

I NEED SOME TIME / BİR AZ ZAMANA İHTİYACIM VAR

by

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This is to certify that we have read this thesis and that in our opinion it is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Fine Arts.

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ABSTRACT

I NEED SOME TIME

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This is a supplementary text that investigates the process of the exhibition, “Biraz zamana ihtiyacım var / I need some time” and can not be considered separate to it. In the first part, it focuses on the theorization of works. It introduces the importance of wool and motors in the rise of capitalism and discusses their effects in the context of time and our perception of time. Later, it points out the process of working with wool and motor on a time based project.

Key words: wool, knitting, motor, time, process, technology

ÖZ

BİRAZ ZAMANA İHTİYACIM VAR

Aylin Sunam

Görsel Sanatlar ve Görsel İletişim Tasarımı Yüksek Lisans Programı

Tez Yöneticisi: Erdağ Aksel

Şubat 2005, viii+ 22 sayfa

Bu, sürecini araştırdığı “Biraz zamana ihtiyacım var / I need some time” sergisini destekleyici bir çalışmadır ve sergiden ayrı bir metin olarak konumlandırılmaz. İlk olarak, kapitalizmin gelişiminde yün ve motorun önemi anlatılır ve bu gelişmelerin sonuçları zaman ve zaman algısı kavramları bağlamında tartışılır. Daha sonra, zaman esaslı işlerde, yün ve motorla çalışma süreci anlatılır

Anahtar Kelimeler: yün, örgü örme, motor, zaman, süreç, teknoloji

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And thanks to ogeceoradaolanlar, all retarded & retired butterflies...

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	iv
ÖZ	v
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	vi
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	vii
LIST OF FIGURES	viii
INTRODUCTION	1
MOTOR / WOOL.....	2
WOOL/TIME.....	4
MOTOR/WOOL/TIME.....	5
CONCLUSION.....	7
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	8
APPENDICES.....	9
PRESENTATION CD.....	22

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Washbasin, wool, 2003.

Figure 2: Washbasin, wool, 2003.

Figure 3: Pregnant, polyester, wallpaper, 2004.

Figure 4: Pregnant, polyester, wallpaper, 2004.

Figure 5: Whirling Egghead (small size), wooden egg, motor, wool, 2005

Figure 6: Motor system (in the studio), 2005

Figure 7: Poster.

Figure 8: Whirling Egghead, wooden egg, motor, wool, 2005.

Figure 9: Whirling Egghead, wooden egg, motor, wool, 2005.

Figure 10: Whirling Egghead, wooden egg, motor, wool, 2005.

Figure 11: Whirling Egghead, wooden egg, motor, wool, 2005.

Figure 12: Whirling Egghead, wooden egg, motor, wool, 2005.

Figure 13: 12 rpm, motor system, wool, 2005.

Figure 14: 12 rpm, motor system, wool, 2005.

Figure 15: 12 rpm, motor system, wool, 2005.

Figure 16: 12 rpm, motor system, wool, 2005.

Figure 17: 12 rpm, motor system, wool, 2005.

Figure 18: 12 rpm, motor system, wool, 2005.

Figure 19: 12 rpm, motor system, wool, 2005.

INTRODUCTION

In this essay, I will try to define the conceptual background of my exhibition “Biraz zamana ihtiyacım var”/ “I need some time”. I will explain some thoughts and the reasons for the choice of materials together with the way I used these materials in my project.

In the first session of the course VA513, our instructor asked us the question: “What is your problem?” He said that “if one chooses to study art then it means that s/he has a problem in life.” This question was always in my mind while writing theoretical papers as well as working in the studio. The process confirmed that my problem was about time, specifically passing of time. It can be said that the exhibition takes its name from my problematic on time and the relationship between my art and the concept of time.

“Biraz zamana ihtiyacım var”/ “I need some time” consists of two works. In these works, I used wool and motors as my materials. The artworks will transform and alter shape thus time is to be considered as a third material. The first work is a 13 m red long knitted wool and a motor system for unraveling the wool. The motor is installed on the column and the 13 m long wool is hang on the wall. The motor system unravels the wool and the unraveled wool makes a pile in front of the column. The other one is an installation that takes its shape by the unraveling of the wool on the wall. This installation also consists of 13 m of knitted wool and a motor system. In this work, the width of the knitted material is crucial. The width of the wool is equal to the length of the metal bar that is installed on the motor system. The installation has a similar principle that lathes have. As the metal bar revolves, it unravels the wool and gains its shape.

MOTOR / WOOL

The major vehicle for the transition to the capitalist mode of production was the textile industry of 18th century England. In cloth production mercantile wealth was visibly transformed into capital and bought human energy to power their operation. Technology and labor power were subjected to the calculus of creating surplus value.¹ In the following period, the invention of looms and electric motor resulted in the increase of textile products and growth of textile industry.

