

Argumentative essay on the life and works of sahin kaygun

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Introduction

The invention of the camera in the latter part of the 18th century became the pathway to create a new style of art called photography. Photography is the art of drawing using the light, a scientific process that relies in lenses to create a reflection of the images onto the paper. Since the invention of the camera, photography became even more popular because it is versatile and fast compared to painting. Photography became the avant-garde of the early twentieth century art not only in the United States but to the whole world as well. Photographers and artists often incorporate several themes inspired by a unique design present either within their own culture, on other people's culture or merely a product of imagination. Turkey is one of the many nations that adopted the changes in terms of the new art style. In this paper, I would like to argue that Sahin Kaygun, a contemporary artist pioneered the interdisciplinary form of photography in Turkey.

This paper will attempt to draw the reader's attention to the artist's personal life based on the empirical evidences gathered. Moreover, in order to understand the artist well enough, I have included a short biography about his life. The next pages will tackle about his notable works, including films and paintings. Sahin Kaygun is the man of unique talents and ideas. In addition, I will also include some illustrations of his notable works and a brief explanation about them. As a *carte blanche*, I would like to add an additional commentary on each of his works included in this paper to help readers' understand his persona and his role in liberating the Turkish photography and painting style into a unique style of art that fascinates even the people from other countries.

Sahin Kaygun: Early Years

“ I don’t take photographs; I make photographs!” –Sahin Kaygun (Istanbul Modern, 2014).

Sahin Kaygun was a contemporary Turkish artist born in Adana, Turkey in 1951. He was the jack-of-all-trades because of his numerous professions. During his lifetime, he used his brilliant acumen in the fields of film directing, photography, painting, scriptwriting and acting. According to the records presented by the official website of the Istanbul Modern, Sahin Kaygun actually began his early career in painting while he was in high school. Sahin Kaygun painted pictures and sold them to the public in order to support himself. In 1969, Sahin Kaygun he attended the prestigious State University of Applied Fine Arts in Istanbul, Turkey wherein he developed a passion for photography and painting (Istanbul Modern, 2014). Sahin Kaygun was probably the first Turkish artist to artistically manipulate how photographs were made because of his sharp and unique motifs of combined themes of paintings and modern photography. In a lighter perspective, during the period of the 1970’s and until his death, Sahin Kaygun challenged the existing artistic style of Turkey. Compared to the other artists, he was extremely passionate about his craft and presented a new and dynamic way of making photography as the avant-garde of the early twentieth century art. His designs and motifs were unique, classy yet rebellious at the same time because they broke the traditional way of painting and photography. Furthermore as a university student, Sahin excelled in graphic designing and photography. In fact, after graduating from university, he immediately began practicing his chosen field, photography, which made him popular through

the eyes of art connoisseurs. Sahin Kaygun was an exceptional man capable of producing such high-grade vintage artworks that portrays the depths of human thinking. Indeed, his paintings and notable Polaroid pieces became the subject of debate because of their cunning yet simple way of portrayal. The artist shrewdly hid some of his personal thoughts in all of his works. Moreover, he also worked as a director and his first film Afife Jale, a classic period piece that tells the story of a Turkish woman named Afife Jale who became the first woman to appear on stage. The film was held in 1987 and Kaygun's lead actress, Mujde Ar received both criticisms and applause from media and film critics.

Sahin Kaygun's Notable Works: Photography

Kaygun's works were securely preserved at the Istanbul Modern Photography Gallery. Including some of his rarest vintage pieces that probably cost millions in today's money. Kaygun is an artist free from the traditional confines of the classicism whilst retaining the humanized form of his subjects. The majority of his works on both photography and painting presents the modernized view of surrealism and abstract expressionism. During his career in the 1980's interdisciplinary photography was unheard and not popular. His subjects and mediums were highly criticized because they are eccentric and beyond comparison to the traditional paintings and photography of his time. Kaygun's uniqueness in all of his artworks drew the attention of many people and contemporary art connoisseurs because his works are the best example of 'breaking free' from the confines of the traditional norms. Photography was his first love; and up to this day, most of

his early works still survives including the 80 Polaroid pictures that clearly showed his skill in manipulating the images to produce an abstract-effect.

Figure 1: Sahin Kaygun's Terrible Ivan's Chair, circa 1987. Image was taken from the Ellipsis Gallery of Modern Art, (Kaygun, 2014).

