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THE PLACE OF MUSIC IN THE DE STIJL MOVEMENT

Abstract

Throughout history, people have been in search of all branches of art and have pursued differences. With this idea, innovations have been created through interaction in the branches of art and science, and new trends have emerged. One of these movements is the De Stijl movement, which was formed by a group of painters and architects who created their works by simplifying shapes and colors as defenders of pure work and universality. This movement showed its effect in the Netherlands between 1917 and 1931 and was created by the asymmetrical combination of vertical and horizontal, the artists created the visual and spatial order using only black, white, and basic colors. Piet Mondrian, the founder of the movement, is also known as a painter who was influenced by American Jazz music and transferred musical data to his paintings. In this study, the De Stijl movement and the paintings of Piet Mondrian and Theo Van Doesburg, one of the pioneers of the movement, were examined in terms of The De Stijl movement and music. This research has been examined as a descriptive qualitative study aiming to reveal the existing situation based on the literature review. It is based on document analysis, which is one of the qualitative data collection methods from an interdisciplinary perspective.

Keywords: De Stijl, Piet Mondrian, Theo Van Doesburg, Music, Interdisciplinary interaction, Geometry, Color

DE STIJL HAREKETİNDE MÜZİĞİN YERİ

Öz

Tarih boyunca insanlar sanatın tüm dallarını araştırmış ve farklılığın peşinden koşmuşlardır. Bu fikirle birlikte sanat ve bilim dallarında etkileşim yoluyla yenilikler yaratılmış ve yeni trendler ortaya çıkmıştır. Bu akımlardan biri de saf çalışmanın ve evrenselliğin savunucusu olarak şekil ve renkleri sadeleştirerek eserlerini oluşturan bir grup ressam ve mimarın oluşturduğu De Stijl hareketidir. 1917-1931 yılları arasında Hollanda'da etkisini gösteren bu hareket, sanatçıların sadece siyah, beyaz ve temel renkleri kullanarak görsel ve uzamsal düzeni oluşturdukları dikey ve yatayın asimetrik birleşimiyle ortaya çıktı. Hareketin kurucusu Piet Mondrian, Amerikan Caz müziğinden etkilenmiş ve müzikal verileri resimlerine aktarmış bir ressam olarak da bilinir. Bu çalışmada De Stijl hareketi ve hareketin öncülerinden Piet Mondrian ve Theo Van Doesburg'un resimleri De Stijl hareketi ve müziği açısından incelenmiştir. Bu araştırma, literatür taramasına dayalı olarak var olan durumu ortaya koymayı amaçlayan betimsel nitel bir çalışma olarak incelenmiştir. Disiplinlerarası bir bakış açısıyla nitel veri toplama yöntemlerinden biri olan doküman analizine dayanmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: De Stijl, Piet Mondrian, Theo Van Doesburg, Müzik, Disiplinlerarası etkileşim, Geometri, Renk

Introduction

The De Stijl art movement is a movement that emerged in the Netherlands during the First World War when sculptors and painters came together. This movement, which managed to take place in the Impressionism art team, has survived until today. De Stijl is an important art style that is extremely impressive with its use of 3 basic colors, and unique figures, and also pioneered the emergence of many art movements. Today, it is still possible to see and hear the traces of this art movement in many branches of architecture, sculpture and many other arts.

The De Stijl movement was influenced by Neo Plasticism. Neo Plasticism is an art movement that seeks the balance of vertical and horizontal lines in the plastic arts (1872-1944) and whose primary colors are yellow, red and blue. Discovered this style by Piet Mondrian by following the Naturalism, Impressionism and Symbolism movements and by examining Cubism, based on his understanding of painting nature (Turani, 2010: 608).



Figure 1. Piet Mondrian (1872-1944) Van Doesburg (1883-1931) Bart Van Der Leck (1876-1958)

According to Neo-Plasticism, the work of art expresses a geometrical order contrary to nature. This geometric order is basically an architectural structure. Painting, which is a proportional entity, resembles both an architectural structure and a musical work. Because every painting is the form of vertical lines, basic colors and their opposites, horizontal lines, neutral colors, and in this sense, it is the harmony of the elements used in the composition (Tunalı, 2008: 181). The De Stijl movement was actively involved in the art world between 1917-1931, and was also used as the name of a magazine published by Theo van Doesburg. De Stijl's representatives are Piet Mondrian, Theo van Doesburg, Bart Van der Leck, Vilmos Huszar, JJP Oud, Gerrit Rietveld and Georges Vantongerloo. This movement is based on a philosophy and Neo Plasticism movement that deals with the idea of abstraction. Neo Plasticism uses black, white and gray colors in addition to the yellow, red and blue colors of the De Stijl group. Compositions created in this color palette; consists of horizontal, vertical lines and planes coming out of the rectangle.

