

Burhan Doğançay
Fifty Years of Urban Walls

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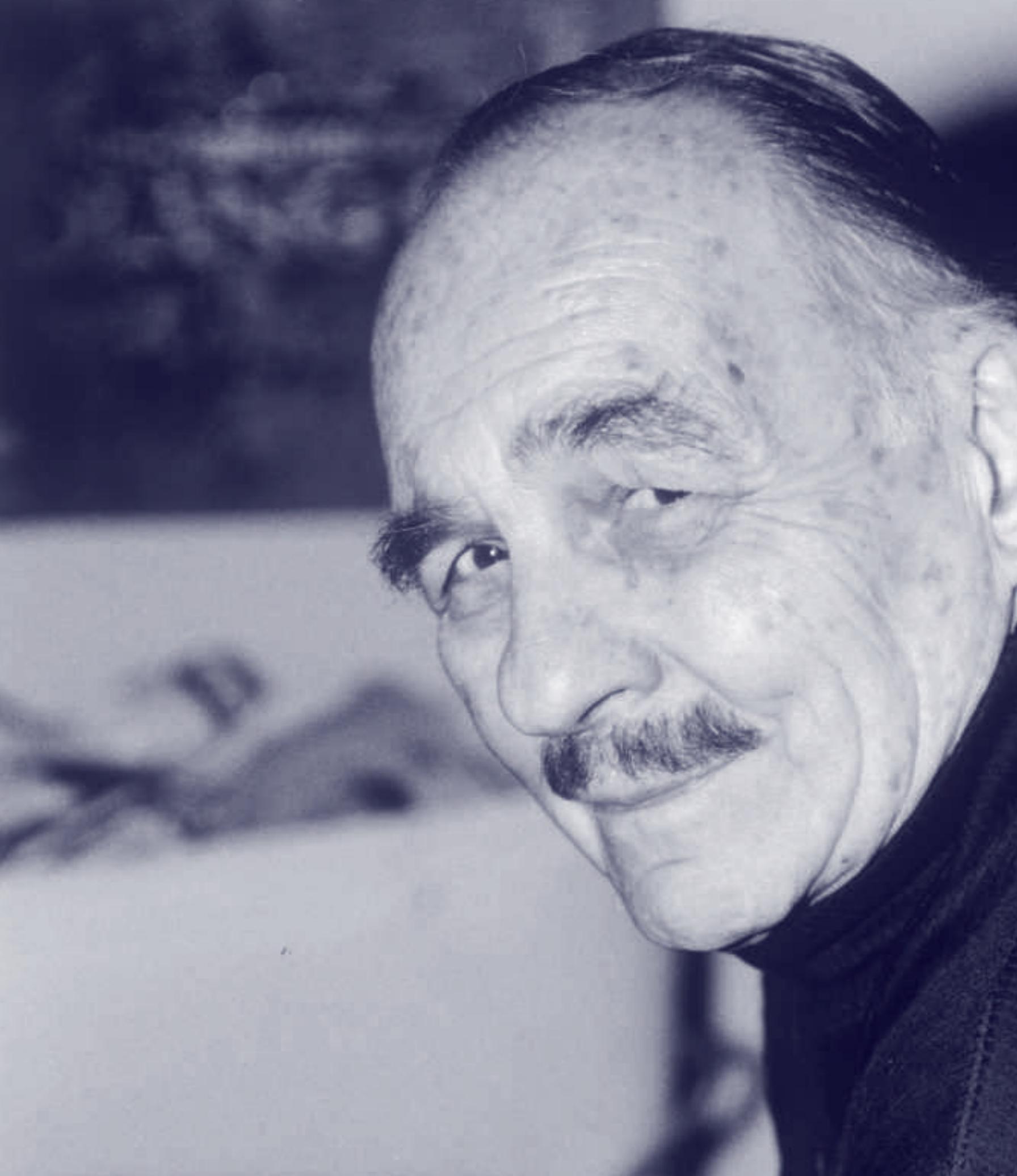


BURHAN DOĞANÇAY

FIFTY YEARS OF URBAN WALLS

EXHIBITION SPONSOR







OYA ECZACIBAŐI

Chair of the Board, İstanbul Modern

Foreword

İstanbul Modern is pleased to present a selection of works retracing the fifty-year artistic career of Burhan Dogañay, one of Turkey's preeminent contemporary artists. This exhibition will be the most comprehensive examination of his work to date.

