

A contemporary approach in transformation of space perception: The meaning of architecture in 2000's art

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to provide a discussion ground that can answer the question, "as a contemporary theme in transformation of space perception, what is the meaning of architecture in the art of the 2000s". As the scope, works of leading figures of 2000s art were examined through literature review and it was aimed to obtain an original concept set by evaluating them in the context of art-space relationship. The methodology is divided into three sections. The first section is literature research which is based on the determination of the theory about the artworks. The second section is based on the demonstrations of the relationships between the spatial themes through "knowledge discovery in databases". In the third section, the groups are emphasized through "relative frequencies of the spatial themes". Accordingly, when the artworks are evaluated in terms of spatial features, it is seen that narratives are related with war, peace, anarchy, individuality, imprisonment, separation, loneliness, uncanny, anxiety, curiosity, desire, lethargy, memory, boredom, consumer culture, ambiguity, habit, conflict and revel. As a result, the image of space occurs while being positioned together with interior and exterior, official and informal, ordinary and extraordinary, dramatic and analytical where dualities formed by contrasts are dissolved.

Keywords: Perception of space, Space in art, Contemporary space, Spatial context

Extended Abstract

Introduction: The study discusses the meaning of architecture as a contemporary theme in the transformation of space perception through the art of the 2000s. It is aimed to create a concept set by evaluating the explanations of leading theoretical figures and the works of artists who developed representations that question the meaning of space in the art of the 2000s. This set of concepts will be instrumental in drawing a roadmap on how the art of the 2000s contributed to the art-space relationship in subsequent architectural studies.

Purpose and scope: The works of the leading figures of 2000's art were examined through a literature review, and it was aimed to obtain an original concept set by evaluating them in the context of the art-space relationship. The basic research question is stated as follows: "As a Contemporary Approach in the Transformation of the Perception of Space, What Is the Meaning of Architecture in Art of the 2000s?" Accordingly, Banksy's Flower Chucker, Luc Tuymans' Within, Peter Doig's 100 Years Ago, Ken Currie's Three Oncologists, Neo Rauch's Gold, Vincent Desiderio's Cockaigne, Zhao Bo's Mother 2004, Inka Essenhigh's Shopping, Mark Alexander's Blacker Gachet I and John Alexander's Parade are evaluated. All these artworks are critical in that they represent themes that worked as a pioneering force before the contemporary art trends that emerged in the 2010s and evolved into different themes. The most influential difference between the art of the 2000s and the art of the 2010s and 2020s stems from the fact that the thematic essences to be used in the art of the following years are based on the interrogative works of art developed from the space-human interaction in the first half of the 2000s.

Method: The methodology is divided into three sections. The first section is literature research which is based on the determination of the theoretical studies about the artworks. The second section is based on the demonstrations of the relationships between the dominant themes through "knowledge discovery in databases". In the third section, the groups made through the determinations are emphasized through "relative frequencies of the spatial themes". Primarily, keywords with spatial characteristics in the criticism texts of the selected works were determined through a literature

review. Sentences containing these spatial keywords were sorted to form a meaningful combination and subjected to data analysis with the help of Voyant Tools. The aim here is to list the spatial essences in the art of the 2000s under the titles of “Anarchy, Uncanny and Escape”, “Consumption” and “Nothingness and Ceremony” and to show the connections they have established with other themes. In this way, the spatial potentials of the bases, which are a reference to the art of the 2010s, have been determined and the bonds that will determine the spatial approach in the art of the coming years have been made visible.

Findings and conclusion: All the artworks are evaluated in terms of their spatial and thematic features and it is seen that the narratives are presented through essences of public space, prison, island, sea, boat, operating room, dark room, provincial store, showcase, cave, shelter, residence, dining room, shopping mall, market, void, dark and ceremony area. The conceptual palette associated with these spaces is nourished by the themes of war, peace, anarchy, individuality, imprisonment, separation, loneliness, uncanny, anxiety, curiosity, desire, pleasure, lethargy, memory, boredom, consumer culture, ambiguity, habit, conflict and revel. As a result, it is seen that all these interrogations create an eclectic image by positioning the themes of “inside and outside”, “formal and informal”, “ordinary and extraordinary”, “dramatic and analytical” together in the context of space. This image is fed by the plurality theme, which forms a strong basis for many themes that will be discussed in the 2010’s art and represents the connections that will affect the spatial perception of the coming years. Following the spatial dualities and contrasts in works of art over a certain production period can provide many guiding data in terms of architecture. These can be evaluated through the identity of the space, the harmony-incompatibility of the space with age, the semantic weight of the space for the users, the obligations that space imposes and the areas of freedom which space offers, the way the space is interpreted by different user profiles or the role of the space in changing the habits of the masses. All the evaluations are based on the conclusion addressing the spatial qualities and forms of association in the pioneering works of art of the relevant period have a role in realizing the architectural design.

Keywords: Perception of space, Space in art, Contemporary space, Spatial context

INTRODUCTION

Countless images surround contemporary urban people. While the distinction between artistic and non-artistic among these images becomes blurred, works and spaces intertwine, creating an illusion and presenting various evidences for the semantic dissolution of the age (Berger, 1972: 98). These evidences can be discussed in terms of the way spaces are evaluated with the perspective of artworks, and they can be deconstructed in a way that makes their contextual relations visible. Accordingly, it is necessary to examine the components that make up the image. Explaining the relationship between the components that make up the image with the concept of association, Pellegrino and Jeanneret (2009: 269) present various approaches to the definition and description of space, and mention that the production of meaning developed in architectural theory can be explained by evaluating both the approaches of modernist function-oriented and the post-modernist communication-oriented world.

