

Chapter 3

PUBLIC ART AS A WAY OF EXPRESSION

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1. Introduction

Art is generally associated with creating beauty and aesthetics. However, art is not only about the aesthetics of the artwork and sometimes it can be used as a way to express some feelings or address social issues, too. However, as art is a very broad subject, this paper will focus on public art and the main aim is to understand the concept of public art and the types of artworks that can be defined as public artworks. Public art has new definitions and different contents due to the constant state of change both in art and in the city [1]. It can be defined as artistic creations exhibited in public spaces. According to Worth's understanding, design and art present cultural thoughts or make interventions with an aesthetic touch. When it comes to public art, the combination of design and art and its presentation in a public space is accessible to everyone [2]. From this understanding, public art is a type of art that can be seen in public spaces or there may be some structures that are open to public access [3]. "Accessibility" to the art is the most important feature of public art. It is significant in order to consider an artwork as a public artwork [4]. What also makes public art public, according to Phillips, is that art can reach a large number of people [5]. Some artworks in private spaces might be considered public because of their accessibility to some people, however, they are only accessible to a group of people who can enter that private space [6]. Artworks in the public spaces are open to everyone in the community. Therefore, artworks that are in a free and unrestricted place that is accessible to everyone in the community and doesn't belong to any particular person or group can be considered truly public [7]. Public artworks can be seen in streets, squares, semi-open spaces of libraries, museums or public buildings, etc. [5]. Considering the space itself as an element of public art also strengthens the sense of place. Instead of making random settlements in the space, shaping the settlement forms according to a certain order and idea reveals the sense of uniqueness and place in the space [1]. However, considering public art as artworks that are located in open or public spaces in the city may not be enough to fully understand its nature. Phillips argues that public art is not a type of art that takes place only in public spaces and claims that the publicness of this art comes from the fact that artistic activities use the idea of the public as their source and research subject [8].

When looking at the nature of public art apart from the location of artwork, it might be said that some public artworks like monuments can stay permanently in its place for years. Some other works may be produced to celebrate a particular event and it can be out of use after the celebration [2]. It also shows that while some artworks take a long time to be designed, made and approved by certain authorities, some public artworks can be made more quickly because they can be produced suddenly and without

anyone's permission [9]. When it comes to the financial part of the artwork production, it is observed that some artworks are funded by public or private organizations or by the artists' own resources [1].

Some artworks may be site-specific and visitors should have background information about the site where the artwork is located. The level of participation also varies according to the structure of the artwork. In a traditional way, the artist's interaction with visitors is not considered and its percentage is very low [10]. However, sometimes it can be seen that artwork becomes more interactive and visitors become participants as well [11]. Sharp et al. discusses that coming together with the audience is at the core of public art [6]. In addition, involving the visitors in the production of artwork may create an environment where people can talk about the problems they see and try to find solutions for them [1]. Therefore, this perspective shows that artwork is not just an object, but can also be a space for interaction and a meaningful experience. On the contrary, there is no obligation to connect with visitors and address some social issues [10]. Sometimes public artworks may be spontaneous and become an expression of the artist's inner world. This is entirely related to what the artist wants to share with the society [2].

There is another understanding of public art rather than the traditional perspective mentioned above that is named as "new genre public art". Activism is the dominant aspect of the new genre public art, so it is directly related to the concerns about. Suzanne Lacy was the first person who put this idea forward in 1995 [12]. People who defended issues like women's rights, protecting the environment, and freedom of thought were inspired by Lacy's [13] idea of this new type of public art [7]. In the first periods of the emergence of the new type of public art, the issues addressed were health-related problems and environmental pollution. Addressing the issues that are related to society shows that this type of art is an activist art [11]. In the next part of the study, types of public arts were examined with some examples.

2. Types of Public Art

Public art concerns various art movements such as graffiti, street art, murals, happening art, land art, environmental art, site-specific art, urban art, contemporary art, conceptual art, community art, anti-art, and participatory art (Figure 1) [12].

