

POST NO BILLS: Burhan Doğançay's Archive of Urban Protest

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Gallery Introductory Wall Text

In 1962, Turkish diplomat Burhan Doğançay (1929–2013) was walking down 86th Street in upper Manhattan when a brick wall caught his eye. The wall—covered in strips of torn posters, laid over old advertisements and colored paint—struck him as a beautiful abstract painting composed by humans, nature, and time. As a young man, Doğançay had studied painting in Ankara before completing his PhD in economics at the University of Paris and embarking on a successful diplomatic career. His encounter with that New York City wall would lead him to abandon his consular post and dedicate the rest of his life to creating artworks inspired by public walls around the world. Over nearly fifty years he traveled to more than one hundred cities, documenting the ever-changing advertisements, graffiti, and discourses recorded on thousands of walls. The messy cacophony of these urban bulletin boards—produced by chance and absorbing the chaos of everyday life—became a source for mixed media artworks that often incorporate raw materials from the street. The works displayed here, in the first US exhibition to focus on Doğançay's fascination with urban walls, mimic the gritty textures and aging layers of city surfaces. Together, they speak to the vital nature of public walls as sites of protest, debate, and self-expression in American cities today.

Elizabeth Rauh

Irving Stenn, Jr. Curatorial Fellow

[insert funding credit]