope with the inconceivable rhythm and totality in postmodern condition. Within the structural rhythm of everyday life, freezing the moment opens up a new space to establish an immediate contact with the moment depicted in the work of art and therefore, satisfies the postmodern need for the continuous present. The present experienced by the freezing of the moment, however, is not a schizophrenic present described by Jameson, but a response to it since the frozen moment represent a linear flow of events, a past and present on the mental level that constructs the moment. Therefore, stillness achieved by freezing the moment functions as a cure to the schizophrenic temporality by making the moment visible and part of the memory. In that respect, it is also a strategy to deal with the velocity of the structural rhythm and inconceivable totality. However, on a more general level, the image produced by freezing the moment at the end, is inevitably another commodity that adds

³⁸ Frederic Jameson, “The End of Temporality,” 717.

³⁹ Homer, “Frederic Jameson,” 186.

up to the pile of cultural images that the individual has to deal with in everyday life, again in a structural speed. .

The need for slow motion and the need for freezing the moment, therefore, is the revelation of the need to stop for a moment and concentrate on a particular image. Still or moving, this image allows for a better understanding of the object, space, time and the movement depicted. It is possible to argue that in an age where reproduction and pastiche kill the uniqueness and originality of the work of art, these characteristics are replaced in the postmodern era by the uniqueness and original depiction of the moment captured. In this sense, freezing the moment allows the artist to pick up a particular image from the fast forward flow of everyday life, make it visible, transform it, and elevate it to a higher level by declaring it as beautiful.

2.2. “Visual Noise” and “Civilization of Blindness”

How then, the importance or the specificity of a moment is decided? The character of the images produced in the contemporary media gives a clue about the answer to this question. As Giovanni Anceschi points out “As to what more directly and specifically concerns *images*, it is increasingly less *figures* and more often *stimuli* that are activated to produce immediate reactions such as conditioned reflexes...”⁴⁰ To him, in the contemporary world we are like war pilots stuck in a cockpit responding to the control panel by giving already defined reactions to the “events already have been anticipated in the software.” In such an environment, where the human being is treated almost like an automata whose only concern is to survive in a competitive environment, the result is a need to escape from the “excess of visual noise.”⁴¹ As Anceschi and Cullars argue, in this “civilization of blindness” we are also blind to other excesses such as information: “We no longer go to exhibitions, but read reviews of them instead. Rather than reading books, we rush through summaries, or even consult lists of

⁴⁰ Giovanni Anceschi and John Cullars, “Visibility in Progress,” *Design Issues* 12(3) (Autumn,1996): 4.

⁴¹ Ibid.

"keywords."⁴² Anceschi and Cullars make similar observations on the production and dissemination of scientific knowledge as well. He claims that scientific knowledge is produced "far from the public" secretly and is demonstrated in the media as a "spectacle" as Fabbri calls it. The logic of spectacle works through distorting the framework of knowledge and at the end impoverishes "what it seeks to elucidate."⁴³ As a result of that:

Images appear to be losing their thickness, that is, the depth of their possible meanings. A single figure could be analyzed and interpreted for hours but, instead of that, images now are flattening out; becoming partially worked inert matter, refuse, and residue for a continuous superficial collage. Informatic devices and electronic technologies produce a global effect of unreality, generating the illusion of dematerialization. Everything appears to happen as if by magic, in a flat space, or even in the depths of a virtual space. In any case, it is a space lacking consistency and corporeality.

As a result, there are three main characteristics of the images (still or moving) produced today, related to this study: that they are produced to create immediate and conditioned reactions, they are superficial in content and that they create an illusion of dematerialization.

2. 3. Affect and Variation

In Courses on Spinoza⁴⁴, Deleuze talks about two different concepts of Spinoza that are critical in this study to understand the reason behind the production and consumption of stillness in contemporary art: *affectio* and *affectus*; *affect* and *affection*. The meaning and the position of both terms are defined with respect to the concept of *idea* in philosophy. What differentiates the idea from affect is that the *Idea* is a representation of a *thing*.⁴⁵ It is a representational "mode of thinking", while affection is

⁴² Ibid. 5

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Gilles Deleuze, "Lecture Transcripts on Spinoza's Concept of Affect: Cours Vincennes; 24/01/1978" Webdeleuze. <http://www.webdeleuze.com/php/texte.php?cle=14&groupe=Spinoza&langue=2> (accessed, October, 2009).

⁴⁵ Deleuze points out that from the Middle Ages to the 17th century, an idea was used in order to represent material reality. In Ibid.

a nonrepresentational mode. Affect corresponds to a feeling such as love, hate or hope which does not represent anything. There are objects that the feelings are directed to, however, these feelings correspond to “nothing strictly”:

Every mode of thought insofar as it is non-representational will be termed affect. A volition, a will implies, in all rigor, that I will something, and what I will is an object of representation, what I will is given in an idea, but the fact of willing is not an idea, it is an affect because it is a non-representational mode of thought.⁴⁶

Since an object is needed for affection Spinoza supposes “the primacy of the idea over the affect” like all other 17th century philosophers Deleuze says.⁴⁷ However, Deleuze warns us by saying that “That the affect presupposes the idea above all does not mean that it is reduced to the idea or to a combination of ideas.”⁴⁸ That is to say, ideas create in us affection, but affection can not be reduced to ideas. When we come across to an object, or a body as Deleuze says, an idea occurs in our mind which evokes in us affection.

On the other hand, what happens inside us is not just the succession of ideas. Apart from the flow of ideas, there is another flow inside us which “never ceases to vary” and as Deleuze cites from Spinoza this is: “(variation) of [the] force of existing, or potentia agendi, the power [puissance] of acting...”⁴⁹ Therefore, depending on the thought the ideas affirms in us, there appears a change also in our power of existence. This continuous change which is called variation is a line created by moments of affection which are generated by the ideas that occurs as a result of our perception of the eternal stimuli.

...to the extent that an idea replaces another, I never cease to pass from one degree of perfection to another, however miniscule the difference, and this kind of melodic line of continuous variation will define affect (affectus) in its correlation with ideas and at the same time in its difference in nature from ideas. We account for this difference in nature and this correlation. It's up to you to say whether it agrees with you or not. We have got an entirely more solid definition of affectus;

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

affectus in Spinoza is variation (he is speaking through my mouth; he didn't say it this way because he died too young...), continuous variation of the force of existing, insofar as this variation is determined by the ideas one has.⁵⁰

Variation, which is equal to affectus and composed of “affection ideas”, therefore, is a determinant of our power of existence. Deleuze affirms that at each instant, the power of existence is “completely fulfilled”, either “in the mode of sadness or the mode of joy”, or “also both at once, since it’s well understood that, in the sub-relations which compose us, a part of ourselves can be composed of sadness and another part of ourselves can be composed of joy. There are local sadnesses and local joys.”⁵¹

Following Spinoza Deleuze argues that sadness and joy are the two poles of the spectrum of affections we have. This almost mathematic description might be compared analogically to the continuous flow of sound waves acting within certain limits. An affect functions like a sound wave whose character is determined by the level of its frequency. When there is more than one affection felt, what determines the dominant feeling is the strength of each affection just like the decibel levels of the sounds heard by the audience. In this case, sub-relations correspond to the pitches heard in weaker decibels.

However, we also have to keep in mind that mostly in our daily lives we are not totally conscious of or pay attention to this internal flow of power of existence just like we do not pay attention to the sounds we hear. How am I feeling at the moment or to which direction my feelings are changing to, are questions that would necessitate concentration to the psyche which would prevent one from concentrating on the routines and requirements of everyday life. However, there are times when we are alerted due to the strong impact that some experiences in variation and we mark those moments as privileged moments consciously or unconsciously and record them in our memory for a later recall. Thus, the degree and character of affection that occurs in us when we encounter an image or an art work depicting a moment is very much related to our past experiences and set of mind. Such works may evoke in us affection either as joy or grief. An ordinary instant then suddenly becomes a “privileged instant”; according to the strength of the "variation" it creates in us. The peak of the variation, either as a decrease or increase in our "power of existence" might be the reason why we

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

want to look at the image which depicts a specific moment. (The concepts of the privileged instant will be discussed in the following section.)

That is not to say that, all art created creates or should create such an effect. There are other categories of *idea* suggested by Deleuze that evokes changes in variation. To Deleuze, “affection-idea” is the first sort of ideas and is the lowest level of knowledge. The reason why these ideas are the lowest type of knowledge is that they do not give explanations; they do not reveal any laws of causality. Since, they create an affect determined by eternal stimuli they do not help the formation of any type of consciousness, on the contrary, they might do the opposite if they are not approached consciously. The notion is the second sort of idea Deleuze puts forward and “is raised to the comprehension of the cause, that is if the mixture has such and such effect, this is by virtue of the nature of the relation of the two bodies considered and of the manner in which the relation of one of the bodies is combined with the relation of the other body.”⁵²

That is to say, an idea might also lead us to understand causality different from the affection-idea which leaves us only with the result of our encounter with another body. In contemporary arts today, as audiences we also employ notion in order to fully grasp the meaning out of the art work. Concerning the works depicting the moment in contemporary art, especially the titles of the works might make such mental practice necessary. In some of the works depicting a particular moment, as it will be discussed in the last chapter, the title reveals another level of meaning different than what the image directly suggest and most of the time this meaning suggests a causal relationship or the relationship between the image and the title suggests such a relationship.

2.4. “Any-Instant-Whatever” or the “Privileged Instant”?

“What moments specifically do we aim to capture?” is a critical question to understand the role of stillness in contemporary art today. Are there really any unique moments in life and how do we decide on the uniqueness of any moment? The answer to the questions seems to be found in Deleuze’s utilization of the concepts “privileged instant” and “any-instant-whatever” in *Cinema I: The Movement Image*.

⁵² Gilles Deleuze, “Lecture Transcripts on Spinoza’s Concept of Affect: Cours Vincennes; 24/01/1978”.

At the first chapter of the book, Deleuze directs our attention to the major illusion Bergson has about perception of movement in *Creative Evolution*. To him, Bergson's illusion is "reconstituting movement from instants or positions."⁵³ Bergson assumes that movement is instants and positions following each other in space and cinema is reproduction of that process "which works with two complementary givens: instantaneous sections which are called images; and a movement or a time which is impersonal, uniform, abstract, invisible, or imperceptible, which is 'in' the apparatus and with which the images are made to pass consecutively."⁵⁴ Deleuze however, opposes to this perception of movement and suggests that movement should not be understood as a result of position changes in space but as a phenomenon that changes the Whole, namely an open system that changes through movement, and determines time. Therefore, movement is not succession of instants but a determinant of instants and can not be reduced to a change in time and space.

An analysis of Bergson's illusion of movement however is fundamental in understanding how movement and stillness is depicted in the work of art. Based on Bergson's analysis, Deleuze points out how movement is perceived differently in Antiquity and Modern times. He states that in antiquity "movement refers to intelligible elements, Forms or Ideas which are themselves eternal and immobile."⁵⁵ These Forms and Ideas are reflected in the art works as "poses" or "privileged instants as in a dance."⁵⁶

In the modern era, on the other hand, although movement "was still recomposed, it was *no longer recomposed from formal transcendental elements (poses), but from immanent material elements (sections)*."⁵⁷ Different from antiquity, in the modern era, movement was supposed to be composed of "any-instant-whatever"s⁵⁸. Any-instant-whatevers are equally distant sections that make a moving image like 24 images that makes movement in cinema. To Deleuze, this change in understanding of movement is a result of industrialization, mechanical movement and advances in moving images. The

⁵³ Deleuze, *Cinema 1*, 3

⁵⁴ Henri Bergson, *Creative Evolution* Translated by Arthur Mitchel. (New York: Henri Holt and Company, 1911), 322 in Deleuze, *Cinema 1*, 1.

