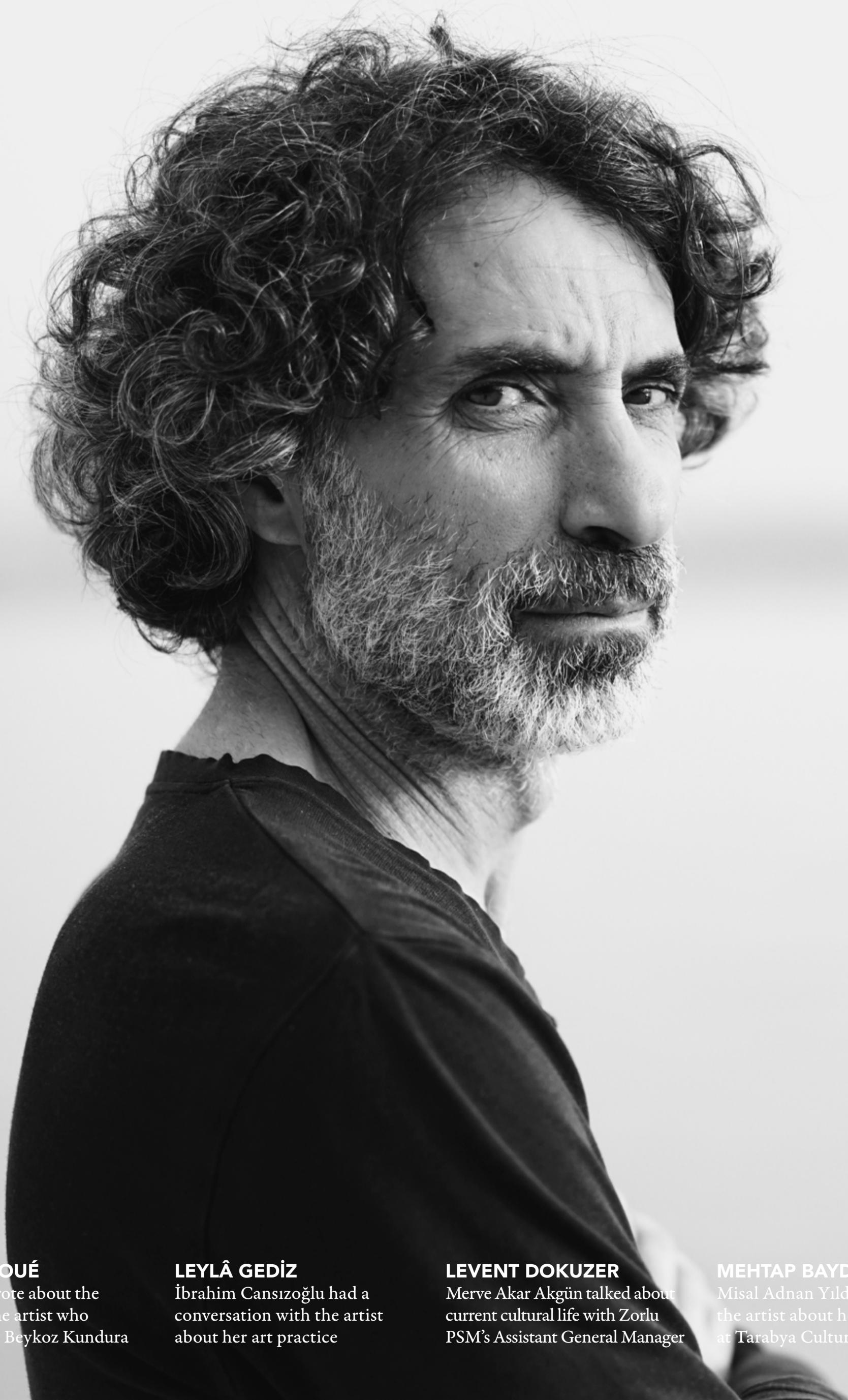


*Art*

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## RABIH MROUÉ

Ayşe Draz wrote about the practice of the artist who performed at Beykoz Kundura

## LEYLÂ GEDİZ

İbrahim Cansızoğlu had a conversation with the artist about her art practice

## LEVENT DOKUZER

Merve Akar Akgün talked about current cultural life with Zorlu PSM's Assistant General Manager

## MEHTAP BAYDU

Misal Adnan Yıldız talked to the artist about her experience at Tarabya Cultural Academy



WHEN WANDERING BECOMES A JOURNEY

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SEEK BEYOND

# QNB First ile ayrıcalıklar dilediğin an senin.

QNB First'ün ayrıcalıklarla dolu dünyasına siz de katılın; indirimli havalimanı VIP transfer, ücretsiz hızlı geçiş ve lounge hizmeti, kişiye özel müşteri ilişkileri yöneticisi gibi pek çok ayrıcalığın keyfini çıkarın.



Ayrıcalıklarla dolu bu dünya ile tanışmak için  
**FIRST** yazıp, **5152** ye gönderin,  
sizi arayalım.



Hello,

The photograph shared last month by the Chrysler Museum in Virginia, USA, as part of their new vision for the permanent modern and contemporary art collections, seemed to me to be a very accurate image that could be used to express the present. On a white wall hangs a colorful painting with geometric forms by Frank Stella\*, one of the masters of minimalism and late pictorial abstraction; in front of it, a 19th century marble sculpture pierces the painting from the perspective of the viewer. The nude female figure has one hand on her breasts, the edge of a long piece of fabric between her crotch... A glimpse of the centuries of transition from realistic and classical representations of art to the abstract, to the free expression of emotions and thoughts. Both artists were inspired by the ancient world, Stella by the circular cities of Asia Minor and Rinehart by a Greek mythological story. More interesting, however, is how both artists use (or don't use) color, says the collection curator Chelsea Pierce. While Stella composes with color, Rinehart absorbed the 19th century standard of pure white marble, ignorant of or dismissive of the fact that ancient Greek sculpture was multicolored. In a room full of works that glorify color as a form, a single white marble stands out to question the notion of whiteness as an ideal, how aesthetics have changed over time, and how artists draw on both the past and the present. I was impressed by this "new" curatorial approach adopted by the Chrysler Museum, as I think it offers keys to reading today's world.

In this summer issue, we bring our readers a selection of individual artists and the figures that make up the art ecosystem, on pages filled with articles that always glorify art at their core, ideally through curious questions in the hope of showing how art is unthinkable apart from life.

The cover of our Turkish edition features the artist Leyla Gediz, who has been working in Lisbon for some time, with a glimpse through the lens of Berk Kir; while the cover of our English edition welcomes the Lebanese artist and theater producer Robih Mroué, whom we had the opportunity to see and meet in Turkey last month through Beykoz Kundura's influential program, with a glimpse through the lens of Larissa Araz.

While İlker Cihan Biner's *Le pli*, Selin Çiftci's *Independent perspective* and Oğuz Karayemiş's *States of matter* columns continue, we invite you to Mehtap Baydu, Tankut Aykut, Doğa Öktem, Yeşim Turanlı, Müge Tümen Çucukçu, Bahar Kızgut, Adnan Yerebakan, Sabiha Kurultulmuş, Gizem Karakas, Ece Bal, Ebru Nalan Sülün, Pınar Öğrenci, Levent Dokuzer, Yusuf Sevinçli, Ufuk Şahin, Frederic Lezmi, Valentina Ravaglia, Didem Yazıcı, Burcu Çimen, Gamze Taşdan and Murat Akgündüz.

Stay tuned for information about your copies of Art Unlimited, which you can acquire this summer not only in Turkey but also in Paris, Marseille, Berlin, London, Amsterdam and the UAE, as well as all the news and surprises we have in store for our readers throughout the summer.

Finally, we recommend all our readers who will be traveling to the South of France to see the Rencontres d'Arles to make a little detour to Marseille and see the exhibition *Bernard Buffet, autrement* at Galerie Alexis Pentcheff...

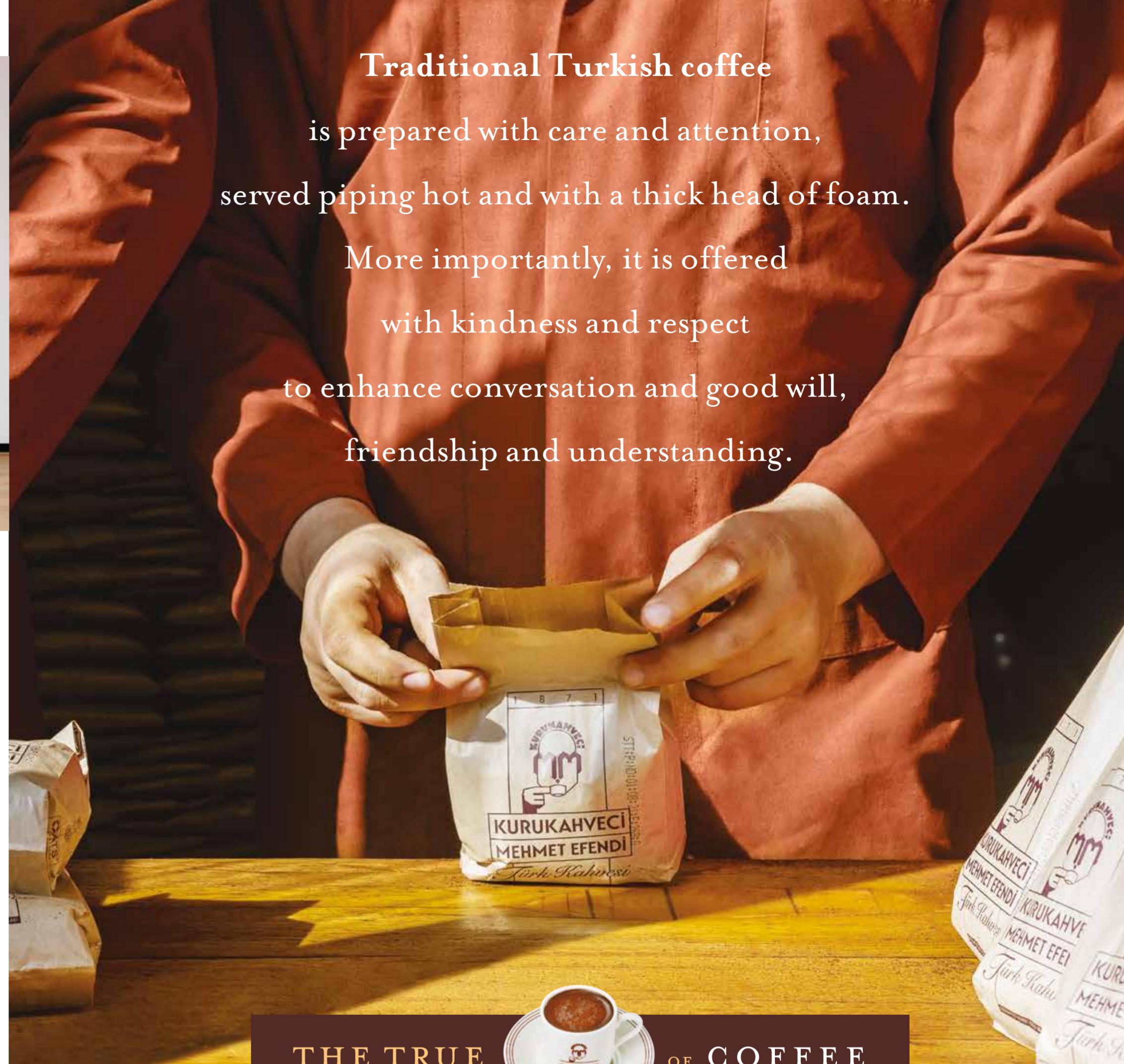
I wish you a beautiful summer and enjoyable reading.

Merve Akar Akgün

\*Let us also take this opportunity to remember the American artist who passed away on May 4, 2024, that is, while we were publishing our previous printed issue (May-June 2024).

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MEHMET EFENDİ

From left: Frank Stella, *Manteneia II*, 1968.  
William Henry Rinehart, *Hero*, modeled  
ca. 1858–59, carved 1874. Courtesy of the  
Chrysler Museum of Art



The cover of the Turkish edition of this issue features Leylâ Gediz photographed by Berk Kir.

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**ART UNLIMITED**  
Year: 18 Issue: 82

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Published 2 times a year.  
Distributed free of charge.  
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exhibition & sale  
July 6 - September 28

## Bernard Buffet, autrement

in collaboration with Nicolas Buffet



# TABLE OF CONTENT

12 **Le Pli:** Ripples in the sky: In the footsteps of Charles Lloyd  
*İlker Cihan Biner*

14 **Independent perspective:** Fiction language of landscape  
*Selin Çiftci*

18 **Artist:** Photography, gender and late history  
*Merve Akar Akgün*

20 **Basel:** Portrait of Palestinian artist Hamza Badran as Theodor Herzl  
*Necmi Sönmez*

22 **XXY:** Hey! Who is Djadja?  
*Yekhan Pınarlıgil*

24 **Interview:** A sensorial landscape  
*İbrahim Cansızoglu*

26 **Interview:** Talismanic objects, magical worlds  
*Misal Adnan Yıldız*

30 **Dossier:** Contemporary art galleries, today  
*Merve Akar Akgün*

38 **Exhibition:** The Aesthetics of Nature: The Possibility of a Botanical Garden at Saint-Joseph High School  
*Ceylan Önalp*

44 **Ayvalık:** The gaze Murat Akagündüz's painting  
*Merve Akar Akgün*

48 **Yanköse:** Contemporary Art Project by Kahve Dünyası  
*Tuna Ortaylı*

50 **Mardin:** The Common Quartet: A dialog between traditional and modern  
*Ceylan Önalp*

54 **Interview:** Curating as a way of thinking  
*Merve Akar Akgün*

58 **Interview:** Change your world  
*Merve Akar Akgün*

66 **Photography:** A spotlight on photobooks from Turkey  
*Frederic Lezmi*

74 **Essay:** How to build a house of art in paradise?  
*Shulamit Bruckstein*

78 **Performing arts:** Rabih means "spring" in Arabic, do I look like "spring" to you?  
*Ayşe Draz*

82 **Focus: Painting:** What makes a painting  
*İbrahim Cansızoglu*

90 **States of the matter:** The endurance of matter  
*Oğuz Karayemiş*

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## LE PLI

İlker Cihan Biner

# Ripples in the sky: *In the footsteps of Charles Lloyd*

*Man, you sure can play the saxophone but that don't have a lot to do with music.*  
From Ornette Coleman to Charles Lloyd 1956

Charles Lloyd was born in Memphis, Tennessee, in 1938. He was introduced to the saxophone at the age of nine. The musicians he was inspired by in those years were Charlie Parker, Billie Holiday, Duke Ellington, Lester Young and Coleman Hawkins. In 1956, he left Memphis for Los Angeles and studied music at the University of Southern California.

The year 1966 was a turning point for Lloyd. He performed at the Monterey Jazz Festival with his band featuring Keith Jarrett on piano. His audience expanded after the event. In his career, he worked with artists such as B. B. King, Eric Dolphy and Ornette Coleman. He became one of the most recorded jazz musicians in the 1960s, 70s and 80s. Charles Lloyd was accomplished not only on saxophone, but also on other instruments such as tárogató and oboe.

Combining the musical perspective he has gained over the years with philosophical views, Lloyd continues to inspire. The artist's album *The Sky Will Still Be There Tomorrow*, released on March 15, 2024 on the Blue Note label, features important musicians such as Jason Moran, Larry Grenadier and Brian Blade. With Lloyd playing a leading role in the album (producer, composer, saxophone and flute performances), the album is about looking up to the sky. This causes the rhythms of the pieces to create different visual fields.

For example, *Monk's Dance*, which begins with Jason Moran's piano performance and gains momentum with Lloyd's saxophone, followed by *The Water is Rising*, expresses different rhythms of life that are invisible, unperceived or unspoken. This field of emotion deepens in works such as *Beyond Darkness, Sky Valley, Spirit of the Forest, When the Sun Comes Up Darkness Is Gone*, again with a mixture of instruments. In addition to the challenge of four different musicians with contradictory and multiple sounds, Lloyd's position as an artist brings to mind philosopher Pierre Hadot's "spiritual exercises".

### Fusion

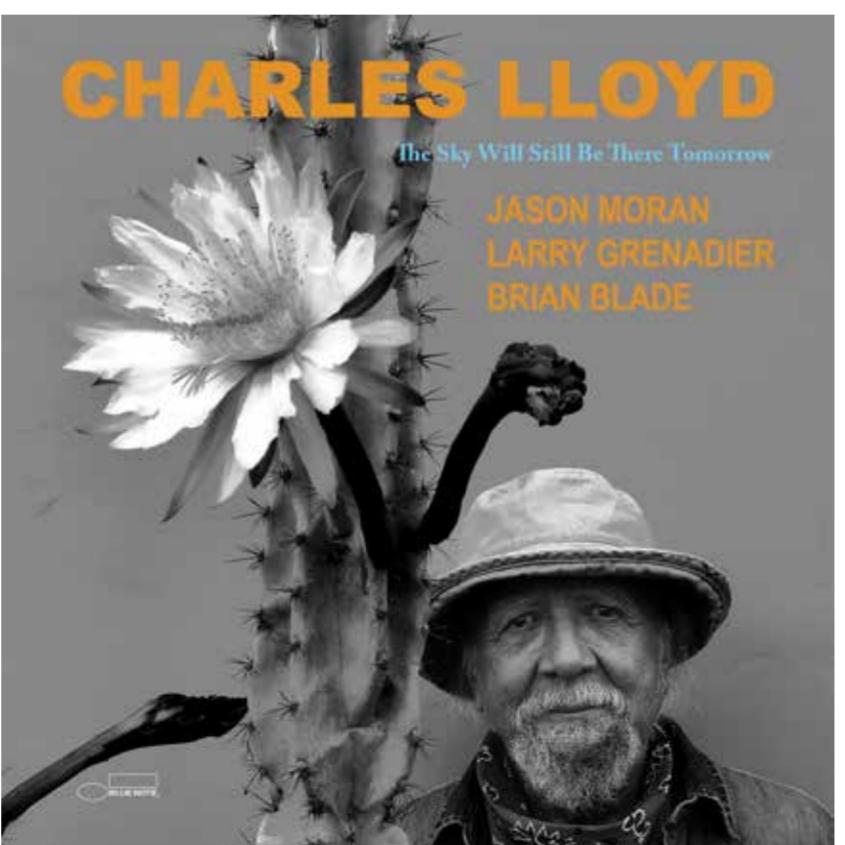
Why philosophy is seen as a life choice and not a system-building has a history that does not fit here. It is this choice that Pierre Hadot refers to as "spiritual exercises." In fact, how to think can be seen as exercises in thought experiences.

Hadot speaks of a sense of fusion with the cosmos, underlining the astonishment at the cosmos, pointing out that looking at stones, animals, the starry sky is a network of unspeakable experiences. This fusion of existence with such deep ties, beyond negation, allows philosophy to become a way of life. This perspective also emerges in Charles Lloyd's relationship with jazz. The musician's discography and performances are the subject of a separate article, but as can be seen/heard in *The Sky Will Still Be There Tomorrow* album, the spirit of the forest, the dance of the monk and the sparkle of the water show that the artist does not limit his existence to social constructs. As a matter of fact, one should take into account the fact that he focuses on non-humans in his creative process, with the instruments he plays and the compositions he makes, trying to envision the vastness of the cosmos. On the other hand, such depth is his political stance.

Preparations for the album began in 2020. On *The Sky Will Still Be There Tomorrow*, the artist writes the following note: "Ever the dreamer – as a young man – I naively thought I could wipe out the ugliness in the world with beauty." He then launches into a political critique, bringing up Black Lives Matter protests and anti-racist struggles: "For a brief time we perceived a change...but it was not lasting and began to crumble. In my wildest dreams I never imagined the world to be in this place. Now."

The album *The Ghost Of Lady Day* is dedicated to Billie Holiday and echoes traces of Holiday's song *Strange Fruit*. *Cape To Cairo* is a reference to Nelson Mandela, again with a political influence.

The artist poses with a strange cactus in bloom on the album cover. Of course this image is meaningful. Because it reveals her leap, her pursuit of enlightenment by risking tension or chaos in any case. 



Charles Lloyd, *The Sky Will Still Be There Tomorrow*, Blue Note

ELIE SAAB x IPEKYOL





## INDEPENDENT PERSPECTIVE

Selin Çiftci

# Fiction language of landscape

«Time and place could have existed without us, not seeing us, not hearing us, leaving no trace.»

As a form of thought, as an experience of existing and taking root in the earth, "place" is tired of all political, social, and economic impositions that render it lifeless. Pulled away from the grip of time and place, it strives to survive in the folds of a human brain, in the sparkle of a thought, in the coolness of a shadow. Looking back at those displaced ones, it seems they too are in search of a new form to take root, tracing the footsteps of other thoughts that could free "place" from time and space.

To some, "place" is grasped through experience and movement, while to others, it takes the form of language, morphing infinitely and constantly recreating itself. Therefore, when asked "Who is the most important person you have met?" Etel Adnan answers, "A mountain." For Etel, "place" is Mount Tamalpais, seen daily from her window, swelling at three in the afternoon with colors and sharp shadows, growing and becoming fuller, or as we know it, transforming in the delicately painted daily sunsets. The translation of this landscape onto the canvas captures a longing for Lebanon's glittering sun to the colors of its days. At the same time, it carries the responsibility of, in a sense, belonging to another country's earth, and it cradles Etel while opening a place for her.

In the traditional language of Chinese landscape painting, *shanshui*, there are traces of a similar "placement". Since the 5th century, the extensive preparation process for painting in Chinese culture has involved delicate materials such as ink stones, rice paper, and silk fabrics. Due to this long process, a Chinese painter can only bring a landscape to life in their imagination under suitable conditions. In this sense, the Chinese painters, in contrast to Monet who meticulously captured every state of the water lilies in his garden, can find "place" for the landscape only in their dreams. *The Shan Shui Reboot* exhibition at the China Institute Gallery reexamines this traditional language amidst changing world landscapes. In this exhibition where every artist interprets the landscape according to their own placement practices, Lam Tung Pang explores the new dream/fiction language of "place" with *The Dictionary of Landscape*. Through his *Moon-mounted* work, he places the Moon at the center of his search for "place" between his native Hong Kong and adopted Canada. He places The Moon into the realm of thought by using its independent geographical position, its constant presence wherever he goes.