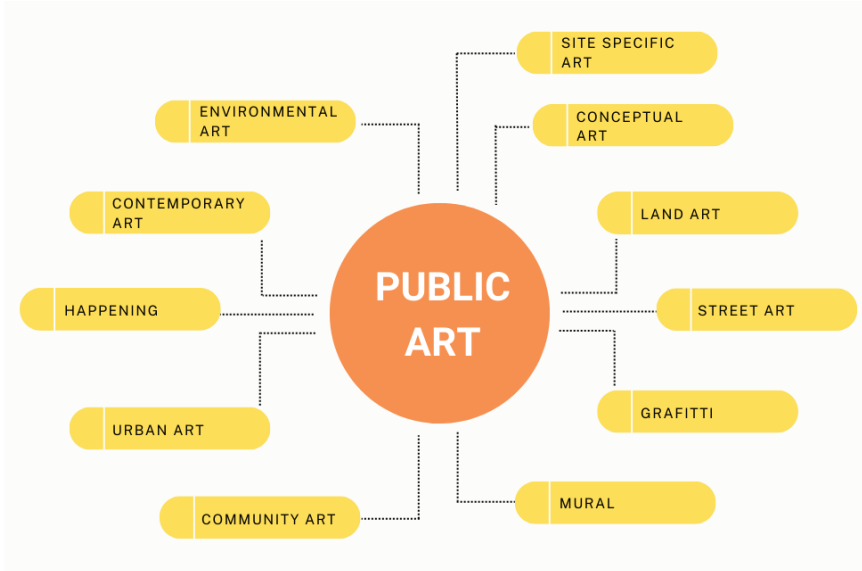


Figure 1. *Types of Art Related to Public Art (adopted from [3] [12])*

The first examples that may come to mind when it comes to public artworks are monuments, sculptures, busts, fountains, and other specially designed water elements. However, public artworks are not limited only to these examples. In addition, architectural artifacts such as buildings, religious buildings or bridges, temporary architectural structures and ornaments and motifs that can be seen especially on the facades of buildings can also be considered public works of art [14]. Urban furniture such as benches, rubbish bins or lighting elements, which are more functional in daily life, and flower pots and floor coverings placed to increase the visual beauty of public spaces can also be shown as examples of public artworks [14].

Considering the classifications of Hamilton et al. and Remesar, public artworks are evaluated as sculptures, works used for ornamental purposes, historically important works and structures such as monuments, urban furniture, works created with land art, open public space arrangements, and temporary structures [15] [16].

Another classification was made by Tornaghi [17]. Public art is considered under five groups and these are: works produced by known artists and located in public spaces that are seen as an important part of cities, provocative and critical works made to revitalize public spaces, artistic works with the participation of people where the process comes to the forefront, artistic installations that are put forward for profit, and elements that support transformation projects [17].

A different classification of what constitutes public artworks was made by the Portland Public Art Committee (Portland Public Art Committee), and in this classification, the artistic content of the works was prioritized (Table 1) [18]. When we look at the classification, it is seen that there are four titles under the names of functional artworks, community artworks, artworks of remembrance, and finally expressive artworks. In another study, in addition to these titles, technology-related artworks are also included [19].

Table 1. *Classification of public artworks created by the Portland Public Art Committee [18]*

PUBLIC ARTWORKS			
Functional Artwork	Social Artworks	Monumental Artworks	Expressionist Artworks
City Furniture	Performance Arts	Monuments	Sculpture
	Graffiti	Mosaics	Surface Painting
	The Game		Installation
	Video, photo and collage		

In the present study, the classification of public artworks created by the Portland Public Art Committee [18] has been adopted to exemplify artworks.

2.1. Functional Artworks

2.1.1. City Furniture

These types of artworks mainly include urban furniture in which artists, architects, and urban planners come together to produce works that aim to increase the quality of life and comfort in public spaces [18]. Functional artworks include benches, bus stops, playgrounds for children, fountains, signboards, kiosks, and shade elements. The common points desired to be seen in these artworks are that they are functional, easy to produce, durable, and have a visual aesthetic at the same time [20]. Typical examples are the Santa Ana fountain located in the vicinity of Plaza Catalunya in Barcelona and the bus station designed by Frank Ghery in Hanover (Figure 2).



Figure 2. *The Santa Ana Fountain in Barcelona (left) [21] and a bus stop in Hannover (right) [22]*

2.2. Social Artworks

Social artworks are works of art created by artists in cooperation with the society. In this way, it is possible to reach different groups in society, to attract the attention of the society and to arouse curiosity, to enable people to creatively express their values, wishes, or traditions. The artworks produced can be both temporary and permanent [20]. Social artworks can be analyzed in four groups: performance arts, graffiti, games and video, photography, and collage.