⁵⁵ Deleuze, *Cinema 1*, 4

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ "Any-instant-whatever is the instant which is equidistant from another." in Ibid. 6.

main differences between the understanding of movement in modernity and antiquity are as follows:

The latter is the order of transcendental forms which are actualized in a movement, while former is the production and confrontation of singular points which are immanent to movement. Now this production of singularities (the qualitative leap) is achieved by the accumulation of banalities (quantitative process), so that the singular is taken from the any-whatever, and is itself an any-whatever which is simply non-ordinary and non-regular.⁵⁹

Today, there are still images in the form of long exposures, some of which are poses and there are images which look as if they are part of a more ordinary system, system of any-instant whatevers. However, the images that depict a freezing moment present that moment as a privileged instant, not in the form of poses that represent an ideal, but as a special moment selected from a collection of moments from ordinary life.

This is similar to watching a video film and pressing pause to freeze your favorite scene in a movie. It is also similar to a narrator's selecting particular moments to tell a story. Conventional cinema does the same thing by stressing particular moments as well. Looking at Eisenstein's cinema Deleuze states that "Eisenstein extracted from movements or developments certain moments of crises, which he made the subject of the cinema par excellence."⁶⁰ However, these moments, be it "regular *or* singular, ordinary *or* remarkable"⁶¹ are different from "long exposures (poses)"⁶² of Antiquity and are still any-instant-whatevers according to Deleuze, because they do not carry any transcendental meaning. This is very much the same in contemporary art today, where the artist picks up a particular moment which he/she wants to point out.

2.5. Moment and Memory

Since affection is determined by the affected body's perception of the external stimuli, Spinoza infers that "the affection indicates the nature of the affected body much

⁵⁹ Ibid. 6

⁶⁰ Ibid. 5

⁶¹ Ibid. 6

⁶² Ibid. 5

more than it does the nature of the affecting body.”⁶³ How does then affection indicate “the nature of the affected body”? As it is stated earlier, external stimuli does not create the same effect on everybody since the mental and physical condition of the person as a whole determines the reaction to the affecting body.

Personal memory is one of the most important factors that form this reaction. “In Matter and Memory, Bergson argues that memories are not stored in our brains but, rather, that the past is a virtual store of time. When we remember events from our past, he argues, we travel virtually within this massive virtual vault of past times, seeking out memories and recollections.”⁶⁴ This virtual vault of past times, therefore, works as a virtual store of references that the mind applies when encountered with an affecting body. In *Deleuze Reframed*, Suttan and Martin-Jones argues that Proust's novel, *In Search of Lost Time* “takes Bergson's ideas a step further, and shows how involuntary memory can facilitate a sudden leap back into the virtual past. Proust demonstrates how recollections can be brought involuntarily on by smells, sounds, tastes or bodily postures, and uses the example of the taste of a cake, called Madeleine, which suddenly transports the narrator back in time to memories of his childhood.”⁶⁵

The artwork which freezes the moment functions similar to these stimuli. Although this process does not happen on a conscious level, what decides the characteristic of the affection or change in variation when a depiction of a still moment is confronted is to some extent determined by the references we pick from the virtual collection of memories. The present we are experiencing at that time as actual reality therefore “is really a snapshot or freeze frame of the perpetual process of virtual becoming that is duration.”⁶⁶ Inevitably, therefore, present is a process of giving meaning to past and the future. As Suttan explains affection is a subjective constitution of duration out of the memory:

What we call the instant, then, is in fact psychologically felt as we try to make sense of the time that will come and the time we have been through. The instant is a kind of pure subjectivity called affection, often misunderstood as perception.”

⁶³ Gilles Deleuze, “Lecture Transcripts on Spinoza’s Concept of Affect: Cours Vincennes”.

⁶⁴ Damian Suttan and David Martin-Jones, *Deleuze Reframed*, (London: I.B. Tauris, 2008): 86-87.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid. 89.

Affection divides the past and the future because it also divides matter and intention, cause and effect, as a series of subjectivities, as impurities 'alloyed' to perception. Here, Deleuze is relying on Bergson's interest in our absolutely basic existence as bodies in time. Matter, the material world, creates needs or choices upon which we act. An example of this is hunger as a need subjectivity, which makes a 'hole in the continuity of things'⁶⁷ ...For Deleuze, however, the most significant role taken in this series is that of memory, which is always with us, and without which we would not be able to pass from need, through brain and affection, to contraction. We therefore live constantly within the 'cerebral interval', the gap between affection and contraction, and that gap is filled to bursting with memory.⁶⁸ For Deleuze, then, the usefulness in Bergson's work is demonstrated in the realization that not only are we constantly living in memory, but also that memory itself is the past that we carry with us as a living present: memory as virtual coexistence.⁶⁹

The role of memory as a virtual coexistence therefore is crucial in understanding how the link between matter and affection works. It is what makes the human experience personal. How then a consensus is created on what a privileged moment is? Why do we look at the same image of a frozen moment and effected similarly? Namely, are there any universal principles that make a privileged instant or a perfect moment?

Our memories which are composed of a compilation again of privileged instants may not be as personal as we think since there seems to appear a link between the specificity of the moment and the commonality of the human experience. What do we (in the parts of the world where contemporary Western rationality and style of life is dominant) experience in our lives that motivates the artist to freeze the moment and the audience to look at the frozen moment? The sociological reasons that have been discussed until now in this essay might be summarized as: the speed almost all we experience in everyday life and the need for slowing down the pace of life and concentrating on the moment; need to escape from the ephemeral nature of virtual life and experience materiality; artists will to freeze the moment of affection and make that particular moment (a real or an imaginary memory) more visible and generate a collective experience of that moment; and the audience's relationship of affection with the work of art that depicts a frozen moment.

⁶⁷ Gilles Deleuze, *Bergsonism* (1966), trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (New York, NY: Zone, 1997): 53, in Suttin, 117-118.

⁶⁸ Gilles Deleuze, *Bergsonism* (1966), trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (New York, NY: Zone, 1997): 53, in Suttin, 117-118.

⁶⁹ Suttin, 117-118.

Conclusion

As it is stated in this chapter, subjective time is a function of capitalized time and therefore devoid of authentic value. Moreover, in today's society we are not concentrating on our own present but instead through the discourse on living the moment we search for an illusion of immediacy, devoid of a diachronic approach to history. Immediacy, on the other hand, is never possible because of the speed of everyday rhythm and inconceivable totality. Stillness as freezing the moment, in this sense, creates an illusion of catching up with the flow of time and functions as a cure to the schizophrenic temporality by making the moment visible and one more time part of the subjective memory.

A privileged instant is the moment which creates in the individual an affection that generates a high variation in the power of existence. Memory is an important determinant in the creation of a "privileged instant" because the subject reacts to the external stimuli with reference to his/her own past experiences. Such a connection through affection is one of the reasons why we are thrilled by the artwork that represents a frozen moment.

Although in the contemporary media today images are produced to create immediate and conditioned reactions and they are superficial in content, by concentrating on a specific moment which is depicted in the art work, we get the chance to fully grasp the meaning out of the moment by employing "notion" as a mental tool. Concerning the works depicting the moment in contemporary art, especially the ambiguous relation between the content and the title might make such mental practice necessary.

CHAPTER 2

Capturing the Moment in Contemporary Visual Arts

Introduction

In contemporary visual arts time is an important theme to work on. There are different strategies employed by the artists in various disciplines to capture the moment and make visible the instant and duration. In 2010 book *Themes of Contemporary Art: Visual Art After 1980*, Robertson and McDaniel analyze the most recent developments in contemporary art around main thematic concepts such as Identity, Body, Place etc. with references to brand new works and literature. The chapter on Time analyzes several "artistic strategies" that "represent" or "embody" time. Representation is defined in the chapter as "the symbolic process by which an artwork refers to a subject beyond itself"⁷⁰. Heide Fasnacht's *Demo* (2000) is the example the author gives for this category. In this chapter, a broader selection of examples will be demonstrated varying from photography to video and sculpture to show how representation of time may give different results using different methods.

Embodiment, on the other hand is defined by Robertson as "integration of time itself in to the actual piece"⁷¹ Kinetic art, process art, film, video and television works are considered by the author under this category. In this chapter, some video works which embodies time as duration will be analyzed comparatively.

Finally, The Bullet Time effect will be demonstrated as an advanced example showing how the strategies of stillness in visual realm are incorporated by the mainstream cinema to reproduce the movement-image.

2.1. Representation of Moment

Representation of the moment has been a common theme in art in general since the very early examples of figure drawing such as the cave paintings. It has been a major instrument in narration of important events, a tool for transferring memory. In contemporary art as well, depiction of moment has a similar function, namely making

⁷⁰ Jean Robertson and Craig McDaniel. *Themes of Contemporary Art: Visual Art After 1980* (London, New York: Oxford University Press: 2009): 36.

⁷¹ Ibid.

visible and transferring a “privileged moment”. Fasnacht's *Demo* (Figure 1) is a sculpture that Robertson gives as an example to the works representing a particular moment. The work depicts from different materials such as neoprene and Styrofoam the collapse of an apartment building. The works Fasnacht make however are various in subject and as Nancy Princenthal states the artist since 1997 has been “making sculptures and drawings that depict explosions of all kinds, from sneezes to volcanic eruptions-events too sudden, violent and self-consuming to be easily visualized.”⁷² By creating modals of explosions, the artist focuses our attention on the materiality of the event and allows us to establish a more immediate relation with the moment of occurrence which the audience can not achieve by observation in actual speed.



Figure 1. Heide Fasnacht, *Demo*, 2000, neoprene, Styrofoam, pigment, approx. 9½ by 10½ by 10 feet; at Bill Maynes Gallery, New York.

Below is a drawing by the artist demonstrating sneeze. Princenthal states that “sneezes interested Fasnacht mostly because they fall at the threshold of visibility, in

⁷² Nancy Princenthal, “Heide Fasnacht: Exploded View,” *Art in America*, (February, 2001), 125.

the realm of things that, while not imperceptible, are more or less impossible to visualize in any stable, conventional way.”⁷³ We can also talk about then, based on Princental’s observation that there is a “visual pleasure” also in looking at the frozen frame or the slow motion of an event, the eye would not capture otherwise.



Figure 2. Heide Fasnacht, Sneeze 1, 1997, Graphite on Paper, 40x60 inch, Kent Gallery, New York.⁷⁴

Naoya Hatekayema’s Blast series is a recent example in photography that demonstrates the potential beauty hidden in explosions. By creating and recording small explosions on the earth surface, the artist suggests a new landscape that is not visible with the naked eye. In this respect, the human intervention that creates the speed and action, this time allows the artist and the viewer to stop the speed and visualize a new formation with the use of photography.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Kent Gallery, http://www.kentgallery.com/artists/fasnacht_key_01.html (accessed, September, 2009)



Figure 3. Naoya Hatakeyama, *Blast # 5707*, 1998, Series: Blast, C-Print, 100x150 cm, Japan⁷⁵



Figure 4. Naoya Hatakeyama, *Blast # 5416*, 1998, Series: Blast, C-print, 100x150cm, Japan⁷⁶

⁷⁵ Prix Pictet, “Shortlist 2009, Naoya Hatakeyama,”
<http://www.prixpictet.com/2009/view/574/5575>

⁷⁶ Prix Pictet, “Shortlist 2009, Naoya Hatakeyama,”
<http://www.prixpictet.com/2009/view/574/5576>

Photography's history as an instrument recording objects in high speed goes back to the 30's. Invention of strobe flash by Harold Edgerton in the 1930's allowed the photographer to capture the movement of high speed objects or motion that would not be otherwise visible. Below is one of the most famous photographs of Edgerton where the famous golf player Densmore Shute's beautiful curved motion while hitting a ball becomes visible. In this photograph, Shute's "torso dissolves into a ghostly shape, superimposed on itself 50 times by the flashing strobe."⁷⁷