What sets "place" apart from space and frees it from time is precisely this. It is the state where a place approaches a thought, an idea, a feeling, a dream. A liberated place generates its own knowledge: The scent you encounter when stepping into your grandmother's house; the evening breeze in the garden on a summer night; the relief that comes with hearing the ferry whistle; the red specks and arabesque prints on a white tea saucer... Not every "place" is a space, and not every space can be a "place." When space loses the experience and movement it once provided, it ceases to be a "place." "Non-place" becomes soulless, devoid of meaning, experience, and practicality.

As a continuation of generations deceived by urbanization's glorification of apartment beautifications, we are indeed familiar with the concept of "non-place." I believe it's because we live in a conservative-minded society that displacement still maintains its popularity today. Displacement manifests itself sometimes as a shopping mall resembling a contextless, fusty, stale cream cake that has replaced a deliberately demolished cinema, the latter a place that could generate its own knowledge, or as office towers replacing a city stadium, doomed to lose their function in the new world order. "Non-place" devoid of abilities struggles ineptly to generate the knowledge of place.

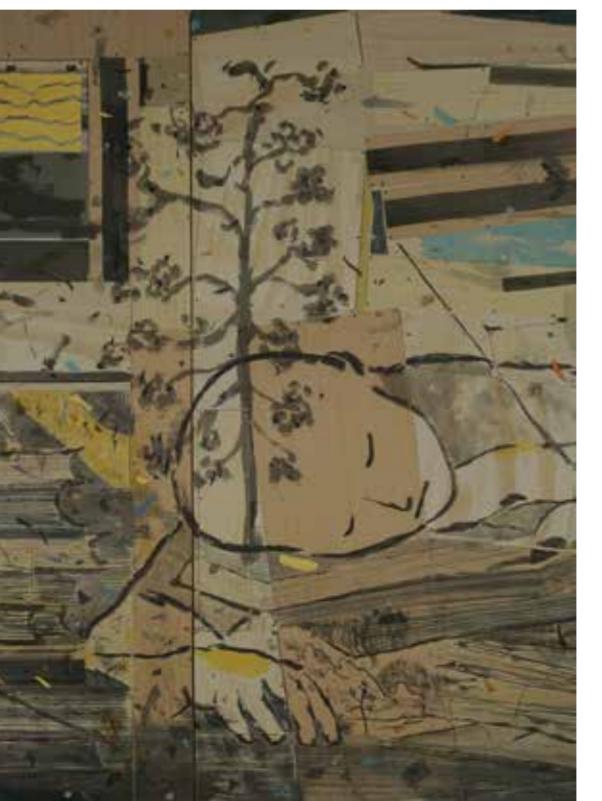
Without the perspective of locals, new ferries that have started to serve the Bosphorus, coastal landfill areas with their repetitive, memorized landscapes (from trash bins to tree gaps), or Kabatas' new pier project, proceeding with a non-transparent, uncommu-

native process without pioneering any major features of its region such as transportation, city skyline, or interaction with water, lack the "place" and the capabilities to produce its knowledge.

The *faux* leather seats of the ferry cling to my legs. It's too hot to sit outside or even order tea. In front of me, the silhouette of Istanbul. If I return home and carefully unpack and prepare my delicate materials, could I, even in my dreams, place myself into this landscape? In this extended landscape could I find a "place" for myself, independent of time and space, like Etel Adnan's mountain or Lam Tung Pang's moon? 



Etel Adnan, From Journey to Mount Tamalpais, Illustration, 1986



Lam Tung Pang,  
The Dictionary of  
Landscape (West-  
coast Loop), Detail,  
2024, Kao/Williams  
Family collection,  
Courtesy of China  
Institute Gallery

# Havaya Dair

2050+

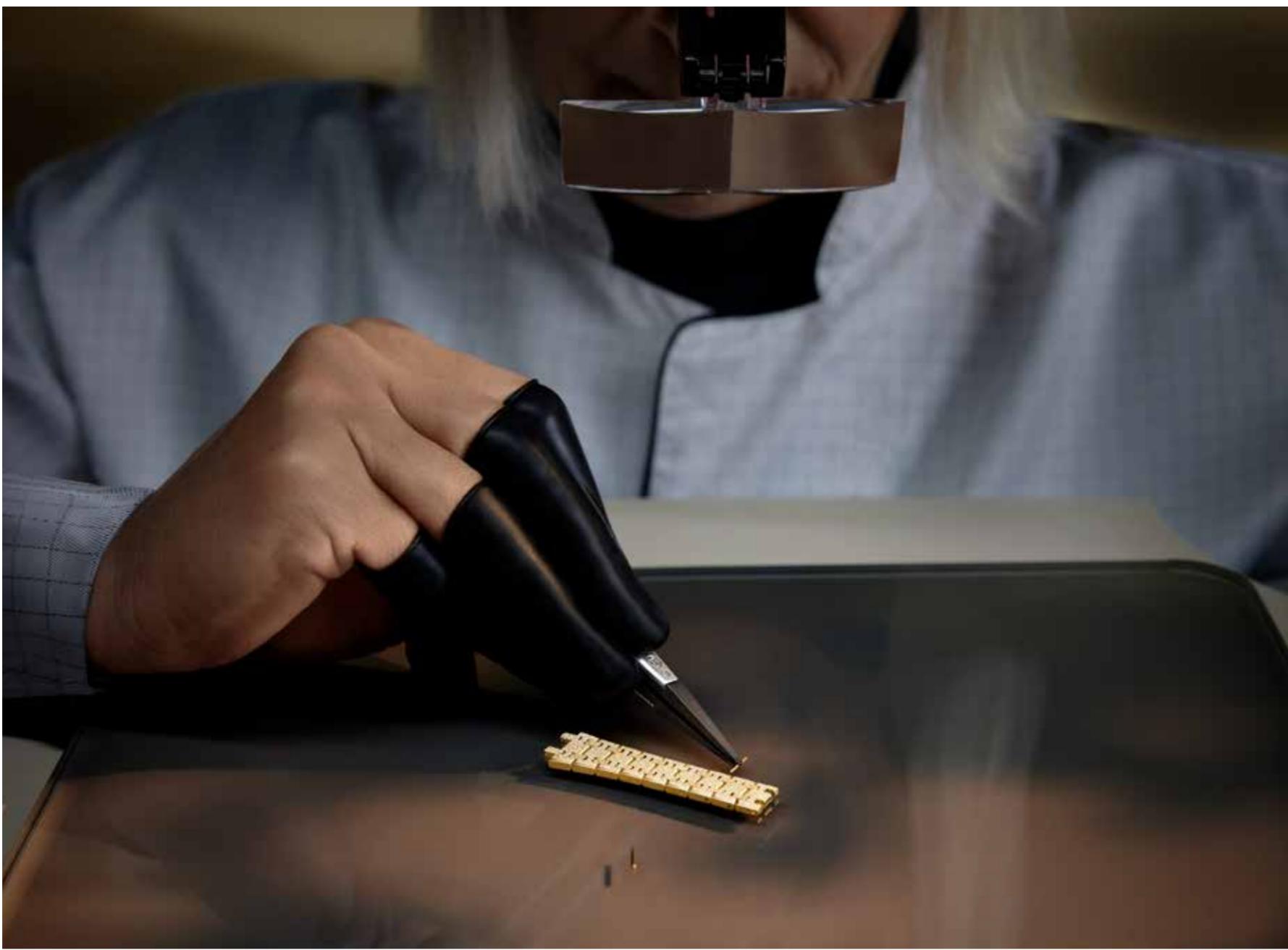


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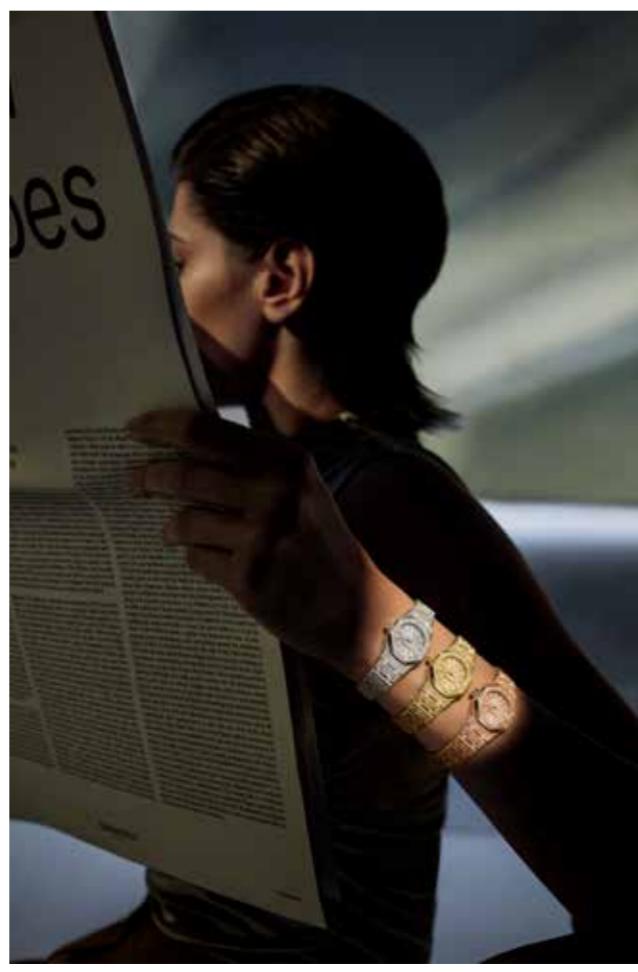
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# The glowing come back of the Mini Royal Oak



**Audemars Piguet introduced the new miniature Royal Oak quartz model, which is only 23 mm in diameter with 18 carat yellow, white or rose gold options. These mini monochrome watches combine the strong aesthetic codes of the original Royal Oak, designed by Gérald Genta in 1972, with the shine of frosted gold, creating a striking visual effect**



Inspired by its manufacturer's rich jewelry and miniature watch history, this trio of small watches offers a contemporary interpretation of the 20 mm Mini Royal Oak, introduced in 1997. By rethinking the proportions, architecture, design and performance of the smallest Royal Oak ever made, the New Mini Oak collection blurs the lines between jewelry and watchmaking.

Inspired by an ancient Florentine jewelry technique, frosted gold plating is revisited by jewelry designer Carolina Bucci and adapted by Audemars Piguet artisans to adorn the Manufacture's watches in 2016. Using a diamond-tipped tool, tiny indentations are created on the gold surface, creating a sparkling effect similar to precious stones. The visual impact of this decoration underlines Royal Oak's affinity with the jewelry world.

The Royal Oak Mini watch trio is powered by the Quartz movement Caliber 2730, one of the best in its class among watches of this size. With a battery life of over seven years, this mechanism offers ideal use for a contemporary lifestyle. 



**SOK SOK**  
PERA

**ERNEST'S BAR  
ISTANBUL**  
by FATIH AKERDEM

# Photography, gender and late history

We take a closer look at the practice of artist Gamze Taşdan, who investigates the relationship between gender and popular culture in her works



(Above) Gamze Taşdan, Mothers and Sons 2022, Acrylic on paper, 25 x 35 cm  
(Below) Gamze Taşdan, Mandolin Lesson, 2022, Acrylic on paper, 25 x 35 cm

I think you occupy a unique space in the art scene here with your practice through which you examine the relationship between gender and popular culture. The representations of women's processes of gaining visibility in the public space in your paintings suggest important sociological implications in the context of gender roles and the ideology of modernization in Türkiye. Can you tell us about your production processes? What feeds your practice and how do your works come into being?

My production process involves a long period of research, document collection, reading and finally the output. But first of all, I have to get excited. Let me explain it this way, when I see a century-old photograph featuring the subjects I am interested in, I get really stirred up and at that very moment I start dreaming about a new work. If I can't visualize the finished work in my mind, I may give it up. This is the way many of the works I have produced so far have come out. I can say that this process of visualization also strengthens my bond with the people in the photographs (usually young girls, children and women). I think this internalization is reflected in the paintings and thus reciprocally in the viewer. Numerous things feed my imagination, especially old photographs, recent history, popular culture and Yeşilçam movies, as I mentioned earlier...

Your unique style has been described as sensitive, colorful and joyful, but also thought-provoking. In my opinion, your paintings have both an aesthetic appeal and encourage the viewer for deeper reflections. What is the main message you want to convey through your art about gender equality and what are your expectations about the perception of viewers?

I have always emphasized gender in my work, but since I have been working on the early republican period in Türkiye, I have started to pay more attention to this issue. Since gender inequality is experienced in every field from everyday to professional life, from art to politics, I think it is difficult to ignore this phenomenon as a woman artist. In my recent works, I wanted to explain and show the crucial role girls and young girls had played in the reconstruction of a nation, and the way they had influ-

ence not only on that period but also on the future generations. I am still pursuing these works. Emphasizing the importance of the equal opportunities offered by the Republic of Turkey to the whole society in the field of education for girls is a fact that should be remembered by the audience.

Do you think your art plays a role in promoting social change? Are there any artists who have deeply inspired you in this sense?

The viewer who looks at my works actually encounters a portrait of Türkiye; they see a country in transition, the construction of a new nation, and the reflections of this change on the understanding of gender... Therefore, I can say that my works are about raising consciousness about history. I want to revive and show images, traditions and rituals that are part of our collective memory, to remind the viewer of values that are consciously or unconsciously being erased. I don't know if this is a social duty, but I enjoy doing it. When I observe the viewers I notice this: Finding traces of their own past, from black school gowns to white lace collars, from national holiday ceremonies to group photographs taken in institutes allows them to connect with my works in a different way. In this context, Nur Koçak's family paintings, in which she reflects the *mise-en-scène* in studio photographs that allow us to look back the past through family albums, and Selma Gürbüz's motif vocabulary and understanding of composition attract my attention.

Between December 20 and February 4, 2023 at Bozlu Art Project Mongeri Building, you investigated the fictional dimensions of all these historical data based on documentary photographs. Do you have a new exhibition on your agenda and what are your plans for the upcoming period?

In July, I will take part in the opening exhibition curated by Necmi Sönmez at Arkas Sanat Alaçatı, a new cultural center. I will participate with Bozlu Art Project in the Contemporary Istanbul fair that will take place between October 22-27. I am also working on an exhibition project to be held at Metrohan in the fall. 

Etiler  
KENT

VADI · KORU · YAMAÇ · CADDE · REZİDANS

YAŞAMIN HER ÇİZGİSİNDE KENT VAR

Kiptaş

mesa 1969

ASL



# If you Force it, it is no Dream

## Portrait of Palestinian artist Hamza Badran as Theodor Herzl

Text: Necmi Sönmez

I first saw the work of Palestinian artist Hamza Badran at documenta fifteen in the collective A stick in the Forest by the Side of the Road founded by Jimmie Durham. The works, which were shown in a space in Kassel Hauptbahnhof, bore the traces of Durham's activist identity and brought together young artists from disenfranchised peoples from different geographies. I spent most of my time in this small space during the mixed documenta fifteen events, where I encountered works from different corners of the world with a political, activist character, often shouting but not having the opportunity to make themselves heard in the art scene.

Then, at a time when the political tension in Palestine was setting the world agenda, I came across Hamza's installation *If you Force it, it is no Dream* at the booth of Livorno-based gallery Gian Marco Casini at the Liste Art Fair Basel. This presentation, consisting of three works in total, was remarkable for its calmness at first glance:

Basel's Pride, 2024, bronze, wood frame, 40x30x4 cm, 3 Edition + 1 AP  
 Herzl's Bed, 2024, single channel video, 7' 9", 3 Edition + 2 AP  
 If you Force it, it is no Dream, 2024, 1000 posters, 100x70 cm, single edition

The work consisted of different layers, as it dealt with the First Zionist Congress, organized by Theodor Herzl in Basel in 1897, from a different, personal point of view, and had an ironic language referring to current political developments. When these layers were put under a magnifying glass, they underlined Hamza's stance and starting points in his creative process, as well as how he developed an ironic, head-like view of himself and his surroundings, even in the face of political developments that led to a dead end. Frankly speaking, among the works dealing with more or less the same themes, Hamza's strange irony interested me. Because he had chosen to develop a questioning, digging, probing attitude rather than a whining, nagging attitude like many of other Palestinian or Middle Eastern artists.

The text he wrote himself to describe this work, which was shown for the first time, reveals that he developed a question based on a bronze commemorative plaque he first encountered in Basel -where he settled in 2018- at the Stadtcasino Basel, where the city's tourism office is located: *I have struggled to understand why Zionism is a topic for celebration in Switzerland.*<sup>1</sup>

This bronze commemorative plaque was installed by the municipality of this city, notorious for money laundering, to commemorate the First Zionist Congress that Theodor Herzl had organized with a group of European Jewish activists in 1897. This initiative, which laid the foundations for the existence of the present state of Israel, was of course agreed to be authorised or tolerated by the Yıldız Palace in return for a large bribe. The sale of land to European Jews was one of the Ottoman Sultan's most hypocritical diplomatic acts. Just as Byzantine diplomacy had managed to preserve the honor and existence of the small city-state of Constantinople for two centuries, Ottoman diplomacy had managed to sustain the Empire, the sick man of Europe, for three centuries. At a time when the Ottoman-Greek War was on the stage, the Zionist European Jews' purchase of the land -they would later define as a country- was not an act that could have happened without the knowledge of Abdulhamid II. I think it is not a coincidence that no comprehensive study has been conducted to date on why and under what realities the Yıldız Palace turned a blind eye to this. Anyway, let us leave this framework of historical reality aside and return to Hamza's study.

In 1901, while Theodor Herzl was formulating his Zionist ideas at regularly organized congresses, he stayed at the Hotel Les Trois Rois on the banks of the Rhine. Turning this historic moment into a public relations event in a clearly not innocent attempt, the hotel created the River Room Herzl room in his name. Hamza stayed one night in the River Room Herzl in this luxury hotel within walking distance of the Basel Stadtcasino as part of his project. «The River Room Herzl impresses with the unique charm of its furnishings. This simple and charming room (approx. 22 m<sup>2</sup>) with a view of the Rhine has provided inspiration and tranquility to this day.» In search of *Charm, Inspiration and Peace*, the Palestinian artist stays in this room for one night at a cost of 735 Swiss Francs. She enjoys the bathroom, the bed and the balcony overlooking the Rhine. Based on the photograph she took on this balcony, which shows the chocolate face of Basel, he developed a wall relief like Theodor Herzl's bronze commemorative plaque. The artist, who was separated from his home, hearth and family as a result of Zionism, does not romanticize the union between himself and Herzl. The balcony of the Herzl Room overlooking the Rhine River is for him the land of Palestine that the Zionists want to destroy. The tourist photograph showing him looking at the river from this balcony is the starting point for his bronze plaque. In associating himself with Theodor Herzl, this young artist is engaged in a process (*procédés*) similar to Kafka's *Der Prozess*. Félix Guattari, in his fascinating essay on Kafka, speaks of «la capitulation définitive» and emphasizes that this is no ordinary death. Hamza stages himself as Theodor Herzl, referring to the hypocrisy of Zionism, the death warrant for the Palestinian people, and the hypocrisy of cursed Europe, the beginning of the whole colonial scourge. The poster, printed in 1000 copies, is based on two photographs. One shows Herzl on the balcony of his hotel in 1901, the other shows the artist posing in the same spot in 2024. When we think about the changing roles and political systems from 1901 to 2024 and the European racism that extends to the present day, it makes us think again about the concept of narration rhizome that Hamza has developed with a truly Kafkaesque fiction.

When we look at Hamza's decidedly political, yet ironic work from the perspective of Kafka, especially through the books *Der Prozess* and *The Die Verwandlung*, we realize how radical a process of questioning he has developed. The Kafka books, which have only been

translated into our language since the 1960's with the efforts of a handful of determined translators, allow us to analyze Hamza's work from a different perspective. While the practices developed by contemporary artists who approach issues such as identity, belonging and social class often resemble a black-and-white woodblock print, Hamza develops his own discourse by focusing on intermediate tones, grays and whites. His attitude is not passive but active, he does not cry or whine, on the contrary he laughs, he puts himself in the place of Herzl, he questions the situation, the current situation, with a Kafkaesque fluidity, rather than categories such as bad guy/good guy in class change.

The current state of the world we face every morning, the situation in Palestine will keep us busy for a very long time. Of course, it is impossible to understand the pain where the fire falls, but by listening to the irony of a Palestinian artist, it is possible to comprehend this war, which is undoubtedly the greatest political catastrophe of the new century, and the extent of this massacre that we are watching with our hands tied. It is no coincidence that Kafka is the author who guides us. There is a very close relationship between the transformation of Gregor Samsa and Hamza Badran's transformation into Theodor Herzl.