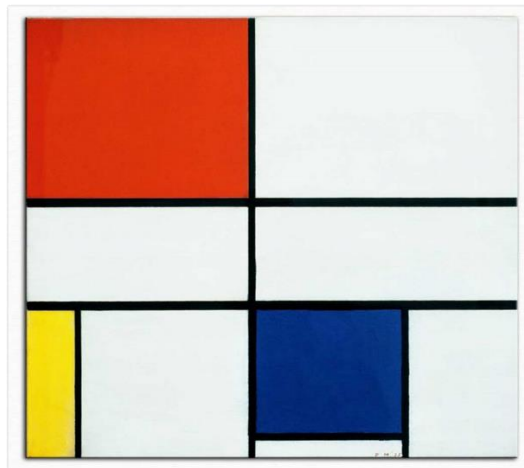


Figure 2. Piet Mondrian- Composition in Red, Yellow and Blue, 1935

According to Mondrian's statement in the journal "De Stijl," published in 1917 at the initiative of Theo van Doesburg; Pure plastic works must be produced and the masses

must show interest in this pure art (Farago, 2011:199). Compositions in plastic arts have moved away from their natural forms and nature. Main and neutral colors were used in a simple way, and importance was given to the creation of colors in a balanced way. A natural harmony relationship has not been observed. In this respect, the De Stijl movement; created examples of abstract painting and also the origin of geometric abstraction.

De Stijl's three important painters, Theo van Doesburg, Piet Mondrian and Bart van der Leck, depicted the world under the influence of impressionism and fauvism, and later reached a collective abstract style. Theo van Doesburg, known as the founder of the group; In addition to painting with innovative ideas and a different perspective, he is a versatile artist who is also interested in architecture and has been involved in many different movements.

Bart van der Leck produced works with geometric compositions, but in the following years, he wanted to include figurative elements in his works. This situation caused him to have disagreements with De Stijl artists. He used the same colors with De Stijl movement in his paintings based on simplicity and purity. At the same time, he is different from the other members of the group in that he includes the representation of objects and figures in his paintings.



Figure 3. Bart Van Der Leck - Havenarbeid, 1916

According to İpşiroğlu, the fixed basic rhythm called “Beat” in jazz music; Rhythms that do not overlap with the basic beat (beat) and show shifts in time (Off-Beat) are the counterpart of Mondrian's theory of composition. In the painter's paintings, the equivalent of "beat" is the basic elements such as unchanging straight line, right angle, surface, color and colorlessness. The equivalent of “off-beat” is the relationship of lines with each other, colors and elements that can change, such as the location of colors on the surface. Jazz music develops in the tension created by beat and off-beat; The same

situation is reproduced by the relationship of static elements with moving elements in Mondrian's paintings, as in jazz music (İpşiroğlu, 2006:107).

Mondrian, who was impressed by the liveliness and speed of Boogie-Woogie music played in the style of blues and generally played with the piano in his paintings, was also influenced by American Jazz music and transferred musical data to his paintings. Cüneyt Sermet, the composer's left hand in this music; that the right hand continues the melody line; It is realized by using ostinato characters with and without dotted 1/8, 1/16 and trioles, with or without syncope; he stated that the melody line lacks development or tension. In addition, he draws attention to the characteristic of Boogie-Woogie being rhythmic and percussive (Sermet, 1990:21).

Looking at the painter's "Broadway Boogie-Woogie" and "Victory Boogie-Woogie", gray background, right angles, horizontal-vertical, ostinato bass that makes itself heard with different rhythms draws attention. On top of that, the rapidly changing colors; yellow, blue, red squares and rectangles stand out. The gray squares or rectangles that fall between the colors on the horizontal and vertical lines are also defined as the reproduction of breaks, one of the basic elements of jazz (İpşiroğlu, 2006: 106-107).