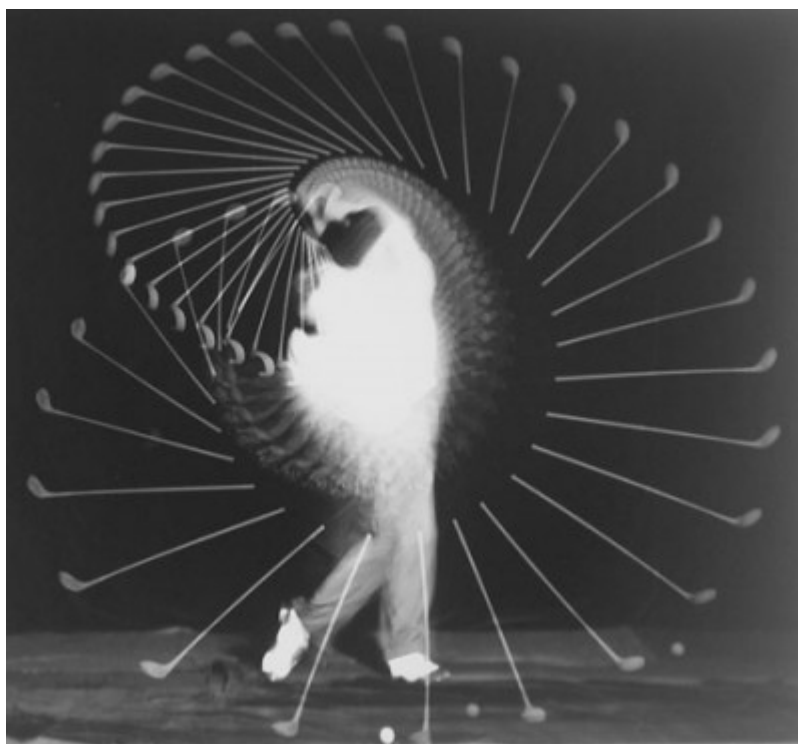


Figure 5. Dr Harold Edgerton, *Densmore Shute Bends the Shaft*, 1938, Silver Gelatin Print © Dr Harold Edgerton⁷⁸

In experimental video as well, there are several attempts to freeze the cinematographic movement. Peter Weibel's *Imaginary Water Sculpture* in 1971(Figure

⁷⁷Michael Hoppen

Gallery http://www.michaelhoppengallery.com/artist,show,1,41,44,167,0,0,0,0,dr_harold_edgerton_densmore_shute_bends_the_shaft,.html (accessed, September, 2009)

⁷⁸ Michael Hoppen

Gallery http://www.michaelhoppengallery.com/artist,show,1,41,44,167,0,0,0,0,dr_harold_edgerton_densmore_shute_bends_the_shaft (accessed, September, 2009)

6) is a perfect example for that and how the freezing of the moment allows for the audience to capture the moment in the flow of time. Peter Weibel states that "While in natural surroundings the movement of water has vanished in time, television technology allows it to be held fast in space. The volume that water has attained in the air, and which I trace here, results in an imaginary water sculpture that is visible and notable only on a TV screen. The TV set as space/time switch."⁷⁹ By just clicking the pause on the remote control, the artist selects and freezes the moment he wishes, this time in a more controlled environment compared to photography since the moment to be frozen is already hidden in a duration already captured by the video-camera. This also allows the artist to rewind and forward and pick exactly the image he/she wishes without giving much effort.



Figure 6. Peter Weibel, *Imaginary Water Sculpture*, 1971. Videostill⁸⁰

⁷⁹ Media Art Net, <http://www.mediaartnet.org/works/imaginaere-wasserskulptur/> (accessed, June, 2009)

⁸⁰ Media Art Net, <http://www.medienkunstnetz.de/works/imaginaere-wasserskulptur/> (accessed, June, 2009)

By freezing the moving image on a video screen through a remote control, Weibel also points our attention to the role of the audience on creation of the still image. With his work he shows that only with the freezing of the cinematic motion, we are able to follow the changes in the volume of the water in the air. Because we can change the time, we can also change motion and the space. So, the audience gains the control to decide on the shape of the imaginary sculpture by using the remote control. The work therefore, is an “observer dependent”⁸¹ work different from all other works mentioned in this chapter.

Different from Edgerton’s work however, the attention in this piece is on materiality, namely the volume of water rather than motion. Since Edgerton’s image represents motion, it also inevitably “embodies” time as its subject, as well as the aesthetic value of the motion itself. Therefore we can say that freezing the moment as a representation of actual reality may serve for two purposes which serve for the purpose of satisfying the pleasure of seeing the imperceptible; making visible the volume of the object(s) or events in high speed in a “privileged instant” and making visible the motion in duration by capturing continuously flowing “any-instant-whatevers” in one single frame.

Jeff Wall’s *Milk* in 1984 (Figure 7) is another example in contemporary art that demonstrates visually imperceptible as stillness. Similar to Weibel’s work, *Milk* also focuses our attention on the volume of the fluid frozen in the air. Following Weibel’s argument, it is possible to claim that *Milk* presents an imaginary sculpture as well. However, when the medium changes from video to photography, since duration of the event taking place is not available, the motion has to be imagined.

⁸¹ Claudia Giannetti, “Aesthetics of the Digital: Endo-Aesthetics,” http://www.mediaartnet.org/themes/aesthetics_of_the_digital/endo-aesthetics/11/ (accessed, May. 2009).



Figure 7. Jeff Wall, *Milk*, 1984, Cinematographic photograph, Transparency in lightbox 1870 x 2290 mm, Collection FRAC Champagne–Ardenne, Reims © The artist⁸²

Contemporary art is full of examples of the frozen moment in sculpture as well. In *New Essays on the Psychology of Art*, Arnheim suggests that “the painter offers not a snapshot, but an equivalent. He synthesizes all the salient aspects: the pilgrimage, the arrival, the recognition, the homage, and the blessing; and he translates action and stillness into their pictorial counterparts.”⁸³ The naturalist sculpture as well does the same thing. The contemporary sculpture on the other hand, has an aim beyond naturalistic representation although it uses realistic elements. It uses realistic elements to create unrealistic moments with metaphorical meanings. Examples for this type of work are Cia Guo Qiang’s *Head On* (Figure 8 and 9).

⁸² Tate

Modern, <http://www.tate.org.uk/modern/exhibitions/jeffwall/rooms/room3.shtm> (accessed March, 2009)

⁸³ Rudolf Arnheim. *New Essays on the Psychology of Art*. Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1986, 5, in Lanfranco Aceti, “Stillness: A Violence to the Evolutionary Fluidity of Digital Media?”



Figure 8. Cai Guo Qiang, *Head On*, 2006, Deutsche Guggenheim, Berlin, Germany, photo courtesy of the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum⁸⁴



Figure 9. Cai Guo Qiang, *Head On*, 2006, Deutsche Guggenheim, Berlin, Germany, photo courtesy of the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum⁸⁵

⁸⁴ Howard Halle, "Cai Guo-Qiang, 'I Want to Believe': A Chinese Artist Blows Up Big at Guggenheim," *Time Out New York* 649, Mar. 5-11, 2008, <http://newyork.timeout.com/articles/art/27020/cai-guo-qiang-i-want-to-believe>

2.2. Video and Embodiment of Time

Experimental video is a discipline that provides great opportunities for capturing moment as duration. Andy Warhol's 1964 work *Empire* is a major work in that respect that points the attention on the passage of time. In the movie, Warhol shoots the Empire State building for "8 consecutive hours from dusk till dawn of the following day, shot on the night of the 25th of June 1964 from the 44th floor of the Time Life Building."⁸⁶ Warhol's attempt to capture the duration and how the scenery within the frame changes in different times of the day may be compared to Claude Monet's *Rouen Cathedral* series in 1890's which depicts the cathedral at different hours of the day under different weather conditions, where the painter reflects how the changes in light changes the depiction of the building.

⁸⁵ Image Saint, <http://www.flickr.com/search/?q=head%20on&w=67071642%40N00>

⁸⁶ <http://www.medienkunstnetz.de/works/empire/>

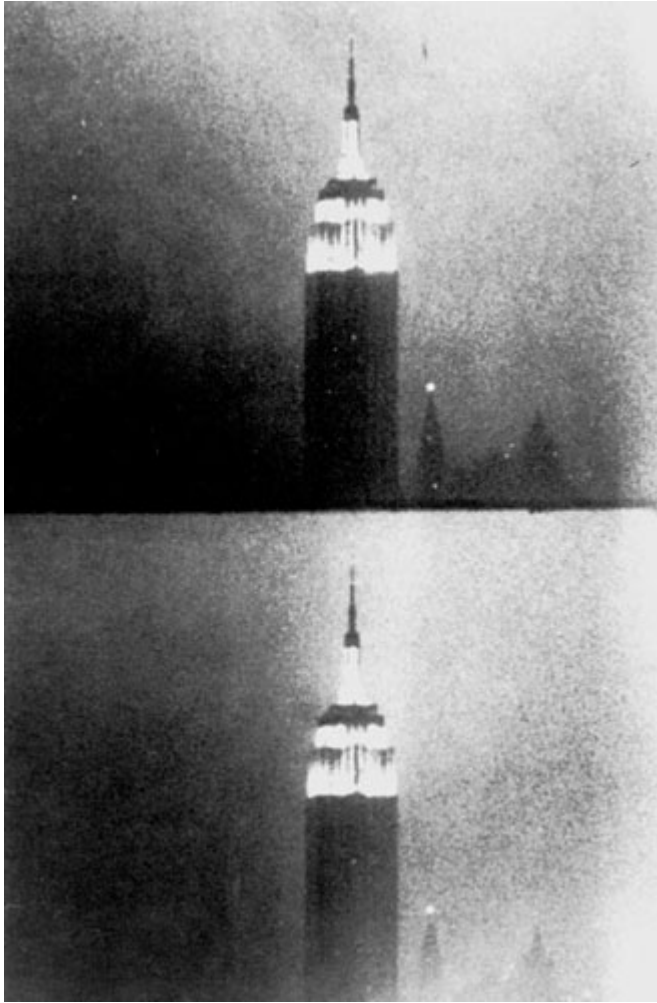


Figure 10. Stills from Andy Warhol, *Empire*, 1964, 16mm film, black and white, silent, 8 hours, 6 minutes (approx.) © The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts⁸⁷

Wolfgang Staehle's *Empire 24/7* in 1999 is homage to Warhol's *Empire*, where a video camera captures a continuous image of the building and sends it online to be shown "as a projected environment in the 1999 exhibit «net_condition» in Karlsruhe, Germany."⁸⁸ What the work implies is the production of "instant images for instant consumption"⁸⁹ like in shops open for 24 hours and 7 days. It is also about the issue of immediacy which was what was not available during Warhol's period.

⁸⁷ Fogel, Amber. "Cronophobia: On Time in the Art of the 1960s." Artcritical.com <http://artcritical.com/bookcritical/AFchronophobia.htm> (accessed, Dec. 2009)

⁸⁸ Staehle, Wolfgang. "Empire 24/7." Media Art Net. <http://www.medienkunstnetz.de/works/empire24-7/> (accessed March, 2009)

⁸⁹ Ibid.

Douglas Gordon's *Five Year Drive-By* in 1995 is another work on duration. The work is a video installation on a Western landscape and it includes a scene from John Wayne's Western movie *the Researchers*. In the movie Wayne is given five years to find a kidnapped child. "Comparing the duration of the film's storyline to the duration of the film, and having five years, seen in relationship to seven weeks as 113 minutes, yield roughly three minutes. Gordon stretches these three minutes to fill the entire 47 days of the exhibition."⁹⁰ So, one second of the original film equals to 6 hours in the video. What the audience sees therefore is only a still image as a result of the very long extension of the film duration. In that sense, what Gordon does is the opposite of speed photography.



Figure 11. Douglas Gordon, *5 year drive-by*, 1995, courtesy: Gagosian Gallery, New York, photography © Douglas Gordon^{91,92}

Fischli and Weiss's 1987 work *Der Lauf Der Dinge (The Way Things Go)* examined in Robertson's book focuses directly on the issue of time and perception.

⁹⁰ Media Art Net. <http://www.medienkunstnetz.de/works/5-year-drive-by/> (accessed May, 2009)

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Ibid.

The work is a 70-100 meter long prepared structure of chain reaction, demonstrating transformation of static energy embedded in objects to kinetic energy. This is a very slow reaction allowing the audience to focus on both the materiality and process, therefore also on movement and duration.