Ever since the 1960s, Burhan Dogañay has traveled to countries in all four corners of the globe passionately documenting urban walls with his camera; he collects advertising bills, torn posters, graffiti, and pictures, which he then reconstructs into narratives with new connotations to create compositions open to multiple interpretations. His works advance urban history by propelling transient, random images from the past, all varied expressions of collective memory left on wall surfaces, into the future.

Drawing inspiration from urban walls, Dogañay observes, explores, and stores the content of their surfaces, accumulating a wealth of themes to create new series. The topics, materials, and techniques he uses in his compositions change and evolve with the constantly varying walls of cities around the world.

Intertwining reality and fiction, light and shadow, the artist's works contain political, social, and philosophical references to art trends, customs, and the current zeitgeist.

Urban walls are a mirror of society and a perfect means of communication for Dogañay; they provide a way to keep a finger on the pulse of what is happening around the world. So, wherever he goes, he tracks down these "walls that whisper, shout, and sing" to reinterpret and transmit the stories they tell. Dogañay reveals to the viewer the dynamism and soul of cities through images reflecting and interrogating daily life, retained on wall surfaces deteriorated by the assault of the elements.

Throughout his artistic career Burhan Dogañay has worked in a wide variety of mediums including painting, drawing, printmaking, tapestry, sculpture, and photography. The first retrospective in Turkey covering forty years of his work was organized in 2001 by the Dr. Nejat F. Eczacıbaşı Foundation at the Dolmabahçe Cultural Center. A traveling exhibition, T.I.R. Museum, was later assembled to carry a selection of the works from the show to various universities in Turkey. Now, in 2012, we are delighted to be hosting a large-scale exhibition celebrating Dogañay's half-century long artistic career, this time at İstanbul Modern, a museum the artist himself had expressed a longing for over the years.

We feel certain that this event showcasing a selection of urban walls from the last fifty years will serve as a testimony to the passage of time for younger generations and offer them a unique opportunity to better appreciate and interpret the world in which we live.

My deepest thanks go first and foremost to Burhan Dogañay, indisputably one of our finest artists, to Angela Dogañay for her meticulous and tireless assistance in the preparation phase of the exhibition, to Murat Ülker for his faith in the project, to Zuhâl Şeker for her cooperation and dedication at every stage of the process, and to Oktay Duran for sharing our enthusiasm.

I would also like to extend my gratitude to all the museums, institutions, and private collections at home and abroad who contributed to the exhibition *Fifty Years of Urban Walls* by loaning us works of the artist.

Additionally, we are keen to express our gratitude to Yıldız Holding for their generous support.

Finally, I would like to thank our exhibition curator Levent Çalıkođlu, assistant curator Birnur Temel, and the rest of our team at İstanbul Modern who contributed to the success of the exhibition.

MURAT ÜLKER

Chairman, Yıldız Holding A.Ş.

Yıldız Holding Statement

Burhan Dogançay, one of the great masters of Turkish contemporary art, will be exhibiting his work in a comprehensive retrospective at the İstanbul Modern. As an art lover, I am delighted that Yıldız Holding will be sponsoring this exhibition.

I attach a particular significance to the fact that Burhan Dogançay, who succeeded in his journey from local to international artist very early in his career, and who has had his work displayed in some of the world's most prestigious museums, such as the Guggenheim and the New York Metropolitan, will be exhibiting his work in a show entitled *Fifty Years of Urban Walls* in Istanbul, which he considers his home.

The fact that Dogançay's work has been displayed at important international museums and within private collections makes it possible to follow and appreciate the universal journey of a Turkish artist.

Artistic activities leave a lasting impression by deepening a community's relationship with art. As Yıldız Holding, we take the sponsoring of projects that develop the community culturally and artistically very seriously. Without a doubt, Dogançay's retrospective exhibition *Fifty Years of Urban Walls* will provide such enrichment.

