

ABOUT A.CEM SAHİN AND HIS ART

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Each work of art includes a resistance to interpret. The power of this resistance most of the time increases the effect of the aesthetic feel created by the work. Because maybe the principal meaning of the modern and post-modern art is to bring us a breath of fresh air as an alternative to the mechanical mind and create an existential escape for the humanity. The far-fetched function of the contemporary art means that sometimes the artist reveals the wounds and gains an existence as a manual labourer of symptomatic manifestation of the truth, sometimes the artist obtains a healing quality as a bandage which helps cover this harsh reality. Either of these options step forward, or both, in any case, the artist shares a kind of partnership with his audience (even if a hypothetical audience). One aspect of this partnership is also a kind of crime.

And in this sense Arslan Cem Sahin invites us on a challenging journey and experimental process. This process is far from promising a short-run, rapidly consumed pleasure, but has a both conscientious and spiritual significance for the audience and for his own world of meanings. A. Cem appears as a sharp-tongued world of symbols that involves social criticism; ironic and humourous at times, and emotionally overwhelming at others, and his art is far from being a delighting, opportunist art that leads one to illusionary traps of pleasure. For a young artist's art, this symbolism obviously means sailing close to the wind. In this regard, A. Cem probably prefers taking risks with a courage his generation inherited as a spiritual heritage. He prefers being one of Leonard Cohen's 'Beautiful Losers' and sticks to a culture that is differently structured than that of the artists who are motivated only by the chance of winning.

Then, in this context, should we consider A. Cem Şahin's art to be "political"? My personal answer to that question would be "no." A. Cem paves the way to a timeless form of artistic production rather than being tied down to what is recent, and he is very much aware of the possibility of artistic corruption that comes along with this. His paintings refrain from imprisoning his vision within a web of historical and regional relations, because that vision is composed of his inner world and the local imageries of his upbringings as well as the objects and factors of the world that influences him on a global scale. His paintings are not limited to stories, events and people with clear beginnings and endings, but they rather expand on a deep existentialist and social level. On that note, we are confronted with an artistic production that manages to get away from the cul-de-sacs of political art but still retains its critical background, all the while strengthening it.

To the opposite of what is thoughts or said, the load that the contemporary artists are carrying today is at all time high. In the past, the artists were able to create their own values and worlds but the world today is dictating how the artists should operate and in a sense, imprisons them within cultural boundaries. This is a deceiving reality, the actual reality is that the artist of today is tied with these boundaries. This is due in part to the financial power of certain dominant social classes and the fact that the young artists are not getting the right education or tools to be independent. Even the political art is trying to support the things that look like its

antithesis. From this point of view, A. Cem Sahin's art is very consistent and has a solid strategy for the future. He has created an independent workshop where he can separate himself from all these issues which helped him stay independent.

An artist has the ability to improve himself to the extent of his capacity but the fact that the society is limiting this development is a pain for the individual artist. On the other hand, we can assume that A. Cem's paintings are very sincere gateways to his inner self. From this point of view, one might say that there are some parallels between his paintings and the split he is experiencing between his internal and external worlds. His compositions are made of various short distance and long distance panoramas that signify his internal and external worlds. This, in the Lacanian context, translates to the painting counterpart of the pre and post linguistic worlds. These landscapes manifest themselves with the most primal features of this cultural area, all the while making references to nature and mother's womb. These ideas are embodied as outstanding and regulated factors in this wide plain of ideas. As separate themes unto themselves, they take their places interconnectedly as parts of the artist's world of symbolism.

These deep and asymmetrical images produce a naturally unnerving effect on the viewer. The moment in which we are no longer in the well-regulated realms of the cartesian mind makes us uneasy. As stated in the beginning, A. Cem's art is hard to penetrate and identify with, rather than being relaxing and soothing. One could see it as an invitation to a garden of thorns. His art is not pessimistic, it springs from pure optimism and hope. This kind of art enables the war machine** rather than providing the audiences with an easy entrance. war machine

*Beautiful Losers: Leonard Cohen's novel.

**War Machine: It's a term that is expanded upon by Deleuze and Guattari in their work titled "Capitalism and Schizophrenia", and it presents the mechanism of resistance that is not tied down by the idea of rulership.