Figure 12. Peter Fischli and Davis Weiss, Still from *Der Lauf Der Dinge*, 1987⁹³

2.3. The Bullet Time Effect and Reproduction of the Movement Image through Slowness

A more advanced and also strangely magnetizing technique of freezing the moment, comparatively recently developed, which mixes the techniques of strobe flash photography, slow motion and time lapse is the Bullet Time Effect. The most known scene displaying the technique is the famous bullet scene from the movie *Matrix* where several different techniques of capturing time is applied: the high speed photography

⁹³ Meaning is a State of Mind, <http://meaningisastateofmind.wordpress.com/2009/03/13/der-lauf-der-dingue/> (accessed, May, 2009)

used for shooting the motion of the bullets coming towards Neo, slow motion to make Neo's fall more visible, and again high speed photography to unite the frames attained from cameras installed around the actor, to create effect of the motion of the camera revolving around Neo. "In *The Matrix*, the camera path was pre-designed using computer-generated visualizations as a guide. Cameras were arranged, behind a green or blue screen, on a track and aligned through a laser targeting system, forming a complex curve through space. The cameras were then triggered at extremely close intervals, so the action continued to unfold, in extreme slow-motion, while the viewpoint moved. Additionally, the individual frames were scanned for computer processing. Using sophisticated interpolation software, extra frames could be inserted to slow down the action further and improve the fluidity of the movement (especially the frame rate of the images); frames could also be dropped to speed up the action."⁹⁴

What is so interesting about the Bullet Time Effect is that, it does not only slows down the motion to a perceptible degree, but also allows the audience to see the object and the environment in motion from different perspectives as a three dimensional reality. With the bullet time effect, the audience is made to revolve around the object in space, and this revolutionary technique may only be compared to walking around a sculpture in real life. Moreover, The Matrix Bullet Time is an important example how the visual perception is shaped through popular visual culture by different techniques of time and freezing the moment.

⁹⁴ Wikipedia, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bullet_Time



Figure 13. Still from the movie *Matrix*, 1999⁹⁵



Figure 14. Still from the Movie *Matrix*, 1999, Bullet Time Scene Backstage⁹⁶

⁹⁵ Entertainment Weekly, <http://www.ew.com/ew/article/0,,702023,00.html> (accessed June, 2009).

⁹⁶ Monash University, Lecture: Digital Movies and Animation, <http://www.csse.monash.edu.au/~cema/courses/CSE5910/lectureFiles/lecture10b.htm> (accessed, November, 2009)

The aim of the Bullet Time scene in *Matrix* is to make the motion of different objects simultaneously visible from as many perspectives as possible. With the use of effects of time mentioned above, condensed motion hidden in a few seconds is revealed to the extent that there is nothing left for the mind to dream about. Flaxman states that “Deleuze distinguishes cinematographic movement from these other arts because the latter are essentially “immobile in themselves so that it is the mind that has to ‘make’ movement.”⁹⁷ In cinema, on the other hand, the movement is there at it is in real life and therefore, the mind only follows the motion on the screen. The Bullet Time scene, however, in that sense goes beyond what Deleuze calls the movement-image; the audience does not have to imagine any motion mentally because he can observe it all in slow motion from different perspectives. However, a single five-seconds-long scene is visually and mentally very demanding because of the complexity of angles and motion although it is all shown in slow motion. While the over-exposure of motion creates a strange excitement due to the over-stimulation of visual perception, it is also exhausting, difficult to perceive and difficult to remember. In the Bullet time scene, the mystery of stillness in a single frame in photography is replaced by the pleasure of seeing the imperceptible as a moving image. The scene is a good example, how Hollywood cinema develops and incorporates strategies of stillness and slowness in itself to produce new forms of movement-image.

⁹⁷ Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time Image* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989): 156, quoted in Flaxman, *Brain is the Screen*, 18-19.

CHAPTER 3

Stillness in Three Dimension and Serkan Özkaya's *A Sudden Gust of Wind*

3.1. Movement and Time in Sculpture

In "Concept of Time in Modern Sculpture" Dale Cleaver suggests that "To the most obvious question of how time is expressed in sculpture, one could match the most obvious answer: by actual or suggested motion, by the suggestion of events preceding or succeeding the event depicted, or by reference to the past, present, or future in the action, symbols, and accessories."⁹⁸ According to the study, while the actual motion parallels with snapshot in photography, the suggested motion can be compared with time exposure. In both snapshot and actual motion in sculpture, the object is captured in a kind of spontaneous action and it depicts the motion in the present of the work. In suggested motion and time exposure, on the other hand, the motion is not there but in our mind and it connects the still position with the previous and consequent movements.

An example to the suggested motion in sculpture is the reclining nude. As in Canova's *Pauline Borghese* in 1805 (Figure 3), the reclining nude, same as in its examples in painting, depicts a static posture where it gives the impression that the figure stays in that position eternally. Dale Cleaver argues that "Canova had inherited from Platonic philosophy the idea that art should avoid the particularities of a given moment to seek a perfect invariable beauty which was fixed outside the flux of time."⁹⁹

⁹⁸ Dale Cleaver, "The Concept of Time in Modern Sculpture," *Art Journal* 22(4), (Summer, 1963): 232.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

Therefore, the reclining nude represents an ideal beauty which is stable and eternal and thus reflects the least movement possible.



Figure 15. Canova, *Pauline Borghese*, 1805, Marble, Borghese Gallery, Rome, photo by Christophe Simon—AFP/Getty Images¹⁰⁰

On the other hand, the late 19th century faces a more natural depiction of human body and motion due to the developments in modern thought. Rodin, for instance, as one of the leading figures in sculpture at the time refused to depict the body in the classical academic style and attempted to capture body in motion in its everyday human reality. He “believed that the expression of life in sculpture required the implication of movement and that this was achieved by suggesting the transition from one attitude to another. One must feel the preceding and succeeding movements or moments, the passage of time rather than the frozen instant.”¹⁰¹ This revolutionary attitude towards motion replaced the priority of the *ideal* with the *real* in depiction and pioneered the practices of more realistic representation of everyday reality in fine arts. In *Head of Mozart*, 1910 (Figure 4), Rodin depicts a gesture which can be captured for a moment.

¹⁰⁰ Encyclopedia Britannica <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic-art/92969/114988/Pauline-Borghese-Bonaparte-as-Venus-Victrix-marble-sculpture-by-Antonio> (accessed, September 2009).

¹⁰¹ Auguste Rodin, *L'Art*, ed. Paul Gsell (Paris: Bernard Grasset, 1911), 76, quoted in Dale Cleaver, “The Concept of Time in Modern Sculpture,” 234.

As Cleaver suggests although Rodin gives the work an eternal look by not sculpting the whole body, he “presents an image with the fleeting aspect of a cloud blown into a certain form for an instant only”¹⁰²

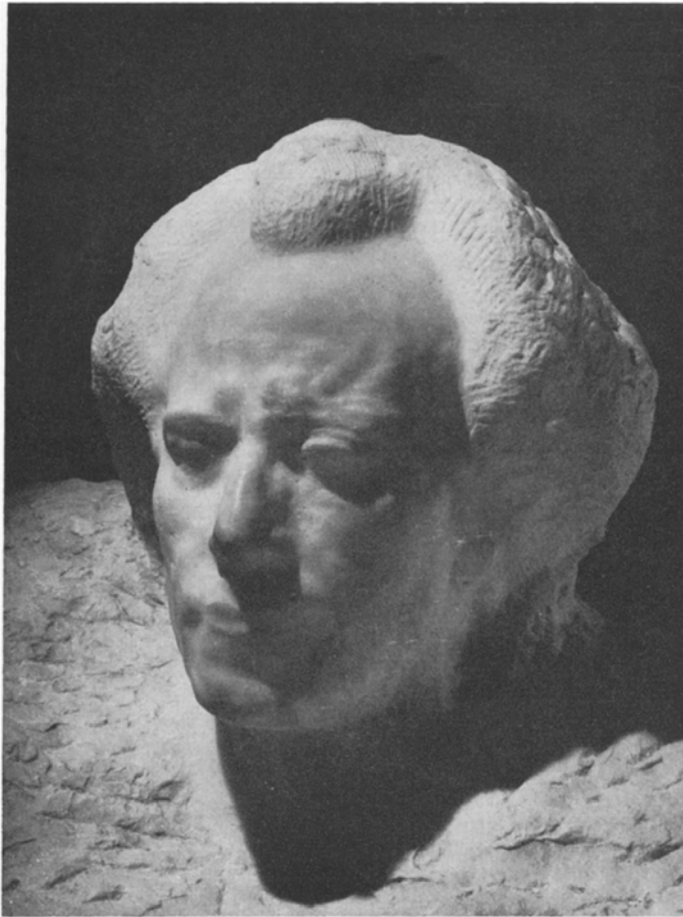


Figure 16. Rodin, *Head of Mozart*, 1910, Marble, Museum Rodin, Paris.¹⁰³

However, the decade Rodin produced the *Head of Mozart*, also faced one of the most groundbreaking avant-garde movements in modern art: Cubism and Futurism. The year 1907 (three years earlier than the *Head of Mozart*) was already marked by the influence of Cezanne retrospective at Salon d'Automne and was also the year Einstein's theory on relativity published for the first time. Cezanne's works which introduced the perceptual perspective in painting had great impact on Picasso and Braque who produced the early examples of Cubism .

¹⁰² Ibid. 234.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

Under these influences the cubists in a spatial, rather than a temporal context, depicted motion by showing how the object looked when different positions are taken in different moments. To Cleaver, the cubist “develops a summary of experience from different moments in time and implies the relativity of time and space. He has carried further Rodin's idea of preceding and succeeding movements or moments in time.”¹⁰⁴

The rise of Cubism also paralleled The Futurist Manifesto in 1909 which declared its admiration to speed and technology. Together with Cubism, Futurism gave way to the production of many important works in both sculpture and painting that deals with time and space from a relativistic perspective. Duchamp's *Nude Descending the Staircase in 1912* (Figure 15) and Boccioni's *Unique Forms of Continuity in Space* in 1913 (Figure 16) demonstrates motion by showing the different positions the body takes in different moments in time.



¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 235.

Figure 17. Marcel Duchamp, *Nude Descending a Staircase, No.2*, 1912, Philadelphia Museum of Art: The Louise and Walter Arensberg Collection.¹⁰⁵



Figure 18. Boccioni, *Unique Forms of Continuity in Space*, 1913, Bronze, Museum of Modern Art, New York¹⁰⁶

Einstein's theory on relativity also had great impact on the artists of the era who adopted in their works relativity of time and space:

The relativist attitude has reinforced the distrust of intellectual systems such as the Aristotelian idea that art works should be constructed logically with a beginning, middle, and end. It has encouraged an appreciation of the irrational as a

¹⁰⁵ Tate Modern, "Duchamp, Man Ray, Picabia: Exhibition Guide," <http://www.tate.org.uk/modern/exhibitions/duchampmanraypicabia/rooms/room3.shtm> (accessed March, 2009).

¹⁰⁶ Earlham College http://www.earlham.edu/~vanbma/20th%20century/images/boccioni_unique.jpg (accessed March, 2009).

valid part of human experience. From the unexpected combinations of objects in Dada collage-reliefs to the "junk" sculpture of Stankiewicz and the moving, noise-producing sculptures of Tinguely, there is a strong suggestion of relativism-and, more specifically, of existentialism-the desire to explore the realm of the irrational, the imaginative, as an essential part of man's reality image, was provided.¹⁰⁷

There appears then a strong rupture in the understanding of both painting and sculpture under the influence of relativism. While cubism marks this change in painting, in sculpture freedom to use different materials and to create "irrational" forms are the main consequences. The Russian Constructivist Naum Gabo's Ralist Manifesto, on the other hand, is the major intellectual text on art that directly focuses on the necessity of reflection of time in the art work at that era. Gabo was already introduced to Einstein's theory of relativism and philosophy of Henri Bergson while attending art historian Heinrich Wofflin's lectures in early 20th century during university years in Munich.¹⁰⁸ Gabo declared with his brother Antoine Pevsner in 1920 in the Manifesto that "art needed to exist actively in four dimensions including time."¹⁰⁹ Below is a sculpture by Gabo where he used "kinetic rhythms" which imitates motion and continuous form to demonstrate the linear flow of time. The work is an early example of Kinetic Art which is developed further by Alexander Calder.