Hamza Badran, The Rhine Portrait 2024, Photographic printing on paper, 29,7x21 cm, ed. of 3 + 2AP

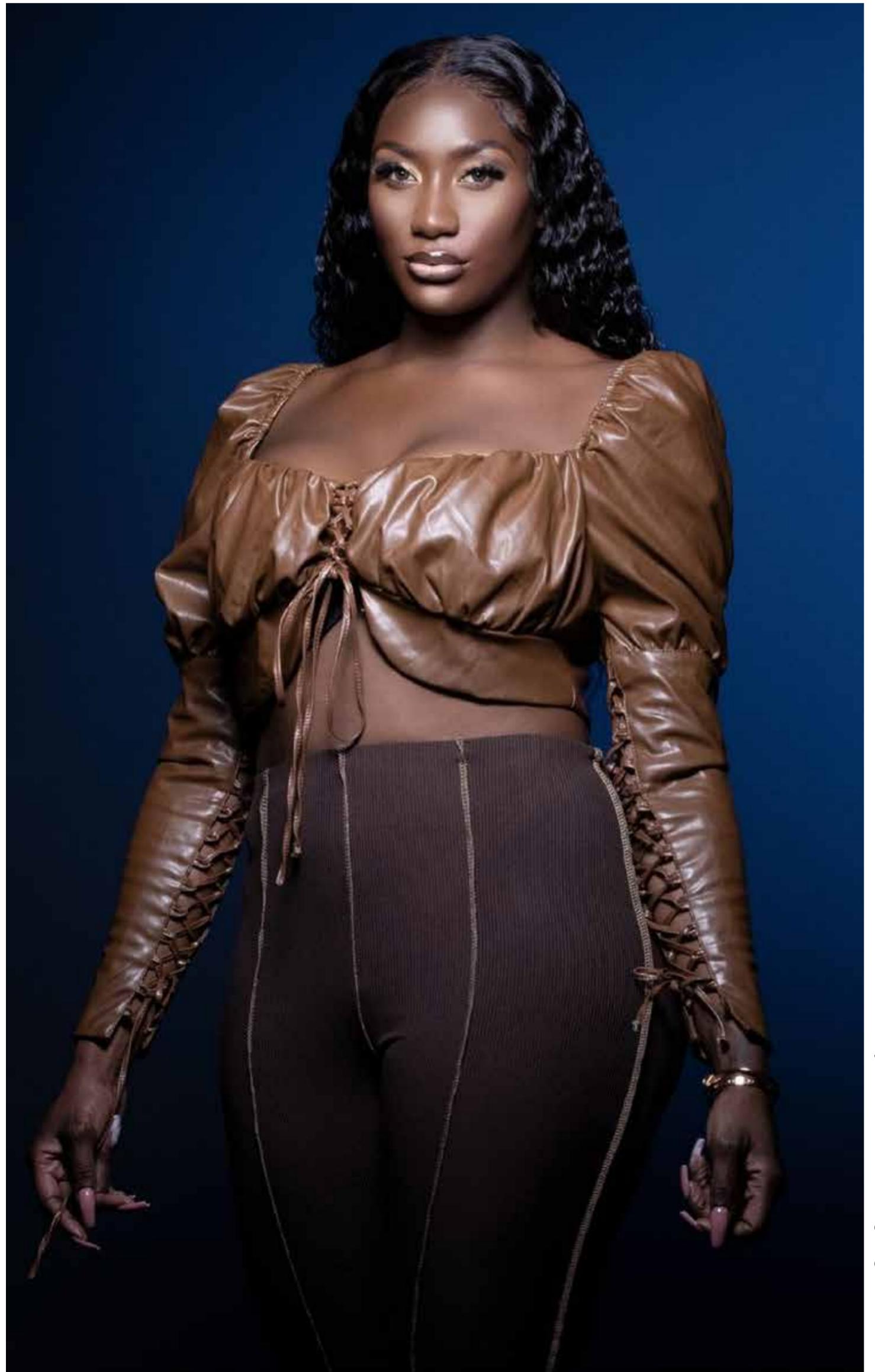


## PURE SOLID SILVER Collection



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# Hey! Who is *Djadja*?



Aya Nakamura, Photo: Joël Saget, Agence France-Presse

As of the summer 2020 issue, both the printed pages of Art Unlimited and the digital pages of unlimiteddrag.com have become a home for “the strong-as-steel attitudes of bodies that do not fit into representations, do not remain under control, use art as a possibility, do not stand still, love laughter, are not afraid of themselves, do not stick to borders, dance, especially curl, make love with feather-lightness, do not look like anyone else, are a little monster, sometimes hybrid, not-one”. XXY, which continues under the direction of Yekhan Pınarlıgil, is showing Aya Nakamura’s body in its last episode

Author: Yekhan Pınarlıgil

7 milyon kullanıcıya  
katılın. Hızlı, kolay  
ve güvenli işlem  
deneyimini yaşayın.

Yarının  
dünyası  
bu.  
**PARiBU**



# A sensorial landscape

Interview: İbrahim Cansızoğlu

Photo: Berk Kır

**Tate Modern's traveling exhibition *The Dynamic Eye: Beyond Op and Kinetic Art* was at Artİstanbul Feshane between 23 January and 19 May 2024. We talked to the curator of the exhibition, Valentina Ravaglia, about the place of optical and kinetic art in art history, the selection of the exhibition and the experience it creates on the viewer**

Vanetina Ravaglia, Photo: Berk Kır

***The Dynamic Eye* makes a valuable contribution to the historical study of exhibitions by revisiting *Le Mouvement* that took place at Galerie Denise René in 1955. This landmark show was critically important in the development of kinetic arts. How did you decide to include this show within the *Dynamic Eye* exhibition and how did you reframe it to fit into your way of presentation?**

The exhibition is structured around several foundational moments and places that marked key developments or turning points in the development of what has come to be known as op and kinetic art, and *Le Mouvement* was a foundational moment in many ways. It was also a good historical exhibition to introduce a certain amount of variety in the types of works we decided to include in the exhibition: Not limited to a certain formal grammar of geometric abstraction, but also the playfulness of Tinguely's sculptures and of the animation works that are featured later in the exhibition.

**Your research interests include the relationship between contemporary art and new materialism. Does *The Dynamic Eye* intersect with your academic research and if so, how?**

The intersection is not overt. I would like to acknowledge that the exhibition was initially devised by former Tate colleague Clara Kim; I inherited the project from her and had a chance to put my own spin to it.

One of the tenets of New Materialism is transdisciplinarity, the interconnectedness and interdependence of different modes of knowledge production. *The Dynamic Eye* demonstrates how artists were deeply influenced by combinations and intersections of science, mathematics, cosmology, engineering, phenomenology, cybernetics, Gestalt theory, and more. My next project, the exhibition *Electric Dreams* opening at Tate Modern this November, is in essence an evolution of this idea and includes many of the same artists. It is posited as a wider look at the intersection of art and technology, and expands on the connection between kinetic and "programmed" art and the dawn of digital art.

**The exhibition presents an exciting early abstract film program including works by Oscar Fischinger, Len Lye, and Norman McLaren. How did you compose this program? How does it connect with the rest of the exhibition considering the physical separation in the venue?**

This section was inspired by the film program that accompanied the exhibition *Le Mouvement*. At the time of designing the exhibition we found that the spatial solution that made the most sense was to create a dedicated projection room, to give the films an appropriately dark environment to be enjoyed in all their animated glory.

**The exhibition presents a rather comprehensive view of Iranian optic art, featuring works by Monir Shahroudy Farmanfarmaian, Mohammed Melehi, and Behjat Sadr. I wonder whether including optic art examples from Turkey was brought into question while designing the show in Feshane. For example, a rather influential figure in the Turkey art scene, Adnan Çoker produced numerous works that can be considered in the context of the international history of optic art. How did you decide on the local focus points within this global framework of the exhibition?**

The selection is based on works and artists that are in Tate's collection, and unfortunately, we did not have any suitable works by Turkish artists that we would be able to include. We also did not know that the exhibition would travel to Istanbul when we first formulated it as a travelling selection.

Conversely, we wanted to give prominence to works by Iranian and Moroccan artists whose interest in geometric abstraction and perceptual effects intersects with the opto-kinetic trends, partly because of their travels and exchanges and partly because of the place geometry already held in their visual culture. They bring to the exhibition a very interesting transcultural aspect of this kind of works that is seldom discussed, when the canonical narratives around op and kinetic art have tended to be very Eurocentric. In general, the exhibition seeks to highlight how widespread those movements truly were, and to present it as a network spanning almost every continent and touching on much more than just surface visual effects and optical properties.

***The Dynamic Eye: Beyond Op and Kinetic Art* exhibition is indeed a touring one and it was presented at the Atkinson Museum in Porto, Portugal, as well as the Pudong Art Museum in Shanghai, China before it came to Feshane, Istanbul. Did you modify the content or the layout of the exhibition at these different locations? How would you compare the reactions of the audience towards this exhibition in different cultural contexts?**

The content was near identical in each tour venue, but each exhibition was laid out in rather different ways. This is a necessity motivated by different architectural features of the participating venues, but it ended up reshaping the narrative and sequence of the works in significant ways. Some of the works shifted between sections; this flexibility was greatly helped by the fact that many artists showed in different contexts, and so there is quite a lot of overlap between different sections. The different ambiance of the venues also played a major role. In Porto, the venue was a historical manor house, so each room had much more of a domestic scale and ambiance, and that completely changes the experience of encountering these works, designing their hang and their relationships in space, too. I loved the contrast between the period home and these high modernist formal experiments. But these works also look incredible at Feshane, and it was a lot of fun to adapt the exhibition for this space. Its open-plan nature and the grid of columns lends itself to the modular nature of many of the works as well, something that comes across by looking at the floorplan more than when experiencing the exhibition in the space itself.

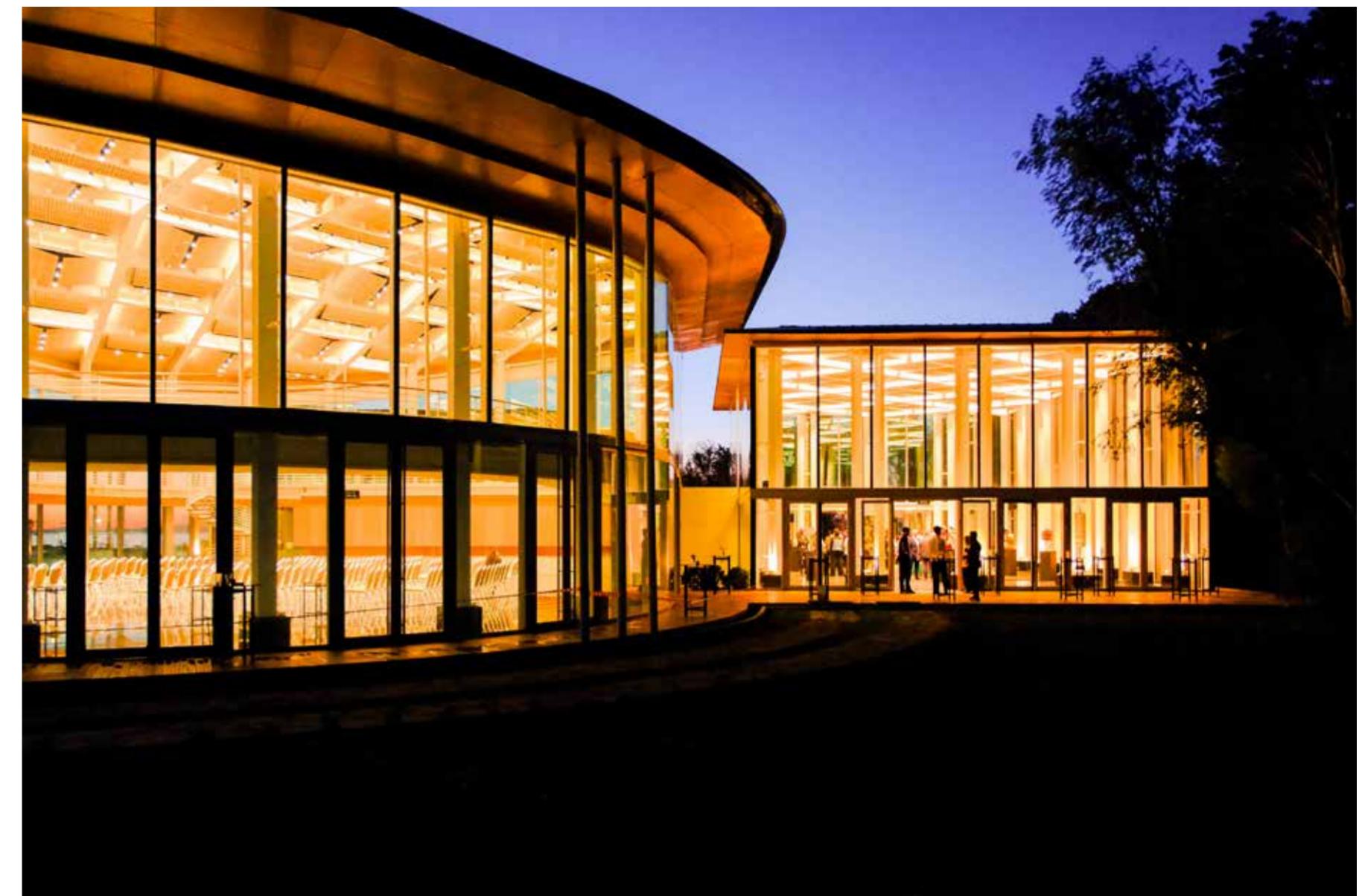
I have to say I wasn't able to spend enough time observing visitors' reactions in each venue, so I can't quite say how the reactions differed. I would guess that the difference in reactions is based in the experience of each individual. Different generations and demographics can react very differently to an exhibition like this even in the same geographical location. Depending on the associations and memories the works trigger, the wonder they evoke can have quite distinct flavours.

**The soundscape of the exhibition features hints of audible kinetic and electromagnetic energy. This sonic environment was mainly created by two works: *Electro-Magnetic Music* (1966) by Takis, and *Débricolage* (1970) by Jean Tinguely. Were these artworks intentionally chosen to create the sonic atmosphere I'm talking about?**

Yes, and it was important to us to include works with a strong sonic component to offset the strong ocular focus of most of the other works. Op art itself is more than just "optical". Consider the importance of the viewer's spatial awareness, which is a fully-fledged sense, there are not only five of them! Not to mention the fact that some of these works required their direct interaction and have tactile aspects that should not be underestimated. Overall, the exhibition hopes to offer a varied sensorial landscape to its visitors, and sometimes a kind of synesthetic experience.

**In the exhibition some works appear to be problematic considering conservation issues like an installation by Gego (Gertrud Goldschmidt). What would you like to say about the maintenance issues of the kinetic artworks?**

First, many of these artists did not make their motorised works thinking about whether they would still be working fifty years later. Often, they were put together using found materials and literal rubber bands. In the case of Tinguely or Takis, this aspect is very overt; they were tinkerers and recyclers and wanted these aspects to come across clearly in their assemblages. But even the works designed to look high-tech require a lot of maintenance and are too fragile to be left running continuously for the full duration of the exhibition. That is why many works are on timers. They need to rest, or their mechanical components will overheat and wear out beyond repair. Another issue is that of ensuring the preservation of works meant to be interactive. It is a pity that Lygia Clark's *bichos* can no longer be manipulated, but they would not last long if we let everyone handle them. In some cases, a solution is to have replicas made that can be manipulated, but this is a very complicated process that requires lots of thought, consultation, and often money to be executed in the right way. So, sadly, it's not always a viable option. And the physical barriers we have to use to protect our artworks are always a bit of a compromise, not least because they have to be visible enough to be effective, but not so present that they affect the experience of the work. It's a fine balance and a huge part of the job of a curator. 



**TARIRIA**  
KÜLTÜR ▪ SANAT ▪ GASTRONOMİ

# Talismanic objects, magical worlds

**Mehtap Baydu, a former artist-in-residence at Tarabya Cultural Academy, realized a performance and installation as part of the Summer Festival organized by the academy. We talked to the artist about the collective performance *Şifa* where she reawakened the Colchis serpent**

Interview: Misal Adnan Yıldız

Mehtap Baydu, Photo: Rana Kuseyri



You spent almost all of June in Istanbul. What did you do during this period?

When Lena Alpozan, the Art Director of Tarabya Cultural Academy, invited me to the Summer Festival in January, I came to Istanbul at the end of May to make my work, based on the story of the Golden Fleece, which I was interested in during my time at the academy, and I stayed for about four weeks to produce the work. This period was also a productive time for me to follow the contemporary art scene in Istanbul.

Verbal history, mythology, legends, proverbs, idioms, heritage and collective memory play an important role in your research and practice. Your project *Şifa* (2024) [healing] which is part of Tarabya Cultural Academy event program and has made a lot of noise, references the legend of the argonauts. After the peacock and the shahmeran, this time you bring us the Colchis serpent. How would you describe this work in simple terms, based on the foundations of your practice?

Yes, it is a mythological creature, again. A giant snake and the Golden Fleece, which symbolizes wealth, fertility and for which struggles are fought. These were the reproduced objects of the performance and installation I realized on the campus of the Tarabya Cultural Academy, which includes a large grove.

The Peacock and Shahmeran, which have influenced my imagination since childhood, are mythological figures that date back to ancient times and visualize the past not only as an oral part of it. Revisiting these talismanic objects of established beliefs that I encountered at an early age was like returning to a magical world and reuniting with old friends.

I learned that the name of this beautiful district of Istanbul, where I was a guest of the Tarabya Cultural Academy Residency Program, was Pharmacia or Phamakias, meaning poison, during the Byzantine period. The name of the area is based on the legend of the Argonauts, the Golden Fleece and Medea. The dramatic legend that brought different peoples together and the allure of the figure of Medea drew me back to this area.

It is said that Jason, who left his homeland with the Argonauts in search of the Golden Fleece, found it here. The people of Colchis, as today's Georgians and Laz are called in ancient narratives, hid the source of wealth and happiness, the talismanic Golden Fleece, here in the Tarabya Forest. The ram's hide, hung on the branch of a high tree, is guarded by the giant Colchis serpent. Jason steals the fleece with the help of Medea, the noble daughter of his people, who puts the giant snake to sleep with a poison. But no one wants to live in a place named after this poison. Patriarch Attikos of Constantinople is disturbed by the fact that this small settlement where he holds his meetings is associated with the poison left over from Medea and the legend of the argonauts, and he changes the name of this place to *Therapia*. However, Medea, who could never maintain her own happiness, prepared not only poisons but also elixirs of health and youth.

With this installation and performance, which I call *Therapie*, instead of the Golden Fleece, the symbol of wealth and happiness, I placed a large-scale reproduction of my own skin with golden fringes, and I wanted to awaken the Colchis snake that would guard it in Tarabya to life with volunteer performers.

When you relate it to the themes of play, imagination and metamorphosis that we can see in your other works, how would you describe the audience's reaction? Especially considering that it is a context-specific (moving) outdoor installation and a collaborative performance, what new excitements and teachings did this work bring you?

The viewer and participant could be involved in such a work from their own position, with their own perspective and differing understanding. In this work, a performance and installation emerged that can create changing and diversifying expressions and images. Of course, the meanings that the audience attributes to the work, meanings that I cannot construct with precise lines beforehand, or reactions that I never anticipated, enrich the work even more and give me new perspectives that I can borrow.

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DELICACIES ARE JUST A PHONE CALL AWAY.

For *Şifa*, I wanted to preserve the pressure I had displayed with the golden fringes, as it should be, by reanimating the Colchis serpent, but I could not realize this performative activity without a collective to give life to the giant serpent.



In the process of making artworks, knowledge of sculpture, at least as much as photography, is influential in transforming her performative research into permanent forms. What impresses me in *Şifa* is your multi-layered storytelling. For example, as you throw the skin on the tree and let the snake wander around, you make us look each other in the eye and make us ask ourselves how legends live. Does sculpture or performance come first for you? If you are in search of a new idea or form, which one feeds you the most?

Legends or folktales, in order to skilfully express the nature of man, confront him with monsters that we do not encounter in real life. So much so that in the story of the shark, the real monster is the human being. These stories, which tell us about our essence, our passions and what we can do to achieve them, come to life with a new language, strengthening each time they are told.

I create my working practice with language that I structure with different materials and methods to reach the audience. In my practice, a new idea is usually born with its own mode or modes of expression. I do not set out with a conditioning in terms of material or performative expression. The fact that in some of my works I am not content with offering a performative experience to the audience, but also include mediums such as sculpture or photography, stems from the fact that I first construct a performance with a three-dimensional elaboration. This detailed fiction is waiting for me there as a phenomenon that is waiting to be expressed through mediums such as sculpture or photography, that forces me to be told again through other methods or forms.

The snake is a symbol of healing, medicine, fertility, eternity, immortality and revital-

ization. You have treated the snake as a protagonist both with the material you used and with the participation of the audience. *Şahmaran* (2021), which we exhibited together for the first time at the Staatliche Kunsthalle Baden-Baden, may be perceived as a mural at first glance, but it is actually a sculpture that combines the reflection of the viewer with the motif through the mirror. You also brought together an invisible chain in the production process, 99 women who donated fabric to you.

Dear Adnan, *Şahmaran* was the occasion for one of the works I have enjoyed working with you every time. We cannot separate the production process and the work. *Şahmaran* is an immortal mother that carries its own talisman every time it is reproduced. Bringing her back to life once again was not something I could try on my own. In the legend of Gilgamesh, the snake that grabs the herb of immortality leaves its old skin and walks away with its new skin and immortality. I could only give this new skin to the *Şahmaran*, which would bring her back to life and immortality, through a collective work with other women.

For *Şifa*, I wanted to preserve the pressure I had displayed with the golden fringes, as it should be, by reanimating the Colchis serpent, but I could not realize this performative activity without a collective to give life to the giant serpent. I would also like to thank Sevim Sancaktar for the important support she gave me with her curatorial collaboration in the realization of the project, the volunteers who contributed to reawaken and mobilize the giant snake, and Performistanbul for supporting me alongside them. 