In this context, art offers essences that are useful in evaluating the spatial meaning and contextual reading (Pellegrino & Jeanneret, 2009: 271). The art in the 2000s, on the other hand, contextualizes the transformation of space with its powerful themes, such as the transformation of the contemporary understanding of the city, the examinations of the urban people, the ways in which the last phase of capitalism spread through images, the speed of popularization of individuality versus sociality, the questioning of actions, the dissolution of the meanings assigned to urban life and the sanctity of the countryside. Particularly, the first half of the 2000’s art includes a perspective that is positioned just before technology, autonomy, and artificial intelligence-based predictions with spatial details that deal with semantic dissolution in the physical context, compared to the second half prepared for the art in 2010 and later. This perspective is also important in terms of expressing the understanding of phase before art is explained entirely through speculation, brand value, and shopping (Stallabrass, 2020: 12). Ten artworks examined in the study were evaluated mainly by the way they interpret the sensitivities of the age through space (Figure 1).

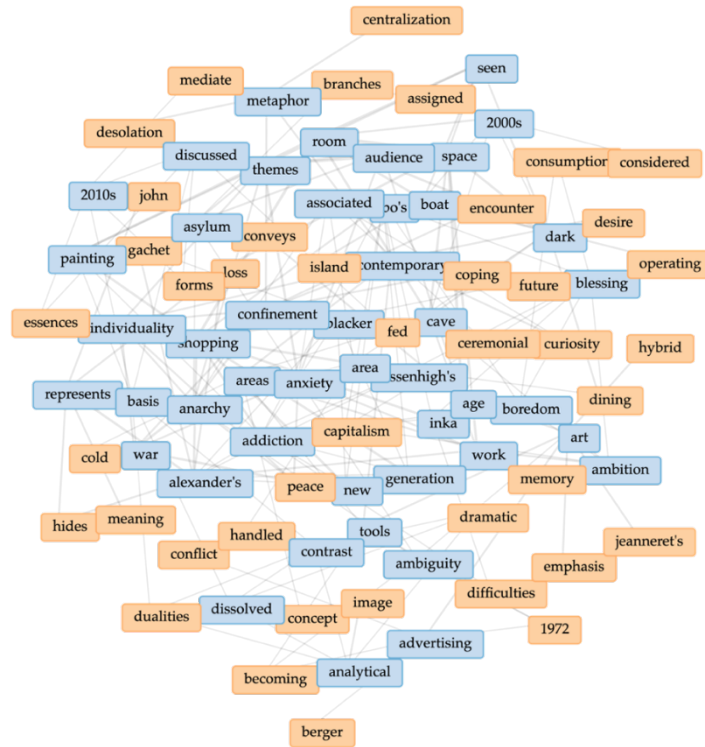


Figure 1. Relations of spatial themes in the artworks and evaluations examined in the study

METHODOLOGY

The first section is literature research which is based on the determination of the theory about the artworks. The keywords with spatial characteristics in the critical texts of the selected artworks were determined through a literature review. The second section is based on the demonstrations of the relationships between the spatial themes through “knowledge discovery in databases”. Sentences containing these spatial keywords were sorted to form a meaningful whole and subjected to data analysis with the help of Voyant Tools. In the third section, the groups are emphasized through “relative frequencies of the spatial themes”. The aim here is to list the spatial essences in the art of the 2000s under the titles of “Anarchy, Uncanny and Escape”, “Consumption” and “Nothingness and Ceremony” and to show the connections they have established with other themes. In this approach, the spatial potentials of the bases, which are a reference to the art of the 2010s, have been determined and the bonds that will determine the spatial approach in the art of the coming years have been made visible.

FINDINGS

Anarchy, Uncanny and Escape in Space

Banksy, Tuymans and Doig stand out with their artwork on the themes of anarchy, the uncanny and escape. Scardamaglia (2022: 418) touches on the importance of the brand value created by Banksy, who spent his entire career staying away from visible properties. Giving a new meaning to the space, Banksy uses an anarchy aesthetic that makes the audience rethink the value of the street and art. Banksy used blank walls to reflect his stance that brings to light speculative issues in public spaces. Many themes such as obsolescence, abandonment, the disintegration of the idea of peace, anxiety, loss of shelter, the transformation of time perception and anarchy are the main themes of Banksy’s artworks. All can be observed in the art that he applies with the stencil technique. Although the ruins are sometimes overlooked parts of the metropolitan fabric that hybridizes with the different uses of glass, steel and brick, Banksy’s art assigns an anarchist context to these

pieces, turning them into a mute forum of ideas represented by minorities and a showcase of opposition to actions that reflect the oppressive attitude of the order (Figure 2).

