

# TRANSFORMING TRASH AS AN ARTISTIC ACT

A Master's Thesis

by  
MUSTAFA İLHAN

Department of  
Communication and Design  
İhsan Doğramacı Bilkent University  
Ankara  
January 2016



To my family and for those who embrace trash

TRANSFORMING TRASH AS AN ARTISTIC ACT

Graduate School of Economics and Social Sciences  
of  
İhsan Doğramacı Bilkent University

by

MUSTAFA İLHAN

In Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of  
MASTER OF FINE ARTS

in

THE DEPARTMENT OF  
COMMUNICATION AND DESIGN  
İHSAN DOĞRAMACI BİLKENT UNIVERSITY  
ANKARA

January 2016

I certify that I have read this thesis and have found that it is fully adequate, in scope and in quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Fine Arts in Media and Design.

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Assist. Prof. Dr. Ersan Ocak  
Supervisor

I certify that I have read this thesis and have found that it is fully adequate, in scope and in quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Fine Arts in Media and Design.

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Prof. Dr. Mehmet Yılmaz  
Examining Committee Member

I certify that I have read this thesis and have found that it is fully adequate, in scope and in quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Fine Arts in Media and Design.

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Instructor Ekin Kılıç  
Examining Committee Member

Approval of the Graduate School of Economics and Social Sciences

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Prof. Dr. Halime Demirkan  
Director

# ABSTRACT

## TRANSFORMING TRASH AS AN ARTISTIC ACT

İlhan, Mustafa

M.F.A., Department of Communication and Design

Supervisor: Assist. Prof. Dr. Ersan Ocak

January 2016

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Keywords: Transformation of Trash, Trash in Art, Trash as an Art Material.

# ÖZET

## SANATSAL BİR EYLEM OLARAK ATIĞI DÖNÜŞTÜRME

İlhan, Mustafa

Yüksek Lisans, İletişim ve Tasarım Bölümü

Tez Yöneticisi: Yrd. Doç. Dr. Ersan Ocak

Ocak 2016

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Anahtar Kelimeler: Atığın Dönüştürülmesi, Sanatta Atık, Sanatsal Malzeme olarak Atık.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

One can even shout out through refuse...

—Kurt Schwitters, *Kurt Schwitters*, 1985

Stav says that “[t]hey forget about it and don’t think about all the time and energy and money put into disposing of it” (as cited in Navarro, 2009).

Banash (2013: 11) draws attentions to the advancements in the recent history of humankind by stating that “over the course of the twentieth century, the twin developments of mass production and mass media in the capitalist economies of the [western countries] completed a total transformation of everyday life, reorienting almost every activity toward consumption.”

“The phenomenon of waste comes clearly into focus not merely as a by-product of manufacturing processes, but rather as an integral element in cycles of production and consumption” (Pye, 2010: ix).

Anyone can encounter with trash in the crowded urban areas “as well as the remotest corners of the world” (Cerny & Seriff, 1996: 16).

Trash is in the streets, in people's home, in the sea that people swim, rotating around the globe<sup>1</sup>. Even if trash is tried to move away from people's habitat, it is as close as the nearest waste bin.

The authors of the book *Rubbish: the Archeology of Garbage* give clearer definition of some these words:

*Trash* refers specifically to discards that are at least theoretically dry —newspapers, boxes, cans, and so on. *Garbage* refers technically to wet discards —food remains, yard waste, and of-fal. *Refuse* is an inclusive term for both the wet discards and the dry. *Rubbish* is even more inclusive: It refers to all refuse plus construction and demolition debris. The distinction between wet and dry garbage was important in the days when cities slopped garbage to pigs, and needed to have the wet material separated from the dry; it eventually became irrelevant, but may see a revival if the idea of composting food and yard waste catches on. (Rathje & Murphy, 1992: 9)

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<sup>1</sup>Satellite discards are disposed to the atmosphere and they rotate around the globe like satellites.