The above picture (Figure 1) was one of the notable samples of Kaygun's Polaroid pieces. As such, the picture depicts a female sitting on a chair posed for a nude shot. Her face was hidden within the darkness whilst the rest of her body was displayed for everyone to see. Overall, the picture presents an enigma, a possible reference to an increase of prostitution during the 1987 in Turkey. Kaygun's Terrible Ivan's Chair posits a wonderful proportional balance because of its accurate portrayal of the human body, not for the sake of lewdness but for the art. The delicate outlines of the body and the chair can be seen with such clarity, despite the fact that half of the image is hidden in the darkness. Unity of design is also achieved due to harmony light and dark parts which only highlighted the pictures enigmatic aura.

Furthermore, the picture's soft, two-tone colors enhance the pictures vividness; the grays accentuated the woman's body whilst the blue provided a contrast to a somewhat gloomy scene.

Figure 2: An untitled Polaroid piece, circa 1985. This Polaroid piece is a combination of painting and photography elements. Image was taken from Ellipsis Gallery of Modern Art, (Kaygun, 2014).

Kaygun processed many different Polaroid pieces; many of them were not given an appropriate title. However, despite lacking a proper title for his masterpieces, Kaygun's photography is an excellent combination of both painting and photography. Figure 2 is an image showing the semi-naked

body of a woman. Instead of developing the picture into a colored version, Kaygun decided to retain the negative version of the image, one of the possible reasons would be to avoid criticisms because the picture is quite lewd in terms of the conservative standards of the 1985 Turkish society. Kaygun applied brown paint to cover up the intimate areas of the woman's body whilst retaining its seductive appearance. In this picture, the viewer is left to guess the identity of the woman because the negative background subtly conceals the identity of the subject. Moreover, unity of design is evident in his work. Kaygun repeatedly placed some semi-light brush strokes over the décolletage, the area between the thighs and another brush stroke atop the woman's head, barely covering her hand. The lines are soft and smooth flowing, not rough as to emphasize the delicate quality of the female body whilst highlighting the perfect proportions of the body. Despite the fact that some of his Polaroid works are quite eccentric at first, it is no doubt that Sahin Kaygun inspired the modern league of Turkish artists to experiment more on their artworks.

Sahin Kaygun: The Life as a Film Director

Turkish films of the 1980's focused more in portraying the capital city of Istanbul, Turkey as a beautiful and amiable place to live in. For some reason, Colin-Donmez (2014) stated that the political turmoil of the 1980's created a drastic change in the Turkish cinema. Colin-Donmez argues that due to the destruction of the old Turkish villages, the society was dominated by a Westernized norm and presented a change in shaping the cultural identity of Turkey. As a contemporary artist, Sahin Kaygun was aware of these changes

in the society. Colin-Donmez notes that the Turkish cinematography went through many upheavals and thus, became more westernized. Westernized in a sense that the film industry was not confined within the traditions of the society; in fact, it became more open to criticisms and changes. Being one of the pioneers of the contemporary art in Turkey, Kaygun also developed a passion for film directing upon which he concludes that film comprises almost of everything and is a combination of all arts. He pursued his cinematic career without leaving photography. He wrote several scripts for various films he also directed himself; such as *Afife Jale* (1987) and *Full Moon* (1988). The latter film became a sensation at the Cannes Film Festival. The *Full Moon* caught the critics' attention because Kaygun portrayed Turkey as an exotic place and good feelings (Istanbul Modern, 2014). Because of his experience in different mediums, Sahin Kaygun was a master not only of photography, but also of cinema. His films convey the deep thought about the subtlety of the human emotions without overreacting. Meanwhile, before his directorial debut, Sahin Kaygun previously worked as an artistic director for the film, *Motherland Hotel* (1985), which was written and directed by Omer Kavur. It was here at this film Kaygun realized the important role of the artistic director. According to him, the cinema is a field wherein he can manipulate and combine his knowledge in order to produce a worthy film. In addition, he also served Atif Yilmaz's film *Oh Belinda!* as an art director. Kaygun's notable films were as follows: *Vasfiye is Her Name* (1985) which explains the story of a woman with a hidden identity as a nightclub singer. This film practically notes of the best example of a movie with a social content. *A Widow* (1985) was a short semi-romantic film of a widow named

Sunna who lost her husband and eventually met the photographer, Ergun. In a lighter perspective, Kaygun managed to bring out the characters emotions and drew the audiences' attention to understand clearly the situation of a woman amidst the strict confines of the Turkish society. In a way, this film was a feminist example because it empowers women to live a bolder and free life away from society judgment (Istanbul Modern, 2014). As a conclusion, Sahin Kaygun was a man of innovation and a seeker of true originality. His artworks were unique and eccentric but provide a deeper understanding of the artist's innermost feelings.

References

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