Mehtap Baydu, *Şifa*, Photo: Rana Kuseyri

Mehtap Baydu, *Şifa*, Photo: CANBERK

(Sol) Tarabya Cultural Academy Summer Festival, Mete Kaan Özdelek, Kulturakademie Tarabya/Flashbang Productions

louis poulsen



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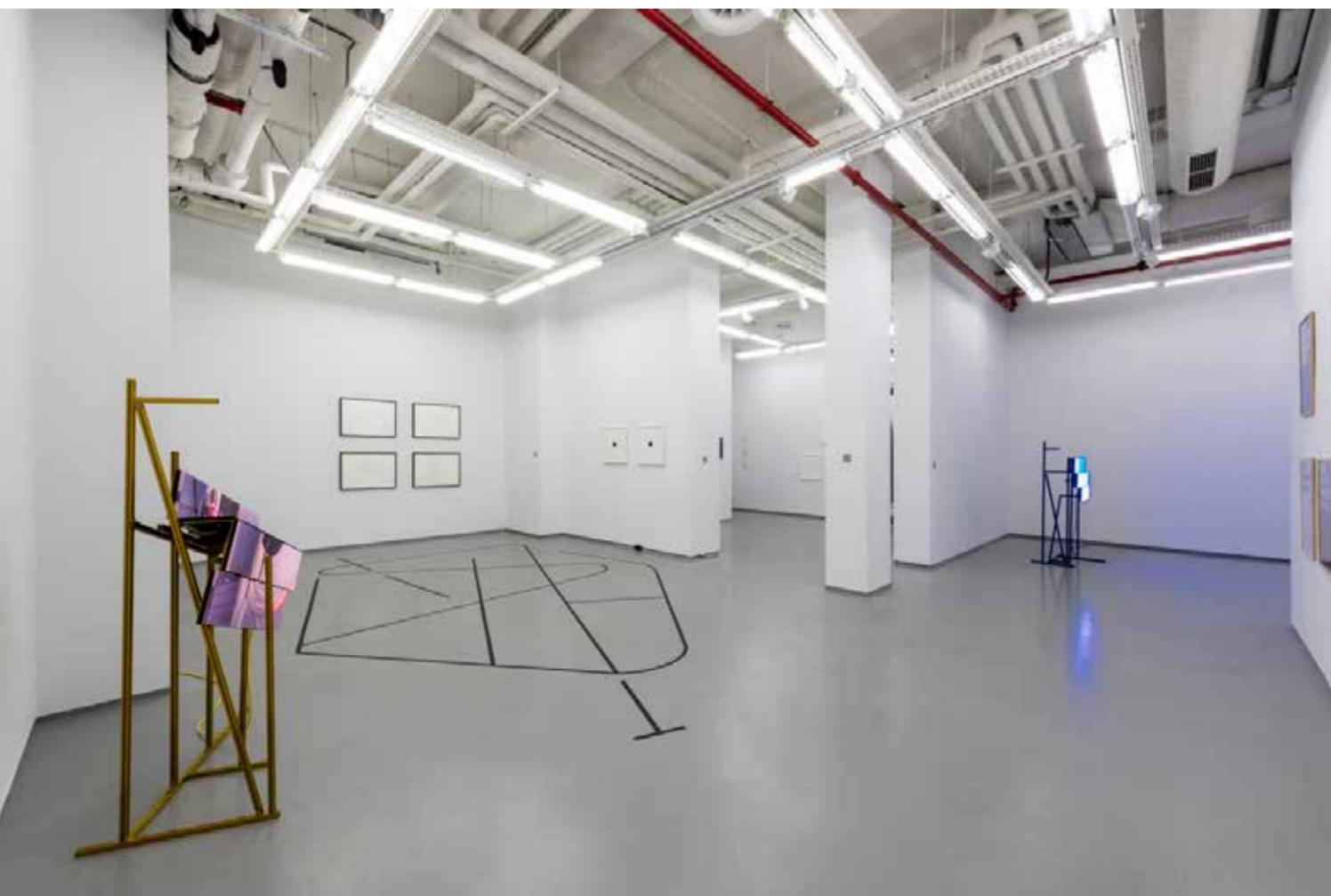
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# Contemporary art galleries, *today*

Contrary to popular belief, art galleries are not only places where various artworks are exhibited and sold, but they also introduce artists to a wider audience, bring works of art together with interested parties, touch the careers of artists and prepare new opportunities for them, provide consultancy to collectors and art lovers, take the necessary measures for the protection and maintenance of the art works exhibited, and ensure proper air conditioning, lighting and security... We have get together with 6 gallerists that are recently building a new association called the International Gallerists Association. Those people which regularly organize exhibitions and opening events; promote their artists they represent and support them from the sale of their works to the development of their careers; protect their rights through contracts; inform the public about art by organizing art-related training programs, seminars, workshops and other activities, and contribute to the dissemination of the art ecosystem today. We asked them what their perspectives is like and needs might be

Prepared by: Merve Akar Akgün



Gallery view from Pi Artworks Istanbul



Dragon'u incelemek için QR kodu okutunuz:



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**TEPTA**  
AYDINLATMA



## Jade Y. Turanlı PI ARTWORKS

**How would you describe the gallery's founding story, its place in the geography in which it exists and the responsibilities it assumes?**

Pi Artworks was founded in Istanbul in 1998 and opened its second gallery in London in 2013. With its presence in these two cities, it acts as an important bridge between East and West. The gallery fosters dialog and collaboration between artists from different cultures across different cultures. Believing that art is a vehicle for social change, it is on a mission to create a more inclusive, equitable and sustainable world.

**What are the criteria you consider when selecting the artists you represent?**

Pi Artworks considers several important criteria when selecting artists. It is important that the artists care about the dialog between different cultures and can appeal to audiences from different backgrounds. We encourage artists to be sensitive to social, political and environmental issues and to produce projects that raise awareness of these issues. This is in line with the gallery's belief that art is a tool for social change. We consider not only the artistic quality of the artists represented by Pi Artworks, but also their social responsibilities. In this way, the gallery maintains a meaningful and influential presence in both the local and international art scene.

**You came together with other galleries to form the International Gallerists Association. Why was this formation important for you?**

The establishment of the International Gallerists Association is important for raising the quality and standards of the gallery profession. Establishing and maintaining high quality standards in the gallery profession is critical to increase the level of professionalism of galleries. Galleries need legal support that protects freedom of artistic expression and defends their rights in the art market. If we can provide legal advice to member galleries, we can make it easier for galleries to deal with legal issues. It is also important to promote cooperation and communication between galleries internationally. Our priorities include market research and information sharing, creating pools for joint use, and providing funding and support for member galleries to participate in fairs abroad.

**Do you think the role of traditional art galleries will change in the next decade, especially in the face of changing consumer behavior and technological developments?**

Yes, I think it will change in the next decade. When looking at the relationship between the artist and the gallerist, gallerism will be a choice, not a necessity. This will create more meaningful partnerships. When we look at the market, we can realize that the new generation of art buyers see art as an expression of their personal identity. Therefore, galleries should aim to appeal to different demographic groups. Traditional art galleries have the opportunity to expand into new markets with the impact of globalization. Art markets in regions such as Asia, Africa and Latin America are growing. This will contribute to increased dialogue and cooperation. Proper digitalization, online platforms and social media marketing tools will need to be used more actively.



Tankut Aykut and Doğa Öktem

## Tankut Aykut & Doğa Öktem

### ÖKTEM AYKUT

**How would you describe the gallery's founding story, its place in the geography in which it exists and the responsibilities it assumes?**

Öktem Aykut will turn 10 years old next November. From day one, our aim was to be an umbrella gallery. We hoped to bring together artists who express themselves in different mediums, who seek answers to different questions, who relate to different communities, and we hoped to benefit from the uniqueness of the resonance in this togetherness. Over time, we realized that it was the Istanbul bohemia that defined us. We believe that we are a gentle bearer of the legacy of an Istanbul bohemia that transcends the ages. For this reason, we also find it meaningful that our gallery is located in the historic Union Française building.

**What are the criteria you consider when selecting the artists you represent?**

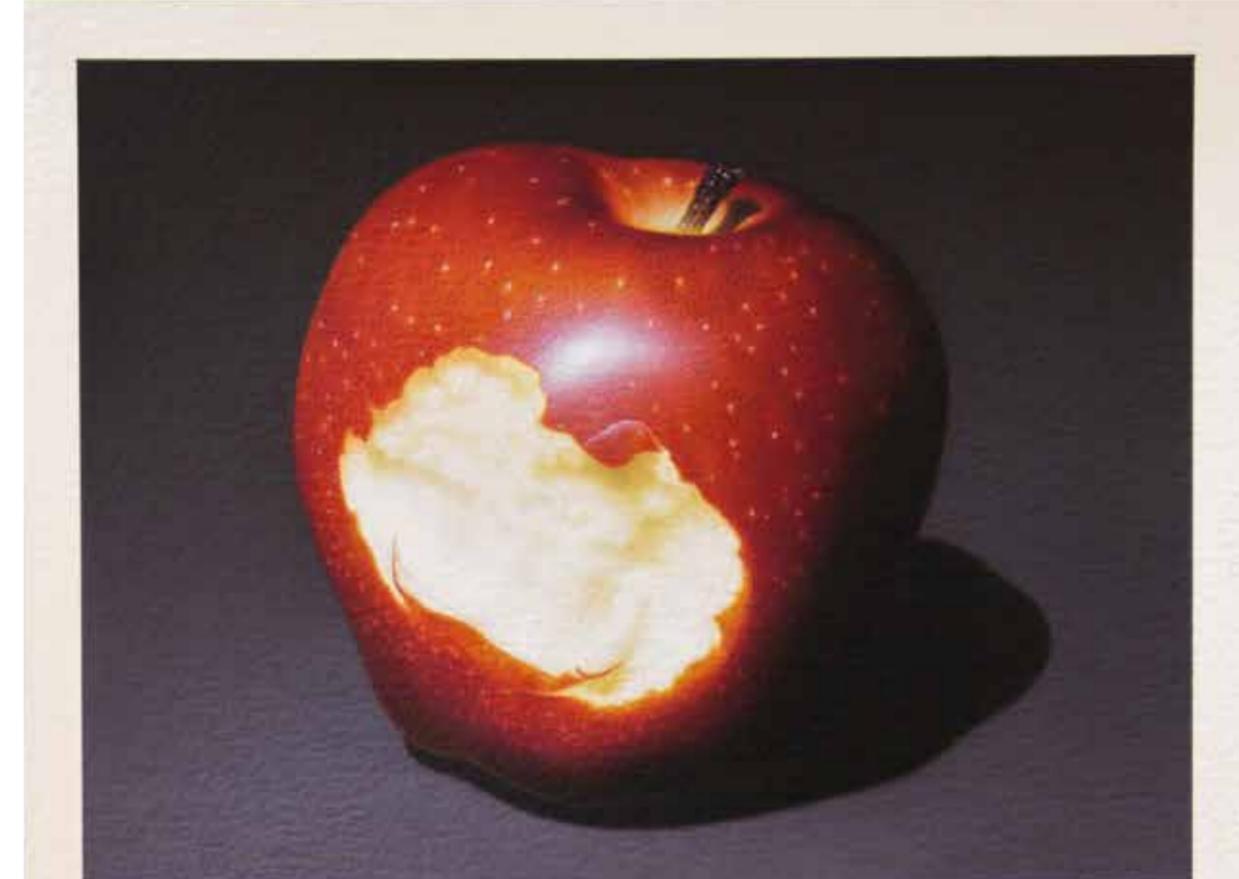
We work with artists with whom we have harmonious and friendly relationships and with whom we pursue similar questions about art, life and humanity.

**You came together with other galleries and founded the International Association of Gallerists. Why was this formation important for you?**

The lack of such an association was an unacceptable deficiency. We work in a very specific and discreet business. We often face dilemmas where we cannot find anyone to share with other than our colleagues. We are left with the fact that we are engaged in a completely precarious job that requires unpaid labor and risks. According to the law, at least seven people must come together to establish an association, so we established the association as seven legal entities, but our aim is to grow and act together with other colleagues who experience the same uncertainties and precariousness.

**Do you think that the role of traditional art galleries will change in the next decade, especially in the face of changing consumer behavior and technological developments?**

It will not change much; on the contrary, we think that our contribution to art, life and society will be more effective, more decisive, more unique and more important under changing world conditions.



# Uğurgüler

Acrylic on paper series #14, 2023





Müge Çubukçu. Photo Barış Özeturin

## Müge Çubukçu

### GALERİST

**How would you describe the gallery's founding story, its place in the geography in which it exists, and the responsibilities it has assumed?**

Galerist was founded in 2001 with the aim of creating a space in Istanbul for Turkish artists who live and produce abroad, and to bring their work to audiences here. At a time when the contemporary art galleries concept was just beginning to blossom, Galerist set out by adopting international standards of artist representation and exhibition techniques. 23 years later, without losing the excitement and focus of the first day, we prioritize building the right strategies for our artists locally and globally, and creating collaborations that will nurture the gallery and our artists while constructing our exhibition program. In this context, curatorial group exhibitions, which occupy a prominent place in our program, allow us to bring together various artists and their approaches in our exhibition space at Passage Petits-Champs. Another value Galerist is proud to maintain is its publishing identity. While we create a meticulous archive with our catalogs accompanying the exhibitions, we are instrumental in keeping timeless records with our artist books. Our participation in international art fairs since the early years is also an important part of our identity. We value the continuity of our presence in the international arena in order for the gallery and our artists to gain visibility in various geographies and make different acquaintances.

**What are the criteria you take into consideration when selecting the artists you represent?**

Galerist is a structure that has been breathing and breathing since its establishment, with its shaping identity and flexible understanding that allows for transformations. First and foremost, it is a roof that continues to exist with its artists and team. The fact that our relationship with the artists we represent has a similarly natural process is indispensable for the continuity of this communication that we value so much. The gallery attaches importance to the equality of different gender representations in the visibility it provides through its artists and exhibitions. The concept of estate representation, which entered our lives with Semih Berksoy in 2014 and expanded with Şahin Kaygun and then Hüseyin Bahri Alptekin, has been transformative for us by opening up space for very different channels and approaches. Considering our current list, which includes Yeşim Akdeniz, Nuri Kuzucan, Lara Öğel, Serkan Özkaya, Yusuf Sevinçli, Ayça Telgeren, Elif Uras, Burcu Yağcıoğlu, Nil Yalter and Nazım Ünal Yılmaz, we can say that we accompany mid-career or mature artists with original and sincere productions in every step of their journeys, regardless of content and material criteria.

**You came together with other galleries and founded the International Art Galleries Association. Why was this formation important for you?**

Establishing the association is a step that responds to more than one professional need and is actually a bit late. With this formation, we aim to create a strong network of solidarity and cooperation among art galleries. Our most important goals are to establish international standards for the profession, to develop fair relations, and to make the gallery more visible by giving it an official status on the bureaucratic ground. In the face of the challenges we witness in the art scene, we see it as a great advantage to act together in order to create a more robust and resilient ecosystem by touching all stakeholders.

**Do you think the role of traditional art galleries will change in the next decade, especially in the face of changing consumer behavior and technological developments?**

It is inevitable that the contemporary art galleries model will undergo changes over the years in the face of changing consumer behavior and technological developments, but I believe that this model will not move away from its essence and will maintain its purpose of existence. In this context, while we witness day by day that the digitized world makes our lives easier in all operational areas, I believe that the sincere and sensory transfer that galleries create in the network of relationships is unique and will never lose its weight.



Sabiha Kurtulmuş

## Sabiha Kurtulmuş

### MERKUR

**How would you describe the gallery's founding story, its place in the geography in which it exists and the responsibilities it undertakes?**

I founded my gallery in 2010. With my 30 years of experience in the art world, I try to shape the perception of art and create a new discourse by bringing many of today's well-known artists into the art world. Working with the most important artists of Turkey over the years, MERKUR's priority is to create a new and fresh atmosphere in the art scene in Turkey, to bring young artists together with art lovers and to present the exhibitions of our important artists to our audience. In the process of including young artists in our organization, the concepts and concepts in the artists' portfolios and the combination of aesthetic perception with the use of different media are taken into consideration. While the works of young artists coexist with originality and reliability, the works they produce with experimental techniques in different media are exhibited in the gallery in an impressive way. We pay attention to this. MERKUR's main goal is to bring together what today's technology and industry bring to the audience in an innovative way through artistic language. As a 30-year art professional, I care about sustainability in a disciplined way and being a program gallery. We also like to support artists with different projects.

**What are the criteria you take into consideration when selecting the artists you represent?**

First of all, like every gallerist, I have my own point of view and artistic approach. A good gallerist must follow the world and national agenda closely and be able to evaluate all kinds of innovations and formations in art. As a local gallerist, I know my audience and buyers well, and I choose artists accordingly. However, I also attach great importance to working with artists who produce work with different structures and mediums in different projects and exhibitions, and to learn and experience something new every moment. I find long-term relationships with artists important. Apart from this, sometimes we also experience new working alternatives with projects. I am a gallerist who loves painting and sculpture. I also follow technology, but I am closer to classical artistic presentations in my artistic approach.

**You came together with other galleries and founded the International Gallerists Association. Why was this formation important for you?**

We all have different approaches, but in general, we used the working principles of the associations all over the world when creating our own charter. We underlined again how a contemporary art gallery should be in accordance with international criteria. I think that "gallerism" is not known enough in general. We needed to have an association in order to better explain ourselves as a profession, to be taken seriously in the public sense and to be more clearly visible in our international relations. I see the establishment of this association as an important step in strengthening our system, which we carry out with individual efforts, by coming together and taking more serious steps towards our rights.

**Do you think that the role of traditional art galleries will change in the next decade, especially in the face of changing consumer behavior and technological developments?**

Maybe the younger generation has different readings, and maybe they do. However, I don't think the classical understanding of galleries will change at all. As long as contemporary art exists, the role of gallerists will become stronger and stronger. During the period we went through the corona pandemic, digitalization started with great excitement, presentations where art could exist without space were tried with NFTs and different technologies. However, when we look at today, it is not possible to talk about NFTs. Art lovers and buyers care about encountering and interacting with the artwork. Since it also has a financial aspect, it is always important for the buyer and the viewer to meet with the work of art in the environment that provides these two, in the gallery. I can say that exhibitions have started to be watched more during the period when fairs have slowed down for a while. With the right collaboration between the artist and the gallerist and innovative presentations, galleries will become even more important. I am also following a different trend. Especially in New York and London, very young gallerists are becoming more visible, and they appeal more to their own generation. It is not easy to sustain gallerism as a profession. I am also following this approach with curiosity. Will it be a short-term trend or will they become the name-brand gallerists of the future? Because Gen Z is a very different and difficult generation.





Bahar Kizgut

## Bahar Kizgut

### MARTCH ART PROJECT

How would you describe the gallery's founding story, its place in the geography in which it exists and the responsibilities it undertakes?

Martch Art Project was founded in 2018 with the aim of creating an ecosystem that brings artists, art professionals and collectors closer together.

What are the criteria you take into consideration when selecting the artists you represent?

We choose the names we represent from artists who have taken contemporary issues as their subject and/or who do not hesitate to show bold works and do not limit themselves at any point. I would like to add that we don't only choose the artists, they choose us. In this ecosystem that we are trying to create, our paths may somehow cross and this process mostly proceeds in its own natural flow.

You came together with other galleries and founded the International Gallerists Association. Why was this formation important for you?

Unfortunately, association is not our strongest feature as a society. As in every professional group, we did this because we are aware that we cannot move forward without acting together. This is only one of the many reasons that pushed us to do this. Once we set out together, we experienced how we can support each other and how we can act together. Another reason is to present and explain the correct definition of galleries to people. We did this in order to establish a more accurate relationship with state bodies and to draw the boundaries of our relationship with our audience, collectors and artists correctly. At the same time, for a long time we felt that the effort, time and financial resources we put in were not appreciated.

Do you think that the role of traditional art galleries will change in the next decade, especially in the face of changing consumer behavior and technological developments?

I see this issue as a bit too romantic. The pleasure of looking at a painting, a sculpture, or a photograph for hours is very different. We also see many collectors who think like this. As in many fields, technology will of course be more involved in our work. But this is in terms of making it easier for us to do our work. I don't see issues like artificial intelligence becoming a mind that produces art, at least for a short time. I think artists will continue to use it as a medium.



Adnan Yerebakan

## Adnan Yerebakan

### SANATORIUM

How would you describe the gallery's founding story, its place in the geography in which it exists and the responsibilities it has assumed?