## CHAPTER 2

### TRASH IN CULTURE AND THEORY

Anger is nothing compared to garbage:  
Garbage eats anger for breakfast.  
It eats all of us in the end.  
—Priscilla Uppal, “Uncle Fernando’s Garbage Triptych”

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## 2.1 Throwaway Culture

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*Fountain* (Figure 1) is an artwork produced by Marcel Duchamp, who is notable member of provocative Dada movement.



Figure 1: Marcel Duchamp, *Fountain*, 1917, Porcelain urinal



## CHAPTER 3

### TRASH (IN) ART

One day, in a rubbish heap, I found an old bicycle seat lying beside a rusted handlebar, and my mind instantly linked them together. I assembled these two objects, which everyone then recognized as a bull's head. The metamorphosis was accomplished, and I wish another metamorphosis would occur in the reverse sense. If my bull's head were thrown in a junk heap, perhaps one day some boy would say, "Here's something that would make a good handlebar for my bicycle!"

—Pablo Picasso, *Trashformations*, 1998

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eleifend, sagittis quis, diam. Duis eget orci sit amet orci dignissim rutrum.

### 3.1 Root in the Art History

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### 3.2 Examples from Contemporary Artists

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### 3.3 The Documentary “The Gleaners and I” by Agnès Varda

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## CHAPTER 4

### NOTEBOOKS FROM TRASHED PAPERS

The first question I ask myself when something doesn't seem to be beautiful is why do I think it's not beautiful? And very shortly you discover that there is no reason. If we can conquer that dislike, or begin to like what we did dislike, then the world is more open. That path —of increasing one's enjoyment of life— is the path, I think, we all best take: to use art not as self-expression, but as self-alteration; to become more open.

—John Cage, *Wild Art*, 2013

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## 4.1 The Statement

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## 4.2 Development Progress of the Project

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### 4.2.1 Collecting

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#### 4.2.2 Transformation

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#### 4.2.3 Demonstration

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### 4.3 Parts of the Final Work

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#### 4.3.1 Notebooks

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#### 4.3.2 Exhibition

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### 4.3.3 Website

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## CHAPTER 5

## CONCLUSION

If I seem to be over-interested in junk, it is because I am, and I have a lot of it, too — half a garage full of bits and broken pieces. I use these things for repairing other things. . . But it can be seen that I do have a genuine and almost miserly interest in worthless objects. My excuse is that in this era of planned obsolescence, when a thing breaks I can usually find something in my collection to repair it — a toilet, or a motor, or a lawn mower. But I guess the truth is that I simply like junk.