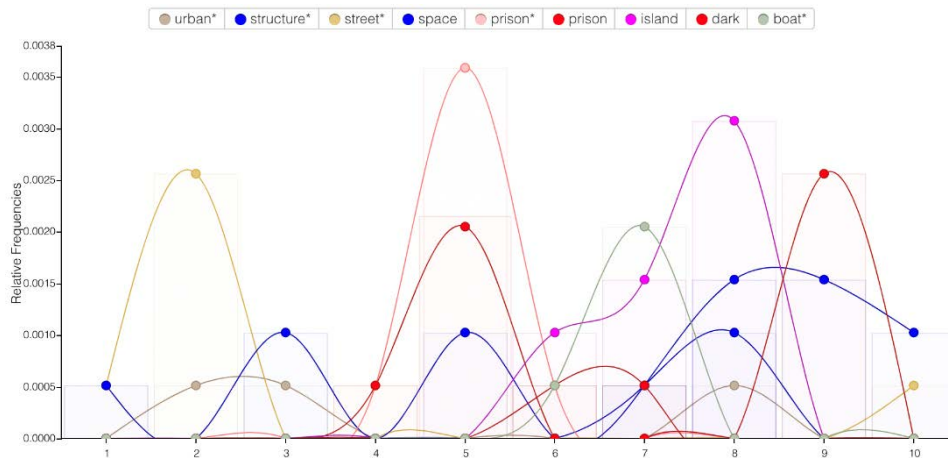


Figure 2. Relative frequencies of the spatial themes in the artworks of Banksy, Tuymans, Doig and Currie

Mentioning that “graffiti” functions as a critique of the alienated spaces of modernity, Branscome (2011: 114) also mentions that Banksy’s works, exhibitions and prints attack the Warhol cult in many ways through a “legal” street vandalism, while simultaneously opposing BritArt. Famous as one of the most radical artists of the postmodern form of the language of communication on the street, Banksy finds exhibition spaces for his works in parking lots, abandoned industrial sites and under highway overpasses or the remains of infrastructure work. Abused streets, seemingly derelict city parts and areas where concrete texture is visible in its coldest forms act as the backdrops that take on the role of the carrier of the postmodern movement. In this context, graffiti works as an architectural element that offers different spatial narratives to the daily users and the viewers in the gallery. Street art, which is an important metaphor for demonstrating destruction from the inside, exhibits itself in Banksy’s two-dimensional drawings with many political messages. These political messages contain a conceptual richness that allows many architectural and urban design elements such as walls, streets, pavements and the values attributed to them to be questioned in terms of capitalism, marketing tools and consumer culture (Ward, 2006: 920) (Figure 3).



Figure 3. Banksy, *Flower Chucker*, 2000, Stencil print on brick wall, Beit Sahour, West Bank, Palestine

Zabawa-Krzyzkowska and Groń (2020: 9) discuss the relationship of artistic activities in the public sphere with architecture through the refreshing and complementary effect of murals on the urban landscape. Murals are works of art that use the surfaces or spaces they choose as a backdrop directly as a context and sometimes turn them into tourist attractions. By indirectly drawing attention to the exhibited and questioned space, it can turn the surrounding buildings into symbols, add depth and richness to the character of the public flow, or turn an inactive part of the city into an interesting focal point. Murals often take on a task associated with the

identity of the place and often mediate it to produce a new context. Zabawa-Krzyzkowska and Groń (2020: 9) show the works of Fangor and the Warsaw Metro as examples in this context.

Another artist who examines space through contemporary dualities is Luc Tuymans. Mieves (2013: 297) emphasizes that Tuymans examines the way he evaluates the relationship between photography/film and painting. Mieves' article examines the impact of photography on Tuymans' work and indicates Benjamin's approach to technological reproducibility to discover the works of Tuymans, who also adopts new technology and media in his paintings, the dualities of internal/external, private/public, real/imaginary, material/spiritual, etc. The article also demonstrates the need for an in-depth questioning of dualities in European Modernism. While Tuymans constructs an artistic language by questioning the fundamental contrasts that modernism insists on and discussing their depths, he also presents compositions that allow for deep analysis of the meanings and contexts of spaces. With the prison theme, *Within* also contains connotations of many spatial dualities mentioned above, especially the inner/outer duality. Luke Tuymans, in his work *Within*, examines the distorted feeling of being imprisoned by creating an uncanny silhouette behind bars. The tension created by the interweaving of the coldest hues of green and blue is reinforced by the installation of two small cages in front of larger iron bars. Wide and narrow intervals form composites that consist of a common grid math but represent different meanings. While the viewer has the feeling that the narrowly spaced fences resemble cages in which animals are closed rather than humans, they feel that the wide-spaced fences are produced for humans (Earl, 2006: 921).

Morris and Worrall (2014: 1084) point out that from a policy perspective, a better understanding of the relationships between architectural design and prisoner behavior is associated with many administrative burdens such as safety, security, cost, and operation. Models developed to explore the effects of prison architecture on violent and non-violent inmates contain many striking data revealing the psychological effects of prisons on inmates. In this context, Tuymans multiplied the conceptual and psychological weight of the prison metaphor by creating space within space and increased the spatial load of his work. Relatedly, Johnsen et al., (2018: 19) reminds that life in an institution is determined by a totalitarian order, just as in prison, reminds us that this spatial metaphor is adjacent to every day and offers illusions associated with the age lived. The simple life described in prisons is actually a multidimensional life loaded with dreams, nightmares, memories and delusions. The prison is a composition not only of the inmates inside, but also of aluminum food containers, old bunk beds and chairs, old basins and jugs. Objects as well as individuals appear pale and isolated from life. Although there is a courtyard just outside the cells, the windows facing the courtyard are narrow and add to the gloom of the interior. While laws, rules and regulations tell what an institution can and cannot do, the anger, frustration, pain, helplessness, despair and sadness felt by the prisoners turns into a giant, burning silence, which determines the unique characteristic of the place (Figure 4).