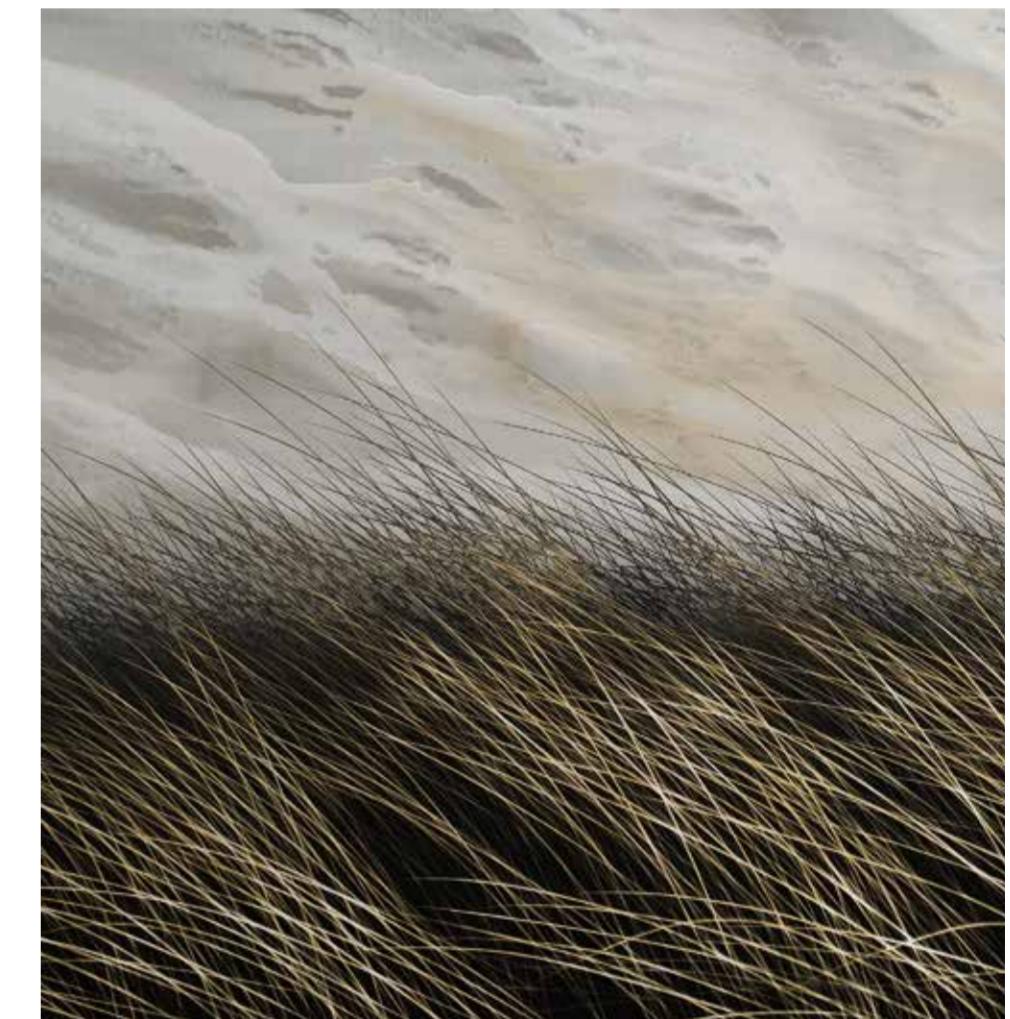
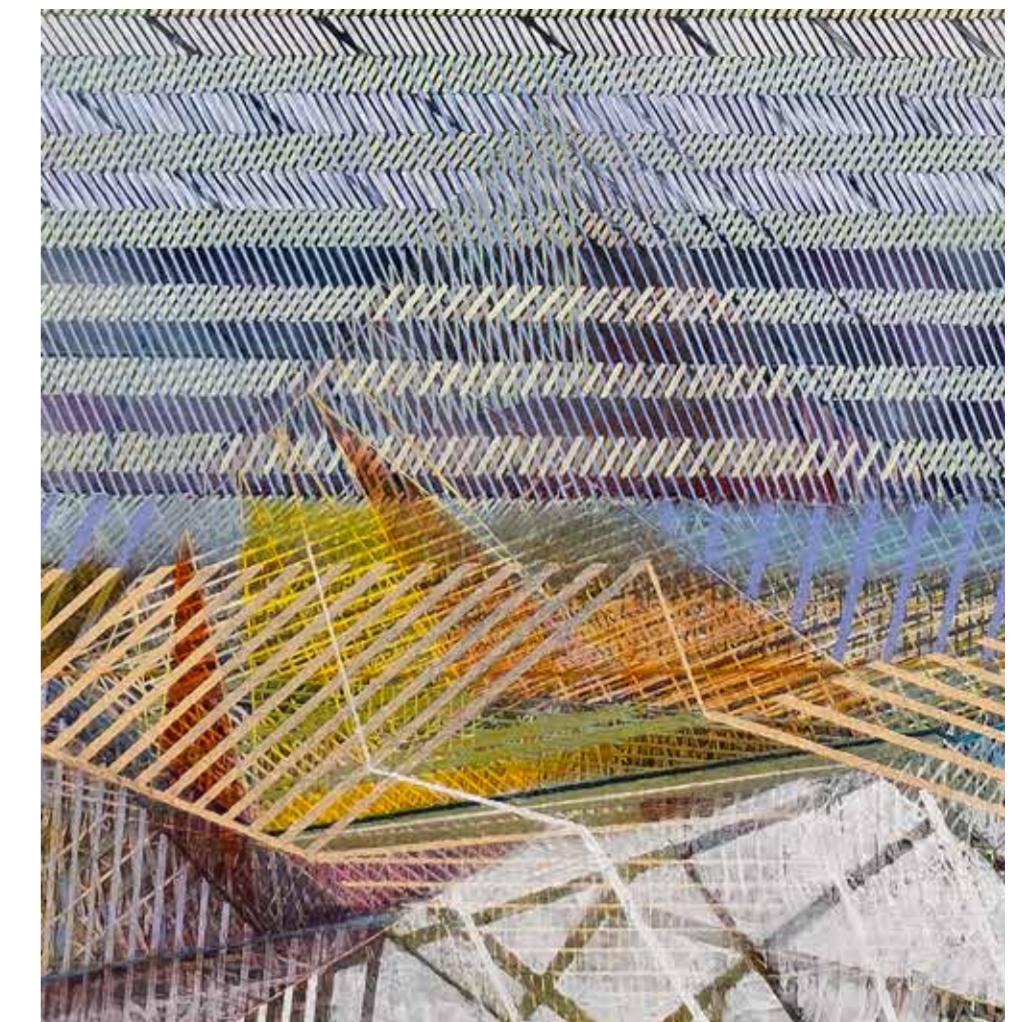
SANATORIUM has made a name for itself as an art gallery where young artists can open their exhibitions and gain visibility since the first years of its establishment. It continues its activities today as an art gallery that develops projects with many different artists and independent curators in addition to the artists it represents and is especially sympathized by artists. At this point, we offer opportunities to artists and curators to realize their projects that are not in line with mainstream tastes, are experimental, original and invite the audience to think about the subjects they examine. In doing so, we aim to convey to the audience the importance of thinking and philosophy in art production by pointing out that contemporary art, which everyone is interested in today, is an intellectual activity.

What are the criteria you take into consideration when selecting the artists you represent?

SANATORIUM is a gallery that establishes long-term relationships with its artists; it values the artists it works with and their artistic productions. Therefore, SANATORIUM not only supports artists in various ways for the development of their careers, but also tries to guide them in line with their goals. From this point of view, as a gallery, we aim to establish a representation relationship with new artists with whom we have a long-standing communication and collaboration process, and who have not yet realized their full potential, at the point where we think we can contribute to their artistic development. We prefer to work with artists who are motivated to continuously increase their intellectual accumulation, who think not only about making art but also about art itself, who like to philosophize, who are researchers, who are not part of the mainstream appreciation system, who have experimental production practices and who have the potential to develop themselves.

You came together with other galleries and founded the International Gallerists Association. Why was this formation important for you?

I believe that being an artist, curator, gallerist and other professional positions related to art are not professionalized enough in our country. I believe that for development and change, we must first accept that what we do is a professional job. Then we need to improve ourselves and strive to improve the quality of our work. At this point, the International Dealers Association will cause the profession we dealers do to be registered as a professional business. It is very important for the development of our sector to discuss new ideas, implement some of them and follow the results, and I believe that our association will be very effective in this regard. It is also very important to organize events with large participation in order to promote contemporary art and increase interaction with the audience. I can give examples of these events such as the Galleries Week, which will be realized jointly, and events where more refined projects are exhibited compared to traditional fairs. Our association will play an important role in organizing these events.



**SOYUT  
MADDE**  
ABSTRACT MATTER

04.07.2024 - 03.08.2024

Armen Gevorkian, Hamlet Hovsepian, Mesut Karakış,  
Armén Rotch, Kirkor Sahakoğlu, Tigran Sahakyan,  
Arman Vahanyan

Ziyaret Saatleri: Pazartesi - Cumartesi, 10.00-18.00  
Visiting Hours: Monday to Saturday, 10.00-18.00

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# The *aesthetics* of nature:

## The Possibility of an Herb Garden at Saint-Joseph High School

Saint-Joseph High School hosted a group exhibition titled *The Possibility of a Herb Garden* between April 4 and May 3, 2024. The preparations for the exhibition, which emerged as a result of the marbling workshops organized by guest artist Ece Bal with a group of students, were completed in collaboration with the Natural Sciences Center, Biology and Chemistry departments, Visual Arts and Audiovisual Journalism Clubs and Video Production Workshop. We analyzed the works in the exhibition through the intersection of the school's century-old herbarium journey with contemporary art and plants

Turkey is one of the geographies with the richest plant diversity in the world. This richness is based on various topographical and climatic features of our country. Plant diversity draws particular attention with the endemic species it harbors. The conservation of local plant species, especially endemic ones, is an important step for the evaluation and protection of natural habitats. Research conducted in this context aims to determine the presence of endemic plant species, the necessity of protecting natural environments and conservation priorities.

At this point, it would be hard not to mention the exhibition *The Possibility of a Herb Garden* organized last month at Saint-Joseph High School in Istanbul, and the century-old herbarium of the high school that was incorporated into the exhibition. Because this exhibition is not only a reflection of plants, but also of the human relationship with nature and the creativity of students. I would like to tell you about this valuable herbarium and its story, which sheds light on history, by commemorating the book titled Istanbul Saint Joseph High School Historical Plant Collection, the result of years of devoted work by Prof. Dr. Mehmet Sakınç.

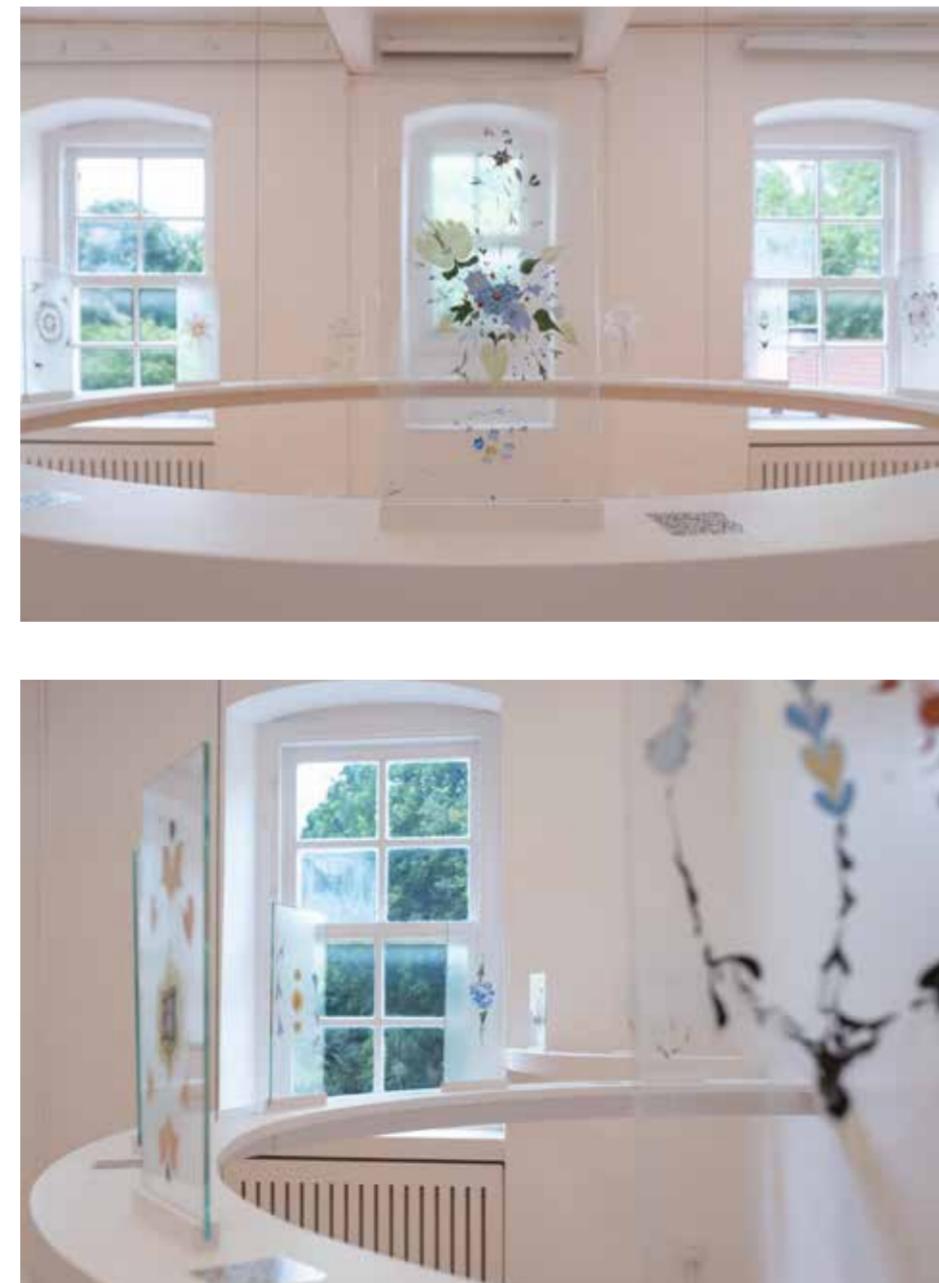
It all began in 1905 when three priest-teachers (frère) of Saint Joseph High School, Jean Marie Reynaud, Pasteur Luis and Idinaël-Simon, started collecting plants from both sides of the Bosphorus and especially from the Kadıköy neighborhood with their students. Their aim was to establish a large herbarium, that is, a plant collection, and document the diversity of plants in the country. Before the first specimens were left to dry, the frères classified the plants with the possibilities offered by the biology and botanical science of the day. They then transferred this information to specially prepared labels and archived them. Although this feverish work was interrupted from time to time, it continued until the mid-1970s. In the end, it led to the emergence of the first and only herbarium of Istanbul/Kadıköy and its surroundings, consisting of 2253 specimens preserved until today.

The work of three Saint Joseph teachers is a continuation of the European tradition of taking inventory of nature. These precious teachers conducted a scientific study of the plant world of a magnificent city like Istanbul, the property of humanity, on behalf of humanity, and preserved the fruits of their labor in their schools.

This unique collection, which has been waiting at Saint Joseph High School since then, has reappeared in this exhibition as a product of the active participation and creative processes of the students of the high school. Participating in workshops under the guidance of guest artist Ece Bal, the students were inspired by scientific methods and imagined the continuation of Saint-Joseph High School's herbarium from a poetic perspective. Therefore, the exhibition was a fiction that brought together imaginary plants with selected pieces from the high school's collection through visual, auditory and olfactory forms.

One of the most remarkable parts of the exhibition was the performative productions in which the students created a sensory experience space using contemporary art

Article and interview: Ceylan Önalp



The Possibility of a Herb Garden, Alisa Abbasoğlu, Ela Çırçıtoğlu, Zehra Aparçı, Duru Karabulak, Selin Aras, Defne Umut, Baran Bozdemir, İrem Su Yıldız, 2024, Installation, Various dimensions, 21 pieces, natural pigments on glass, each 15x30 cm. Photo: Serhat Beyazkaya

GİZEM AKKOYUNOĞLU  
KEREM OZAN BAYRAKTAR  
LUDOVIC BERNHARDT  
LUZ BLANCO  
MEHMET DERE  
YUNUS EMRE ERDOĞAN  
EROL ESKİCİ  
ÇAĞLA KÖSEOĞULLARI  
YAĞIZ ÖZGEN  
ZEYNO PEKÜNLÜ  
CHRISTIANE PESCHEK  
FARID RASULOV  
SERGEN ŞEHİTOĞLU  
MERVE ŞENDİL  
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SANATORIUM

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The Possibility of a Herb Garden, Alisa Abbasoglu, Ela Çitipitoğlu, Zehra Aparci, Duru Karabulak, Selin Aras, Defne Umut, Baran Bozdemir, İrem Su Yıldız, 2024, Installation, Various dimensions, 21 pieces, natural pigments on glass, each 15x30 cm. Photo: Serhat Beyazkaya

elements and were presented under the subtitles of études. The unification of student clubs from various backgrounds at the school on a common ground and the encouragement of multifaceted thinking and artistic production led to an organic and unique fluidity, just like the marbling installations in the exhibition. At this point, we can briefly touch upon the art of marbling and herbarium traditions in Turkey: Marbling is a traditional art that has an important place in Turkish culture. This art technique, which emerged during the Ottoman Empire, is created by dripping colored inks onto the water surface and shaping them. Ebru comes from the combination of the words ab (water) and ru (cloud). The oldest examples of marbling, which is thought to have been brought by the Turks during their migration from Central Asia to Anatolia, can be seen in the 15th century during the Ottoman Empire. During this period, the marbling technique was frequently used around the palace, especially on book covers and illumination decorations. However, in time, the art of marbling became popular not only in the palace circle but also among the public and was developed by artists in different regions. The art of marbling, which has gained a place in the field of modern art as well as in the field of Sufism with the influence of technology that has developed over the centuries, never loses its uniqueness while changing and transforming due to its ability to be shaped according to the person who makes it.

Although the herbarium tradition in Turkey does not go back as far as the art of marbling, it started in the 19th century and has been developing significantly until today. The first herbarium established in Istanbul during the Ottoman Empire plays an important role in documenting plant diversity. Turkey's rich plant diversity and endemic plant species make herbarium collections important worldwide. Today, many universities and research institutions in Turkey have herbarium collections, which are constantly being expanded and updated. These collections make important contributions to plant science and the conservation of biodiversity. Floras, plants, botanical gardens and artworks, often featuring flowers, form an important part of the artistic tradition. Although the fact that plants have many aesthetic qualities without the need for material manipulation has led to their use as decorative elements, with the development of digital technologies in contemporary art, the way plants are perceived and the direction of applications with plants is changing. In aesthetic installations where the science of biology and digital media are used together with plants, it can be observed that they are transformed from ordinary elements into an integrative element of communication. These alternative installations, which allow for multi-sensory experiences, also enable the human-nature relationship to be questioned again. Plants, which are transformed into art objects in digital-based art practices such as installation and performance, become concepts with a high capacity to stimulate the senses when considered as an interface model.

Without going into more details about the exhibition and losing its magic or exposing you to more academic information, I will move on to the mini interview with Gizem Karakaş and Ece Bal. Enjoy your reading.



Last Year's Herbarium, Dilşad Aladağ & Eda Aslan, 2021, Installation, 45x130x100 cm, Custom made wooden archive cabinet with led light, 415 plant samples, each 5x5 cm diapositive film framed, Istanbul Private Saint-Joseph High School Collection



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Gizem Karakaş

**What is the inspiration for the exhibition The Possibility of a Herb Garden and how did this idea come about?**

**Gizem Karakaş:** The exhibition is the result of a series of workshops that Ece conducted with students as part of her residency program at Saint-Joseph High School. We have known Ece for many years. I knew that she was interested in natural materials and scientific processes in her practice, so we talked about how we could bring together the collections and facilities available at the school with Ece's practice and offer a workshop program to the students. Our starting point was the Saint-Joseph High School Herbarium. The collection began in 1905, when Saint-Joseph High School fraters Jean Marie Reynaud, Pasteur Luis and Idinaël-Simon and their students collected plants from both sides of the Bosphorus, especially around Kadıköy, and classified them with the possibilities offered by the biology and botany of the day. As a result of this work, which lasted until the mid-1970s, the first and only herbarium of Istanbul/Kadıköy and its surroundings, consisting of 2253 specimens, has been preserved to this day. As part of the workshops, students also imagined the continuation of the high school's herbarium.

**What was it like working with the Natural Sciences Center and different student clubs while preparing the exhibition? How do you think these collaborations enriched the exhibition?**

**Ece Bal:** Being able to work with the Natural Sciences Center and the biology and chemistry departments was very nourishing for the students to be inspired by scientific processes and to make creative productions. Inspired by the school's plant collection, the workshop sessions students spent in the biology lab examining microscope images were the first step in shaping their creations. I believe that these sessions allowed the students to rediscover the forms in nature and the microscopic world from a different perspective, taking them out of their familiar contexts. In addition, collaborations with the video and sound clubs brought a multiple perspective to the shaping of the works and the emergence of the exhibition. Such interdisciplinary collaborations are very valuable in terms of being open to new directions throughout the process, producing in collaboration and learning to think in multiple ways.

**Can you tell us more about the installation at the center of the exhibition, The Possibility of an Herb Garden? How did you come up with these imaginary plants and their healing properties? What influenced or inspired you the most while preparing this installation?**

**E.B:** The installation that forms the core of the exhibition consists of plants created by the students using the marbling technique on glass. Since marbling is a free and fluid technique by nature, it allowed the students to be flexible in terms of forms. Throughout the workshops, texts describing the individual and social healing properties of these plants, which they created with the images they were inspired by using their own mixed colors, emerged organically. When I noticed the students' tendency to further define the plants they imagined and named, I had the idea that these texts could also be part of the exhibition.

**When we were touring the exhibition together, you told us that the glass used in this installation combines marbling drawings, texts and sound recordings. How did you establish a relationship between these different elements and what kind of experience did you aim to offer to the visitors?**

**E.B:** Our aim in bringing the different elements together and organizing the installation within the space was to offer as inclusive an experience as possible. We wanted to create as few distracting visual elements as possible in order to create the feeling of wandering through the garden. With the help of the students of the Audiovisual Journalism Club and its director Kerem Yalçiner, we converted the texts into audio recordings. Our intention was to create a speculative experience of walking through a garden for the visitors.

**What was the creative process behind the video installation *Study 1: Tropism*? What can you say about the dance of pigments on water and the references to Loie Fuller?**

**G.K:** We realized this video installation with the students of the school's Video Production Club and the club's director Nusret Emre Bilgin. It was the students' idea to construct the video through movement and dance. Then Emre, Ece and I sent choreographer names and videos as references to inspire the students. Among these, Loie Fuller's Serpentine Dance choreography was the most popular.

**Study 2: Microcosm installation brings together marbling on microscope slides and algae slides selected from the high school's collection. What do you think about the connection of this installation with the other elements in the exhibition through the use of sea velvet? How does this section, dedicated to the microcosm of the imaginary plants in the exhibition, influence and expand your understanding of nature?**

**E.B:** I would say that the installation *Study 2: Microcosm* brings together different layers of the scientific and artistic process components of the exhibition on a micro scale. The imaginary plant cells made on microscope slides allowed the students to rethink nature at different scales. The presentation of this installation with seaweed slides is directly related to the abundant use of seaweed in the creative process. Sea buckthorn, which is used as a thickener in marbling, is also a kind of seaweed. We wanted to draw attention to the symbiotic relationship between the elements in the process by including this seaweed that they use in the creative process and a selection from the school's collection of seaweed slides that they have been inspired by since the beginning of the process.