¹⁰⁷ Dale Cleaver, "The Concept of Time in Modern Sculpture," 236-237.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Wikipedia, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Naum_Gabo (accessed December, 2009)

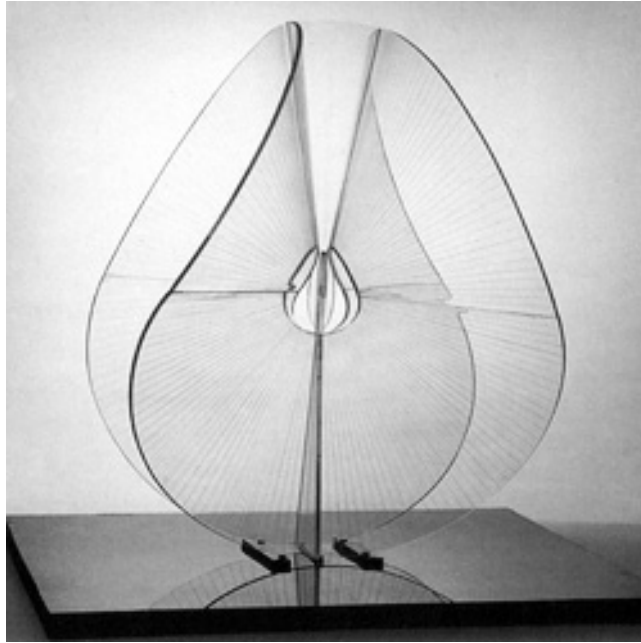


Figure 19. Naum Gabo, *Spheric Theme: Translucent Variation* (c.1937, this version executed 1951 as a replacement of original of 1938-9), Perspex, diameter 57.3 cm, Solomon R. Guggenheim, Museum, New York, © Nina Williams¹¹⁰

The movement of abstraction also contributed vastly to the reflection of movement in sculpture. Brancusi's *Bird in Space* series is a clear example where the "essence" of movement is demonstrated by elimination of details and contouring the "directional forces within the shapes". By doing that the artists manages to capture both the "idea" of the birth and its movement through abstraction.¹¹¹

¹¹⁰ Christina Lodder, "Naum Gabo and the Quandaries of the Replica," *Tate's Online Research Journal* (Autumn, 2007).

¹¹¹ Dale Cleaver, "The Concept of Time in Modern Sculpture," 235.



Figure 20. Constantin Brancusi, *Bird in Space*, 1923, marble, (with base) H. 56-3/4, Diam. 6-1/2 in. (144.1 x 16.5 cm)¹¹²

When we come to the late modern period, we face a major acceleration in the production of works which deal with time and objecthood as their subject. In *Chronophobia: On Time in the Art of the 1960's* Pamela M. Lee states that

Robert Smithson's obsession with entropy and futurity; video art's politics of presence; conceptual art's preoccupation with seriality and "real time" aesthetics; Andy Warhol's musings on the fleeting character of modern celebrity, on the one hand, and his cinematic endurance tests, on the other; kinetic art's literalization of movement; John Cage's soundings in time; the discourse of performance art and

¹¹² Metropolitan Museum, Works of Art, Collection Database, Modern Art, http://www.metmuseum.org/works_of_art/collection_database/modern_art/bird_in_space_constantin_brancusi/objectview.aspx?collID=21&OID=210006973

the lived and timely body: all of these examples, covering a wide range of sixties art making, are informed by a marked grappling with temporality.¹¹³

In this period, while Eva Hesse's rhythmic experiments searches the idea of rhythmic representation in three dimensions (figure 21), minimalist works of Sol LeWitt and Donald Judd carries this search to a different level by stressing repetition and continuity (figure 23). Tony Smith's massive minimal sculptures deal with the issue of objecthood as parameter of the audience's experience of time and space. Robert Rauschenberg's entropic work *The Spiral Jetty*, on the other hand, points to the fluidity of time and the temporariness of objecthood (figure 22).

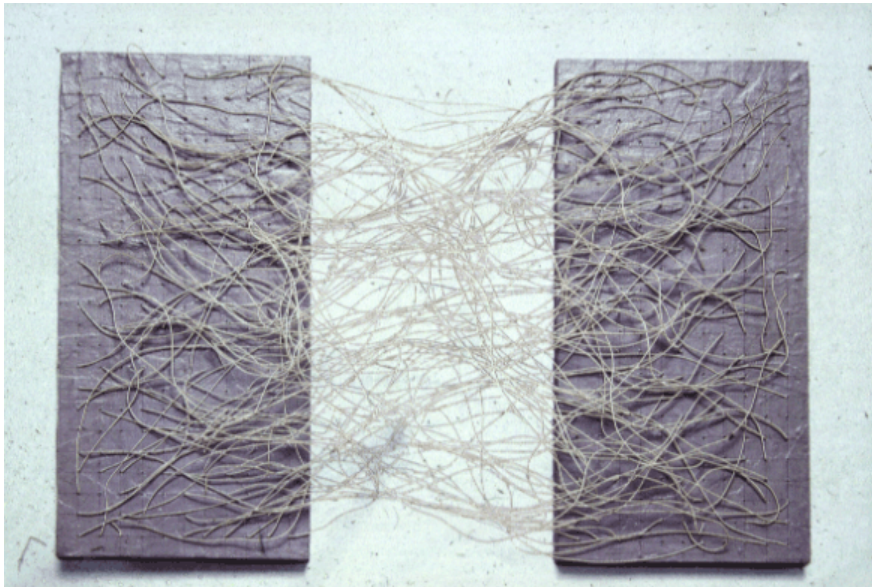


Figure 21. Eva Hesse, *Metronomic Irregularity*, 1966, photo by Laurence Shafe¹¹⁴

¹¹³ Pamela M. Lee, *Chronophobia: On Time in the Art of the 1960*, xii.

¹¹⁴ Shafe, [http://www.shafe.co.uk/art/Eva_Hesse-_Metronomic_Irregularity_1\(1966\)-.asp](http://www.shafe.co.uk/art/Eva_Hesse-_Metronomic_Irregularity_1(1966)-.asp) (accessed, December, 2009)



Figure 22. Robert Smithson, *Spiral Jetty*, 1970, Great Salt Lake, Utah, photo by George Steinmetz¹¹⁵



Figure 23. Donald Judd, *Untitled*, 1969, Copper, Ten Units¹¹⁶

¹¹⁵ Dia Art, <http://www.diaart.org/sites/main/spiraljetty>



Figure 24. *Tony Smith with Cigarette*, 1979, photograph by Hans Namuth¹¹⁷

3.2. “Immersive Mode” in Installation

It seems to me that I am not in front of my house, but in front of myself, in front of myself sleeping, and that I at the same time have the joy of sleeping profoundly and of guarding over myself as sentry.¹¹⁸

Franz Kafka, *The Burrow*

The discussion on movement and the three dimensional work is inevitably related to human perception. “Perception” can simply be defined as becoming aware of the external world through the action of the senses.¹¹⁹ Pizlo states that despite some

¹¹⁶ Georgetown University, <http://www9.georgetown.edu/faculty/irvinem/CCTP738/VisualSystem-AbEx-Pop-Minimal.html>

¹¹⁷ Gay Outlaw, <http://www.gayoutlaw.com/images/floor/f7/index.html>

¹¹⁸ Franz Kafka, 'The Burrow' in *Metamorphosis and Other Stories*, Harmondsworth, 1981, p. 128ff Nicolas De Oliveira., Nicola Oxley and Michael Petry. *Installation Art in the New Millenium* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1997), 53.

¹¹⁹ Zygmund Pizlo, *3D Shape: Its Unique Place in Visual Perception* Massachusetts, (London: MIT press, 2008), 1.

advances in natural sciences, “modern philosophy and the scientific study of perception did not start until the seventeenth century when Descartes (1596–1650) came on the scene.” There are two major contributions Descartes made in the study of perception. First, “he offered a dualistic, interactionist interpretation of the mind–body problem”, a conceptual distinction which prioritized mind over the body and suggested brain as the controlling organ. “In physiology, he introduced the concept of reflex action and distinguished what came to be called “sensory and motor mechanisms” in the nervous system”¹²⁰ These studies are still most common foundations psychology, neurology and cognitive sciences.

Today, the study on perception gained a new speed with the advances in cognitive science where the functioning of the mind body interaction and the relationship between perception and action is studied for the aim of technological advancement. Despite the centuries long studies in various fields, technology is still far from imitating the human capability on environmental perception and response and human perception still keeps its mystery.

Today, technology and visual design together forces the limits of human perception further by production and marketing of three-dimensional virtual environments as research environments or computer games. On the area of visual arts, these technologies are used to create imaginary environments which carry the audience to a different level of actuality between real and fantasy. Based on the works of the installation artist Borre Saethre, Ina Blom uses the term “immersive mode” to describe “a type of experience in which the subjective awareness...appears to merge with the artwork, so as to create a sensation of a new more powerful, experience of totality.”¹²¹ In Immersive works, the authors of Installation Art in the new Millennium writes:

The artwork's aim to elicit sensual pleasure through sensory manipulation is significant as it mirrors developments in contemporary life; the theorist Frederic Jameson states that 'We are submerged...to the point where our postmodern bodies are bereft of spatial coordinates and practically incapable of distantation'. Jameson uses the term 'submerged' to describe a space that leaves the individual in a state of confusion. This lack of orientation returns the audience to a reliance on sensation and subjectivity. The critic Paul Virilio suggests that perspectival

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Ina Blom in Ibid, 49.

geometry gave way to 'the relativity of an accidental, discontinuous and heterogeneous space'. These shifts mark important changes in the development of installation in recent years, as sensation itself appears to have replaced the traditional art-object. The 'immersive-mode', referred to above, has become a key condition of viewing: it appears to indicate a withdrawal into the self, to a place of bodily sensation. It allows artists to propose an escape from perceived reality which no-longer offers stable boundaries.¹²²

The immersive mode therefore, by leaving the audience in a state of confusion between real and fantasy, takes him/her to an internal journey where unconscious dynamics of fear and pleasure plays an important role. Børre Sæthre's *Stealth Distortion (...must have seen it in some teenage wet dream)* below, is a two-part installation composed of a room with a unicorn and sound installations. Taxidermy, which has been used commonly in contemporary art today by different artists such as Cia Guo Qiang and Damien Hirst creates an uncanny effect in the artwork with references to death or fantasy. Sæthre's "mythological taxidermy hybrids insinuate elements of surrealism, drawing from an ancient register that collides with futuristic settings."¹²³ By using a collective reference in a futuristic setting, the artist manages to puzzle the audience by simultaneously creating alienation through architecture and familiarity through referencing collective memory.



¹²² Nicolas De Oliveira., Nicola Oxley and Michael Petry. *Installation Art in the New Millenium* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1997), 53.

¹²³ P.S.1 Moma Studio Visit, <http://ps1.org/exhibitions/view/209>

Figure 25. Børre Sæthre, *Stealth Distortion (...must have seen it in some teenage wet dream)*, 2008, Mixed media, Dimensions variable, Courtesy the artist, Photo: Matthew Septimus. Courtesy P.S.1 Contemporary Art Center¹²⁴

The immersive mode's importance for the current study lays in its explanation of the state of confusion that the existentially ambiguous three-dimensional work creates on the audience. The moment frozen in three dimensions has such an impact as well since it is realization of a fantasy to freeze the motion in actuality.

3.3. *A Sudden Gust of Wind*

Serkan Ozkaya's *Sudden Gust of Wind*, made in 2008 was one of the works in mind that gave the initial idea for this study. Looking at the work, the question in mind was "How come a work suggesting such an ordinary scene, whose presentation is so simply put, creates such a magnetizing affect which sticks to the viewer's memory and forces him/her to keep looking?" Based on the previous chapters, now we have several answers to this question. First, the work by freezing the moment, transforms what might only be captured through digital and analog recording techniques, to the perceptible present in three dimensions. Since the audience gets the chance to walk around the work and observe the moment from different perspectives, *A Sudden Gust of Wind* provides an "experience" of the imperceptible moment, rather than only a perception of it as in the works using two dimensional mediums. Therefore, the work provides the audience with the visual pleasure of not only seeing but also "experiencing" the imperceptible in a fixated time in a three dimensional space.