I think that getting to know Burhan Dogançay and to witness his unique artistic approach provides us with a different perspective. We are constantly learning new things from his work. Talking about the theme of his work, for example, he says: "Walls are the only places where people express themselves freely. It was like this 20,000 years ago and remains the same now." After hearing these words and observing his works, it is impossible not to pick up the habit of looking at city walls, at streets, and at people with a different perspective.

This exhibition is an intellectual festival of visual delights for those who know Burhan Dogançay, and a new beginning for those that do not know him, especially the young.

We would like to thank the collectors and museums who have participated in this major exhibition by entrusting valuable works by Burhan Dogançay to İstanbul Modern.

Acknowledgements

İstanbul Modern would like to express its gratitude to all the museums, institutions and private collectors who have lent works to this exhibition or who have facilitated loans without which this exhibition and its catalogue would not have been possible.

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Sincere thanks are due to Brandon Taylor and Richard Vine for their insightful essays, and to Clive Giboire for his notes on the artist's series—their contributions will undoubtedly add to a greater understanding of the artist's work.

Last, but not least, Angela Dogançay deserves special thanks for having laid the groundwork for this exhibition and its catalogue.

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LEVENT ÇALIKOĞLU

Half a Century of Urban Culture:
The Recording of History and
the Anatomy of Walls



Burhan Dogançay is one of the few artists who have kept a record of the times we live in through the use of walls, which are among the key symbols of modern and contemporary urban culture. His practice of thought and production are both shaped by examining walls that reflect the contemporary memory of socio-cultural transformations, and by becoming a stakeholder in the history of walls, which constitute a public field of expression. This energetic transformation, which from the early 1960s to the present day has constructed new fields of social, cultural, and political discourse through the medium of walls, holds a light to the complex and protean alternative history of urban life.

Dogançay has made the subject of his art the subtle interplay, the game of puss-in-the-corner, between word and image, culture and visual media, political power and social habits; and as an urban traveler he has been, for almost half a century, taking photographs of walls, and mapping their anatomy, in various cities across the world. Dogançay reminds us that on these surfaces, which are open to many different contemporary interventions ranging from posters to slogans, and messages with sexual content to serious newspaper clippings, we can discern the pulse of history. The common platform of knowledge and expression for artists, walls serve as the confessionals of established culture. They act as a political meeting point where slogans clash, an intimate surface where lovers pour out their hearts, a fresco where film posters become stratified, a complex social network loaded with all manners of symbols of violence, eroticism, and solitude. These surfaces, where unofficial powers are pitted against their dominant political counterparts with what is at times an absurd language, are also the conveyors of an uncontrollable world of communication where all manner of hierarchies are dismantled. Dogançay examines walls—the space of an infinite process that incorporates writing, scribbling, passing one's time in an irresponsible and carefree manner, struggling for the transformation of the system, manipulating reality, seducing the *other* and revealing the invisible tentacles of power—in the guise of an anthropologist; it is as an artist that he constructs new realities from them.

For an artist who believes that the complex nature of the present can find form only in a platform of freedom that is open to the public, walls serve as a public blackboard. Conveying a common memory, these blackboards establish similarities between the hardships, dreams, and desires of people living in different cities of the world. Through their surfaces—which people use unreservedly to reveal who they are, what they like, whom they curse, what makes them angry, whom they vote for, which icons they fall in love with, what they have to endure to keep on living ... in brief, all the external and internal forces in their lives—Dogançay interrogates the layers of identity that make us who we are.

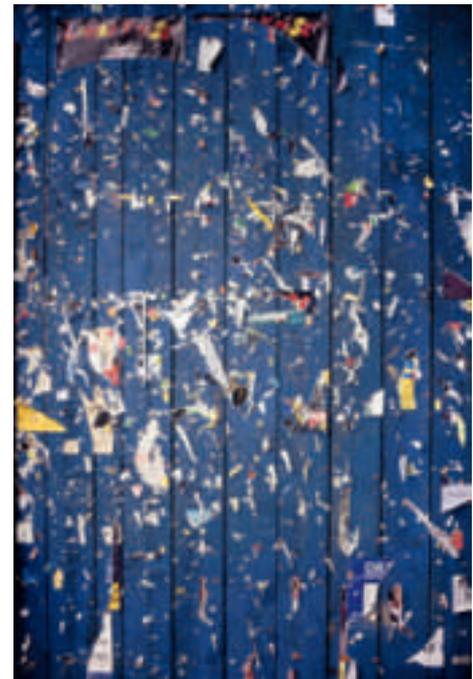
Formed from a blizzard of collaging, with hundreds of images and scraps of text, Dogançay's works reveal the present power of political authority that has explicitly permeated these walls. He chooses walls to settle his accounts with his own time and to show that this present moment did not take shape suddenly and out of the blue, but continues to be fashioned from the remnants of yesterday's power structures. This is perhaps why in some of his works leaders or icons from turning points in the political history of the world are summoned into the present. Powerful ideologues of