**Let's talk a little bit about Eda Aslan and Dilşad Aladağ's *Herbarium of Last Year*. How did this work add depth to the exhibition?**

**G.K:** We had the opportunity to work with Eda Aslan and Dilşad Aladağ for the first time in 2021 as part of the 150th anniversary exhibition of Saint-Joseph High School. For the exhibition, they produced the video installation *Neşyünema* as an extension of the *Forgetting Garden* project they have been conducting since 2017 to keep the memory of Istanbul University Botanical Institute alive. The video installation was accompanied by photographs of the artists' encounters with Frère Jean from Istanbul Saint-Joseph High School in the 1940s and botanical drawings donated to Saint-Joseph High School in 1942 from the Istanbul University Botanical Institute, which the artists found in the archives of Alfred and Mehpare Heilbronn. Later, in 2022, we added the work titled *Herbarium of the Last Year*, which they produced as part of the *Garden of Forgetting* project, to Saint-Joseph's collection. *Herbarium of the Last Year* presents a selection of leaves collected from the Alfred Heilbronn Botanical Garden at the Istanbul University Botanical Institute, founded in 1935 by Alfred Heilbronn and Leo Brauner and closed to visitors in 2018. The exhibition *The Possibility of a Botanical Garden* actually questions the possibility of such a garden in today's conditions. Therefore, it was inevitable to include an installation to preserve the memory of a botanical garden that no longer exists!

**Let's not forget Alfred and Mehpare Heilbronn's connections with Saint-Joseph High School and their influence on the exhibition. How did these historical connections inspire you and the students to create imaginary plants?**

**G.K:** It was thanks to Eda and Dilşad that we discovered Alfred and Mehpare Heilbronn's connections to Saint-Joseph High School and the fact that the botanical drawings I mentioned were donated to Saint-Joseph High School by the Botanical Institute of Istanbul University while making the 150th anniversary exhibition. Curated by Aslı Seven, the exhibition was the result of a long-term artistic research process around the school's archives and educational tools. On Aslı's initiative, instead of making an exhibition of ready-made works, we preferred to share the school's archive, technological and scientific infrastructure and natural science collections with artists and to design a collective research and production process. Personally, I am very excited to have discovered these historical connections through art production. So I thought it was important to share this with Ece and the students as a source of inspiration.

**Study 4: The scent installation contains the scent of mint collected from the school's permaculture garden. What can you say about the relationship of this installation with the quote from Gaston Bachelard's *Water and Dreams*? How do you think this installation affected the visitors' experience of the exhibition? I wonder what kind of feedback you received from the visitors.**

**E.B:** We can say that the quote from Gaston Bachelard's *Water and Dreams*, which is the inspiration for the installation created by the smell of mint that we collected from the permaculture garden and distilled in the chemistry laboratory of the school, has a similar structure to the general vibration of the exhibition in terms of the connections between nature and existence. Bachelard uses the smell of water mint as a metaphor, an existential symbol that points to the aroma of life emanating from the essence. Our intention to capture a context with nature beyond the visible in the exhibition, which we wove with various scale games, was embodied as a multidimensional internal experience stimulus with the idea of including Bachelard's metaphor in the exhibition. However, I think it is important for the sense of smell to find more space as a means of expression in art. The feedback we received supported this idea. Perhaps due to the effect of the close connection between smell and memory, the installation was also instrumental in the sharing of various associations. ☺



Ece Bal



## ERTUĞRUL GÜNGÖR & FARUK ERTEKİN Breakers of Vases

21 Haziran - 7 Temmuz

## ARDAN ÖZMENOĞLU Looking Through the Glass

12 Temmuz - 28 Temmuz

## LAL BATMAN Cherry on Top

1 Ağustos - 18 Ağustos

## HANEFİ YETER Hâl-bu-ki

23 Ağustos - 8 Eylül

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# The gaze Murat Akagündüz's painting

Gate 27, established in 2019 as an artist residency programme, has been preparing all its infrastructure, operations and programmes in line with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals 11, 12, 13 and 16 since its foundation, focusing on building stronger institutions in the light of cities and communities, climate crisis and environment, responsible production and consumption, peace and justice by encouraging interdisciplinary work. Gate 27 Ayvalık, which hosts artists and researchers who have reached a certain point in their careers and want to intensify their projects in seclusion, hosted Murat Akagündüz during May. We talked to the artist about his time spent in Ayvalık and his reflections on his works

Interview: Merve Akar Akgün  
Photos: Yavuz Civelek  
Courtesy of Gate 27



During your residency, you wanted to create installations using displaced or dead olive trees at Gate 27's space in Ayvalık, but plans changed. How did the relationship between what was in your head and the environment you were in, and the time you spent in Ayvalık reflect on your work?

Yes. I had forgotten that olive trees are popularly called "immortal trees". I saw destroyed olive trees, but all of them were alive... It would have been murder to touch them when I wanted to create a massive form! I wanted to work on a traditional form that was formed only for function, but it didn't work out, so I went back to painting. The Kaz Mountains and Ayvalık are places I love very much, both with their sea and islands. It stretches from the south-east of the Edremit Gulf to the west towards the sea. Ayvalık forms an inland sea with Midilli and Babakale Cape. The weather changes very often. Sometimes the wind doesn't know where to blow from... My location was on the tip of a peninsula, quite isolated. I could see Ayvalık, piece by piece... I was at the tip of the peninsula along the coast opposite Cunda. I was looking at a strait... A beauty that is a gift. A place in motion, where everything is in movement, transition, encounter. But what seemed to be a state of harmony also carried a mutually resisting tension. Considering that it was an important transit point for migration movements, it was also a witness to extraordinary tragic scenes.

The differentiated understanding of law between nature and human beings occupies an important place in your recent art. As a "subject", you open your central position in the human view of nature to investigation. This is also a courageous act. I would like to know your thoughts on philosophical approaches such as Chthulucene (Donna Haraway), which no longer only agency human beings but also all the elements that make up nature.

Haraway's philosophy is an answer to the paradox formed by the proposition "Man is a perverted being detached from nature" and the proposition "a being who thinks what he thinks"; I agree with this approach. The four hundred thousand year old story we have been assuming came from the rule of law that protected man against nature. Perhaps we can think of the last five thousand years, beginning with writing, as the struggle to become "human" and then "subject". This is a great and gratifying achievement. Now it does not seem easy for the "subject" to renounce this acquired right. I think this is the biggest point of resistance. We should deepen the view that the concept of equality should be between species, races, classes, religious identities, ethnic identities, sexual identities, with the fact that equality is already inevitably directed towards the whole of life. I first heard the words of neurologist Türker Kılıç, whom I had been following in the years before the pandemic, in his seminar on Connective Wholeness, that "matter has consciousness". How close are we to Haraway's idea of equality, kinship, socialization, the idea of life accepting mortality and the joy that comes with it? I think of the words of a composer whose name, unfortunately, I cannot remember: "he who does not live does not die". And the sentence "it is as if our eyes were given to us so that we cannot see the real reality".

Thinking about the paper and lead materials you use in your works, do you have critical thoughts about the material consumption of art?

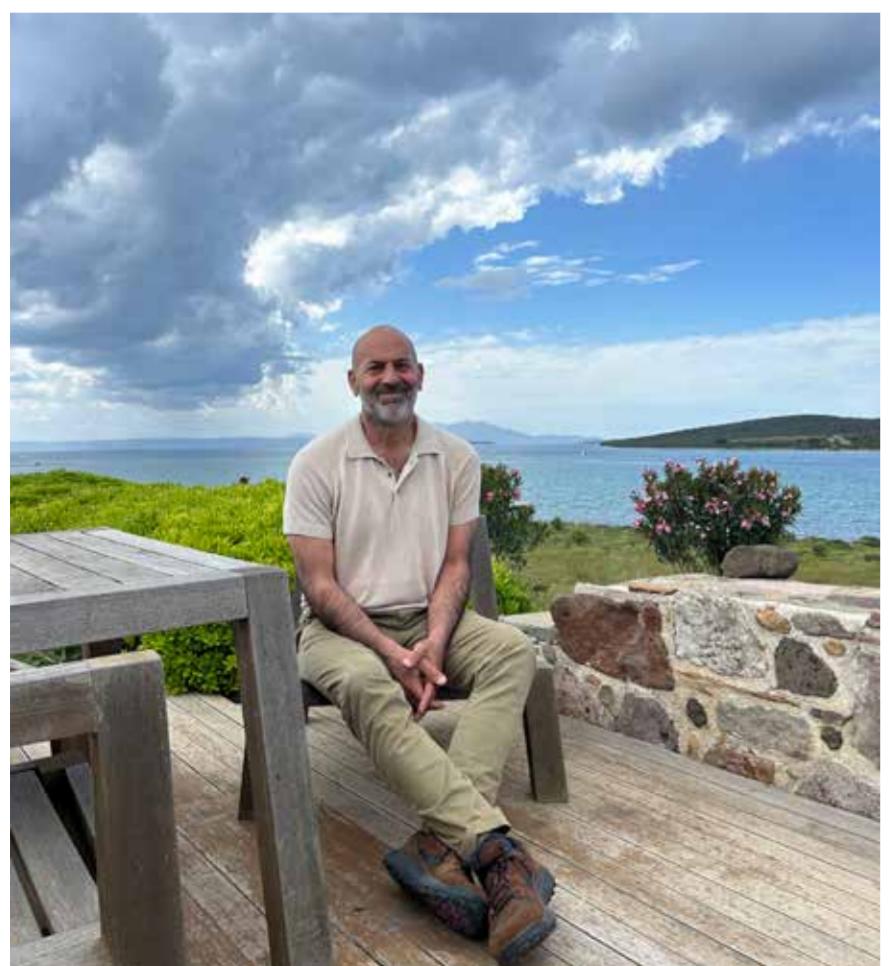




No, I am not. This is my preference for now. When I was making the Kaf paintings, I wanted to pull back the illusion of representation as much as possible. I wanted to paint the image of the Earth designed with satellite images, that is, the image of a digital data, to deconstruct it in a way. I tried to make the point where the viewer is positioned in front of the painting ambiguous. Mountain ranges painted white on a white tone! They were paintings that forced the perception between tones. The retreat I am talking about is the surface for me, finally the whole act is there. Surface, medium and body. The idea of the equality of these three became important for me. Each one seems to owe its existence to the other. Paper is important to me because it holds the possibility of making the plane behind it visible. The front and the back of the painting can be in a kind of relationship. Paper as the surface where the planes where perspective works in two directions meet.

Do we see a reflection of your interest in seafaring in the works you produce here? It marks the moment of intersection in the relationship between the seer, the seen and the signifier. Nazlı Pektaş called it a kind of world depiction in her workshop article. Is depicting the world one of the aims of your art practice?

As a metaphor, the sea is a kind of retreat for me. You look at the land we are familiar with from the horizon. It is another look besides watching the moon. It contains mutual fear, helplessness, vitality and all kinds of possibilities together. Beaudelaire describes the attraction of the sunset as "our curiosity for what we do not know behind it". The same happens when we look from the horizon to the land.



The slight difference here, perhaps, is that it also harbors our suspicion of familiar shores... The sea reminds us again and again that we are on the earth, as a constantly moving surface, your position is uncertain, unlike on land. You are in a relative place. This indeterminate place that establishes the gaze in my paintings perhaps comes from here in a way. Each of us actually creates worlds with our imaginations and we live in those worlds. Piece by piece with what we sense, with our intuitions... I am also involved in this.

**How would you describe the boundary you call "letting go where connotations turn into form"?**

My paintings are not about an outcome, they are formed in the flow of a process. Here one can speak of a bodily representation. A collection of gestures, diagrams... On the surface, the factors that make up the repetitive verbs stimulate, but do not generate emotion. Words, dreams and their accompaniments. With the psychology of the mind this is impossible. As the linear repetitions in the paintings continue, a tendency towards an associative whole form begins on the surface. Some of its representations evoke or invoke fantasy. This narrows and restricts the possible possibility of differentiation in the process of painting. As the painting progresses, it wants to emerge and tension arises. I think this is where I left the painting.

**There is a work you made on the duralite that washed up on the shore. How is this sub-meaning incorporated into your work and is it something you aim to convey to the viewer?**

There are items belonging to migrants found on almost every shore and island in Ayvalık. Scattered, broken into pieces, washed ashore... Floating life jackets of various kinds, wood, composite materials... They are in use for the needs of the people around... They are transformed in everyday life as objects that carry the memory of the current tragedies. Fences, stairs, stools, tables, chests and other things... Some of them gain transformation value. Some of them become works of art... I used it as a surface for painting. But I still have a hard time coping with the thought of the conditions under which the lithium batteries we use are extracted... I brought the duralite I found to my studio. Somehow I worked with the duralite I hadn't lost since I was a student for years. Now I have another one. It is included in the painting as another surface under the painting paper. When I apply pressure, its texture becomes vaguely visible on the surface. I find these acceptable within a totality of movements. It adds a sense of togetherness in the sense of equalization I mentioned above. I did not aim to make migration and migrants the subject, to articulate and convey in terms of storytelling. Contact is our life, some are remembered, some are forgotten, they are carried.

**We talked about the concept of interconnectedness. Is it possible to think of this as something that defines your practice?**

I have long been excited by the idea that everything is interrelated. This idea has created an empirical space for me, not in the sense of truth or transcendence, but in the sense of reconsidering the reality we are in. A break in the way we deal with objects and concepts. What we call vitality, what we call mortality! In the relationship between surface, medium and body, I created moving paintings that consider the possibility of consciousness being replaced by physiology. The idea that life itself is a relationship of connected wholeness that is unacceptable with the classical scientific approach, that science is incapable of proving, but which is confirmed by experience. It is also exciting with its closeness to Haraway's philosophy! But looking back at myself today, I am still aware of my sense of self, I know that I carry a resistance to the idea of equality that comes from my subjectivity. I am trying to internalize the fact that "matter has consciousness". I am practicing with an intuitive perception, perhaps to be tamed through painting. Like preparing for an invitation I will never attend. I paint not for a relationship or a dialog, but alone, to know where I stand...

**You call your works in which we try to grasp the world with possibilities, either composition or deconstruction. Can you explain this a little bit?**

To construct, to build a structure, to disassemble and organize. If we think of modernism as an absolute, construction is the "form" of the system: It categorizes, establishes hierarchy. Deconstructionists were skeptical of this absolutism and established the logic of dismantling. The Cubists were the first to do this... When we think of painting not in terms of the end result but in terms of being in the process, the concepts of construction and deconstruction, of building or deconstructing, become different. Balance, imbalance or harmonization and non-harmonization seem to come to the fore.

Erinç Seymen, Isimsiz, 2022,  
Kağıt üzerine mürkepeli kalemler  
ve kuru boyası, CNC kesim  
çerçeve, müze camı, 75 x 88 x 8 cm

# Kipuka

## Erinç Seymen



18.5. — 2.8.2024

**Young Fresh Different Miami**  
28 Haziran - 23 Ağustos, 2024

Addison Wolff, Alberto Alejandro Rodriguez, Amanda Linares, Anna Morelli, Chantae Elaine Wright, Chloe Sailor, Ernesto Gutiérrez Moya, Katelyn Kopenhaver, Liz Beltran, Luna Palazzolo-Daboul, Mariana Angel, Marilyn Lodzi, Smita Sen, Susana Kim Alvarez, Zoe Schweiger

Zilberman Miami



**Pondering Provenance**  
17 Mayıs - 6 Temmuz, 2024

Marianna Christofides, Itamar Gov, Judith Raum, Simon Wachsmuth

Küratör: Lotte Laub & Lusin Reinsch

Zilberman Berlin

**Ev Başladığın Yerdir**  
2 Mayıs - 13 Temmuz, 2024

Hera Büyüktasçıyan, Guido Casaretto, Lucia Tallová

Küratör: Nazlı Yayla

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# Leap into the Future

**Yanköşé Contemporary Art Project by Kahve Dünyası**



Sena Başöz' project *Leap into the Future* revolves around bodies of young and healthy athletes, incarnating the future of the newly founded Republic, clipped out of photographs from the Yapı Kredi Historical Archive Selahattin Giz Collection. Encompassing 35,000 photographs, for the most part taken, and merely collected for the remaining proportion by Selahattin Giz (1914-94) himself, this collection is extremely significant in terms of documenting the social, economic, and political atmosphere in the country in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Titled *Leap into the Future*, this work derives its inspiration from *Leap into the Void* (1960), the iconic photographic work by French artist Yves Klein. It blends the staging, and emancipating sensation, sparked by the movement that emanates from Klein's photograph with the pictures of athletes Başöz recovered from within the archive.

Dear Sena, the tenth work to be exhibited at contemporary art project Yanköşé belongs to you. Could you tell us how the production process that enabled this work to materialise unfolded, and how the idea first came up?

Through all my works, I investigate the notion of healing. I give a lot of consideration to such phenomena as competing against oneself, against one another and against time, and bring into question the idea of linear progress. We live based on the idea of racing our way forward. But in fact, such a frame of mind is not compatible with the true rhythm, and grand order of life. That is why I often find my way into my practice. I have created performances and video works where I performed the wrong sport in the wrong place, and investigated the implications of such frictions. In 2023, I had a solo exhibition titled *Possibilities of Healing* at YKKS. In the scope of the preparation process ahead of the exhibition, I was invited by curators Burcu Çimen and Didem Yazıcı to delve into the Yapı Kredi Historical Archive, Selahattin Giz Collection, so as to revivify this material on the occasion of the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Republic by conducting research and reflection on its contents with a contemporary mindset. The 35,000 photographs, for the most part taken, and merely collected for the remaining proportion by Giz himself, which

make up this collection are extremely significant in terms of documenting the social, economic and political atmosphere in the country in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This collection was configured so that it could be scanned by thematic files. I examined approximately 12,000 photographs. I started to notice that some threads reappeared cyclically across those files: pictures of celebrations, ceremonies, military/safety exercises, social events, natural disasters and pictures reflecting the spirit of those times documenting a story of national progress and development... Eventually, I chose to focus on the recurring files titled "sports". The numerous monuments that were built in the early years of the Republic often feature young athletes. Oftentimes carrying either flags or torches, these young and healthy bodies were intended to represent the bright future of the newly established Republican regime. Wherever we may be, the official historical narrative changes and transforms according to whoever is in power. As an artist, what and how do we remember and the way we memorialise it falls within the scope of my interests. Looking backwards from the point where we currently stand, the history of Turkey is laden with sharp fractures. Undoubtedly, these developments also obey a cycle of their own. The fact remains that throughout these ruptures, the idealistic young people who willingly took responsibility for the future upon their shoulders paid a particularly heavy price. For the sake of precision, I am talking about young people who acted over different time periods, on the basis of widely disparate views. I happen to view the body as an archive. Which is also why I have recently turned to practices such as the Somatic Experiencing Therapy, whose aim is to heal traumas through a body-oriented approach, or the Skinner Releasing Technique, which intends to unlock and awaken spontaneity and creativity by releasing held-back energies accumulated tensions and habitual body-mind patterns. Drawing inspiration from such practices, I was eager to liberate the young bodies which I saw in the photographs from the crushing load of the future. While combing through the collection, the dive of a swimmer in one specific photograph immediately reminded me of *Leap into the Void*, the iconic photographic work by French artist Yves Klein. Every time I cast a look at



it, this work gives me a jolt. I am awe-stricken by the relaxed expression Klein wears on his face as he leaps from the top of a building towards an asphalt road, about to crash into the ground. I, too, wanted to emphasise the courage of the youth in the face of an unknown future, which is why I headed for the bodies of athletes, caught while in mid-air in moments of sheer freedom from gravity. I proceeded to cut these bodies out of their context and placed them on display in the main exhibition space at YKKS. The title I gave to this work was *Leap into the Future*, as a reference to Klein's. Almost a year later, I have now adapted and adjusted my work once more for Yanköşé. I was very excited at the prospect that *Leap into the Future* would approximate to a gigantic public monument at Yanköşé. These young people float freely in the air, like birds. They are no longer competing, neither against themselves, nor against one another or against time. Their tracks are neither linear nor progress-oriented. Instead, they follow a cyclic motion, on the route that they trace for themselves, in their own time.

This project, which focuses on the healthy youth of the (itself) young Republic, presents us with a number of athletes photographed while in action. On the other hand, not only are these photographs black and white, but some among them even appear significantly blurred due to the technology employed at the time. Looking at these photographs under that light, I am inclined to think that these figures, although promising bright hope and future, also convey a form of pessimism. Was this selection a conscious choice on your part in that sense or were these technicalities purely coincidental?

True: these photographs are black and white, sometimes blurred or blotched; some of the young athletes they represent were caught while executing a strenuous movement, wearing a tense expression on their faces. No matter how hard *Leap into the Future* wishes to disencumber the young bodies appearing on those photographs from the burden of the future, in reality, what has occurred simply has, once and for all. What would be the point of attempting to heal the past, i.e. what has already come to pass? The history of the Republic bears the traces of many young

people who have had to pay a dear price for their ideals. You are absolutely right in perceiving a pessimistic overtone in these photographs, because this work actually mourns these young persons. I just came to this realization now, thanks to your asking this question. However, we should also keep the following in mind: reiterating the past always implicates the future as well. So, yes: on the one hand, this work is a form of mourning aimed towards the past, but on the other, it yearns to achieve weightlessness and emancipation sometime in the future.

The works you create often consist of reiterations of previous materials, materials that could be described as highly sensitive; however, performance is also an element that frequently appears in your practice, whether through video recordings or live. There is definitely an air of fixed performance to your work now hung at Yanköşé; did you specifically select these photographs within the archive out of such a pre-developed habit?

In trying to regenerate what has become frozen, I explore the relationship between healing and movement. Every archive essentially turns motionless and dead unless it is being interacted with. By placing them on the wall, as if caught in one moment from their performances, I wanted to summon and set in motion this group of athletes, who have long passed from this world, once again and under different conditions. In some of my previous performance and video works, I have found such sport disciplines as swimming, fencing and skiing slalom to be a source of inspiration. I either enacted these performances myself or collaborated with other performance artists. In the present case, I indeed designed this performance moment with the help of static images which captured motion.

In recent years, it appears that working on archives has become ever more prominent in your practice, while care and attention are key concepts you have been contemplating. From an outsider's point of view, I should think that these are precisely the problematics at stake when delving into an archive. I wonder if this impression of mine is correct: how did the idea of exploring archives take shape?