¹²⁴ Taxidermy: Ravishing Beasts. <http://www.ravishingbeasts.com/taxidermy-art/?currentPage=3>



Figure 26. Serkan Özkaya, *A Sudden Gust of Wind*, 2008, Installation, Boots Contemporary Art Space, Missouri.¹²⁵

In the work, artist creates an installation that gives the impression of “hundreds of white paper that appear to have been caught mid-swoosh by an unseen gust of wind. This poetic, graceful sculpture references a famous photograph by Jeff Wall (following Özkaya knack for appropriation) while asking viewers to think about the forces of movement (social, political, and otherwise) as well as the forces that stop those movements dead in their tracks.”¹²⁶

It is no coincidence that the work which is depicting motion both literally and metaphorically is an appropriation from a Jeff Wall photograph: *A Sudden Gust of Wind* in 1993 (Figure 28 and Figure 29). As it is also evident in the example used in the second chapter *Milk* (Figure 7), Wall’s aim is to capture the movement in the moment.

¹²⁵ Boots Contemporary Art Space News Blog. “Serkan Özkaya: A Sudden Gust of Wind.” <http://bootsartnews.blogspot.com/2008/11/serkan-ozkaya-sudden-gust-of-wind.html> (accessed June 8, 2009).

¹²⁶ White Flag Blog, “Boots Contemporary Art Space: 11.10.2008,” <http://www.myspace.com/whiteflagprojects> (accessed June, 2009)

In *A Sudden Gust of Wind*, Wall manages that by using the method of digital montage, by using more than a hundred photographs and creating a setting in which amateur actors playing “the odd assortment of rural and city characters, surprised by the forces of nature.”¹²⁷ The work is actually a reference to Japanese artist Katsushika Hokusai’s woodprint *Ejiri in Suruga Province* (*Sunshū Ejiri*) in A.D.1830-33 (Figure 27). “Wall transposes the nineteenth-century Japanese scene to a contemporary cranberry farm near Vancouver...It required over 100 photographs, taken over the course of more than a year, to achieve a seamless montage that gives the illusion of capturing a real moment in time.”¹²⁸



Figure 27. Katsushika Hokusai, 'Ejiri in Suruga Province' (*Sunshū Ejiri*), AD 1830-33, From the series 'Thirty-Six Views of Mt. Fuji' (*Fugaku sanjū-rokkei*), Color woodblock print, Japan British Museum¹²⁹

¹²⁷ Tate Modern. “Jeff Wall: Photographs 1978-2004,” “Works in Focus: 1990-1994,” <http://www.tate.org.uk/modern/exhibitions/jeffwall/infocus/section3/img2.shtm>

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Media

Commons, http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/1/12/Ejiri_in_the_



Figure 28. Jeff Wall, *A Sudden Gust of Wind*¹³⁰ (after Hokusai) 1993, Transparency in lightbox. 2500 x 3970 m, Cinematographic photograph, Tate Modern



Suruga_province.jpg/800px-Ejiri_in_the_Suruga_province.jpg (accessed, May, 2009)

¹³⁰ Mark Stevens, "Remain in Light", *New York Magazine*, February 25, 2007, <http://nymag.com/arts/art/reviews/28478/>

Figure 29. Detail from Jeff Wall, *A Sudden Gust of Wind*, 1993 ¹³¹

After Hokusai's and Wall's version of the work, Özkaya simplifies the content of the work by appropriating only the motion of the papers flitting on the air and eliminating the pictorial elements in Hokusai's print and the cinematographic elements in Wall's version. By eliminating all contextual elements in the previous works, Özkaya puts forward the questions on ontological meaning of movement and makes us rethink on the nature of stillness. As it is argued throughout this study on stillness, what the work implies at a first glance is that movement is an inevitable aspect of stillness and the fascination with stillness stems from its ability to make visible what is invisible in normal speed.

However, in the interview conducted for this study, the artist reveals that his initial aim was to produce "an impressive installation with new materials at a very low cost...an installation made by only 10 lira." (Appendix A) The work was first done as a sculpture placed on an office table and then it was made as an installation. With the title that appeared in the mind of the artist at this stage, the work also became a reference to Hokusai and Jeff Wall.

The interview also shows that the work does not depict a group of paper frozen in the air but a sequence of moments of the movement of one single paper. Özkaya clearly states his aim as follows: "Instead of freezing the moment, I was thinking of the moments following each other. You can think of the work as one paper scattering." He also goes on to say that the work is minimalist: "That is what Oppenheim said when he saw the work, that is was minimalist. It is like the music of Steve Reich, you do not hear a melody but you hear the differences the lapses create. Distortions start to form a new construction." Therefore, it would be more appropriate to say that Özkaya's work represents continuity in time rather than a frozen moment: continuity composed of lapses and variation rather than repetition. In that sense, the work might be thought as similar to time-lapse photography.

As stated earlier, different from two dimensional examples stimulating visual perception, Özkaya's work by providing the audience with the chance to walk around the frozen movements, transforms her/his perception on space to an experience.

¹³¹ Tate Modern, "Jeff Wall: Photographs 1978-2004," <http://www.tate.org.uk/modern/exhibitions/jeffwall/infocus/section3/detail2-1.sh>

Therefore, what was an imaginary sculpture in Peter Weibel's video installation and Jeff Wall's *Milk* becomes a spatial reality through which both time and space is transformed in *Sudden Gust of Wind* to a real sculpture. What makes us keep looking at the work at the end is the visual stimulation and pleasure of looking at duration.

On the other hand, Özkaya's work also presents a very simple construction of the immersive mode by offering us a fantasy or a childish dream of freezing the moment and the pleasure of walking around the frozen object. The work, however, does not provide any symbolic or surrealistic references, not even in the title.

Chapter 4

Stillness in Painting and Leyla Gediz's *Perfect Moment*

4. 1. Movement and Time: Reflections on Contemporary Painting

In his article “Moment and Movement in Art” written in 2009, E. H. Gombrich states that “while the problem of space and its representation in art has occupied the attention of art historians to an almost exaggerated degree, the corresponding problem of time and the representation of movement has been strangely neglected”¹³² Concerning painting, this is probably because of the fact that painting is an art representing a three dimensional world on a two-dimensional surface and problems of space and perspective therefore are part of the mode of representation. However, with the realization of the impressionist concern to capture the moment in time and visualizing its impacts on the perception of the figure and the Cubist attempts to depict the object from different perspectives and in different points in time, the emphasis on space in both theory and practice seems to have shifted to a new direction where time starts to appear as an emerging subject in painting.

Before the modern period, on the other hand, Gombrich’s study in “Moment and Movement in Art” shows that time has been a concern in painting as part of the narrative structure, as a tool to decide which part of the narration specifically the painter should represent. Based on Lord Shaftesbury's analysis in *Tablature of the Judgement of Hercules in Characteristics* where Shaftesbury shows how Fable or History “may be variously represented according to the Order of Time”, Gombrich comments on how the

¹³² E. H. Gombrich, “Moment and Movement in Art,” *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 27 (1964): 293.

depiction of the figures and events would change based on the artist's selection of a particular instant in the story. Shaftesbury suggests that the story may be depicted differently based on three different instances in the Choice of Hercules: as the two Goddesses accost Hercules, when they enter into their Dispute, or when Virtue is about to win the Dispute. To Gombrich “In the first instance, Hercules would have to be shown surprised at the appearance of the two Goddesses, in the second he would have to be shown interested and in doubt; and in the third we would witness how he “agonizes, and with all the Strength of Reason endeavors to overcome himself.”¹³³



Figure 30. Annibale Carracci, *The Choice of Hercules*, 1596, Oil on Canvas, 167x273cm, Copodimonte Gallery, Naples.¹³⁴

We see in this example how the choice of the instant in a particular narration effects depiction of figures and their relation with each other. Similar to a historian's choice on which documents to use in historical argumentation, the choice of the instant

¹³³ Ibid, 293.

¹³⁴ Art in the Picture,
http://www.artinthepicture.com/paintings/Annibale_Carracci/The-Choice-of-Hercules/

is an important factor that completely changes the perception about the whole story. Is then which instant to pick a totally subjective choice?

Gombrich answers this question by arguing that the absolute necessity to depict the “Passages or Events as have actually subsisted, or according to Nature might well subsist, or happen together in *one and the same* instant” as Shaftesbury suggested it in 1714 “need not prevent the painter from representing movement and change such as the turning point of the drama...”¹³⁵ By eliminating the issue of objectivity therefore, both Gombrich and Shaftesbury suggests concentrating on the instant that “might have” changed the course of events rather than focusing on the question of subjectivity. How then the artist should decide on the point of break in the timeline of the story?

Lessing (1729-1781) argues that “Painting can ... only represent a single moment of an action and must therefore select the most pregnant moment which best allows us to infer what has gone before and what follows.”¹³⁶ Suggestion of the depiction of the most pregnant moment, however is very problematic of course in understanding the art in the modern period since the purpose of art at that time and after is beyond aesthetic documentation. What is interesting in Lessing’s understanding is the following argument where he insists on the issue that the moments of pregnancy were the moments of stillness rather than moments representing motion.¹³⁷ Within a narrative structure, it is hard to think about the moment of pregnancy as a breaking point that changes the course of events. On the other hand, Lessing’s insight is valuable for the current study on stillness in contemporary art since, stillness as the point of pregnancy can be considered as the moment of *potentiality* which is just before the break of events. We see many examples of such moments of stillness in contemporary arts today where such moments of potentiality are represented in painting.

¹³⁵ Gombrich, “Moment and Movement in Art”, 294.

¹³⁶ ‘Lessing’, “Lecture on a Master Mind,” Proceedings of the British Academy, xliii, 1957 Lessing in Gombrich, “Moment and Movement in Art”, 294.

¹³⁷ Ibid., 295.



Figure 31. Luc Tuymans, *Gas Chamber*, 1986, Collection Museum Overholland, Amsterdam, Oil on Canvas, 50x70cm.¹³⁸

Tuymans' *Gas Chamber*, is one of the contemporary works that exemplifies the representation of such moment of potentiality. Ignoring the title, the painting itself alone is enough to make us feel that something eerie is just waiting to happen in that brownish, claustrophobic room. With the title, we are informed that with such a dreadful emptiness in the painting, what we are facing is actually the presentation (or non-presentation) of the most gruesome tragedies in the history of humanity. As oppose to Lessing's argument on the illuminating force of the moment of pregnancy, without the title we would be unaware of the narrative behind the moment represented, and left only with an uncanny feeling.

The instant where the break of an event is just about to take place might also be the moment of pregnancy. Carla Klein's work below (figure 32) very effectively illustrates how the dark clouds signal the coming of a storm. The dark blue color spread towards the centre of the canvas horizontally gives the impression of a grand mass pressing the tiny space between the earth and the sky which creates a claustrophobic

¹³⁸ Tate Etc., "He is Poetic, But..." <http://www.tate.org.uk/tateetc/issue1/article3.htm>

anxiety on the viewer although he/she is looking at a wide landscape. This anxiety tells him/her that the break of a storm, or to put in Lessing's term "the birth" is very soon. Compared to the previous example which is relatively more still, we can realize that the tension is increased in this painting with the expression of motion through the passing clouds.



Figure 32. Carla Klein, *Untitled*, 2005, 140x300cm¹³⁹

Contrary to Lessing's argument, what best represents a narrative in one single frame might also be the depiction of the moment just after the break of event(s). David Hockney's *Bigger Splash* (figure 33) is another contemporary work which illustrates how illustration of the end of action also might give an idea about what happened in the previous moments. We can easily imagine in this painting that somebody jumped or something is thrown in the pool, so there is a splash. The title has a role in this case assuring that this has happened, namely something hit the water and the event had been repeated previously.