the past are exposed by Dogançay as nostalgic souvenirs, lightened and turned into playthings by popular culture. The artist reminds us that leaders condescendingly grinning at the public from a poster from many years ago are trapped in the dusty pages of history and yet may re-emerge. In other examples, he conveys the colorful and entertaining political lives of famous statesmen who have become the superstars of the present. The composition of these works clearly displays the flavor of a photo-novel. The visual framing of the works allows them to feed off each other, and the details of a specific story reveal truths that we actually all know quite well.

In these works, Dogançay produces a language that exposes, through the use of walls, the tentacles of power that have surrounded our lives. Although the fragments of all types of information he juxtaposes tap into the same veins as narrative painting, or the inflated language of popular culture, the outcome reflects how much thought can benefit from visual culture. At the precise moment he invites us to see an exposition of reality, he simultaneously issues a calm reminder that what we see is in fact fiction dressed in artistic language.

Dogançay is aware of the fact that contemporary art progresses via languages and signs. This is perhaps the golden key to the special and privileged place he has earned for himself in global art history. His canvases, constantly open to innovation and shaped by countless techniques and interventions from collage to photography, and from environmental influences to touches from nature, are nurtured by the main concern of the fundamental investigation of modern artists: *To create an image that cannot be encountered in any other experience.* Although his references are from street culture, all Dogançay's works are, in terms of artistic unity and image composition, born of the expression of his personal imagination. Although they emerge from the depths of a different type of experience, they aim only to be seen and to be themselves with the images they bear. Therefore, every work is unique, each painting a singular image. On the other hand, these works also contain fundamental contemporary themes. They constantly evoke the present and remind us that they are dealing with their own time. Rather than timelessness, it is this very moment in the present that they host—and the potential inherent in this moment to shape our world. The complex nature of today is reshaped in each work, the complex structure of the contemporary revealed.

By means of the synthesis he has developed over the last half century, Burhan Dogançay has become one of those rare artists who act as an intellectual bridge between modern and contemporary art. These works, in which recent history is called forth to the present via the images they contain and so enveloped in a nostalgic spirit, also remind the viewer how close a relationship they share with the multiple languages of the present time. These images that we know, that remain stuck in our memory and feed off the iconic moments of visual history, bear both the spirit and magic of modern times, and betray the directionless, drifting nature of the contemporary world. Dogançay constantly updates his creativity, which, with versatile styles and techniques, is born of the modern, but shaped by the energetic language of contemporary art. Burhan Dogançay narrows the present-day boundaries between street culture and art, transience and timelessness, memory and the subconscious.



BRANDON TAYLOR

Dogançay's World

It began, Burhan Dogançay tells us, when something caught his eye during a stroll down 86th Street in New York: “It was the most beautiful abstract painting I had ever seen. There were the remains of a poster, and a texture to the wall with little bits of shadows coming from within its surface. The color was mostly orange, with a little blue and green and brown. Then there were the marks made by rain and mud.”¹ Taking out his sketchbook, he jotted down the details of what he had seen in those few square inches of wall. He immediately went back to the studio and started work on the conversion of the sketch he had made into a work of art, faithfully duplicating each torn poster fragment, each grimy stain, in the surface of the painting. The year was 1963. Dogançay was 34; a newcomer to New York, and at the beginning of a long artistic career, one that would take him to many corners of the globe, making further notes and photographs of the walls he sees there. In doing so, he has placed himself squarely in the mainstream of modern art: to observe the urban maelstrom and the feelings and energies of the city street. As Baudelaire said in recommending the rapid, quickly changing sensations of the street as the true subject that the artist must portray, it is “the ephemeral, the fugitive, and the contingent” that are the components of modern beauty; not the timeless features of eternal beauty, but the “relative, circumstantial element” that will point towards the morals and emotions of the age.²