2.2.1. Performance arts

Performance arts are artistic works that take place, especially in city squares such as Plaza Catalunya (Barcelona), Plaza Mayor (Madrid), or Piazza del Duomo (Milan), which are visited by tourists in order to attract more audiences. In this context, performance arts are artistic works such as dance, theatre, music, poetry and video [23]. Another example of performance arts is the work titled “Bodies in Urban Spaces” prepared by an Austrian choreographer named Willi Dorner and performed by groups of people such as dancers and climbers (Figure 3). This performance work is a moving work that starts at one point in the city and moves towards different points. These points are usually in places that are not paid much attention to in daily life, such as gaps between buildings, stairs, benches, mailboxes, and construction scaffolds. In order to bring a different perspective to these places, the group performs movements such as bending and twisting or clustering at these points [24]. There are also artistic performance applications created by painting the whole bodies of street artists [25] (Figure 3).



Figure 3. “Bodies in Urban Spaces” (left) [24] and street artists (right) [25]

2.2.2. Graffiti

Unlike surface painting, graffiti works are mostly illegal. Sidewalks, walls, traffic signs, billboards, motor vehicles, or train carriages are some of the places that have become a base for graffiti art. Banksy’s graffiti work titled “Window Seat” on the “Separation Wall” in Palestine (Figure 4) [26] or yellow fist graffities by German artist Kripoe around Karaköy district in İstanbul are some of the works that stand out (Figure 4) [27].



Figure 4. Graffiti works titled “Window Seat” on the “Separation Wall” in Palestine (left) [26] and yellow fist graffities around Karaköy district (right) [27]

2.2.3. Games

The works that are considered as games can be thought of as treasure hunt-style games that allow people to look at the places they use or pass through every day from different angles, and sometimes to create a work of art as a result of the designed game [12]. “News.Box.Walk”, designed by a designer named Christina Ray, works like a treasure hunt. News boxes painted in different colors give clues to people in the work, which includes

the idea of moving to different points in the city by sliding from the places where the objects in the city are located. A route is created according to the colors of the news boxes and people play a kind of game in the city by following this route [28].

2.2.4. Video, Photography and Collage

As an example of video, photography, and collage, the “Inside Out” work carried out by a photographer named JR in New York can be considered (Figure 5). In this work, which was realized with the participation of a large number of people, people’s photographs were taken and exhibited in Times Square. The aim here is to enable each person participating in the work to have their own say. Another social artwork is *El Mon Neix En Cada Besada* in Barcelona (Figure 5). This work can be considered as a large composition work that emerged by bringing together photographs of the moments when the people living there felt free.



Figure 5. JR’s “*Inside Out*” (left) [29] and *El Mon Neix En Cada Besada* in Barcelona (right) (Source: İpek Özer personal archive)

2.3. Monumental Artworks

These works are created to perpetuate the memory of an important event or a historical figure [18]. Monuments and sculptures allow the events experienced by societies, empires, or political powers in historical periods to be transferred to the next generations and thus remembered. Such monuments and sculptures can be seen especially in city squares [20].

2.3.1. Monuments

When we look at the monuments and monuments in the world, the Holocaust memorial (Denkmal für die ermordeten Juden Europas) (Figure 6) in Berlin, Germany, and the “Washington Monument” (Figure 6) built in memory of George Washington, the first president of the USA, can be given as important monumental works of art. Among the examples in Türkiye, the Taksim Republic Monument in Taksim, which was built in 1928 by the Italian sculptor Pietro Canonica with the contributions of Sabiha (Bengütaş) Hanım and Hadi (Bara) Bey, has an important place.

Thanks to this monument, the story of the War of Independence and the enthusiasm brought by the Republic were passed on to the next generations and continued to be remembered [5].

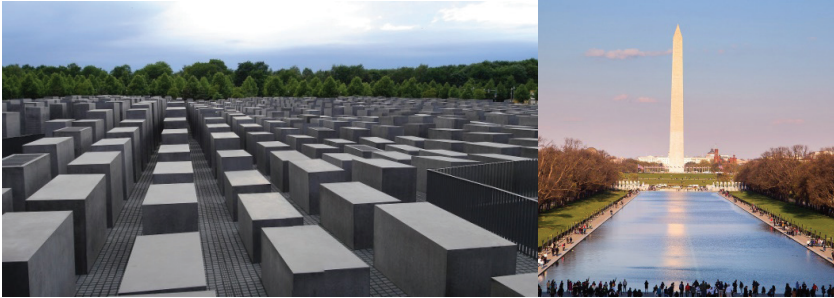


Figure 6. *The memorial to the murdered Jews in Berlin (left) [30] (Photo Chaosdna) and the “Washington Monument” in honour of George Washington (right) [31]*