¹³⁹ Carla Klein, <http://www.carla-klein.com/77.php> (accessed December, 2009)

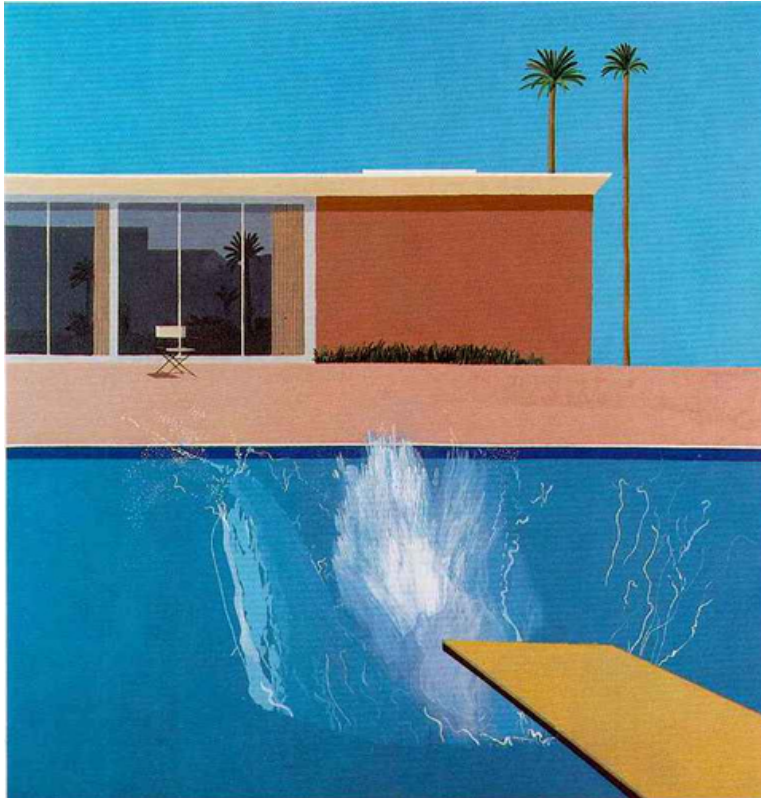


Figure 33. David Hockney, *A Bigger Splash*, 1967, acrylic on canvas, 243.8 x 243.8 cm, Tate Gallery, London¹⁴⁰

On the other hand, the impressionist attempt to capture the moment and visualize the effects of changing light on the object in different periods in a day can also be considered as part of the search for the best possible instant. The content of the search however, shifts from a narrative-oriented perspective to a stylistic concern on form and expression. Monet's *Rouen Cathedral* series, composed of 31 pieces painted between 1892 and 1894, illustrating the Cathedral at different time periods according to the changing light and atmospheric conditions, is probably the best example for the change in the understanding of time and movement in painting. However, the point of rupture that signifies a sudden shift in the reflection of time and movement in painting occurs when Cubism introduces the world of art the possibility of reflecting on the same plane different positions a moving object takes at different moments in time. As Gombrich points out, referring to Picasso's *Sleeper Turning* and *Girl Reading*, "The strange ambiguity of beauty and plainness, of serenity and clumsiness in these conflicting aspects has nothing directly to suggest a succession of viewpoints in time, but precisely

¹⁴⁰ Flickr, <http://www.flickr.com/photos/oddsock/100830944/>

because they are here held in provisional simultaneity they present a novel convincing victory over that man-made spectre, the *punctum temporis*.”¹⁴¹

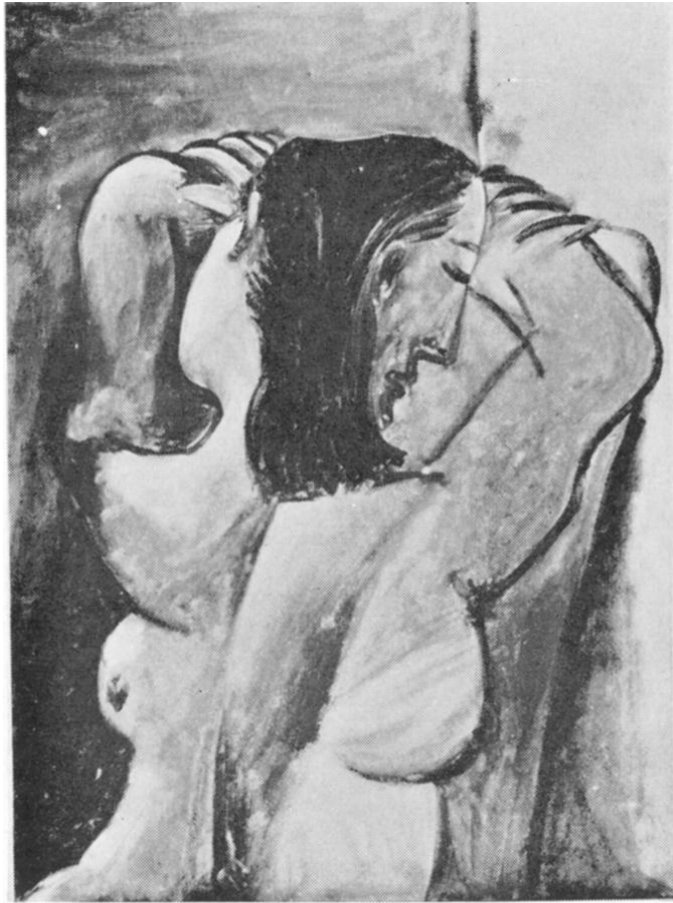


Figure 34. Picasso, *Sleeper Turning*, 1960¹⁴²

¹⁴¹ Gombrich, “Time and Movement in Art”, 305.

¹⁴² Christian Zervos, *Picasso: Catalogue de l’Oeuvre; XI*, , fig.198, (Editions Cahiers d’Art, Paris, 1949-1975), in Gombrich, 305.



Figure 35. Pablo Picasso, *Girl Reading*, early 1950's¹⁴³

4. 2. Pop Art and Representation in Contemporary Painting

Our perception of motion is also very much related to the clarity of depiction and the composition of figures. Gombrich argues that “If we ask ourselves what quality a snapshot must possess to convey the impression of life and movement we will find, not unexpectedly, that this will again depend on the ease with which we can take in the meaning that allows us to supplement the past and arrive at an anticipation of the future.”¹⁴⁴ Therefore, what is important for Gombrich in order one image to be kept in memory is the precondition of clarity in description and meaning because the speed of our visual perception is not as fast as the occurrence of events. Moreover, our perception is selective and concentrated on meaning.¹⁴⁵ Usually when we are encountered with an image for a few seconds, what we focus on in those first moments of encounter is the meaning or the content of the image rather than the form. Clarity of

¹⁴³ The Summa Mamas, <http://summamamas.stblogs.org/archives/2008/11/fine-art-friday-74.html>

¹⁴⁴ Gombrich, “Time and Movement in Art”, 303.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid. 301-302.

the message and simplicity of the form are the basic qualities that make an image easily perceptible, memorable and more importantly “visible” among all other images that occupy visual perception.

This very basic assumption is fundamental in understanding the figurative return in painting in the 60’s which also effected deeply the reality of contemporary painting and even contemporary art in general today. In *Cronophobia: On Time in The Art of the 1960’s*, Pamela Lee defines an uneasiness with time experienced both by the artists and critics of the era as an uncertainty about placing the era in the chronological line of history. This uncertainty about where the present belongs and what the future would bring is related according to Lee to the acceleration of the speed of communication and mechanization which appears as the fundamental characteristic of the 1960’s as a result of the implementation of post World War Two technological developments to the everyday life.

This very fast and confusing change in the speed of life in everyday realm also paralleled a vast increase in the production and distribution of the image through communication technologies. It is no surprise that the Pop Art movement with the strategies of clarity in meaning and simplicity in form became the avant-garde and later the dominant art movement of the era when the public was under the attack of imperceptible amount of visual signifiers coming from all directions. Pop Art’s method of appropriating images which are already in circulation therefore was a brilliant strategy to popularize and commoditize the work of art and it was also a clear return to the figurative in painting. Andy Warhol’s 1962 work *Golden Marilyn* (below) is a good example illustrating the strategies employed by the Pop Art movement at that era.



Figure 36. Andy Warhol, *Gold Marilyn*, 1962, oil and acrylic polymer silkscreen on canvas.¹⁴⁶

Today in a society where the images are produced and transferred even more intensely due to the development in digital and communication technologies we are subjected to a greater visual stimulation compared to the 1960's to the extent that we are even blinded with the visual noise produced within the system. On the other hand, we also seem to loose contact with the materiality of life because we are stuck in our virtual and digital worlds. The velocity of life is also much higher in contemporary society as discussed in the previous chapters.

On the other hand, in contemporary painting, it seems that the methods of figurative expression are used more and more dominantly everyday. In painting the works of Luc Tuymans for instance in his depiction of the publicly known figures

¹⁴⁶ Georgetown University,
<http://www9.georgetown.edu/faculty/irvinem/CCTP738/VisualSystem-Ab, Ex-Pop-Minimal.html>

chooses to capture the gestures of the celebrities as if he is reading their faces. In *The Secretary of State* (figure 37) for instance, we can easily recognize the ambition, self confidence and meanness on Condoleezza Rice's face, the characteristics that we unconsciously observe in the media but we are never consciously aware of. Therefore, by depicting a moment and capturing the motion in the Secretaries face (just like Rodin did with the Head of Mozart in the 19th century), the artist reveals different levels of meaning hidden in minimal bodily gestures.



Figure 37. Luc Tuymans, *The Secretary of State*, 2005, Oil on Canvas, 18x24-1/4 inches, courtesy David Zwirner Gallery,¹⁴⁷

On the other hand, looking at a figurative painting representing a moment with references to our subconscious or collective memory, while getting a chance to contemplate on different levels of meaning and reality the image conveys, we also get a subjective experience through affection the work evokes in us. The work below belongs

¹⁴⁷ Art Critical, <http://artcritical.com/DavidCohen/SUN118.htm> (accessed March, 2009)

to a young Turkish contemporary artist Gökçen Cabadan and is a good example showing how the figurative representation of the captured moment in contemporary painting establishes an affect on the audience by utilizing references to collective memory both in the painting itself and in the title. With the work, Cabadan evokes in us affection by reminding us our childhood memories and by naming the work as “Dream of a Bastard”, he creates in us another level of affection which probably causes a stronger change in our power of existence. In the meantime, he makes us shift from pure affection to norm in our mode of our thinking which is a necessary shift to be able to establish the causal link between the work and the title. What is also interesting about the work is the round shape of the frame which makes us feel like we are the voyeurs watching the moment from a pinhole on top. Realizing that, we suddenly become the bastards ourselves watching the boy having his finger nails cut by his daddy.



Figure 38. Gökçen Çabadan, *Dream of A Bastard*, 2009, Oil on Canvas¹⁴⁸

4.3. Leyla Gediz's *Perfect Moment*

¹⁴⁸ Galeri Non, <http://galerinon.com/gokcen-cabadan?nggpage=2> (accessed, September, 2009).

As it is discussed in the previous chapters, stillness as representation of a captured moment has a function in contemporary society to force the individual face the moments of affection in life that is lost in memory within the speed of everyday life. Leyla Gediz is one of the leading figures in Turkish figurative painting today who is in a constant reach for those moments of affection which she names as “perfect moments”. Gediz’s perfect moments however, are neither representations of moments of perfection nor symbols for a high aesthetic taste. They are the very short instants of affection that are hidden in the small details of ordinary life, selected by a careful attention and an extraordinary sensitivity. (figure 39)



Figure 39. Leyla Gediz, *Eclipse*, 2005, oil on canvas, Collection of Muammer Brav.¹⁴⁹

Mika Hannula, one of the authors of the catalog text for Gediz’s last exhibition *The Perfect Moment*, explains Gediz’s perfect moments as follows:

¹⁴⁹ Leyla Gediz, (İstanbul: Galerist and Leyla Gediz, 2008), 88.

A perfect moment. Or is it a perfect moment? Semantics aside, let us focus on the promise of it. Perfect kiss, perfect miss and perfect bliss. We all know what we are talking about. That perfect moment when everything comes around and fits together without any buts and doubts. This sensation of finally being able to master it, to get things accomplished into their most perfect shape and frame of mind.¹⁵⁰

As Hannula puts it, the perfect moment is not unfamiliar to us. Everybody has an idea about the perfect moment. However, rather than being something we have knowledge about, the perfect moment appears as something we can only recognize intuitively; like affection as What Deleuze calls which creates a change in our power of existence.