The beginnings of Dogançay’s artistic career may lie in his epiphany on 86th Street, but in a different sense he had already started to look carefully at the cities he had been in before his voyage across the Atlantic. He had spent time in Paris in the early 1950s, preparing his doctorate in economics and had returned to Turkey, only to embark on more international travel as an employee of his country’s government. Dogançay’s Paris was not Baudelaire’s, of course; but it had shown him the power that cities have to speak their identity through the diversity of the street: Paris in the early 1950s was a city of torn posters and faded pre-war advertising, a congenial if decayed community slowly raising itself from the horrors of war-time occupation. He could have returned there at the beginning of the 1960s; but by some intuition he opted for a posting to New York instead, conscious that America was rising as a commercial and artistic power. “I am not clairvoyant,” he reassures us about this decision, “but I saw that Paris had lost its advantage as the capital of the art world, and [that] New York was where it was happening.”³ Naturally, his first months in New York demanded an awkward compromise between his role as a Turkish diplomat and his increasingly frequent painting excursions into the street. Finally divesting himself of his diplomatic career, he decided to devote himself to a life in art, at a time when New York was becoming, perhaps had already become, a ferment of artistic activity, full of doubtful precedent and hesitant experiment, and yet with a rising reputation for art that was large in its ambition, grand and energetic in its scale, and commercially as well as critically active at the highest level.

1 Burhan Dogançay, cited by E. Flomenhaft, “Dogançay: A Heroic Quest,” in *Dogançay: Doors and Walls*, Tenth Avenue Editions, New York 1994, p. 29.

2 Charles Baudelaire, “The Painter of Modern Life” (1863), in *The Painter of Modern Life and Other Essays*, translated and edited by Jonathan Mayne, Phaidon Press, London 1964, pp. 3, 12.

3 Burhan Dogançay, cited in Flomenhaft 1994 (as note 1), p. 28.



We do well to linger on that moment of arrival, and the many contexts to which the young diplomat-turned-artist was now exposed. The city's wall surfaces—one sure source of 'modernity' for Baudelaire—had for more than a decade been absorbing younger American artists who were aware of the forces unleashed by the dynamic new economy, by its sheer productiveness and ambition—both its prodigious energy and its waste. Something of the scale of the urban wall had already rubbed off on those American painters of the 1940s and 1950s, by then known as Abstract Expressionists, who had wrestled in their art with the contradictions between individual and collective action in a time of headlong social and scientific change; above all the contradiction, as it must have seemed then, between the impersonality of the urban wall and the demands imposed by a culture premised on consumption. A younger but related group, those who made up the 'Beat' sensibility of late 1950s America, had moved even closer to the attitude that would fuel Dogançay's fascination with the flyblown surfaces of the street. The Beat artists and poets had declared themselves absorbed by the neglected and the overlooked, by the random in city experience and the happenstance in personal life; and they had begun to convert those attitudes into new formal procedures in art—in painting and sculpture, poetry and the novel. It was the city of Frank O'Hara and Allen Ginsberg. Artists coming to prominence in the late 1950s such as Allan Kaprow, Jim Dine, Red Grooms, and Claes Oldenburg had already begun to experiment with non-art materials such as objects picked up on the street, with broken or degraded signs, and translate them into three-dimensional structures and environments that contained evidence of word-forms, advertising, and graffiti. Hyper-production and prosperity, twinned with the rapid obsolescence and urban waste, were encouraging a posture of wide-eyed celebration at what was almost a spectacle of poverty combined with decay. "Everything belongs to me because I am poor," Jack Kerouac had written in the spirit of the group.