Figure 4. Luc Tuymans, *Within*, 2001, Oil on canvas, 223x243 cm, Saatchi Gallery, London, England, Britain

The theme of imprisonment refers to a set of concepts directly related to the themes of escape and loneliness. Peter Doig's *A 100 Years Ago* stands out for the way it questions these themes. Standing in the middle of a deserted water with a contrasting color and brightness, the female figure in the boat represents the loneliness

of the age in a dominant language, metaphorically. While the dark sky provides an effect that heightens the gloom of the distant island, the island, with its numbered roads and the monumental stain at the top, represents distant dreams and belongings left behind together. The shadow of the female figure is the same color as the boat. This strengthens the viewer's thought that the woman is not in a semantic unity with the boat in which she sits with an uneasy body language and that the boat assigns a new meaning to the female figure. It can be thought that the fact that the boat is flame-colored and that the figure is depicted in pale and dark tones play a role in this thought (Bonaventura, 2006: 922).

Mentioning the importance of island symbolism in architecture, Mcgrath (2020: 81) indicates Rossi's 1982 definition of "island as structure" which emphasizes that the links with phenomenology and history should be considered in order to understand the use of structural elements built as part of built islands. The island is described as an effective metaphor for welding from the past to the present and helping to ensure the smooth passage of time. It is an attempt to assign a temporal axis to the horizontal plane of space. In this context, the islands are also referred to as paradise with the most optimistic view. As an urban structure, the island is also a powerful formation that depicts the tension between the cities' cosmopolitan structure and the individuals' loneliness. Carpi (2020: 225), on the other hand, deals with the connotations of this spatial metaphor in the context of law and literature, mentioning that the concept of the island represents separations and corruption in the context of the law. The island means a new and destructive geopolitical space. According to Carpi, the new legal space created on the island is not a discredited form of natural space but a temporary, artificial organization that preserves cultural memory. In this view, those who reach an island are actually described as survivors of a physical, spiritual, or cultural wreck. This context can also examine a break from civilization with its legal system, the deterioration of a known system, or a physical, moral, political, or social disaster. The creation of an island is an invitation to re-examine old relations in the legal and political context (Figure 5).

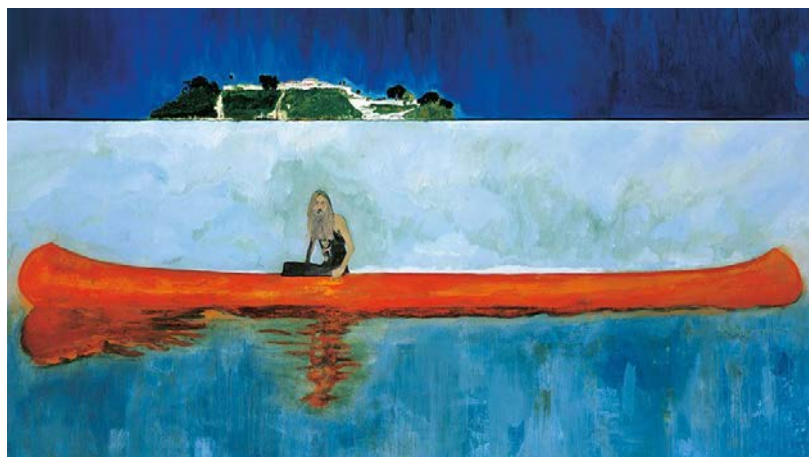


Figure 5. Peter Doig, *A 100 Years Ago*, 2001, Oil on canvas, 229x358.5 cm, Victoria Miro Gallery, London, England, Britain

Considering the prominent themes in the previous three paintings, it can be said that the themes of anarchy, imprisonment, loneliness and escape open up space for the representations of anxiety, which are positioned as their successors. Traces of all of these themes can be captured in Currie's painting *The Three Oncologists*. In the artwork, three oncology specialists head towards a dark space behind dark curtains with their facial expressions and trembling silhouettes that reflect anxiety and cautiousness together. The tension created by being disturbed and being accountable for the problem they are dealing with can be read from the faces and body language of the figures. The dark space framed by dark curtains stands out as a metaphor loaded with many negative connotations, referring to the magnitude of the problem and the polysemy of time (Honigman, 2006: 925). Emery (2005: 61) mentions that while Currie uses doctors and the dark background to reflect his philosophy of art and beliefs in his painting *Three Oncologists*, this work contains a feeling of uncanny and insecurity that differs from traditional doctor representations. Relatedly, while explaining the relationship between surgery and architecture, Adams (2018: 261) emphasizes the prevalence among medical historians of

the belief that architecture is one of the necessary criteria for medical progress, and reminds Sullivan’s iconic statement about form following function. Recalling the Victorian surgical amphitheater, surgical suites, and pseudo-operating rooms of the post-war era, the concern to relate to the street refers to the way contemporary operating theaters are placed at the center of hospital complexes and invisible from the outside, in contrast to past details such as skylights, sometimes rounded, exaggerated ventilation solutions. This raises questions of a duality that fits with the situation in Currie’s painting. Doctors struggle with countless dangerous ideas while completing their work in the darkness of a psychological realm disconnected from the world in the operating room, which is perceived as their autonomous space. Ibrahim et al. (2017: 34) also point out the importance of evidence-based operating room design, emphasizing that operating rooms work like a closed box. Few operating theaters’ actions are known, officially recorded, and tracked. In this context, darkness seems to be an appropriate use to describe a space where ideas and actions become invisible by intertwining (Figure 6).



