

On Murat Pulat's Paintings

Emre Zeytinoğlu

A question simpler than “what is a work of art?” (although it has created its own unique “historical thought spheres”) will allow us to say more about Murat Pulat’s paintings. That simpler question is this: What does a painting look like and how do we perceive what it looks like?

We do not necessarily need to research and learn how a digital screen or a cinematic image, photograph, or *peinture* (painting), etc can transform into what shape with which technological conditions. It’s up to relevant specialists to research all of these, discuss old and familiar methods and revise them, and more importantly, to invent new visual technologies. But even a layman perception can give us an insight into how a visual that has been placed on a platform ‘looks’ to us. An individual who carefully looks at that visual platform will immediately comprehend whether or not the painting has eventuated from the forms and pixels in it or how the textural grains have come together, or the relationship between the fine lines, the illusion that comes to be from intensified or infrequent pigment layers. Simply ‘looking’ will give you clues as to how the form in a visual platform came to be.

However, although we have the perceptual ability to easily learn which methods were used to create the form in front of us, when looking at an image, we generally get lost in the details that make up the structure of that image. We make do with simply looking at that form (without paying attention to the details in its structure) and feeling something about it or thinking about it. It’s exactly like listening to music: There’s no doubt that each sound or note that the ear hears back to back is not music in itself. For it to be perceived as music, the sounds have to create organized blocks with durations. Put in another way, making music is creating blocks of flowing sound within specific durations (in fact, John Cage left long spaces between sounds in some of his music, ruining the blocks and encouraging us to question the system between those blocks and musical perception). As Gilles Deleuze wrote quite clearly:

Cinema tells stories with blocks of movement-time. I could say that painting invents another type of block, which is neither blocks of concepts, nor of movement-time, but, let’s suppose, that they are blocks of line and colour. Music invents another type of particular block, a very, very particular block.¹

In terms of time, blocks, and movement, these statements by Deleuze are naturally directly involved with “masses”. Whether it’s art, philosophy or science, these are all creative disciplines. They realize that creativity with their own various materials and form their own “masses”. The movement-time blocks of cinema and video, the line-colour blocks of painting, the conceptual blocks of philosophy, the function blocks of science, etc... Although these disciplines never *need* each other to exist, they can however exchange “ideas”. Again, as Deleuze put it, they can unite at the level of “I have an idea”.

¹ Gilles Deleuze, “What is the Creative Act?” Translated into Turkish by: Ulus Baker, Norgunk Pub. 2003, p. 21.

However, the fact that art, philosophy and science share something in common on the “I have an idea” level does not mean that their structures are destroyed or that they fall apart. Because as each of them operate within the logic of a “mass” (simply because they can exist within this logic), no discipline can replace another or destroy it:

‘...But the idea in cinema becomes as such because it is simultaneously engaged in a cinematographic process. Then you can say: “I have an idea”, even if you’ve borrowed it from Dostoyevsky.²

If this cinema or cinematographic structural tie applies to other disciplines as well, then an artist for example, will take advantage of the ties related to his/her own discipline and unite with just about every other discipline on the “I have an idea” level. As Deleuze indicates: Even though he borrowed this idea from Dostoyevsky (or something similar)...

Then we can say that (setting off primarily from Deleuze): Each creative discipline has its own structure and this structure can only be built again with its own methods. This applies to art too; each artistic discipline can only be defined by the method it uses to shape its material. Thus, it’s not possible that they replace each other, nurture each other, need each other or create support for each other. No discipline *needs* the support of another discipline. We, even when loosely (by looking, hearing, touching) perceiving a work of art, can comprehend how the image was put together and this perception is what draws the boundaries of an artistic discipline. From this point onwards, everything is limited to those boundaries. Regardless of the method used to create an image as an outcome of these, it means that that image has set up its own domain as well; Like cinema, video, a photo, a *peinture*, etc...

But let’s never forget this: All creative disciplines, if they define themselves based on original building methods, determine their own boundaries and find their identity there, then they’re also paving the way for a new problematic. This problematic is relevant to the boundary concept. Because, just as much as determining the “interior of the space”, the boundary (also) highlights the “exterior of the space” (when announcing Jacques Derrida’s concept of “hospitality”, in terms of poignantly putting it across)³. In this case, an “interior” space that has a boundary is always involved with its own “exterior” too. So it is quite clear that the boundary is a “confining” line just as much as it is an opportunity to “cross” it... It’s at this point exactly that disciplines that lock themselves (using original methods) within disciplines open to the “outside” as per necessitated by the qualities of these boundaries; achieving the chance to “touch” other disciplines. It’s here that the “I have an idea” expression that we read from Deleuze takes on validity.

Setting off from what’s written above, let’s take another look at Murat Pulat’s paintings: These images, in terms of materials and his use of them, each appear before us as a *peinture*.

But what these *peintures* generally relay to us are images from cinema or photography: The artist has borrowed some of the frames from films he’s previously seen and transformed them

² A.g.e. s. 29.