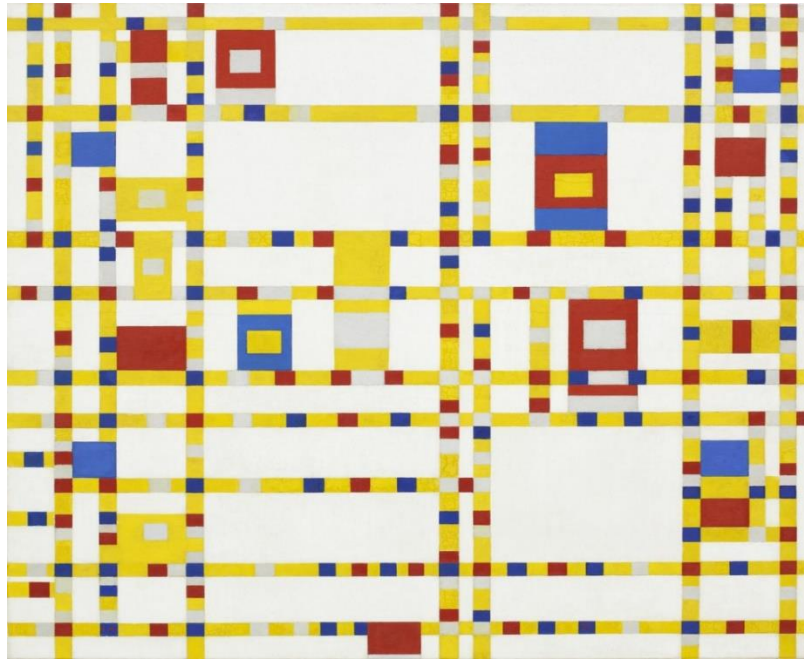


Figure 4. Piet Mondrian - Broadway Boogie Woogie 1942

Jazz and painting were the biggest inspirations of Mondrian's life. Late in his short life, Mondrian established good relations with the jazz musician Thelonius Monk., Monk referred to Mondrian's music-inspired paintings when speaking of his own music often referring to his sensibility in placing a line or applying a color to the painting.

Geoff Winston attended a conference entitled “Mondrian, Nicholson and the 20th Century Abstraction” held at the Courtauld Institute on March 3, 2012, where he wrote: Mondrian has his distinctive style. He did not hesitate to attend famous dance parties organized by artists in a country where the folk dance was banned until 1924 as it was considered too modern. In Paris, Mondrian became acquainted with jazz, brought with him by the black American soldiers who stayed there after the First World War. In 1927, Mondrian summed up the primacy of rhythm and beat and wrote an article entitled 'Jazz and Neo-Plastic'. Jazz was running in Mondrian's veins. His great late paintings 'Victory Boogie-Woogie' and 'Broadway Boogie-Woogie' encapsulated the rhythm, energy and structural grid of the New York metropolis, and their titles were an expression of his feelings towards this music. (Londonjazznews, 2012)

Broadway Boogie Woogie reflects Mondrian's experiments with grids and color blocks, while the way the colors Red, Blue and Yellow are used is a distinct step forward from his previous work. The Broadway Boogie Woogie painting is a landmark in painting, with grid patterns and colorful dots inspired by the grid-like architecture of New York and the frenetic energy of boogie woogie music.

In Broadway Boogie Woogie, Mondrian did not use his usual thick black lines, but painted Broadway Boogie Woogie in lighter tones. The dots at the top of the picture are gray and spaced apart, but the denser dots towards the bottom of the piece are noticeable. The spaces between the grid pattern are made up of planes using the unique and never repeating colors of blue, yellow and red. Mondrian has placed the most complex of these planes on the right side of the piece, near the top of the painting, with the midplanes seen as monochromatic blocks that are narrower in smaller areas. The blocks in the yellow grid lines in the picture are a reference to boogie woogie music that uses a fast rhythm and tempo. Contrary to Mondrian's previous work, which used thick, continuous lines, this painting of smaller color planes is reminiscent of the eight and sixteen beats of boogie woogie music.