My reflection on the notions of care and attention undoubtedly has a lot to do with my becoming interested in the archive. In exploring the ramifications of the notion of healing, I scout for ways to interact with what remains inaccessible, and to experimentally regenerate what is considered frozen-dead-stale-lost. That is why I frequently work with archives, which form the only tangible material standing halfway between life and death. In other words, the interests which I pursue ineluctably lead me towards archives. Archives themselves stand before us motionless, waiting to be revived. As a matter of fact, I have attempted to revive my own personal archive, and used archive as a material in a broader sense, from the very onset of my practice. However, the realization that I was in fact working with an archive first occurred clearly in my mind on the occasion of my installation, titled *Fürüğ* (Forough), which I realised by photographing taxidermied birds from the St. Joseph High School Natural Sciences Museum Collection for my solo exhibition *On Lightness*, held at Depo (2018). This work prompted me to fathom the fact that one may hold on to an archive after sustaining loss. Creating and upkeeping an archive itself requires a tremendous amount of time and effort. As for revivifying one, it necessitates profound interest as well as genuine and intense care. I experienced all of this first-hand while working on the creation of the 23.5 Hrant Dink Memory Space at the Hrant Dink Foundation.

Your works have been exhibited exclusively in closed spaces up until now; what are your thoughts on having a work displayed in a public space?

This is absolutely thrilling for me. Especially after having examined public monuments so closely during the incubation of the conceptual framework for *Leap into the Future*, the fact that this work be exhibited in a public space completes a delightful cycle. I also think that the adaptation of this work to such dimensions and an outdoor space will significantly enrich its context. Besides, apart from context-related considerations, this is my first work ever to be exhibited in a public space and in such dimensions. I am learning a lot as it is from this fresh experience for me. On top of that, the fact that my art should reach an audience that is not strictly limited to art viewers is something I have always longed for, and been quite curious as to the results of. I remember how passers-by used to stop in front of Vahit Tun's installation here, and remained caught in its contemplation for long periods of time.

How does it feel, having a work of your making exhibited for the next 6 months on a giant, 260 m<sup>2</sup> wall in Kabataş, one of the areas with the busiest pedestrian and vehicle traffic in Istanbul; is there anything you are particularly worried or excited about?

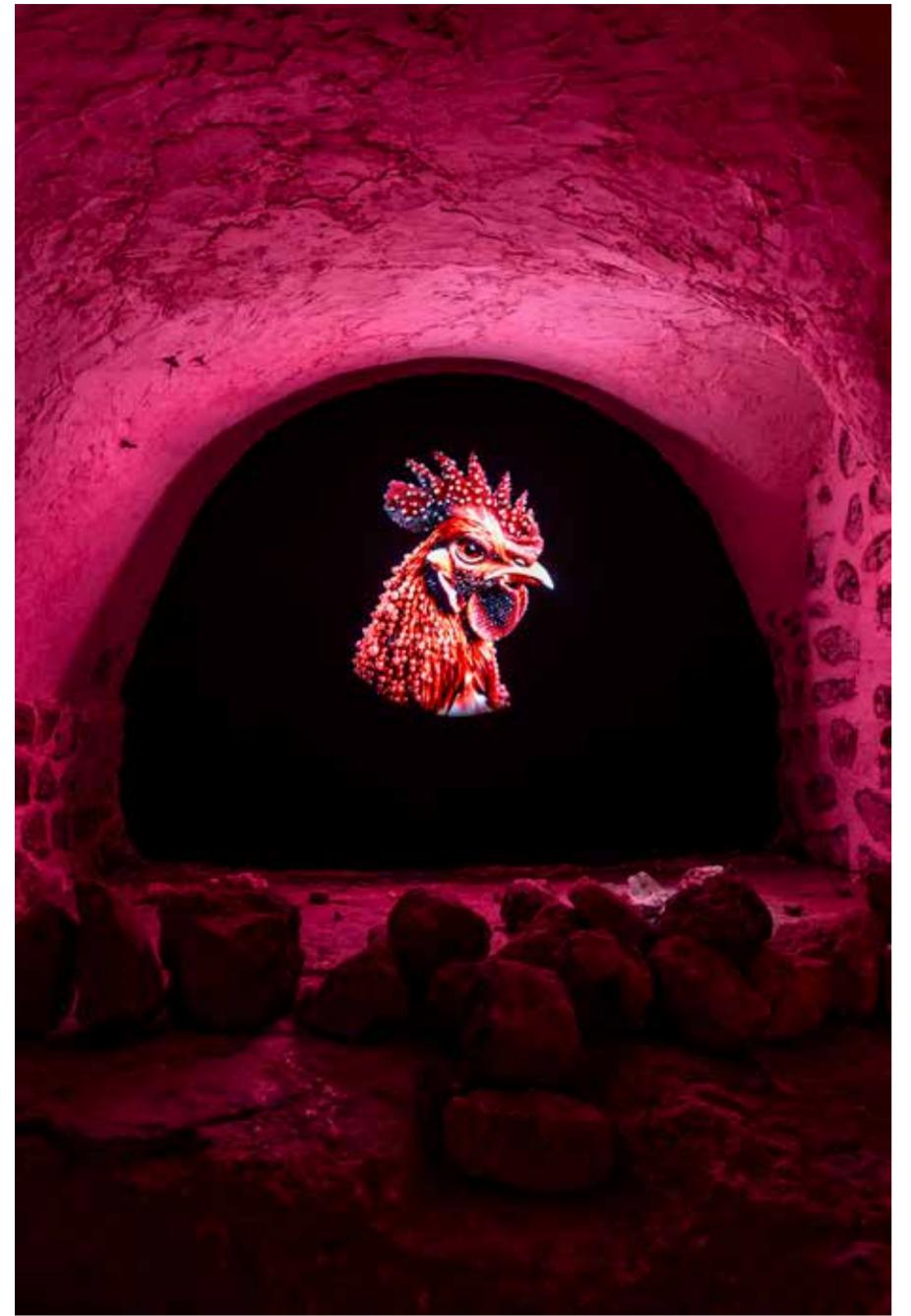
My studio being located in Kabataş, I have passed by Yanköşé since its inception, and kept track of all the works successively hosted there. Yanköşé is a project that I am particularly fond of. I am delighted to be a part of this series.

I would like to enquire a little bit more about you personally. You are someone who, like myself, and despite your undergraduate education in an altogether different field, has shifted directions quite a lot before finding your way into the art world. Do you consider that this different education which you received has had any particularly positive or negative effects on your progression?

I wasn't bold enough to go to art school, and chose to study economics instead. Afterwards, I had a corporate experience finance for 3.5 years. That experience frustrated me so much that I was in fact brimming with inspiration, and even began producing my very first videos while in the office. I took the decision to buy a video camera for myself, and started documenting my surroundings. When making these initial videos, I didn't have an exhibition to prepare for, or a particular circle to show them to. I started to produce art works merely to survive in an environment where I strongly felt I didn't belong. The healing power of expression was what kept me alive, and that is how I ended up stepping into this field. Healing became central to my artistic research. Later, my office videos turned into my application file to Bard College. Although it was very harsh for me at the time when I experienced it, in retrospect, this period actually enabled me to grasp what I deeply wanted in life, where I really should go, and what I truly held dear. I often create fictional moments, which I might even call surreal. As a matter of fact, these flying athletes from the archive, grouped as they are together like birds, might be regarded as yet another example of this. Studying economics has been beneficial in that sense, as it has enabled me to realise how head-on the relationship between fiction and reality is. We used to start our economics papers with fictional situations.

As an artist, you possess plenty of experience in residency programmes, which is also the reason for our personal acquaintance. In your view, are these programmes as useful for artists as they once may have been, especially considering how easy access to information, institutions and individuals has become thanks to the technological means available to us today?

I was born in 1980, I feel compelled to say. I still take handwritten notes in my diary with a fountain pen. All joking aside, I am convinced that the biggest contributions residency programmes can provide to artists consist in the time, resources and new encounters they supply them with. Resources may be granted from a distance whereas simply existing inside one space, entirely devoted to art, with the least possible distraction, is a very powerful and stimulating experience. A marvelous gift... Besides, due to how Turkey's particularly intense agenda constantly pulls one down, it is also very nurturing to take a step away and observe yourself from the outside. Being reminded that there are other worlds, other discourses, other productions out there... Aren't face-to-face encounters entirely different? Of course, it is also good to have technological means that allow for the continuity of these relationships once established as well. 



Ahmet Rüstem Ekici &amp; Hakan Sorar, A Computable Loop, 2024, AI made video

**Invited: Unified**, curated by Ebru Nalan Sülün, was presented at the independent art space *EXIT Kolektif* as part of the 6th Mardin Biennial. The exhibition featured works by Mehmet Çimen, Ahmet Rüstem Ekici & Hakan Sorar, and Cansu Sönmez, marking the inaugural exhibition of *EXIT* Collective. Following the closure of the biennial and the exhibition, we conducted interviews with the curator Ebru Nalan Sülün and the four artists, and published special experimental essays on their works

and his significance to the city, it was crucial to include Mehmet Çimen in this narrative and exhibition. Mehmet Çimen has been instrumental as our guide in understanding Mardin through our discussions and study sessions. Our goal was to explore, discuss, witness, and deeply experience Mardin, which serves as the central theme of our work. Through this process, we have been energized, learned from each other, and engaged in a productive sharing and creative process together.

**What were your expectations from the concept of commons that gave the exhibition its name and how did you hope to create a collaborative environment between the artists?**

*Invited: Unified* is an exhibition project within the scope of the biennial that emphasizes hospitality. During the conceptualization of the exhibition, my aim was to delve deeply into Mardin and to narrate the city's story from the past to the future, extending from the exhibition space to the streets and public areas. It became evident that Mardin possesses an inherent unity, a conceptual thread that permeated all stages of the project. This unity, discovered in Mardin, manifested in the interconnectedness of materials used, the diversity spanning traditional ceramic techniques to artificial intelligence, and the harmonious blend of these elements. It was reflected in how the works related to the exhibition space, in the narrative language employed, and in bridging the past with the future, as well as in the connection between the viewer and the artworks. Following reading and teaching sessions with artists about Mardin, we embarked on several expeditions within the city. Prior to our arrival, we documented the corners we wished to explore, the historical sites to visit, the people to meet, and the experiences to absorb. In Mardin, ancient sites like the city of Dara, its water cisterns, and the 5th-century Assyrian monastery Deyrulzafaran left profound impressions on us. For instance, the monastery's construction atop a four-thousand-year-old Temple of the Sun exemplifies the significant interactions shaping our understanding of the concept of "commons". We conducted oral history studies and dialogues on the cultural and urban history of Old Mardin. Our focus was particularly on Mardin's multilingual and multi-religious fabric, its cultural stratification, and its resilience in preserving heritage through the ages. We encountered residents who uphold ancient beliefs and observed rituals of various faiths still practiced today. Our research and readings were enriched by the city's relationship with the sun, which casts its light behind every doorway, leading us to explore the Shamsis and their contemporary beliefs and rituals. We engaged with locals who continue these traditions. Our investigations also delved into the city's geographical and ecological aspects, examining how Mardin interacts with its natural environment. All these explorations unfolded in harmony, inspiring the works featured in the exhibition. I would like to express my gratitude to our guide, Lokman Açıł, whose expertise provided invaluable insights. The sense of "commonality" encountered throughout Mardin greeted us in its layered cultural elements, the city's dialogue with the sun and nature, and its rich linguistic, religious, and social history. Drawing upon this greeting, we drew inspiration from the historical backdrop of our chosen exhibition space, shaping a multi-layered narrative that expanded across exhibition design, audience interaction with the artworks, the relationship between the street and the works, and the diverse range of materials and media employed. My expectation and goal from the artists was for them to join me in this journey of research and discovery, fostering a collaborative environment throughout the process. It surpassed my expectations and resulted in a profoundly enriching journey.

**How did you focus on issues such as the coexistence of materials among the artists, the commonality of the building with the city, and the meeting of the old and the new on a common ground? How did you guide the artists in creating space to touch the memory of the space and cultural memory?**

In the production of our works, the memory of the exhibition space proved as significant as Mardin's urban culture and the cult of the sun. Therefore, the exhibition was organized across four different spaces designed as installations integrated with the environment. Until the final day of installation, our understanding of the space's memory, what we were told, and our discoveries as a team continued to surprise us. The former owners of the house even attended our exhibition opening. They shared their childhood experiences in the house and their story of leaving 30 years ago, which further heightened our excitement. The space's memory was apparent from our first visit. It was impossible to ignore the details we encountered: bird nests in the cave room, hanging clotheslines, water cisterns under the rock floor, wells, a structure oriented towards the sun with closed windows and the interiors of closets. Artists used a narrative language combining traditional materials and artificial intelligence to transfer all that we watched and experienced into the production process. I would like to express gratitude to Borsanat and Missem Cammutlu, whose assistance allowed us to integrate the latest technological materials and devices into the exhibition space in Mardin. This support was crucial as advanced digital technologies were used across all works. In the installations spread across four different exhibition spaces and streets, we emphasized the harmonious blend of the past and the latest innovations. This methodology carries a metaphorical meaning, highlighting how deep and powerful narratives can develop through the "common" harmony of all differences from past to future. Understanding and learning through harmonious components, layering, and deepening without ignoring each other, we build a bridge to the future in this way: being common...



Ebru Nalan Sülün

## FOUR ARTISTS, ONE QUESTION

How were the historical textures and cultural richness of Mardin reflected in your works during the preparation process for the biennial and what was your relationship with space and materials during this process? Also, how did you integrate these elements with the present day, taking inspiration from different periods and geographies?

**Cansu Sönmez:** Exhibiting in Mardin was not just an art project but a journey of discovery. In the exhibition I was invited to, I had the opportunity to explore the traces of the past within the cultural layers of the city and to merge my stories with my future imaginings. We went door to door, gathering and digesting information from artisans, craftsmen, and artists. Our curator, Ebru Nalan Sülün, brought us all together under one roof, allowing us to touch the history, culture, and nature of the city and discover new connections. The relationship I established with the space and materials during this process was not just a physical interaction but also an intellectual bonding process. Mardin's historical texture and natural richness created both visual and semantic layers in my works. The concept of *Unified* added new dimensions to the meaning of togetherness in the practice of shared thinking. We experienced the excitement of touching Mardin's yellow stones, fine carvings, traces of civilizations, different languages, and religions in the powerful reflections of light.

The walls of the Deyrulzafaran Monastery, painted yellow with the use of saffron, demonstrated how history and nature are intertwined. The fact that the crocus family, to which the plant belongs, held special significance for the Hittites is an important indicator of nature's influence on culture. The festival of AN.TAH.ŞUM (ŞAR), which the Hittites celebrated with the blooming crocuses offered to the sun goddess, roughly translates to "May the sky increase our bulb". This ritual, which has survived from the Hittites, is still celebrated in Anatolia as the "crocus stroll". In my work *Robotik Zafaran*, I reinterpreted this historical element with a contemporary artistic approach. Plants with disrupted circadian cycles, whose existence today is uncertain, opened and closed at different intervals, adapting to the space. In the structure I created by amorphizing the stigmas of the saffron plant, I blended traces of the past with today's materials, combining them with components like leather, electronics, and mechanical elements made from ceramic and olive waste.

The piece titled *Closer* was specifically made for the niche you encounter upon entering the space. My choice of material for the lightbox representing the sun was influenced by olives, which are said to have spread around the world from Anatolia. The close-up images of the sun, its bulbous structure, its resemblance to human skin and barren lands led me to abstract the sun using vegan leather. Through my research, I discovered Oleatex, a company that produces leather from olive waste. Thus, the surface of the work was made from this new, sustainable material: olive leather. This choice of material strengthened the historical ties with the presence of the Derik olive of Mardin, located within Upper Mesopotamia.

The two-minute artificial intelligence video titled *Circadian Unraveling*, located directly opposite *Closer* and *Robotik Zafaran*, begins with a close-up of the sun's physical structure. The sun, united with the olive, falls to the ground and turns into saffron, meeting Deyrulzafaran, symbolizing the return of a plant that existed in the past to its rightful place. The video closes with the depiction of a duality that either dissolves and disappears or scatters its seeds after being seen in Deyrulzafaran, a man-made area, serving as a reference to the era of capitalism.

**Mehmet Ciwen (Çimen):** As an artist from Mardin, opening an exhibition here has

# The Common Quartet: A dialog between traditional and modern

Text and interview: Ceylan Önalp

Could you tell us about the process of being invited to the exhibition, which was organized for the second time as part of the Mardin Biennial?

**Ebru Nalan Sülün:** I was invited by the directors of the Mardin Biennial, dear Döne Otyam and Hakan Irmak. This year, for the first time, the Invited project was organized with a curated exhibition model. As a curator who was "invited" and thus "hosted," I was naturally very excited. The main reason for my excitement was the opportunity to participate in an exhibition in Mardin. Previously, I had contributed as a writer to the 5th Mardin Biennial and had the chance to delve deeper into the city. Mardin is a city that has managed to preserve the traces of its ancient past to this day, embodying its multi-layered structure with rich linguistic, religious, and cultural elements—factors that have always left a lasting impression on me.

I began the preparation process for the exhibition by studying the texts of Ali Akay, this year's biennial curator. It was crucial for me to grasp and analyze the conceptual perspective of the biennial that I was part of as a guest curator. Subsequently, I embarked on an extensive reading journey about Mardin. During these readings, I believed that many answers to the questions posed in the biennial's curatorial text were hidden within Mardin itself. One of the most remarkable aspects of Mardin's multi-layered structure is its ability to coexist despite

differences and to preserve its culture within this context. With an understanding of these dynamics, I initiated my work through the research process.

**What were your criterias and priorities while choosing the artists you will work with in this exhibition?**

My priority in the exhibitions I curate is always to unite the works, spaces, themes, and methods in a way that serves an educational mission. In this exhibition, my main goal was to delve deeply into Mardin, to explore all facets of the city, and to make visible our discoveries. Therefore, I ensured that the artists I invited to the exhibition shared this historical sensitivity and enthusiasm for research. My aim was to integrate contemporary artistic narrative methods with the richness of the past, much like the multi-layered communal structure observed in Mardin. Ahmet Rüstem Ekici and Hakan Sorar are artists whom I have long followed and admired for their ability to blend cutting-edge technologies with historical sensitivity. Cansu Sönmez is another artist I admire for her innovative works exploring themes of city, nature, and ecology, and her profound sensitivity to history and research. Additionally, Mehmet Çimen, an independent artist from Mardin and a former student of mine, is also featured in the exhibition. I have witnessed firsthand Mehmet Çimen's deep connection with Mardin reflected in his artistic production and life. Given these connections

always been a unique experience. I have been a part of this event for many years as the exhibition coordinator of the Mardin Biennial, which was held for the sixth time this year. Historically significant places, registered buildings, and these magnificent structures filled with historical stones can overwhelm the works when not used correctly, making the search for deeper meaning difficult. This is an experience we have encountered in other historical places outside Mardin as well. Mardin's strong texture and architecture can sometimes make it challenging to integrate artworks into spaces. Ebru Nalan Sülün's guidance was invaluable, especially with her understanding of the city's art dynamics. In this biennial, I aimed to represent the multicultural structure with a new work. My production process was shaped by the influence of other artists' works, and it was crucial to use cultural layers correctly.

While the artists who came to Mardin for the first time discovered the city's cultural riches, I had the opportunity to rediscover my city through the details they highlighted. These cultural riches can sometimes captivate artists, and in this context, I focused on the land. The land, which has witnessed wars and provided bread in return for labor, drew me in even more. Mesopotamia is where the "first" story of the past began. Utilizing the impressive architectural space available at Exit Kolektif, I blended my work with sound, light, and video, designing it as an experiential area that transforms with each viewer.

I integrated my polyphonic and layered work, inspired by the Ancient City of Dara, with the story of this place, which is now a rock tomb area that attracts tourists. It became a changing canvas where thousands of footprints seemed to wander over thousands of bodies. I created my work called *Hybrid Lands* with the texture, echo, and smell of the place, along with sound, light, and video installation.

**Ahmet Rüstem Ekici & Hakan Sorar:** Looking at a city from a distance and then being invited there always has deep meaning for us, allowing us to add new lenses to our perspective. In our work, while we generally reconstruct the past with digital tools, we try to explore the bonds humanity has established with design, architecture, and nature. In this context, we have been following Mardin and the Mardin Biennial with interest for many years, but we had not yet had the opportunity to visit. The joint exhibition, which we attended upon the invitation of Ebru Nalan Sülün, brought us closer to the city with new perspectives. With the help of Mehmet Çimen, we established a deeper bond with the city. Hundreds of questions went through our minds as we produced the works: What are we trying to say to the future while editing the past with digital tools? What can we discover about humanity's connections with design, architecture, anthropometry, skeuomorphism, and nature by breaking out of today's patterns and exploring the possibility of the past as fiction?

To answer these questions, we pursued the shadows and faint traces of the Shamsids, who once worshipped the sun. In the lower layers of Anatolian religious structures, we traced the sun temples that became the foundation for subsequent religious buildings. The sun-like patterns seen in the stonework on Mardin's facades guided us. These patterns, carved on the facades, created a different contrast with the sharp shadows cast by the sun and were perceived in new ways with the dancing light of the atmosphere. Mardin is a city deeply connected to optical illusions. Therefore, we tried to create new layers in the city by directing light, leaving traces, and exploring illusions and virtual imprints, both visible and invisible. Being invited to Mardin provided us with unforgettable experiences related to light, control mechanisms, boundaries, and layers. Throughout history, humanity has mapped protrusions on the plain, settled, destroyed, divided, left traces, and migrated. Mardin, with its rich history, nestled in our hearts like a stone, yet also brought us solace and tied us to itself.

We incorporated our work *In a Computable Loop* into the space using hologram fan technology to manipulate light. The illusion created by 2880 pixels rotating at a certain speed generated layers of sound, wind, and light. This piece was designed with artificial intelligence tools, reflecting on the culture of votive offerings and sacrifices.