Dogançay's status as a diplomat must have kept him aloof from that experimental culture. And yet a fascination for the qualities of the New York streets was quickly absorbed by the young artist from Turkey, a relative stranger to the city, no longer supported by a regular income, but with time to observe the material circumstances and conditions of his adopted home. It so happens that Dogançay just missed seeing the groundbreaking *Art of Assemblage* exhibition that had been curated by William Seitz at the Museum of Modern Art in 1961. It was a show that had reawakened a new attitude to the mixing and montaging of genres in art, to casual, even provisional assembly. Specifically it had mobilized a fascination for 'junk'; an old nautical term now widely absorbed into the youthful vernacular, and meaning material broken by over-use, but also matter whose very uselessness made it seem attractive, the more so if it was damaged as well as slightly rare. The Beat artists had already treated 'junk' as a category that now included, in Seitz's words, "Beat Zen and hot rods, mescaline experiences and faded flowers, photographic bumps and grinds, the

poubelle, juke boxes, and hydrogen explosions ...[but also] the images of charred bodies that keep Hiroshima and Nagasaki before our eyes; the confrontation of democratic platitudes with the Negro's disenfranchisement." To that already expansive list Seitz added "the peeling *décollage* on abandoned billboards in the blighted neighborhoods of Chicago or Jersey City, accented by the singing colors and clean edges of emblems intended to sell cigarettes and beer ... [that] take on an intense beauty more poignant than that of the lacerated posters and graffiti that cover the old walls of Rome and Paris."⁴ Quite evidently, language itself was now acting as a powerful stimulus to new art. And yet, like other artists of his generation for whom the city and its energies had become important, Dogançay needed his own method for the conversion of real city surfaces into art.

Dogançay's work from those early years is mostly in the painted medium alone, and reproduces more or less faithfully, at their correct scale, the look of urban billboards, graffiti-covered wall surfaces, as well as broken or neglected entrances such as windows and doors. And yet those works cannot quite be counted as 'Beat,' since, and contrary to superficial impressions, we find them to be un-casual in their appearance and most often very carefully composed. Technically often ingenious, they are the result of long hours of patient reconstruction; and it is Dogançay's adherence to an ethic of strenuous studio work that mainly serves to distinguish his practice from that of Americans who addressed the urban scene. The distance he has maintained from a contemporary artist like Robert Rauschenberg, for instance—himself in thrall to a 'Beat' sensibility in 1950s New York—is significant; and notwithstanding Dogançay's admiration for his work. By the time of Dogançay's arrival in New York, Rauschenberg had already mastered a *bricolage* idiom that could reabsorb material from the degraded public sphere; to begin with, broadsheet newspapers transferred whole to a pictorial surface and then obscured in layers of black paint. By the early 1960s Rauschenberg was being lionized for a series of large, mural-sized 'Combine' paintings that exemplified a subtle attunement to the sensations as well as the surfaces of the modern city street. Like other artists of his milieu—Jasper Johns among them—Rauschenberg's attention was being trained upon the incongruous, the abstract, and the planar in city life; all now subject to a Beat-like sympathy for the broken or the over-used. Contemporary opinion had it that Rauschenberg's originality lay in pasted and painted panels on which, to repeat a verdict of Leo Steinberg, "objects are scattered, on which data is entered, on which information may be received, printed, impressed, whether coherently or in confusion."⁵ And yet Dogançay, for his part, was developing a set of translation practices that were distinctively his. For one thing, his attitude to the orientation of signs and surfaces has from the earliest days always been one of respectful adherence to the look of the original, and the 'signature' quality of the anonymous markings of those who made them. Further, he has always preferred to reproduce fragments of wall surface in their mutual relations just as he found them, and with minimal adjustment of color or position,

⁴ William Seitz, *The Art of Assemblage*, Museum of Modern Art, New York 1961, pp. 76, 89.