“In his essay on Weber, Herbert Marcuse argues that the apparent neutrality of the cognitive-instrumental sphere is a special kind of ideological illusion (Marcuse 1968). He concedes that technical principles can be formulated in abstraction from any content, that is to say, in abstraction from any content, that is to say, in abstraction from any interest or ideology. However, as such, they are merely abstractions. As soon as they enter reality, they take on a socially specific content relative to the “historical subject” that applies.”²

To my way of thinking, it is impossible to distract technology from any interest or ideology. The development of technology was an important factor for the rise of capitalism. Technology changed the mode of production and played an important role in the establishment of factories and firms. The major change that the technological innovations brought was the time of production. The machinery was the determining factor of the work time, not the workers. Time became something that could be sold and bought in return and all of these developments made us forget other forms of time. Needless to say, many things have changed since the beginning of capitalism. “If the machine age is approaching its end today, or to put it better way, if machines and technological artifacts have changed so much that they also contain other temporal norms than those which were fed into the old production technologies; then the newly

¹ Eric R. Wolf, *Europe and People without History*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990) p.267.

² Andrew Feenberg, *Questioning Technology*, (Newyork: Routledge, 1999) p.160.

added temporal norm is that of flexibility. It finds its technological equivalent in the temporal availability that information-intensive technologies have made possible, but also presuppose. Information-intensive technologies have attained a new quality of speed, which far exceeds that of human perception and the human ability to keep up.”

Paul Virilio has a similar understanding of speed and its effects on our cognition. He claims “the development of high technical speeds would result in the disappearance of consciousness as the direct perception of phenomena that inform us of our existence”. “The idea of time can be reduced to a point of view: duration is made of transitory instants just as a straight line is made of points without depth.”³

“Just as technology is neither purely natural nor purely social, so the nature which it is applied also confounds such abstract distinctions. Both are simultaneously causal mechanisms and meaningful social objects.”⁴ In an age, where we talk about the disappearance of consciousness due to speed, we can not disregard the changing human-nature relation. First, we explained the nature in terms of numbers and then, we claimed that we could measure the time. We made calendars, clocks, etc. Consequently, we came up with new methods of measuring time. With the age of industrialization, time turned out to be something given, working time and free time were the major dimensions to understand time. We were no longer observing the process of nature such as the rising and setting of the sun.

Aristotle says that “Time is what is counted in change, but it measures change only by comparison with a uniform standard.” Given a uniform motion to serve as a standard, motion measures time.⁵ Since time is the number of motion, time measures motion by counting its before and after. In the age of information, everything has gained such a speed that it is no longer possible to see time as number of motions; we can no longer count before and after.

³ Paul Virilio, *The Aesthetics of Disappearance*, New York: Semiotext(e), 1991) p.105.

⁴ Andrew Feenberg, *Questioning Technology*, (New York: Routledge, 1999) p.165.

⁵ Aristotle in Philip Turetzky, *Time*, (New York: Routledge, 1998) p.20.

WOOL/TIME

Why did I choose wool? How did I decide to use wool to depict time/passing?

The last project of the VA 302 course was about time. Our instructor had asked us to make a time based project. The outcome of the project could have been about anything, but the work had to be a result of process, of passing time. For that project, I had chosen to work with balloons and nails. I installed the balloons on a wooden structure and I used an air motor to fill the balloons. When the balloons became filled with air, they hit the nails and blew up in a sequence, one by one.

In the beginning of the second year, I decided to repeat the time based project. This time I decided to use the balloons that I made from latex. I took mould of my body parts and tried to make balloons out of these moulds. The project did not work out. Our instructor suggested me to use a material that was familiar and easier for me to handle. Then, my experimentations with wool started. In the beginning, I was making soft sculptures from wool. I knitted a washbasin, television and a computer from wool.

In that year, the loss of my granddad caused me to get stuck in the ideas about life and death. I did not want to continue doing soft sculptures. I gained a different perception of human life-span and I started searching for different ways of saying “time/time passing; I saw death in the sense of 'undergoing the process', and life was that process.

Later, I began sewing the digital time codes printed on the photographs that I took. I had the idea that if I sewed the dates of the photos, they will gain a tactile sense and they will belong to that day, as much as they belonged to the dates the photos were taken. At the same time, I produced a pregnant woman installation (Figure3) on the wall. The polyester pregnant woman installation was covered with wallpaper that had flower patterns. Pregnancy was the start of the life/process.

One day I was playing with wool and I decided to unravel wool that I had knitted and see what was happening. I knitted wool numbers and I used an old clock to unravel the knitted wool. I felt that unraveling the wool would be a continuation of the aim, which was to show a process in a period of time.