—John Steinbeck, *Travels with Charley*, 1962

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## APPENDICES

## APPENDIX A

### COLLECTED MATERIALS AND MAKING OF



Figure 2: Marcel Duchamp, *Fountain*, 1917, Porcelain urinal



Figure 3: Marcel Duchamp, *Fountain*, 1917, Porcelain urinal

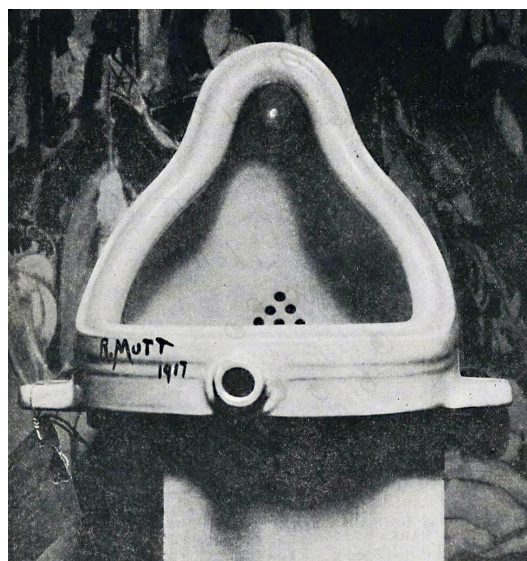


Figure 4: Marcel Duchamp, *Fountain*, 1917, Porcelain urinal

## APPENDIX B

### PHOTOGRAPHS OF FINAL WORK

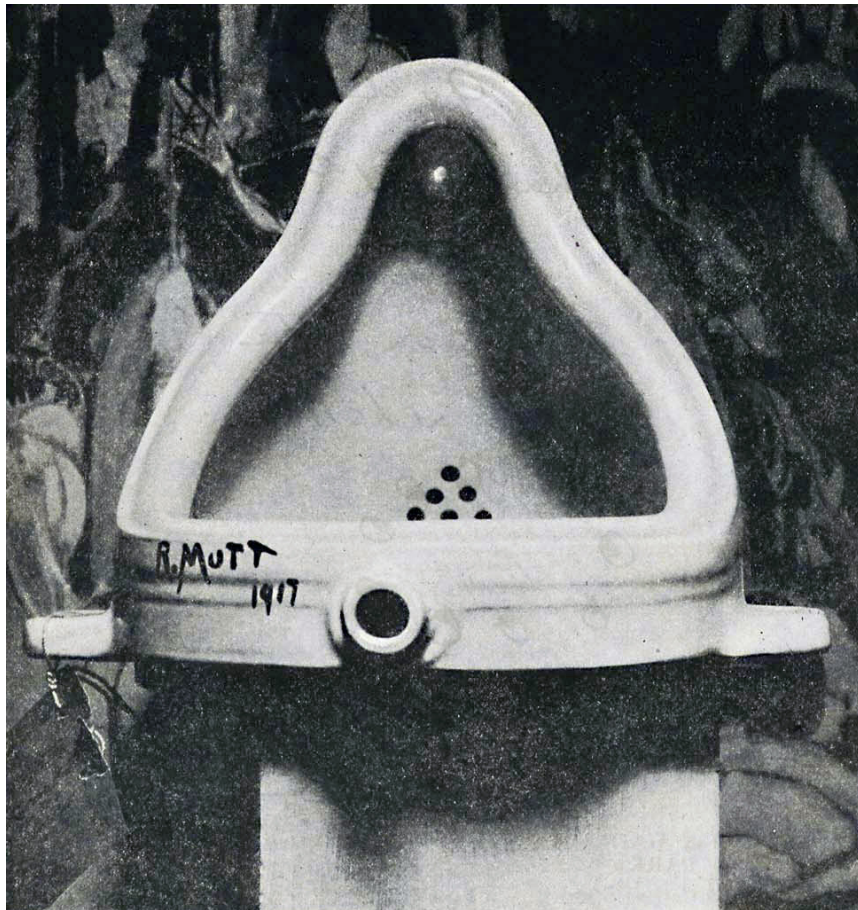


Figure 5: Marcel Duchamp, *Fountain*, 1917, Porcelain urinal





Figure 6: Marcel Duchamp, *Fountain*, 1917, Porcelain urinal

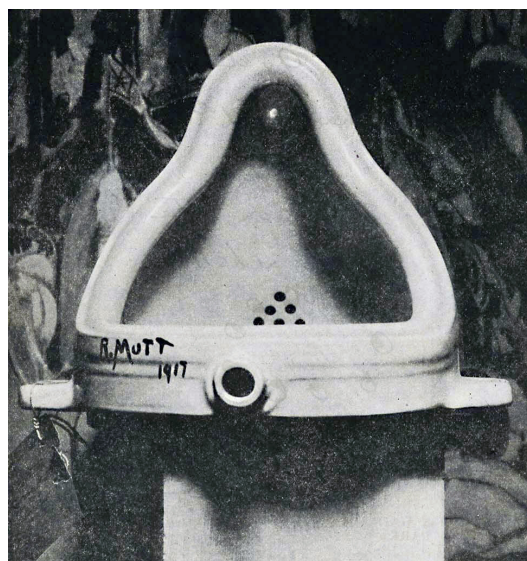


Figure 7: Marcel Duchamp, *Fountain*, 1917, Porcelain urinal