Mondrian died a year after finishing "Broadway Boogie Woogie." He was working on another masterpiece called “Victory Boogie Woogie” when he died. Like some of his paintings, this last canvas was tilted 90 degrees. When Mondrian died, the painting still contained bits of tape, its colors were impure, and the edges of the lines and shapes were imprecise. “Broadway Boogie Woogie” is the last work the painter completed during his lifetime. (Ideelart, 2018)

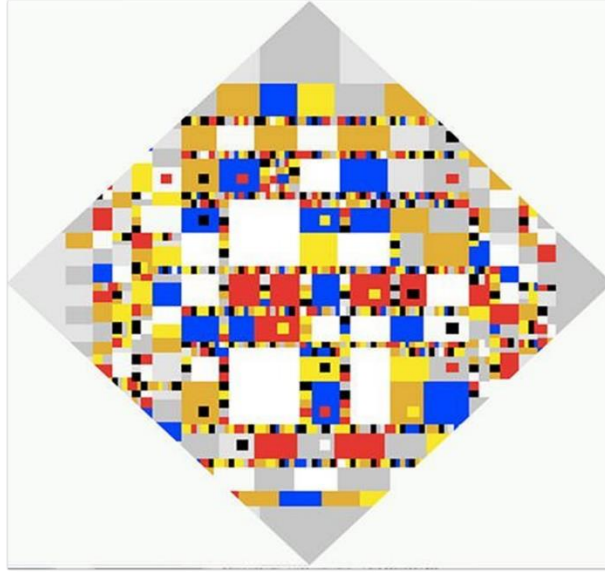


Figure 5. Victory Boogie Woogie,1944

Theo Van Doesburg

Doesburg was born in Utrecht in 1883 into an artistic family. His name was Christian Emil Küpper. When he started painting, he borrowed the name of his stepfather and became "Theo Doesburg". Van Doesburg was a proficient figurative painter at the start of his career, but he soon came into contact with non-figurative painting and met Mondrian in 1916. Committed to creating purely abstract art, these two men led to the founding of the De Stijl group in 1917 and the publication of the journal De Stijl, which Van Doesburg edited and published that year. Van Doesburg died in 1931.

Van Doesburg's life was short, but he was very energetic. Neoplasticism, constructivism, suprematism, dadaism, elementarism - Van Doesburg was involved in all of these currents, and some of them he invented. He was both sociable and eclectic. He was a centrist element in his diverse and chaotic artistic world. He participated in conferences, congresses and exhibitions, most of which he organized himself, gave lectures and produced theories.

Van Doesburg's greatest influence was in the field of architecture and design. Together with architects JJ Oud and Gerrit Rietveld, he took the flat, geometric picture of the De Stijl group and brought it into the third dimension. He certainly had an exciting spatial imagination. Together with the young architect Cornelis van Eesteren, he created axonometric projections of ideal homes. For the first time in almost a thousand years, architectural style is not to imitate anything else. Van Doesburg's contribution to this change was crucial. The use of geometry and primary color, which has become an integral part of the Bauhaus philosophy, has always been under his influence.

When it comes to Van Doesburg's interest in music, the first thing that comes to mind is his great love with Nelly van Moorsel. Nelly was a pianist whom she met at an exhibition of the Section d'Or abstract painters group she organized in The Hague in 1920. Van Doesburg was 15 years older than him and was already married, but this did not hinder their love affair and Doesburg left his wife. They finally got married in 1928. They were inseparable; Whenever Van Doesburg appears in a photograph or exhibition, Nelly is with him, and her mischievous grin is a wonderful contrast to the man's serious gaze. (Vandoesburghuis)



Figure 6. Theo and Nelly

Alongside De Stijl, Van Doesburg was actively involved in a movement that seemed to represent the opposite: Dada. To understand Van Doesburg, it is necessary to understand these different orientations in his life: De Stijl on the one hand and Dada on the other. From De Stijl, the sublime, to Dada, the ridiculous.

The poet Tristan Tzara, founder of the Dada movement, said, "Dada, like everything else in life, is useless." Dada has cast aside all perceptions of what constitutes tradition and art. Its influence is felt to this day. Tracey Emin's messy bed is a modern Dada example.



