

After the Rain

Certainly, Berlin and Istanbul relate to each other as Berlin houses one of the largest Turkish community living in Europe. However, the relation spoken of here belongs to the very intrinsic natures of the two cities: their capacity to transform themselves. After the demolition of the Berlin Wall, the city has been repositioning itself for a new beginning and has become the largest construction site of Europe, like Istanbul.

Istanbul, a giant organism that feeds on motion and speed, transforms itself constantly, especially, after 1980's. This period marks the date of the oppressive coup d'état and the adaptation of a liberal economic model which was the first step towards integration into the economic globalization. With the process of globalization, Istanbul has been going through a series of drastic cultural, social, economic and urban transformations. 1980's witnessed radical urban renewal projects such as the construction of the second bridge over the Bosphorus, new high ways and boulevards, an underground metro, a second international airport as well as new docks and ports on the Asian coast. Shifting, relocating and restructuring the already existing business, finance, media centers and urban spaces related to transportation has changed the existing balances and given way to the emergence of new locations for concentration of diverse purposes. In addition to all these structural renewals, the best locations of the city were reserved for the five-star hotel chains in the expectation of accommodating "world elites" and the entrepreneurs of global capital. Gigantic shopping malls, fashion designer boutiques, clubs for the world music, speciality restaurants, etc, followed to fulfill the emerging demands created by the new lifestyles of the citizens of the desired "global city".

The undesirable majority of the ever-increasing population of Istanbul also took part in these hasty preparations by creating new shantytowns as alternative habitats and lifestyles. Mostly illegal, shantytowns like a chorus, have been emerging and extending their circumferences in the hearths of the most elite districts, at the back of highways, in the midst of skyscrapers or on the hills of the Bosphorus. Referring to the practicality and speed of their construction, the shantytowns in Turkish called *Gecekondu* (founded-by-night or landed-by-night). In addition to what the name implies, with the diversity and variety of materials and methods with which these *Gecekondu*s were built, and with the resulting unrecognizable architectural notes of which they consist, they recall spaceships that have landed at night, just like the sculptures of Auke de Vries.

The high-rise towers are considered as the sign of high civilization and global cities. The shantytowns, on the other hand, reflect the side effects of globalization. Architecturally speaking, while the high-rise buildings are stamped by the standardization of globalization, shantytowns are stamped by uniqueness of form and construction. Auke de Vries deals with these urban as well as social issues in his work. He creates spatial "fairytales" related to the architectural settings and urban complexities as well as temporality, process and instability. His architectural sculptures refer to architecture and non-architecture simultaneously. While it refers to the trivial, instable, off-balanced, incomplete structures of shantytowns, it also points out to the perfection and rigidity of the contemporary architecture by contrast. In his "Gelandet" (2002) on the top of the DaimlerChrysler building by Renzo Piano at Postdamer Platz, Auke de Vries brings together these contrasting forces to unfold the content and context of both. The sculpture was placed on the building in such a subtle in-balance that the verticality of the erected building is balanced by the over-turned pose of the sculpture and creates a narrative. In his photomontage that he placed one of his sculpture on top of a high-rise office tower which is located at the Levent-Maslak axis, the new finance and banking center of Istanbul, he furthers his proposal. This new center actually brings together the two sides of globalization: the finance world in the front and at the back, the shantytowns. Therefore, Auke de Vries in this work is contrasting not only the two opposing formats of architectonic structures but also two different social strata, alternative habitats and lifestyles.

Two years after Auke de Vries' photomontage, "After the Rain" was exhibited in Istanbul in the framework of the "Istanbul Pedestrian(Yaya) Exhibitions 2: Tunel – Karakoy", an international urban art exhibition realized in Istanbul between 16th of September and 22nd of October 2005. This time, "After the Rain" was shown in a totally different context and installed on top of one of the towers of Galata Bridge connecting the two sides of the Golden Horn, Karakoy to Eminonu. This area has functioned for centuries as the main port and trade center of Istanbul and has been undergoing through a socio-economic, cultural and urban transformation since the '80s. The Yaya exhibition aimed at exploring the new possibilities in this area in the favor of the public spaces allocated to pedestrians and for its future identity through spatial and cultural proposals by the participating artists/architects.

Questioning the established conception of sculpture in public space, the placement of "After the Rain" exemplified the use of unusual, non-conventional places/locations for art and created an awareness on the different possibilities of public space art. In the context of the Yaya exhibition, with its exceptional placement, location and form, "After the Rain" emphasized the improvisational nature and bewildering results of the transformation that this area anticipated.

In the lack of the Utopian height and midst of nothingness, Auke de Vries proposes us to look at the "otherwise" of the way we think and live.

Fulya Erdemci

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