Figure 6. Ken Currie, *Three Oncologists*, 2002, Oil on canvas, 195.6x243.8 cm, National Scottish Portrait Gallery, Edinburgh, Scotland, Britain

“Space within Space” Based on Consumption

Spatial outputs on consumption habits, one of the most important themes of 2000s art, can be seen in the works of Rauch, Desiderio, Bo and Essenhigh. Eisman (2012: 233) mentions that Rauch is particularly known for his approach to navigating the boundary gap between figuration and abstraction, combining recognizable images with solid-colored spaces, in addition to his alienated people in eerie landscapes. Critics often describe these works as “Kafkaesque” and “nightmarish”. The productions are filled with visual references to socialist realism, dada, pop, comics, and 1950s advertisements (Figure 7).

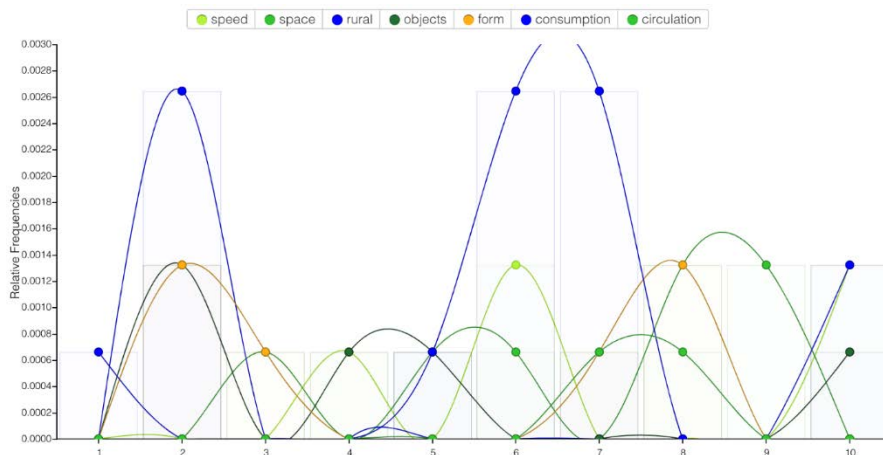


Figure 7. Relative frequencies of the spatial themes in the artworks of Rauch, Desiderio, Bo and Essenhigh

Rauch’s painting reflects the combination of feelings created by a showcase in the country life surrounded by boring everyday elements, while the province watches this effect with its unique atmosphere in golden tones.

As one of the main metaphors of capitalism, the showcase offers a representation area that triggers pleasure and entertainment motives in users. In Rauch's painting, mask-like objects in the form of a human face are in the showcase. While the paint on the glass refers to the internalization of hasty and careless marketing logic, the red spots create the illusion of black humor that the objects may be real human heads (Grant, 2006: 927). Akhimien and Isiwele (2017: 10) mention that not every change in rural can be read as a sign of development. The emphasis that the built environment determines the character of the rural area, as well as the community members, is also important in this context. The relationships that people establish with each other, as well as the relationships they establish with places, play a decisive role in the character of the rural area. Pop and Viorel (2010: 19) also mention that local rural heritage represents an aggregate of all local architectural and landscape elements that form a common denominator for both traditional buildings and a particular rural landscape and contains the footprint of residents. The locals try to survive in a society that tries to impose contemporary values and techniques (Figure 8).



Figure 8. Neo Rauch, *Gold*, 2003, Oil on canvas, 250x210 cm, David Zwirner Gallery, New York, USA

Desiderio's 2003 work, *Land of Dreams*, on the other hand, exhibits a messy, dirty and lived-in room with books, a table and dinnerware, with a composition it presents against the traditional use of space. The reactions and strategies of the last form of capitalism, aimed at satisfying all the senses as quickly and impulsively as possible, are visible in the picture. In such a place, meals were interrupted and all the books were thrown one after the other after a rough scan. Insatiability and anxiety, two of the main diseases of the age, were treated with an intense feeling of boredom. Books stand out not with their theoretical weight, but with the abundance of their visuals. This strengthens the viewer's perception that the person or people who read the books represent shy, speed and entertainment-oriented characters who do not like to read much (Lerner, 2006: 930). Desiderio (2008: 2) makes his explanations in the context of innovative art through Manet, Delacroix, Duchamp and Marx, who has explanations about the fetishization of commodities. Pointing out that Duchamp's adoption of aesthetics that can only be determined socially, creates an important context for the art of desire and the spaces of desire, Desiderio mentions that the struggle of the rising bourgeois sensibility is no longer as important as it used to be for art and the spatiality it spawned. Pallares (2020: 310), on the other hand, emphasizes a collective understanding defined through the blurriness of the alien environment, recalling Bruegel's 1559 fragments of composition full of animals, objects, evil and stupidity. The everyday built environment is filled with passers-by, workers, shoppers, artists, traders, dreamers and the homeless. Upton (2002: 707) mentions that the daily space is not as successful as it is thought to define and determine the objects used by it. Everyday life is actually full of innumerable uncertainties and is far from the desire of architecture to describe. Combining life and landscape, commodification and social stratification are two-pronged consumption paradigms that trigger each other. While man supports a resilient spatiality, he is also bored with it and desires the new (Figure 9).