⁵ Leo Steinberg, *Other Criteria*, Oxford University Press, London and New York 1972, p. 67.

rather than to up-end them or combine them casually in the Rauschenberg manner. In large measure his practice has been one of simulation in the spirit of record-keeping, carried out with the collector's rather than the scavenger's eye. And while Dogançay has liked to divert the viewer's attention to entire panels of wall surface encountered on the city's hoardings, or other upright entrances and barriers such as doors, he has generally selected his material with an eye to much older canons of beauty, in which imagery was arranged relationally, sometimes asymmetrically, in the manner sometimes we might feel happy to term 'composed.' Secondly, the doors and surfaces that Dogançay has liked to simulate have generally had a rigor and identity that his American colleagues would generally seek to avoid. A typical Rauschenberg painting of that time was such as to make it resemble, in Steinberg's words, a surface "to which anything reachable-thinkable would adhere. It had to be whatever a billboard or dashboard is, and everything a projection screen is ... dump, reservoir, switching center, abundant with concrete references freely associated as in an internal monologue."⁶ Dogançay's attitude to urban surfaces, by contrast, has been one governed by abstract values of color and line, even a radiant intensity, guided by a traveler's optic of curiosity and stimulated by the real time and space of particular locations in the city. Such an anthropological gaze, together with the strenuous work of verisimilitude, has given Dogançay's art a documentary status that the work of his contemporaries in America has generally lacked.

If one doubted Dogançay's commitment to the documentary mode, one has only to notice his ceaseless photographic survey that has taken him to no less than 114 countries since 1975, resulting in perhaps the largest photo-archive of urban surfaces that has ever been compiled—a veritable 'atlas' of the world's surfaces comparable in its scope and ambition with the photographic 'Atlas' compiled by the art historian Aby Warburg that he called 'mnemosyne,' in reference to the tendency of all cultures to memorize and then reproduce in translation their major canonical forms. The difference is that the medium of painting makes documentary a category full of puzzles. After all, the very idea of a document contains the paradox that veracity cannot be delivered without translation into another medium, one with conventions and properties of its own. Indeed, the very concept of 'document' seems to actively mobilize this tension between sociological reportage and the aesthetic, between what might appear 'genuine' in experience and what is composed and therefore contrived inside the work of art.

It is no wonder that the reputation of Kurt Schwitters ran so high in 1950s America, against the background of his engagement with the European city at an earlier period of time of rapid cultural change: His scavenging in the real street, for real materials, was matched only by the artifice and inventiveness of his transportation of them into art. As to Dogançay's own methods, we know that he first encounters walls Schwitters-like, on walks that he describes as 'hunting,' and that, during the process, sketches and photographs are made;

while in a complementary process, actual pieces of paper or even whole inscribed surfaces are torn from their hoardings and taken home to the studio. At least since Baudelaire, the first of those activities can be said to be conventional for an artist attuned to 'modern' life. But the second is definitely new, standing as it does somewhere between re-vandalizing the original surface on the one hand, and collecting its fragments anthropologically for study and subsequent use, on the other. For we have to accept that in the work of the studio that follows 'hunting,' Dogançay does not always simulate a section of wall with absolute verisimilitude. He will sometimes reinvent a surface that can resemble rather than faithfully reproduce the reality of the city at a given moment in its history, but in a manner that ensures that its authenticity can be guaranteed. As Dogançay himself puts it, "I usually compose a work based on my observations and memories of different walls. Frequently I mix different impressions I have of different walls, sometimes even in different countries. My works are never exact copies of what I have seen."⁷ More relevantly, it is a type of authenticity that can perhaps be called the typical. For I think that Dogançay reconstitutes wall and door surfaces not only because they exist, but because they function as symptoms of the damage and profusion that the culture expresses at its core.

From Beat America we must modulate to Pop. For surely the other context for Dogançay's virtuosity with his painted doors and surfaces is an attitude towards the commercial signifier that was inescapable when the artist was finding his way. Remember that Dogançay already knew European culture well before arriving in America. In fact the European city street, newly adorned with pasted signs for entertainment, for clothing, for medical remedies, and of course signs hung outside shops and eating houses to advertise their trade, had already become a legal and political battleground by the time of the industrial revolution. Jean-Jacques Rousseau had written of the "flux and reflux" of cosmopolitan life, in which, in the experience of one of his novels' heroes, "everything is absurd, but nothing is shocking, because everyone is accustomed to everything."⁸ Exponential population growth during the late 18th century, combined with commercial expansion, resulted in laws being passed in the early part of the 19th century in an effort to regulate what was becoming an overwhelming impression of visual clutter in the larger cities. Cleanliness and public order were viewed as incompatible with ungovernable excess; and so politics became a process of control over the burgeoning culture of the street. By the end of the 19th century, visual overcrowding was widely registered as tasteless and mesmerizing at the same time. But it was not until the 1930s that the city street was regarded, at least by artists, as creative in itself; as if inanimate city surfaces were virtually living organisms having personalities and means of expression of their own. To the Surrealist sensibility, cities were locations of spontaneous authentic creation, which the artist needed only to record in order to mark the identity of particular surfaces as being art. When artists

⁷ "Burhan Dogançay in Conversation with Brandon Taylor," in *Urban Walls: A Generation of Collage in Europe and America*, Hudson Hills Press, New York 2008, p. 38.