MOTOR/WOOL/TIME

A few artists have used wool and knitted wool before. Joan Brossa and Terry Smith are two of the artists who use knitted material. Brossa's work is a knitted letter "A". He placed the knitted wool on the wall with its needles. Smith's work is a knitted sweater. Smith uses the sweater half unraveled. They made concrete the process of knitting and unraveling. Despite the similarity of the material, there is a difference between Brossa and Kerry's use of wool and mine. I use wool to indicate the process, the passing time whereas they choose to freeze a moment of that process. Eva Hesse is another artist who uses similar materials and who engages in similar technique of knitting. In fact, she is counted as one of the names of process art. She used time as her material and she led her pieces to transience. The transformation of the pieces was the result of natural tendencies of her materials. In the book, *Art of the Postmodern Era*, Irving Sandler points out "Hesse's attraction by the pliability and instability of the materials such as rubber and latex".⁶ Hesse used these characteristics of materials in her works.

"Process art emphasizes the "process" of making art rather than any predetermined composition or plan and the concepts of change and transience, as in works of such artists as Lynda Benglis, Robert Morris, Alan Saret, and Richard Serra." My emphasis of "process" is rather more determined and planned compared to process artists. I use motor rather than characteristics of nature to control the process.

"Nietzsche argues that "time is not a flow but a pulsation. If time merely flowed

⁶ Irving Sandler, *Art of the Postmodern Era*, (New York: Harper Collins, 1996) p.29.

it would lack tension and no differentiation would occur. The whole time is at stake in the rhythmic tension of the moment. This tension arises between the becoming of being, the differentiating and generative element in appearances that Nietzsche calls will-to-power, and the being of becoming, which allows differentiation to recur.” Nietzsche calls this “eternal return”. For Nietzsche, “Being comes to be at every moment. Past and future do not exclude one another but emerge together in each moment of becoming. Past and future, and consequently all time, arise in the moment.”⁷

Aristotle has a notion of past and future in his understanding of time but Nietzsche mentions differentiation in time. Even though, in unraveling the knitted wool with the help of the motor system, one of my intentions is to offer something to reverse the process of knitting that played a major role in history of capitalism and changed our relationship with time. I also see that process as a part of Nietzsche’s “eternal return”. In “12 rpm”, 13 meters long knitted wool unravels in time, but it becomes something else. During the exhibition, “12 rpm” installation will be a pile of wools that will accumulate and form a mass in the entrance of FASS Gallery. In “Whirling Egghead”, the unraveled wool will wrap around the metal bar and the carton bobbin that is installed on it and will end up in another form. To my thinking, the transformation that takes part in that process will be the signs of past and future.

In his essay on 21st century art, Edward Lucie Smith argues that the “analysis of material culture leads directly to the question of technology. In the concluding decades of the twentieth century there was much talk about “technological art”. In general, technology was seen as something closely linked to an expansion of the means of representation available to artists - in other words, discussion of technology centered on artists’ video and, to a lesser extent, on digital still photography.”⁸ Compared to general trends about the use of technology in art today, my works' relation with today's technology may seem outdated as I work with wool and motors. I feel that this was the result of my education in studio courses. Rather than following the trends, we learnt to find the suitable material for our purpose.

⁷ Friedrich Nietzsche in Philip Turetzky, *Time*, (New York: Routledge, 1998) p.109.

⁸ Edward Lucie Smith, <http://www.arttomorrow.co.uk>, 01.27.2005.

As I have mentioned before, knitting has played a major role for the transition to the capitalist mode of production. This transition to capitalist production affected our relationship with time in a considerable way. Today, knitting is seen as an activity to kill time. It is a craftwork that is usually despised and degraded as this activity is usually done by housewives or women who can not enter the work cycle. My experimentations with wool gave me the chance to observe these women's, world and compare it to men's world. In order to search for materials, I went to wool markets and places where motor is sold. In places where they sell motor, there were no women and in wool markets there were no men. However, there was one similarity between these two places, both men and women knew the technique very well. These women knew the differences between wools and special knitting techniques and they were speaking a professional jargon when it came to wool like men in motor stores.

I feel that I have learnt some of the techniques of both groups and I carry the effects of the observations of these two worlds in my works.

CONCLUSION

In the exhibition “biraz zamana ihtiyacım var/ I need some time,” I wanted to suggest an unconventional way of measuring of time. In doing this, I chose a material that played a historical role in industrial revolution. Industrial revolution was not only a revolution of production but it was also a revolution of time with the changes that it brought to our perception and our cognition of time. In this day and time, technology and the great mass of information that we are exposed to complicates our comprehension of things taking place around us. With such a load of information today, it is much harder to comprehend time with counting before and after of a motion. All in all, this process that takes place in this exhibition may be seen as a reaction to speed of our time, a proposal to slow down time.