Figure 9. Vincent Desiderio, *Dreamland*, 2003, Oil on canvas, 284.2 x 389.6 cm, Hirshhorn Museum, Washington, USA

One of the most powerful descriptors of the morbid desire for the new is Zhao Bo. Bo's 2004 painting is illustrated with a background featuring the most popular figures of capitalism. The mother and her children, who are depicted with dissatisfied expressions, are represented by the popular neon colors of the age, and are shown as one of the elements of the consumer society. Logos, writings and clothes reinforce the intertwining with the language of the age. While the space described in the background represents the chaotic composition of many elements, it also reflects the consumption and speed-oriented cultural transformation of the post-2000s. This desire for consumption is constructed and transformed with a speed and transience that triggers selfishness, haste, thoughtlessness and dissatisfaction among family members. Billboards are powerful elements that reflect the fluid consumption traffic of the age as the most practical and dominant tools for corporate identities to infiltrate the daily life and intellectual world of individuals (Machida, 2006: 934).

Chase (1991: 211) mentions that consumption is the most important output of social and economic organizing power. Architecture is defined as a discipline that responds directly to agreements and regulations related to consumerism and realizes this through symbolism rather than abstraction. Although architecture is not essentially a marketing-based mission, architectural production has also changed form, through the appeal of advertising and symbolizing a ready supply, playing a role in the process of influencing new requirements by the disproportionate demand of the public for goods and services. Sklair (2017: 225) has worked on the discovery of theoretical and tangible connections between iconicity and consumption habits in the field of contemporary architecture and urban design. The belief that happiness will increase as consumption and property habits are developed, and in this context, the values attributed to consumption-related sectors are problematic in many respects. The visibility of the fact that capitalist globalization and consumption habits are unsustainable in the long run due to ecological pressure is decreasing. These relationships are explained through the knowledge that the circulation rate is much slower in places such as libraries and cemeteries compared to the circulation flow in the places where money is spent the most (Sklair, 2017: 225) (Figure 10).



Figure 10. Zhao Bo, *Mother 2004*, 2004, Oil on canvas, 100x120 cm, China Gallery of Modern Art, London, England, Britain

Contrary to Bo's approach, Esssenhigh evaluates the shopping theme through a futuristic space. The perception that the space offers a slice of the future is reinforced with cool colors and minimalist interior architecture. The floor is represented in a jointless form that is easy to clean. The figures shop with their "plastic-surgery" faces that resemble each other and their clothes, which are by-products of the same fashion trend. Their dissatisfied, indecisive expressions reflect the data-bombarded minds of the age. The sales units, designed in a minimalist form, contain a limited number of products, unlike in the past. The color tones on the walls depict an old, rotten, rusted, stinking space. The space, which appears to be free of the means of color and entertainment, is, in turn, surrounded by segmented units for the completion of the sales transaction as quickly as possible. Long lines, represented by elliptical forms, refer to Fordist production methods (Honigman, 2006: 925) (Figure 11).



Figure 11. Inka Esssenhigh, *Shopping*, 2005, Oil on linen, 178 x 193 cm, Saatchi Gallery, London, England, Britain

Lovelace (2001: 113) cites Esssenhigh's success in creating his own visual universe and even "his own genre". Cyborgs, small humanoid shapes, the feeling of thick enamel that covers the canvases, the pieces that shine as if they were polished and the technological feeling are all parts of Esssenhigh's distinctive artistic language. Bold, avant-garde and occasionally minimalist backgrounds balance the ability to be exotic with mundane details. Resembling atmospheric fabric waves, these pieces are deep enough to express a technologically advanced decay in addition to a limited representation of the future. Alvesson (2013: 47) reminds that few people focus on the real meaning of consumption, apart from green activists who are portrayed as enemies of development. He mentions that in such an age, fashion and brands are built with a speed and variability that is aimed at temporarily providing consumer satisfaction. In an age where the concept of need is deceptive, and all non-essential needs other than food, water, oxygen, and sensory stimulation are reflected as necessary, it produces its spaces with this understanding. Relatedly, Baudrillard (1998: 25) speaks of a kind of fantastic abundance of consumption that appears with the proliferation of objects. In this abundance of services and goods, the ecological orientations of the human species also mutate, resulting in a way of life that lives at the speed of things and forgets its own natural rhythm and falls into a new fluidity.

Dissolving Spatial Meaning: Nothingness and Ceremony

The meanings assigned to the space through themes can be examined through both the world framed by the artwork and the positioning of the characters who share that world. The themes of nothingness and ceremony are also prominent among the themes frequently observed in the art of the 2000s. The theme of individuality, sanctified through social tensions, manifests itself in solitude, nothingness, and eclectic compositions in ceremonies (Figure 12).