⁸ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Julie, ou La Nouvelle Héloïse* (1761), in a letter from to Julie from her lover Saint-Prioux.

of the stature of Brassai or Wols in Paris looked through the lens at cracked and broken city walls, they saw signs that had no author, messages that had no addressee; but that nonetheless spoke just as if they had.

And that attitude of astonishment mixed with reverence emerged in European Pop during the 1950s and 1960s. It erupted with particular force within the vanguard of British Pop culture, at the hands of those who reacted with fascination at the spectacle of urban decay, at the same time as feeling dismay at the gross commercial blandishments of the time. When Richard Hamilton came to compose his list of the elements of the new attitude, he included—in addition to Popular—Transient, Expendable, Low Cost, Mass Produced, Young, Witty, Sexy, Gimmicky, Glamorous, Big Business.⁹ Hamilton’s sensibility, like Baudelaire’s before him and in common with Dogançay’s now, was essentially non-Aristotelian; functioning as a receptacle for words and images, original and remaindered, pacifying and aggressive, true and false, in a combination having no resolution but merely presenting themselves as facts—affirming once more that city experience in a time of minimally regulated capitalism resembled a barely coherent flux rather than a stable unfolding of sequential parts. Back in Paris, meanwhile, a group of artists comprising Jean Tinguely, Yves Klein, Daniel Spoerri, Arman, Jacques Villeglé and François Dufrêne were in 1960 being formed into a group called *Nouveaux Réalistes* by the Paris critic Pierre Restany. Restany reiterated approvingly the Dada mantra that ‘painting is dead,’ and insisted that something like a sociological attitude in *Nouveau Réalisme* was replacing the kind of imaginative embellishment that had hitherto been definitive of art. Further, he claimed that “sociology now comes to the assistance of consciousness ... whether this be at the level of choice, the tearing up of posters, the allure of objects, household rubbish, the scraps of the drawing room, or the unleashing of a mechanical susceptibility.” His implication was that the materials of the usable city could be translated directly into art, resulting in a ‘new realism’ of the contemporary human and material world.¹⁰ Dogançay, by now preparing to travel to America, would sooner or later become aware of how stylish and how anthropological was the additive method of Arman’s boxes; how Daniel Spoerri’s ‘trapped’ meal tables looked; how Tinguely’s machines could mimic the process of urban change; and how Villeglé’s torn-poster method would form a complement to his own.

Such were the polarities the Pop revolution was eager to explore: the contradiction between bright colors and urban deprivation; between the hypertrophied rhetoric of advertisers and social disenfranchisement; between wealth and poverty; between humor and desperation; between renovation and decay. And once more we find Dogançay both sympathetic to, and yet beyond, the attitude of his European contemporaries. If anything, he has aligned himself with the methods of American Pop artists such as Andy Warhol, Roy Lichtenstein, and James Rosenquist, who had had a job pasting large-scale posters in Manhattan, before turning that experience towards his art. For we can see that

⁹ Richard Hamilton, Letter to A. and P. Smithson, January 16, 1957, in Richard Hamilton, *Collected Words, 1953–1982*, Thames and Hudson, London 1982, p. 28, cited in Brandon Taylor, *Collage: The Making of Modern Art*, Thames and Hudson, London 2004, p. 162.

¹⁰ Pierre Restany, “Preface,” exh. brochure, Galerie Apollinaire, Milan, April 16, 1960, later used as the “Manifesto” of *Nouveau Réalisme*. For a new edition, see *Manifesto des Nouveaux Réalistes*, with a postface by Denys Riout, Editions Dilecta, Paris 2007, this quotation p. 6.

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