Figure 8. Tracey Emin, My Bed, 1998

The Dadaists organized a tour and performance in 10 different countries in 1923. Nelly played the piano, took an active part on the stage in Doesburg. They expressed themselves with very interesting presentations, ignoring the strange looks of the audience.

In the same year (1923), the famous Doesburg house was built. The house, which he planned completely in his own style, is one of the most beautiful examples of modern architecture. In this house, besides white, yellow, red and blue, which are the defining colors of Doesburg's style, were used. Believing that painting could serve as a laboratory for testing architectural ideas, Doesburg created this house with the idea of a flat plane in its plan. Constructed of “iron and glass,” this house contains asymmetrical volumes revolving around central voids, and the plane of primary colors is reflected in the surrounding space as floors, walls and ceilings. (Wawer, 2010)



Figure 9. Theo Van Doesburg, Model Artist House, 1923

Van Doesburg's work was a continuation of the De Stijl group's paintings and was inspired by the Dada movement, constructivism and cubism. Doesburg was a good example for Bauhaus students. The artist's interest in music was not as deeply embedded in his painting as Mondrian, but he could not imagine his work without music. Using her creativity under the influence of music, she performed with Nelly and reflected the rhythm of the music to her paintings and performances. He painted a painting called Street Music in 1915. With the effect of the different movements he is in, dancing human figures in his paintings called Dance and Russian Dance depict dancers caught in the rhythm of the music.



Figure 10. Doesburg, Street Music, 1915

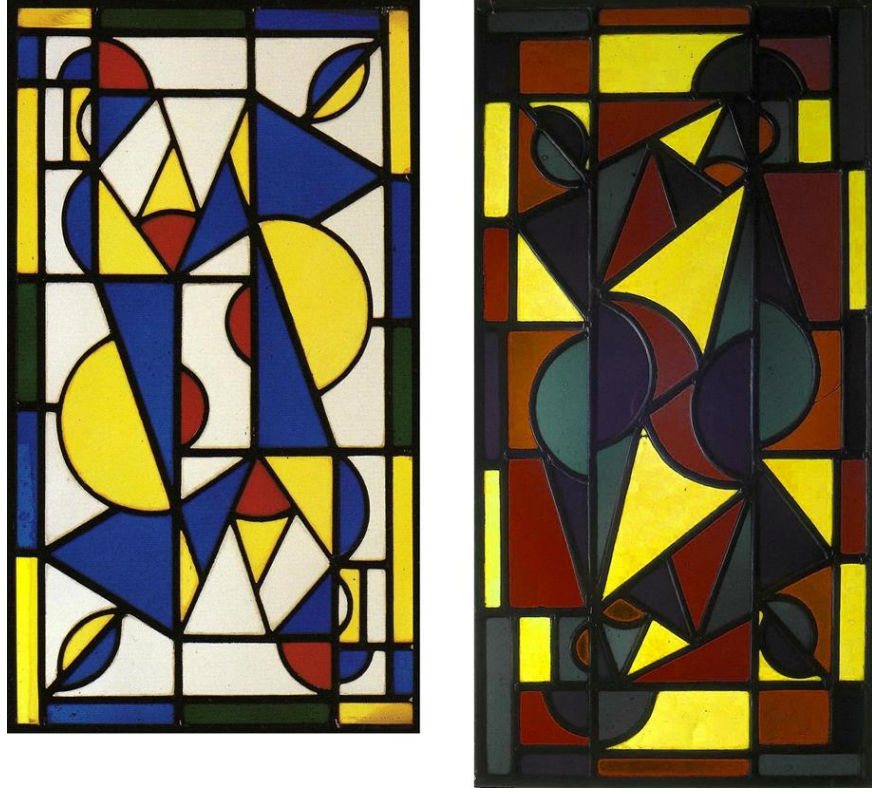


Figure 11. Doesburg, Dance 1-2, 1916- 1917

Theo van Doesburg completed *Rhythm of Russian Dance* in 1918. Using only rectangles and simple colors, Doesburg exemplified the De Stijl style in this work. Rectangles, roughly drawn, but neatly painted. The rectangles appear straight, but upon closer inspection, the lines can be seen to be freely drawn. The four colors used for the rectangles are black, blue, red and yellow. There seems to be no obvious pattern in the color of a rectangle. There is also an inconsistency in the intensity of the colors. This can be seen especially in red and yellow rectangles that look like pink and pale yellow. By reducing colors to their simplest forms, Van Doesburg is able to “express [with pure abstraction and simplicity] the ideal spirituality of harmony and order.” (Troy, 1984)