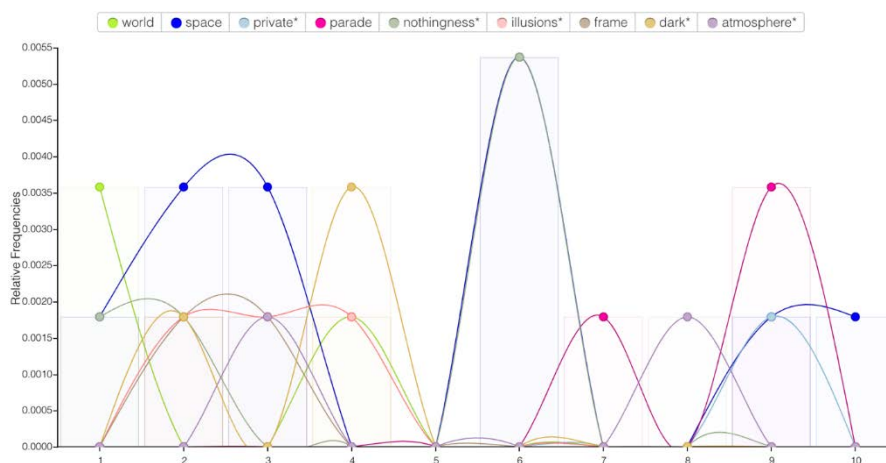


Figure 12. Relative frequencies of the spatial themes in the artworks of Mark Alexander and John Alexander

Alexander’s *The Blacker Gachet I* depicts a thoughtful and tired male figure with illusions of tone and texture on a black background in a dark frame. The painting works like a framed space, creating a sense of autonomous space for the viewer to breathe in if entered. Although the painting represents the special and unique space of a figure buried in uncertainties, illusions, long thinking processes, and indecisions, the emotions expressed through the painting are easily transmitted to the viewer, and a contagious space that leaps from the frame and spreads around is depicted. The gloomy atmosphere obtained with black color and textural illusions also bears signs of the indistinctness of the thoughtful and tired figure. The dominant language of the age is covered with a veil that is too dark to make the individual and the individual’s dark world covered with thoughts sufficiently visible. The state of integration with this veil also plays a role in the fading of uniqueness and its transformation into a gloomy fossil (Middleton, 2006: 938) (Figure 13).



Figure 13. Mark Alexander, *The Blacker Gachet I*, 2005, Oil on canvas, 88 x 76.5 cm, Haunch of Venison, London, England, Britain

Lyons (2018: 11) offers important insights into how a masterfully arranged form drags the viewer into the space of nothingness. He mentions that art is shared through the tension between different levels of appreciation, since art is subjective and immanent, meaning is objective. The space nourished by nothingness and the artistic context assigned to that space can be reinterpreted even though it remains “specific to the individual”.

The ways in which nothingness is represented can also contain marked contrasts. Spaces of individual loneliness and spaces of public loneliness also differ in this context. John Alexander highlights this contrast with *Parade*. Streamers and flags, strange masks on faces, skeletons in cloaks and ballerina costumes, bruised, sunken or painted faces, hoods and crowns, people in suits with religious motifs, banknotes flying through the crowd, animals dressed in suits create an atmosphere of festivity and mourning. Formality and sarcasm,

slowness and haste, shyness and assertiveness are intertwined. The perspective of the painting also reinforces its frightening effect. Head and body figures stacked at the bottom of the rectangle reduce the effect of depth and create a perspective perception that will tip over the viewer. This space, which is found suitable for a parade, constructs its meaning through those on it (Mahony, 2006: 941) (Figure 14).



Figure 14. John Alexander, *The Parade*, 2006, Oil on canvas, 213 x 457 cm, Private collection

Driskell and Trawalter (2021: 2) mention that different purposes can be pursued in relationships with the past, including honoring proud moments in history, as well as acknowledging and correcting shameful ones. The responses of participants from different minorities can be clearly observed in hybrid compositions. Alexander's work also most easily chooses the use of public space or the responses to develop a sense of ownership and belonging.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Anarchy, war, peace, economy and inequalities are told with the "Flower Chucker" made by Banksy in 2000 with the stencil printing technique on a brick wall. The gigantic "Within" made by Luc Tuymans in 2001 questions the deciphering and reconsideration of the meaning assigned to the prison metaphor. In "100 Years Ago" by Peter Doig in 2001, the themes of loneliness, island metaphor, escaping from centralism and desolation are emphasized. With "Three Oncologists", completed by Ken Currie in 2002, the uncanny, insecurity, indecision and pessimism are brought to the fore. With "Gold" completed by Neo Rauch in 2003, belongings, desire to own, curiosity and escape from the countryside are internalized. With Vincent Desiderio's 2003 work "Cockaigne", the space of objects, use, ambition, indifference, disorganization and shyness come to the fore in the context of space. Zhao Bo's 2004 painting "Mother 2004" highlights capitalism, consumption habits, the blessing of individuality and the difficulties of being a family. Inka Essenhigh's 2005 work "Shopping" criticizes superficiality, addiction to shopping, a new generation of wealthy housewifery and the shopping spaces of the future. Mark Alexander's 2005 work "The Blacker Gachet I", on the other hand, is evaluated with the space of nothingness that the work hides, the loss of meaning and its multiplicity. With John Alexander's 2006 *Parade*, the representation of minorities, the semantic contrasts of ceremonies, and the distortions of daily rituals are represented.