In that sense, Leyla Gediz's works function as a mirror showing us what we already have but we are not aware of. They show us the hidden sensibilities in us to the moment with the potential of creating a change. An idea of a perfect moment therefore as Hannula puts it "works as an invitation. An invitation to think with, walk with-even sleep with. An invitation to play with, to quarrel with, to heal with and yes, to burn with. An opening of a door: we may end up here, there, everywhere. A thrilling temptation for us to measure ourselves vis-a vis our hopes, wishes, anxieties and needs."¹⁵¹

Looking at a Leyla Gediz painting therefore, is a very subjective experience which is created by common signifiers that can be found everywhere, here and there in the ordinariness of daily life. *Green Boredom*, painted in 2006, for instance illustrates a common small cinema hall that can be found almost anywhere in the world. The work makes visible however the dullness of this public space by displaying it all empty, without any sign of life, as a narrow claustrophobic space which reflects with its title the banality behind standardization.

¹⁵⁰ Mika Hannula, "Accidents Waiting to Happen," in Leyla Gediz, (İstanbul: Galerist and Leyla Gediz, 2008), 6.

¹⁵¹ Ibid.



Figure 40. Leyla Gediz, *Green Boredom*, 2006, oil on canvas, 30x40cm.¹⁵²

The work may also remind one of Luc Tuymman's *Gas Chamber* in terms of its signification to collective memory. It also might be thought of as a depiction of a moment of pregnancy as Lessing calls it, a moment before the movement in the place starts to occur. But what the exhausting stillness in the work reflects is our own desperation in the routines of modernity, reduction of our individuality to those green chairs whose smells we are very familiar with, and a reaction to escape and scream like in Munch's famous painting. What comes out of Gediz's imagery therefore are:

...like accidents waiting to happen. These perfect moments created and generated for us. These carefully and caressingly chosen sites and situations where we witness how time has stopped. It is a freezing zone-and I am not talking about temperature. When I am talking about is how motions and emotions are put on hold. They are pushed into the domain of anticipation. We see, we feel and all we can do is to wait. And to speculate. Excessively speculate how close we dare to go to, extensively speculate how deep and how badly we are ready to burn.¹⁵³

¹⁵² Leyla Gediz, 56.

¹⁵³ Hannula, "Accidents Waiting to Happen", 6.

Are we ready for instance seeing a maiden jumping from the top of a windowless apartment building (figure 41). How long can we look at such a work, painted all in grey and black? Leyla Gediz with her work makes us face the possibility of a suicide which is always there in all of us. She makes us contemplate on the issue further with a careful attention to avoid agitation in her plain expression.



Figure 41. Leyla Gediz, *Maiden Tower*, 2005, Oil on Canvas, 210x160cm, Collection of Ebru Özdemir.¹⁵⁴

As it is stated earlier, Leyla Gediz's search for the perfect moment is very much concentrated on the selection of ordinary details. *Converse* below demonstrates a very short instant that would not normally catch our attention in everyday life; a guy or a girl stepping on the back of his/her shoes, probably opening a door to go out for a very short time. Positioning of the feet towards the end of the canvas and the very little piece of the door seen from the corner are just enough to makes us think on the motion the whole body is ready for. *Converse*, on the other hand, as one of the iconic brands representing

¹⁵⁴ Leyla Gediz, 68.

comfort and freedom is a reference that most of the young audience may associate themselves with.



Figure 42. Leyla Gediz, *Converse*, Oil on Canvas, 60x80cm, private collection, New York¹⁵⁵

Remains of the Cake (figure 43) which might be seen as a still life makes us dream of a whole celebration with a few brush strokes painted on a moon-like round shape in the middle of a pale background. The motion of the people eating the cake, the table, laughs and presents...The attention Leyla Gediz pays to the small details of everyday life, its moments and objects encourages us to be more careful about these details. As Fatih Özgüven puts “as we stand face to face with these paintings, we are increasingly filled with the sensation that the real issue here is this insistent attention, and if we look a little longer, the all-pervading mystery will be revealed to us.”¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁵ Leyla Gediz, 53.

¹⁵⁶ Fatih Özgüven, “A Sincere Attention,” in Leyla Gediz, 14.



Figure 43. Leyla Gediz, *Remains of the Cake*, 2002, oil on canvas, 40x40cm, Private Collection¹⁵⁷

CONCLUSION

¹⁵⁷ Leyla Gediz, 100.

In contemporary society, time is controlled by strategies of capitalism that functions to dominate the life of the individual. Experiencing a pressure to catch up with the demands of the digital technologies, advances in communication and constantly developing virtual realms, the individual loses its connection with the present which leaves him or her in an existential blankness. On both ideological and practical levels, the contemporary capitalist system also produces and reproduces the strategies to manage this existential blankness that is created by the loss of the present. There are three major strategies that the system incorporates to control individual consciousness and behavior on time and present: serving the instant pleasure of consuming the pre-selected modes of entertainment as part of the culture of spectacle, installing within the present a nostalgic past in visual realm; and creating an illusion of immediacy through advanced telecommunication. These strategies function to puzzle the individual on where he/she stands within the chronology of both subjective and social history and to eliminate any possibilities of search for an authentic experience of time.

However, stillness evidently occurs as a need in individual life as a response to this domination on social and subjective realms. Contemporary art is one of the areas where we can observe a multiplicity of examples where stillness is provided through capturing of the moment as an instant or duration. Although this stillness is an illusionary one created either as a still image or a sculpture or a moving image focusing on duration, it allows us to concentrate even for a short period of time to one particular moment and understand the different meanings or aesthetic possibilities hidden in it. In that sense, it functions similar to what Deleuze calls the time image for moving images. The still image, like the time image is used as several examples shows like *Green Boredom* or the *Girl Tower*, to reflect the existential problems that the contemporary individual experiences.

On the other hand, in this study, the works that use stillness as a strategy to deal with speed are divided into two categories. The ones that freeze an object in speed and therefore allowing the audience to see what the eye can not catch through senses and the works that uses stillness as a strategy to resist the speed of everyday life that detaches us from our memories and subjectivities. Edward Muybridge's photography, Heide Fasnacht's sculptures of explosion belongs to the first category and they give us a kind

of visual pleasure by reflecting the missing moment by focusing on motion. Works like Peter Weibel's *Imaginary Water Sculpture*, Jeff Wall's *Milk* and Serkan Özkaya's *A Sudden Gust of Wind* can be seen as studies on volume through different mediums.

Another use of stillness as a response to speed is representation of a particular moment which belongs to the artist's memory or imagery. Luc Tuymans's *The Secretary of State*, Gökçen Cabadan's *Dream of A Bastard* and Leyla Gediz's paintings are examples that freeze the time for a moment and communicate with us through common signifiers of collective memory. The originality of these works rests in the artist's success in capturing instants of revelation that are hidden within the moment such as in Tuymans's or Leyla Gediz's works. These works in a sense depicts Deleuze's "privileged instants". Different from the *ideal* moments of the pre-modern period however, they represent instants and imaginary durations that are selected from everyday living. The selected moment which becomes an "any-instant-whatever" in the modern period as a result of humanization of the figure and deidealization therefore, is transformed in the post-modern period again to a subjective and consequently a "privileged" level.

In sculpture, the discussion on stillness necessitates a search on the representation of time and movement. Although sculpture is a medium mostly stationary with the exception of kinetic art, there appears fundamental changes in depiction of the figure in terms of time and movement since the early modern period. Rodin's depiction of the bodily gestures in their everyday occurrences is a major change that liberates sculpture from the tradition of pose that is strictly applied in academic circles. The turning point that causes a major change in depiction of movement and time in sculpture however occurs when relativism is introduced in the art world through cubism. Boccioni's *Unique Forms of Continuity in Space* that attempts to capture the movement of the figure is one of the first examples that illustrate the inclusion of time as a subject in sculpture. Gabo's *Realist Manifesto*, on the other hand, is an open declaration on the necessity of inclusion of time as a forth dimension in sculpture. Rhythmic works of Eva Hesse, repetitive works of Donald Judd and Sol LeWitt are examples that suggest motion on a mental level. The still works that freezes the moment in contemporary sculpture and installation are the immersive works of Børre Sæthre, Cia Guo Qiang who use taxonomy in their works similar to the use of poses in classical structure or still life in painting.

Serkan Özkaya's work which looks at the first instant as a construction of an imaginary snapshot in three dimensions is actually designed as a structure that points out duration by demonstrating different spaces a paper occupies in the air in different moments. The work, different from other examples in the study, allows the audience to experience stillness of the frozen moments in real space and therefore creates an effect of fantasy.

In figurative painting the discussion on stillness on the frozen moment has also been related to motion. As Gombrich argues which moment is the most appropriate in order to give the idea of a whole narrative has been a major concern of depiction in classical painting. Lessing argues that the moment of stillness is the best moment that gives an idea about the narration because it is a moment of potentiality. However, there are many other examples showing the expressive potential of the depiction of the event itself and its preceding moments.

The Pop Art movement has a significant place in this study to understand the relationship between the role of the social structure and social understanding of time on developments in art. In the 1960's it appears that acceleration in the speed of life, development of information technologies and sudden production and distribution of imperceptible amount of visual images led the artists of the era to follow clarity in meaning and simplicity in form as strategies to establish a link between art and society. These basic principles of the pop art movement have also been effective on the contemporary painters today such as Luc Tuymans, Gökçen Cabadan or Leyla Gediz.

Specifically Leyla Gediz's painting utilizes such principles in order to create a strong effect on the audience through affection. Leyla Gediz, by selecting perfect moments from everyday life and expressing it in simple forms establishes a strong relation with the audience. These carefully chosen unique moments of Gediz's imagery are successful in creating an intense affection on the audience either as joy or sadness. However, they demand a "sincere attention" as Özgüven puts it to reveal themselves to the audience. Stillness in Leyla Gediz's painting and in similar works therefore is essential for the audience to stop for a moment and contemplate on the details of everyday life that are missed in the confusion and speed of contemporary life.

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APPENDIX

Interview with Serkan Özkaya – 20. 02. 2010 – İstanbul

Elif Gül Tirben: How did the idea about the *A Sudden Gust of Wind* come out? Did it just appear as an idea when you saw Jeff Wall's photograph?

Serkan Özkaya: No. That is actually part of my strategy as reproducing the works I like for myself without imitation or any mimic references. That idea apparently attracted the people in the Gallery in St. Louis; the idea of having a copy since they are also on the periphery, they are not at the centre where the famous works are displayed.

I actually borrowed the name from Hokusai, before Jeff Wall.

What I wanted to do at the start was to produce an impressive installation with new materials at a very low cost...an installation made by 10 lira. The A4 papers are 4 lira, the glue is 1 and a friend of mine gave me the strings, so you can even eat a savory roll with the money left.

E.G.T: Did you have any intention of freezing the moment?

S.Ö: Instead of freezing the moment, I was thinking of the moments following each other. You can think of the work as one paper scattering.

E.G.T: What about *Breeze*? How did *A Sudden Gust of Wind* turn into *Breeze*?

S.Ö: I initially have done the work as a sculpture with a few papers on an office desktop, looking as if they are flipping in the air. But, I wanted to produce something which could even be sold in Ikea, so everyone can have it and it was difficult to take a cast of that piece. Then, it became an installation and then the idea to give the whole effect with a single paper came about. Then, it became about space, multiplicity and objects, I was thinking about the cheap and ordinary in place of the elite. The ready-made is concrete but also close to abstract. When I do this (He takes an A4 paper and slightly moves one corner up), it suddenly turns into an object, which makes you think

of the space, the whole negative space, the room as an effect of breeze. And sculpture is actually is related to negative space.

E.G.T: In the video where you recorded the construction process of *A Sudden Gust of Wind* at Bilsar in 2009, you used music. Who did that piano piece belong to and why did you choose that piece?

S.Ö: The piece belongs to John Adams. It also creates the effects of moments following each other. In that sense, it is minimalist. That is what Oppenheim said when he saw the work, that is was minimalist. It is like the music of Steve Reich, you do not hear a melody but you hear the differences the lapses create. Distortions start to form a new construction.

This is similar to copying. Copying also creates a negative space. The work where I copied the Radikal newspaper by hand for instance... when you look at it, you start to see the labor and the preparation process behind the making of the newspaper. That is also a negative space.