2.3.2. Mosaics

Mosaics, another monumental work of art, is the creation of a pattern or picture by arranging colored and small stones side by side and gluing them together. It is thought that this type of art was first used by the Sumerians. It is seen that they are used in many different places such as pools, streets, and interiors or exteriors of buildings, and increase the visibility of the space [32]. Examples of mosaics include the Republic Monument in Taksim, Istanbul, and the mosaics with religious content in the Basilica of San Vitale in Ravenna, Italy (Figure 7).



Figure 7. *The Republic Monument in Taksim, Istanbul (left) [33] and the mosaics in the Basilica of San Vitale (right) [34]*

2.4. Expressive Artworks

Expressive artworks are works that are located in public spaces in cities and aim to add a sense of joy, vitality, pleasure, or curiosity to the daily lives of people using these spaces [18].

2.4.1. Sculptures

These artworks can be found in squares, parks, or indoor places that are thematic parks accessible to the public. The Picasso sculpture in Chicago's Daley Plaza, which has become one of the symbols of the city, and the Vigeland Sculpture Park, one of the largest sculpture parks, where Gustav Vigeland's sculptures are exhibited, are some of the works of expressionist art [20].

These works, which can be depicted as expressive artworks, can be adopted by local governments and included in cultural policies and can be positioned in urban spaces in a planned manner. In this context, the "Percent for Art" strategy implemented in the United States can be emphasized (Figure 8). The strategy stipulates that a portion of the costs of public buildings to be constructed in cities should be used for public art practices, and with the implementation of this legal regulation after 1978, public art activities have been seen in nearly 200 cities. Over the years, these activities have gradually increased in momentum. The work created by Gustav Vigeland in Vigeland Park in Oslo (Figure 8) and the public artwork "Cloud Gate" by the famous sculptor Anish Kapoor in Millennium Park in Chicago are among the important outputs of this practice (Figure 9) [35].



Figure 8. A cross-section of the "Percent for Art" strategy in the United States (left) [35] and the Vigeland Sculpture Park in Oslo (right) [36]



Figure 9. “Cloud Gate” by Anish Kapoor [37]

2.4.2. Surface paintings

Works on walls, floors, and facades of buildings are called surface painting. The Miami-Dade Art in Public Spaces Program took place within the Carnival Center for Performing Arts in Miami, and there are some works made as surface painting. The application seen on the floor in the lobby of an opera house was designed by Jose Bedia (Figure 10). Another example is the mural ‘Finding the Light Within’ by Mural Arts in collaboration with the Department of Behavioral Health, Intellectual disAbility Services, and the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention in Philadelphia (Figure 10).



Figure 10. A work created at the Carnival Centre for Performing Arts in Miami (left) [38] and a mural entitled ‘Finding the light within’ by Mural Arts in Philadelphia (right) [39]

2.4.3. Installations

The last example of expressionist artwork is installation works. Installation is a type of art which had been affected by conceptual art in 1970s, however, its roots goes back to Dadaism and Surrealism [40]. Since installation art can be defined as placing objects to a specific location, it can be seen that its main concern is the relationship between space and object. In 1923, artworks named “Merzbau” by Kurt Schwitters [41] and “Proun Room” by El Lissitzky [42] are the first examples of the installation art. One of the installations of artist Jenny Kendler that is titled “Birds Watching” (Figure 11) and “Ice Watch” (Figure 11) by artist Olafur Elliason can be some examples of more recent installation works.



Figure 11. “Birds Watching” by Jenny Kendler (left) [43] and “Ice Watch” by Olafur Elliason (right) [44]

3. Conclusions

As can be seen in the examples, public art is a very wide area and it has a great variety in it. Public artworks may include different use of materials and presentation techniques, they can discuss some cultural, social or political issues about society or only represent artists’ ideas and feelings. Public artworks show that art can be outside of the museums and galleries and its accessibility makes these artworks more reachable for everyone. Because of the ease of accessing artworks, the awareness about art itself, the topics they address and the value that people give to them may increase. The increasing number of public artworks puts art in the daily life of people and everyone in the community can see and experience the artworks. Sharing these experiences creates a feeling of togetherness and it allows people to see their environment in a different way.

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