Considered as a whole, it is seen that the spatial themes that are the most processed in the 2000s painting are public space, prison, island, sea, boat, operating room, dark room, provincial store, showcase, cave, shelter, residence, dining room, shopping mall, market and space. It is seen that it is indicated through the dark and ceremonial area. Among the themes associated with these places, the prominent ones are listed as war, peace, anarchy, individuality, imprisonment, separation, loneliness, uncanny, anxiety, curiosity, desire, pleasure, lethargy, memory, shyness, consumer culture, ambiguity, habit, conflict and revel. Contemporary ways of seeing which Berger (1972: 98) defines through the art image becoming a part of advertising tools, are in line with the thematic emphasis of Pellegrino and Jeanneret (2009: 271) on the hybrid period after modernism and postmodernism. The art of the age conveys the space of the age and the loss of the meaning of that space to

the audience through the lower branches of the upper themes such as memory, freedom, anxiety and asylum (Figure 15).

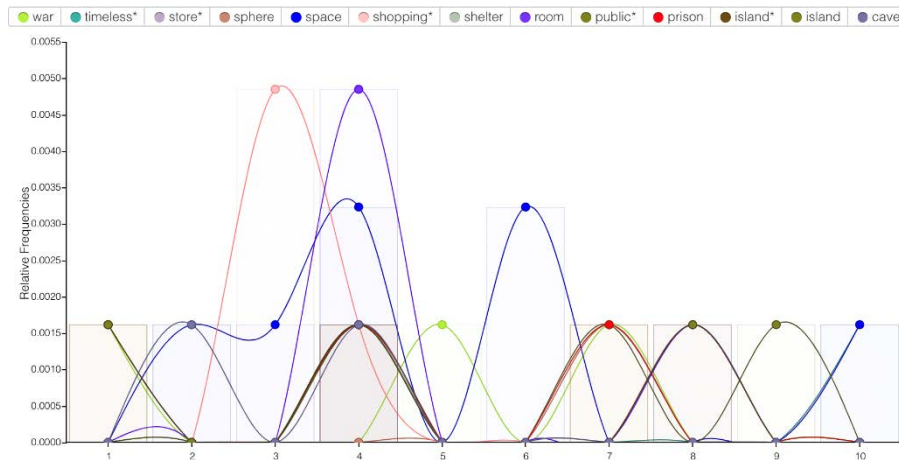


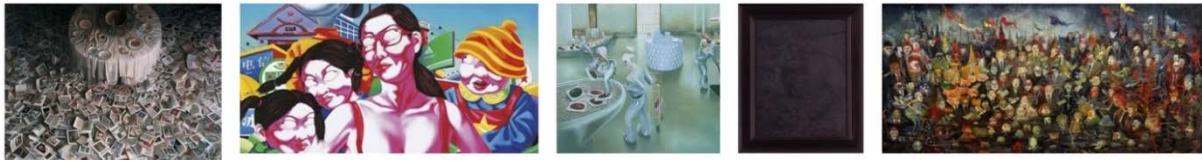
Figure 15. Relative frequencies of the spatial themes in the artworks of Banksy, Tuymans, Doig, Currie, Rauch, Desiderio, Bo, Essenhigh, Alexander and Alexander

The audience who is pushed to question the themes of war, peace, and anarchy in the public sphere can think about the contemporary reflections of individuality, imprisonment, and confinement through the intertwining of the prison metaphor and encounter the weight of coping with the feelings of indecision and autonomy caused by loneliness through singular and static images such as island-sea-boat. Warm neighborhoods that do not seem as cold and uncanny as dark rooms and operating theaters can turn into more restless and sometimes tragic areas with the visibility of contemporary marketing tools. While the concept of the room, as a metaphor for escaping the mental and spiritual burdens brought by age, maintains its popularity, shopping malls and supermarkets are positioned against it with the promise of responding to the diseases of boredom and inadequacy. While all these interrogations lead to the questioning of the urge to imprison individuals, works and spaces in nothingness, everyday identities and immanent characters collide, creating strange compositions in public associations. It creates an eclectic image by being positioned together with interior and exterior, formal and informal, ordinary and extraordinary, dramatic and analytical, in this world where dualities fed by contrasts are dissolved.

This image is fed by the theme of plurality, which forms a strong basis for the many themes that will be discussed in the 2010s painting and reminds of the timeless essences that mediate the transformation of the perception of space (Figure 16). Following the spatial dualities and contrasts in works of art over a certain production period can provide many guiding data in terms of architecture. These can be evaluated through the identity of the space, the harmony-incompatibility of the space with age, the semantic weight of the space for the users, the obligations that space imposes and the areas of freedom which space offers, the way the space is interpreted by different user profiles or the role of the space in changing the habits of the masses. All the evaluations are based on the conclusion addressing the spatial qualities and forms of association in the pioneering works of art of the relevant period have a role in realizing the architectural design.



public space * prison * island * sea * rowboat * operating room * darkroom * rural * shop
*war * peace * anarchy * individuality * confinement * separation * loneliness * uncanny * anxiety * curiosity * desire*



cave * sanctuary * dining room * shopping mall * market * space * darkness * parade * ground
pleasure * lethargy * memory * boredom * consumer culture * ambiguity * habit * conflict * revel

Figure 16. Spatial themes and related keywords in art of the 2000s

Authors' Contributions

The author contributed to the study 100%.

Competing Interests

There is no potential conflict of interest.

Ethics Committee Declaration

Ethics committee declaration is not required for the study.

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Figure References

Figure 1, 2, 7, 12, 15, 16: Created by the author.

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