Rectangles were used vertically and horizontally to depict the Russian dancer. The rectangles form an outline for the shape broken down into the simplest form. As Nancy J. Troy noted, van Doesburg did not allow rectangles to intersect, creating an active interaction between the dancer and her surroundings. (Mendez, 2011) The horizontal rectangles used show different levels of the body such as waist and neck, while the vertical rectangles are used to represent height. It connects the different levels of the person, as vertical rectangles often end adjacent to the horizontal rectangle.

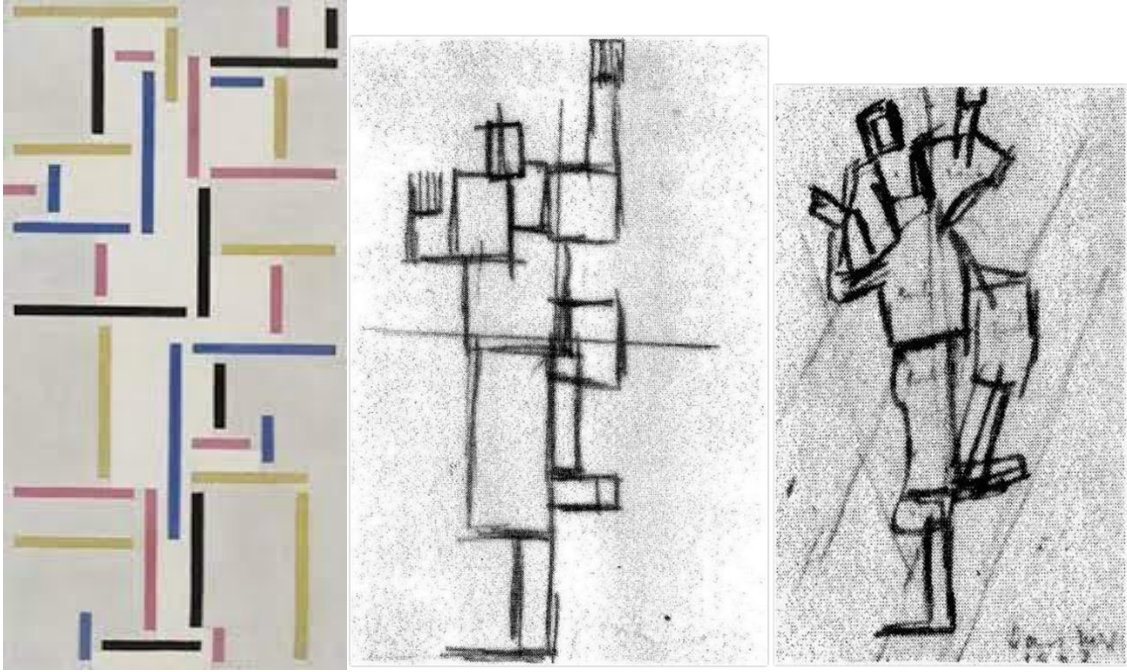


Figure 12. Rhythm of a Russian Dance

Van Doesburg's Dancers presents his understanding of music and rhythm as well as his explorations of Theosophy and spiritualism. The two dancing and flute-playing figures on the diptych represent the Hindu god Krishna. Van Doesburg portrayed the spiritual ideas of his belief in the power of art in this painting.



Figure 13. Dancers, 1916

Doesburg's interest in music was not as deeply embedded in his painting as Mondrian, but he could not imagine his work without music. Using her creativity under the influence of music, she took the stage with Nelly and reflected the rhythm of the music to her paintings and performances. He painted a painting called Street Music in 1915. In his paintings called Dance and Russian Dance, the human figures dancing with the effect of the different movements he is in, depict the dancers caught in the rhythm of the music.

As a result, the De Stijl movement created both the origin of geometric abstraction and the most beautiful examples of abstract painting and architecture, and the pioneers of the movement created very important works with the influence of rhythm and music by using the same colors and shapes without compromising the movement. In this respect, the De Stijl Movement is a very important movement that has contributed to the production of paintings by including music.

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