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APPENDICIES



Figure 1 Washbasin 2003



Figure 2 Washbasin 2003



Figure 3 Pregnant 2004



Figure 4 *Pregnant* 2004



Figure 5 *Whirling Egghead (Small-size)* 2005

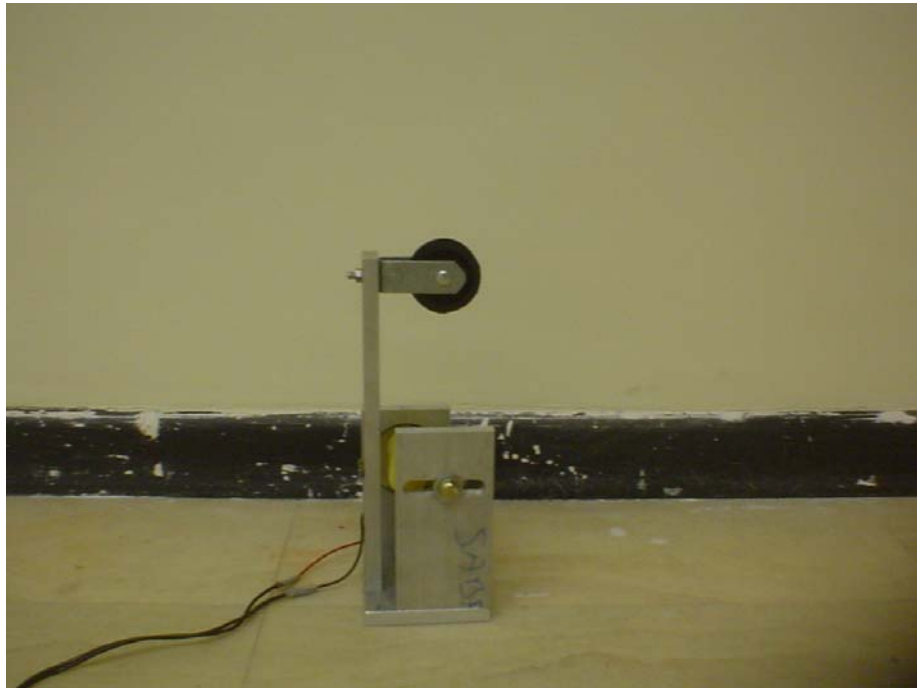


Figure 6 *Motor System (in the studio) 2005*



Figure 7 *Poster of the exhibition 2005*

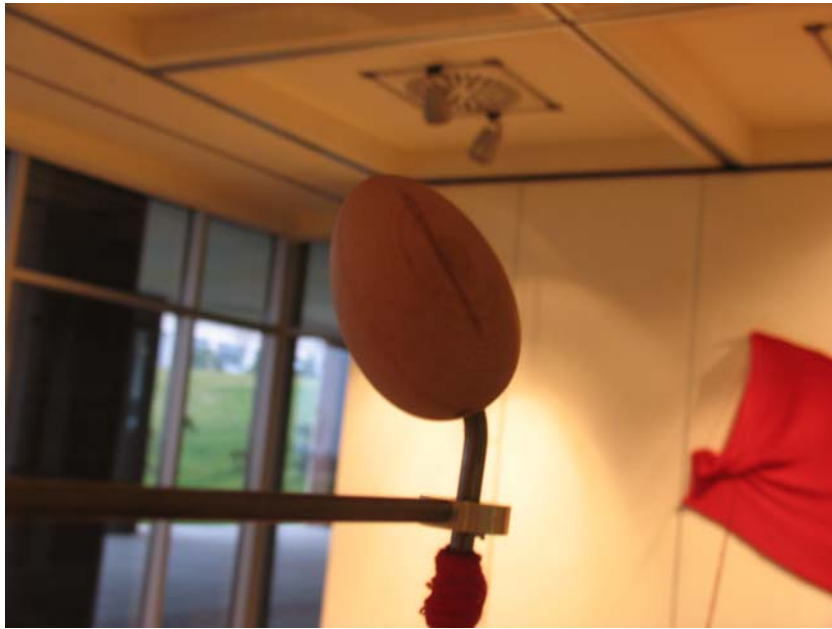


Figure 8 *Whirling Egghead* 2005



Figure 9 *Whirling Egghead* 2005



Figure 10 *Whirling Egghead* 2005



Figure 11 *Whirling Egghead* 2005



Figure 12 *Whirling Egghead* 2005



Figure 13 *12rpm* 2005



Figure 14 *12 rpm* 2005



Figure 15 *12 rpm* 2005



Figure 16 *12 rpm* 2005



Figure 17 *12 rpm* 2005



Figure 18 *12 rpm* 2005

PRESENTATION CD

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