

A Study of the Viewpoints of Selected Iranian Environmental Art Pioneers On the Meaning of Landscape

Abstract

Since the beginning of human life and his first creative movements, nature has always been considered a proper context for expressing intellectual, philosophical and religious concerns in the form of artworks. Perhaps what is called Environmental Art today, on one hand, attempts to connect with ancient myths and forms of expression of mankind and on the other, through a novel expression, it endeavors to stabilize itself backed by the twentieth century's modern art movements. Moreover, it tries to respond to ongoing global problems brought about by modernity and unbridled development of technology and deal with contemporary concerns such as culture, society, and environmental issues and offer practical solutions.

Environmental art maintains a profound affiliation with its surroundings and taking into account the position such affiliation holds in terms of form and meaning, it strikes a balance between the audience, artwork and the environment. It also deals with ecological concerns; however, this is not its only remarkable feature as this type of art has a range of diverse, varying definitions. Since the very first days of the coinage of this word, when the artist's creative ideas were typically taken into account, to the present day, when preserving the environment is its main concern, such variety of descriptions have existed. Environmental, social, cultural, educational ...

issues can easily be transmitted through works of environmental art. In spite of considerable efforts made in Iran in recent years, unfortunately, this type of art doesn't enjoy a deserving place. Besides, no comprehensive approach exists for broad and systematic formation of festivals and supporting institutions of this type of art, although, it has always been rich in terms of both the required conditions and availability of young artists. Devising a plan of action to transmit environmental concepts to people, change their viewpoint towards the environment as a source of energy for mere economic purposes to an extremely risky, vulnerable, biological entity requiring special attention as well as determining the message to be conveyed through a work of art are the main objectives of the present research. In order to find the cognitive method of exchange between the nature and human beings and discover the way the meanings are transmitted, first, the theoretical foundations existing on the nature of landscape and the environment have been analyzed to extract a set of categories that will be used afterwards as the basis for how Iranian artists approach the issue and how their works are evaluated. Next, the works of these artists created in the area of environmental art have been analyzed, through which we come to know that in dealing with the environment, which artists have paid attention to which categories in the theory of landscape and which aspects have been considered so that the requirements are determined. On the other hand, relying on the perception of landscape and environment as well as the visual experiences derived from the works presented, the study attempts to decide which approaches dominate the minds of the artists of the field and analyze the features of these works.

The research methodology is descriptive-analytic which has been conducted through desk study of library resources as well as the outcomes of the findings of fieldstudies through interviewing the artists. The results indicate that from a critical viewpoint, the formal aesthetic aspects are of concern to many Iranian artists. When expressing, many of them try

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to realize their own aesthetic ideals on a material platform. Their attention towards the natural landscape as compared to their focus on human environment is very insignificant. Of course, part of such negligence goes back to the non-existence of systemized structure for recording the artists' experiences of environmental art in Iran which has hindered the artists from making extensive use of the landscape. However, as far as the environment is concerned, the Iranian artists have been the most active, creating artworks that illustrating a kind of historical document to show how do humans affect the environment. This is why their works predominantly portray ethnic and religious roots in connecting with the nature and human-landscape interaction. Consequently, a systematic outlook towards nature where environmental issues are defined with human-landscape interaction in the contemporary era, has been less appreciated and instead, has been replaced by artifacts that mostly intend to depict a thematic thought. Moreover, philosophical and aesthetic ideas are more prevalent than others in these works besides a kind of feminist approach, popular among female artists, which is itself divided into psychological and sociological approaches. As far as the works are concerned, except for a few works presented to festivals, the artists had no opportunity of involving the audience in creating the artworks. Therefore, most of them are mere pictorial representations not finding their way into the actual urban environment.

Keywords: Environment, Human, Environmental Art, Landscape, Iranian Artists

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