³ See: Jacques Derrida, *Pera Peras Poros*, “Of Hospitality”, Prepared for Turkish publication by: Ferda Keskin-Önay Sözer, Yapı Kredi Pub. 1999.

into *peintures*. The quotes from the photo frames have also been transformed into *peintures*. This is the conclusion that can be drawn: The artist is trying to associate *peinture* with the disciplines of cinema or photography and convert them into each other. And this means that *peinture* has a desire to be associated with the disciplinary domain of cinema or photography. But is this possible? Can images created by different materials take each other's place? The answer to this question is clear: No... The pigment layers, pixels, textural grains or fine lines that form the images remind us of the qualities of other disciplines and tell us that these are not the same things. Furthermore, it's quite clear that a cinematographic structure for example, cannot be realized in a *peinture*. In that case, why does the artist persist with cinema or photography in his own *peintures*? Is he not aware that a *peinture* is neither cinema nor photography? Or, does he simply choose to feign ignorance?

Associating a discipline with other disciplines doesn't mean that they replace each other (we stated this before). This is exactly what Deleuze indicates as "I have an idea". In this way, a cinematic image that an artist portrays is revised and transformed according to the conditions of that painting. What was Deleuze trying to convey: If a discipline is using an image of another discipline (engagement area) in its own engagement area, it does not form a common relationship with a domain outside of itself, but, it does reorganize and transform an idea it borrows from it. In this sense, what Murat Pulat does can be considered to be creation of cinema or a photograph using the conditions of *peinture*. At most, a *peinture* is his way of explaining an idea he borrows from cinema or a photo (in fact this could even be an idea taken from Dostoyevsky in the example by Deleuze; as long as the idea is shown not as Dostoyevsky's directly, but that of the *peinture*).

At this stage there's an important attitude that Murat Pulat takes on: He makes his materials, the pigment layers, openly visible to the viewer's eye, exaggeratedly in fact, as opposed to concealing them. This at first may not seem to be an unusual situation; a number of artists use this method to paint. However, as Murat Pulat applies these thick pigment layers to the platform, he turns them into pixels with additional interventions or separates them into pixels with regular "marks" that he leaves on those layers. Efe Korkut Kurt also stated this method on Murat Pulat's previous exhibition. Efe Korkut Kurt drew attention to the pixels applied to thick layers and the way they created a digital effect. The pixel effect in the pigment layers is also important in terms of Pulat making a reference to new digital technologies. But this state of affairs allows this statement to be taken even further.

If the pigment layers that belong to a *peinture* are making a reference to the method of another domain, in this instance the digital field, then by using that reference to make a reminder of certain stories, he's also making a reference to cinema and photography; that's all well and good. We previously mentioned the "I have an idea" relationship that the *peinture* can form with cinema and photography; the situation here is a little different however. When pigment layers take on a form through pixels, then the story behind that "picture" starts to become irrelevant. The digital imitation that settles on the infrastructure dominates the story. And this means that any image (regardless of whether the stories belong to cinema, or photography) that's in a *peinture* is realized on the basis of imitation. A viewer with the least interest in the *peinture* can distinguish this: The *peinture* is applied with digital methods as its base and the

imitation becomes a “subject of the *peinture*”. What the *peinture* strives for is to reveal an imitation.

There's one thing that this desire can mean: To be communicating from within the *peinture*... Or more indirectly, to be “protecting” the *peinture*... In other words, each external influence that has been attributed (willingly or unwillingly) to the *peinture* is presented as a distinction of “imitation”, and an “awareness” again within the *peinture*... An artistic discipline can only exist with an “awareness” of an external influence. It's only when an artistic discipline contains each external influence that it's exposed to with an “awareness” that it can exist. It's a very Derrida-like case and can be explained with a “permeability” that results from the limits of that discipline when an external influence is found within a discipline and as a difference. In this sense, Murat Pulat's paintings are important not just because they make a reference to “I have an idea”, but also because he's able to present the “permeability” of the boundaries that determine an artistic discipline as a problematic.

Finally, presenting “imitation” as an “awareness” is to have also discovered a method that overcomes the negative aspects of that “imitation”. For example, in the 19th century, artists, plastic surgeons and philosophers all complained about this: Their qualities of “being humane” were harmed in the face of capital production conditions and humankind (and naturally art), became distanced from its own nature. This created a world of negativity. Because, it became clear that as humankind became “mechanized”, it deceived itself as it imitated machinery. This process of negativity continued until Andy Warhol, who came out with the most radical attitude, said, “I'm a machine”. The solution to the “mechanization” process mentioned here is clear: If we're talking from a state of “being humane”, explaining the “awareness” of imitation to “mechanization”... Or, it can be put this way: The “mechanization” that's seeped into the state of “being humane” (imitating an external influence) is again the contained by that human as a difference...

Thus, in terms of *peinture* and pixelization, Murat Pulat's paintings also remind us of a long argument on humankind and art.