Our work *Shadow Structure* was formed by compressing Mardin soil and positioned like a sundial on a stalagmite, with 3D clay-printed fired ceramics. Inspired by Mesopotamia, this structure celebrated shadows with its light-permeable and inviting doors.

*Theatrum Mundi - A Shadow, A Trace, A Movement* emerged as a piece questioning experience, control mechanisms, and boundaries. By scanning the space with 3D scanning methods, we virtually opened closed windows and invited the light inside. With the contribution of Artun İmamoğlu, we directed light onto surfaces, creating an experience where viewers pass through and even dissolve the Mardin window bars within the architecture.

In our textile work *Temporary Layer*, we pursued spolii stones and stories using artificial intelligence and augmented reality tools. In this piece, we aimed to ask questions about virtual image superimposition and disappearance, memory, existence, and spatial occupation.



Cansu Sönmez, *Robotic Zafaran* and *Circadian Dissolution*

## ESSAYS

### A sensory journey in the footsteps of the sun: The Power of Plants

Cansu Sönmez

Plants have been an integral part of art since prehistoric times, continuing their existence as cognitive, cultural, and physical elements in our lives. Plants showcased with digital interventions in contemporary art practices have unlocked different layers of meaning and introduced new concepts to the viewer. This way, while our awareness of the plant world has increased, we have also had the opportunity to overcome plant blindness, a condition caused by our human-centered perspectives that we have carried from the past to the present.

The concept of plant blindness can be overcome through plant installations in contemporary art. In this sense, plant installations transform into spaces where biopower relations between humans and plants are discussed, and concepts of cultural memory and space are explored. We can also see that plants should not be defined solely by their aesthetic appearance. While understanding aesthetics from a purely visual perspective may suffice for analyzing man-made objects, living flora is multi-sensory, making visual perception alone inadequate. Nature aesthetics theorist Allen Carlson argues that the embodied aesthetics of plants do not revolve around sight alone and suggests that visual aesthetics can negatively impact the cultural value of flora. Carlson also emphasizes that analyzing art and nature are not separate disciplines. In landscape art, transforming the natural world into a set of designed objects presents a fundamental problem for contemporary environmental aestheticians and environmentalists. Plants are not static entities but living beings capable of change, evolution, and forming communities with other life forms. The multi-sensory aesthetic of flora prevents plants from being evaluated solely as visual works. Examining nature as a non-aesthetic model aligns with nihilistic views, while examining it as an aesthetic structure triggers pragmatic perspectives.

The assertion by aesthetic theorists that plants are living creatures open to sensory experiences encourages artists to explore this subject. In digital-based works, plants function as intermediaries, actors, or collaborators rather than mere aesthetic elements. In modern art, plants are positioned as a unifying and integrative interface. Thus, plant installations become dynamic, changing, and organic spaces. This concept aligns with Donna Haraway's idea of terrapolis, which explores the open, worldly, uncertain, and multi-temporal.

These concepts kept running through my mind while experiencing the works by Cansu Sönmez at the joint exhibition within the Mardin Biennial. That's why, in this article, I wanted to share with you the secret but obvious communication methods of plants. Based on this, let's take a closer look at Cansu Sönmez's kinetic installation, *Robotic Zafaran*, inspired by the saffron plant from the Deyrulzafaran Monastery. The monastery's yellow walls highlight the historical significance of saffron in the region. However, the existence of the saffron plant today is full of uncertainty. This uncertainty is brought to life with Sönmez's *Robotic Zafaran*, which dances with arrhythmic movements disrupted in its circadian cycle. Thus, the historical and symbolic significance of saffron is presented to the audience by blending it with modern materials in the artist's work. Additionally, the sun's role emerges as a significant theme in this piece. The sunrise and sunset deeply influence the architecture and culture of Mardin. The sun's light accentuates the yellow tones of the stones in the exhibition space, symbolizing the impact of plants on the life cycle. And Mardin's famous Derik olive. In her work titled *Closer*, the artist highlights the historical and cultural context of olives, taking the viewer on a visual and intellectual journey with vegan leather made from upcycled olive skin. Thus, the bond between plants and humans is made clear.

### Hybrid Lands: A poetic essay on sound and soil\*

Mehmet Ciwen

Hybrid Lands are the silent witness of Dara.

Hidden within the recesses of time, concealed with thousands of stories.

Right here, among the rock tombs, echoes the silent screams of the past.

Soil, the interpreter of forgotten memories, dances with history.

Don't casually dismiss the ground you tread upon as just soil!

This line keeps echoing in my mind –

The stories of those lying beneath the soil, memories that never fade,

Those who step onto these lands again are living witnesses to everything.

Sound and soil, they merge in time

As if it never happened.

\*These verses were crafted with ChatGPT's assistance as an homage to the artist's installation that blends the physical with the digital.

### A Diary Essay:

#### *I wonder what Heidegger would say about this?*

Ahmet Rüstem Ekici & Hakan Sorar

I last went to Mardin in the spring of 2005. We traveled from one end of Mesopotamia to the other with students from various countries of the world, in a city where seven languages and seven religions intersect. The uniqueness of the region, the lives lived together but separately, the expansion of the city vertically rather than horizontally, unlike other cities, and the traces left by the sun attracted my attention.

Seeing Mardin again during the biennial, known as the City of the Sun, both surprised and delighted me. I wondered if the sun was where I had left it? At least it was still burning until I set foot in the city. The sun seemed to say, "Welcome!" before hiding behind clouds and covering the city in rain. After a quick tour of the biennial, I arrived at the joint exhibition area. It wasn't yet open, but the installations were complete. Thanks to my acquaintance with the artistic team, I immediately felt at home. While preparing questions for the curator and artists team, I decided to give them space to freely express themselves. The exhibition showcased Mardin in its most natural and sincere form, reflecting diverse aspects yet together. It was a deeply meaningful exhibition unlike any I had seen in a long time. The space, the team, and the artworks were all interconnected!

I particularly want to highlight how Ahmet Rüstem Ekici and Hakan Sorar make you experience visually and audibly through their meticulously crafted works. Their redefinition of our perceptions of space, construction, habitation, thought, and plastic arts enlightened me like the sun illuminates the city. It provoked so much thought! On my return journey after 36 hours in Mardin, Heidegger's concepts of existence, space, world, and time filled my mind... Enough with the free associations now! It's time to put these thoughts into writing.

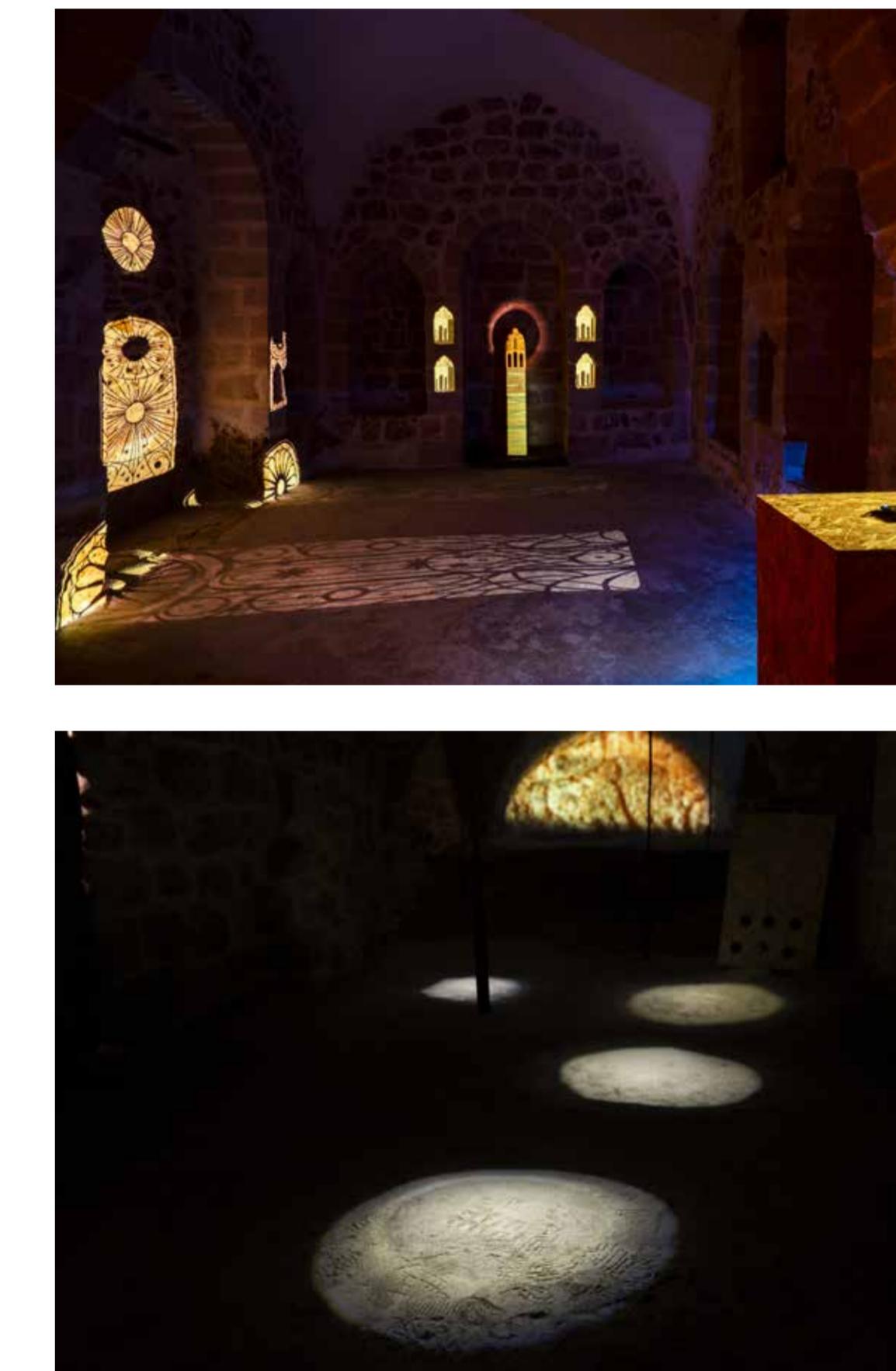
The collaborative works of Ahmet Rüstem Ekici and Hakan Sorar revive an abandoned place, literally creating a new world. This resurrection instantly brought Heidegger to mind. According to him, the world isn't merely a finite or infinite space, but a network that imparts meaning to relationships and their entirety. Humans, much like Mardin has existed for centuries, exist within this network of spatial relationships.

In our daily lives, we are always moving within and across spaces; everything has its place. Concepts such as top-bottom, front-back, far-near, vertical-horizontal constitute the natural spaces around us. The world encompasses the entirety of relationships between existing entities and humans. Man lives and resides in such a world, creating a shared space for himself.

So, what would Heidegger say about this? Gevift, meaning Four.

To dwell in the world isn't merely to occupy a place, but to coexist with the mortal, divine, earth, and sky. Man's relationship with time and existence owes itself to these four. Buildings too act as guardians of these elements; from the moment they are built, they house the dwelling of existence. Architectural and mechanical technologies serve as crucial aids in uniting the concept of the world with existence and time. It's Heidegger who says this, not me.

The Exit Kolektif building, hosting the joint exhibition, had been abandoned and was revived by the exhibition. Through the works of Ahmet Rüstem Ekici and Hakan Sorar, the coexistence of Mardin's architecture and cultures was reinvigorated in the reconstructed space. Fear not, we navigate this sea of profound thoughts! As Heidegger put it, I conclude this article by embracing the unbearable lightness of existence and the flow of time. 



Ahmet Rüstem Ekici & Hakan Sorar,  
*Shadow Structure*, 2024, clay printing  
with three-dimensional printer  
Mehmet Çimen, *Hybrid Territories*, 2024

# Curating as a way of thinking



Burcu Çimen ve Didem Yazıcı, Photo: Berk Kur

Interview: Merve Akar Akgün

**Curated by Burcu Çimen and Didem Yazıcı, the exhibition *Painting Today* continues at Yapı Kredi Gallery until August 11, 2024. The exhibition brings together the works of Ahu Akgün, Figen Aydıntaşbaş, Can Aytekin, Gökhun Baltacı, Taner Ceylan, Antonio Cosentino, Cansu Çakar, Timur Çelik, Fulya Çetin, Rojbin Ekinci, Eda Gecikmez, Leylâ Gediz, Tayfun Gülnar, Hakan Gürsoytrak, Onur Kılıç, İhsan Oturmak, Toygun Özdemir, Yağız Özgen, Deniz Pasha, Kirkor Sahakoğlu, Rugül Serbest, Yaz Taşçı, Sevil Tunaboylu, Derya Ülker, Gülnihal Yıldız, Nalan Yırtmaç, Ecem Yüksel and Erdoğan Zümrütoğlu. We talked to the curators of the exhibition about Yapı Kredi Culture and Arts' functioning as an art institution, the way *Painting Today* deals with painting practice and the curatorial process**

*Painting Today*, Exhibition view,  
Yapı Kredi Gallery, 2024.  
Photo: Kayhan Kaygusuz



You have been curating at the Yapı Kredi Gallery within YKKS and I have been observing that you have been transforming the gallery by bringing your own perspective to the gallery's exhibitions for some time now. Especially the recently opened painting exhibition, *Painting Today*, which will be open all summer, is an important indicator of how you keep your finger on the pulse of contemporary art. I would like to hear from both of you individually about your journey to get here and the vision you want to bring here.

**Didem Yazıcı:** In my 20s, I had short but intense experiences working in art institutions in Istanbul. When I think about it now, I better understand how much that period in the early 2000s kneaded me. I had the opportunity to be involved in the coordination of an exhibition process from A to Z at Hafriyat Karaköy, to get lost in artist archives while interning at Garanti Contemporary Art Center, as it was then called, to talk about art while giving exhibition tours at the 10th Istanbul Biennial, to keep collection inventory at Pera Museum, to write about art at Radikal Newspaper, and to closely observe the birth process of an exhibition while assisting independent curators. In Germany, where I went for curatorial training after school, I worked as both an institutional and independent curator for more than ten years. At that time, many things about curating were established in me, but deep down, my mind was always in Turkey. At Yapı Kredi Culture and Arts, I feel like I am back home.

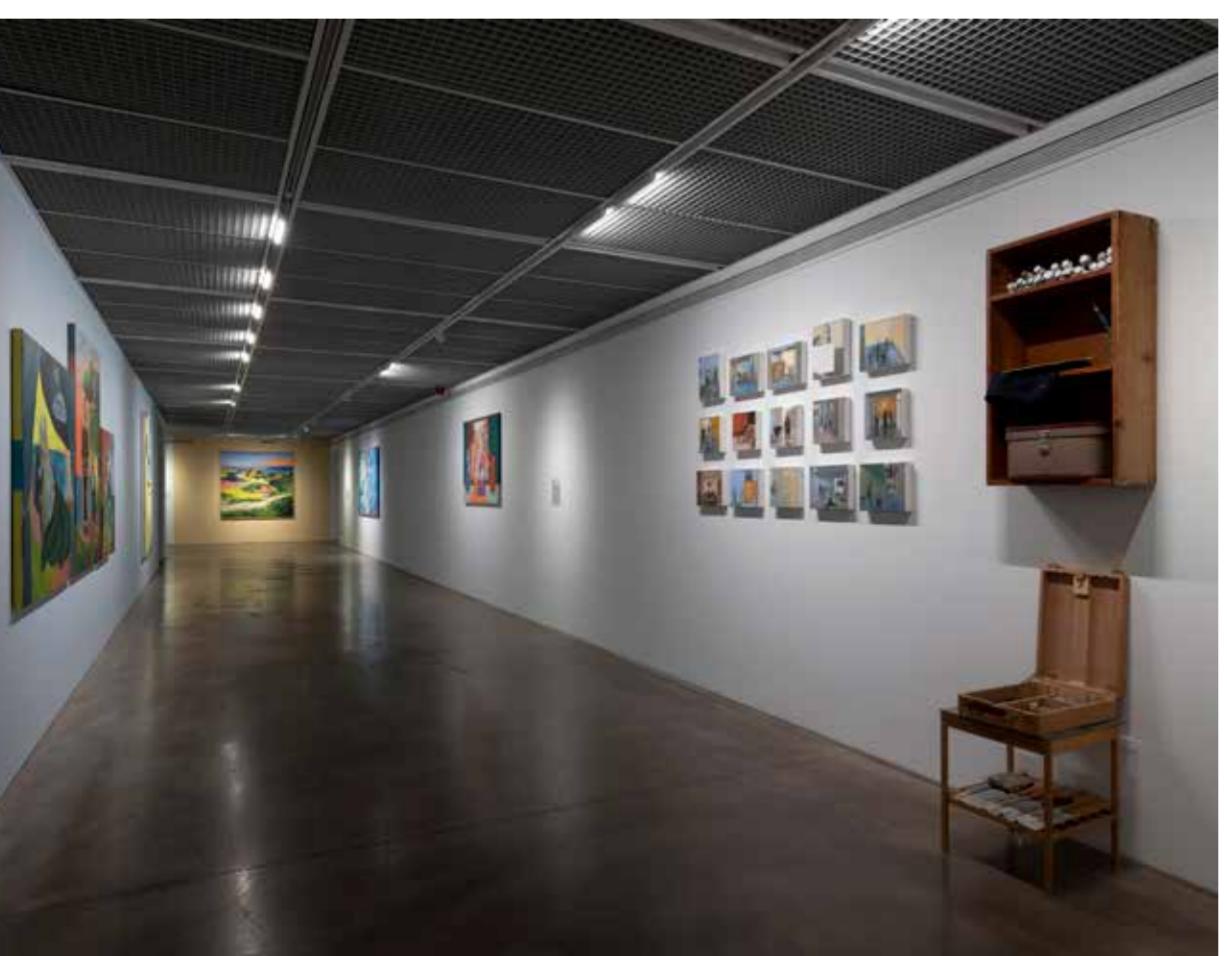
While I was in Germany, I was closely following the political fluctuations and artistic transformations in Turkey. I observed that the independent art spaces and artist initiatives that were effective in the early 2000s gradually gave way to a gallery-oriented atmosphere. Art, which changes according to social conditions, is also a field of struggle. Today, this is always at the forefront of my mind when I organize exhibitions.

When we construct the program of Yapı Kredi Gallery as a team, we are fed by the fact that curating is a way of thinking. We think about what certain works say when they are juxtaposed; the role of exhibition design in the reading of the exhibition; the co-construction of a correct language of representation in which the artist feels good; the audience of all ages, languages and social backgrounds feeling good in the gallery. We care about sensitive issues such as not taking a work out of its context when exhibiting it, seeking a method of display based on the artistic approach of the work, in short, publicizing art and the artist without instrumentalizing and reducing them. Yapı Kredi Culture and Arts is a well-established institution that has been organizing exhibitions since 1964. We strive to create exhibitions that leave permanent traces in the exhibition history of the gallery.

**Burcu Çimen:** I started working as an assistant at the Istanbul Biennial during my university years. Being a part of this great exhibition experience and following its establishment and exhibition process step by step has been like a second school. Being involved in many stages of the exhibition production, watching the exhibition installation, connecting with the artists, witnessing their production processes were the most important parts of my experience. In 2019, I worked as an artist assistant to İnci Eviner at the 58th Venice Biennale Turkey Pavilion. Both working as an assistant to İnci Eviner, a teacher with a mind-opening approach to learning processes, and the experience I gained in an international exhibition shed light on how to continue in this field. Then the Yapı Kredi Culture and Arts process began. The idea of holding an exhibition in an exhibition space I had visited as a child and in the middle of İstiklal Street created both excitement and uneasiness. I think my main point of view is to preserve the heritage of the institution and make new experiments. The need to develop this space that we inherited by establishing new connections with what was done before us took shape. We aim to improve the points where the institution comes into contact with the audience and to make its existence a place of memory in the public consciousness.

In our country, due to economic, political, social and infrastructural problems in general, art institutions (most of which are privately owned) often encounter walls that we do not want due to lack of financing, limited (or no) state support, the nature of the target audience, and freedom of expression issues. How does it work in a large organization on the scale of YKKS? How do you take and define your responsibilities towards the society within such an organization?

Painting Today, Exhibition view,  
Yapi Kredi Gallery, 2024.  
Photo: Kayhan Kaygusuz



**B.Ç:** Yapı Kredi Culture and Arts has social roles. Making different voices heard and freedom of expression are issues we care about. In our exhibitions, we generally act with a mindset of polyphony. In her book *The Art Institution of Tomorrow*, which I recently read, Fatoş Üstek talked about the effect of the psychological term threshold fear and its relation to art institutions. I am also thinking about the factors that prevent people from entering art institutions and eliminating them. Considering that even the spatial presence of an art institution sometimes creates a reason for people to hesitate to enter, when we consider political or class dynamics, many elements, both architectural and public, can of course put a distance between people and institutions. We want this distance to be broken with artworks and books from the first moment of entering the building. In this exhibition, the viewer starts to come into contact with the work from the very first moment. Leylâ Gediz's installation *Intro* (2024) makes a soft start to the exhibition. The visitor enters by touching the canvas cloth; Leylâ Gediz invites the viewer to establish an emotional relationship in this work. She breaks down both the idea that painting is untouchable and the distance between the viewer and the gallery with painting.

**D.Y:** We cannot think of responsibilities towards society as independent from the responsibilities towards artists and art production. We try to look at these responsibilities in a wide range from budget management to communication language, from exhibition design to curatorial approach. For example, when organizing exhibition budgets, we prioritize supporting new art productions. We prepare label texts in an understandable language, with the consent of the artist at every step. We write short, non-didactic label texts that open up space for viewers of all ages and backgrounds to communicate with the work. Especially in large-scale exhibitions, I believe that having a separate printed material with the names of the artist and the work, and visiting the exhibition with this plan steals a lot from the exhibition experience. While the viewer is trying to figure out which room they are in, where they are looking and trying to position themselves in the space, the feeling of visiting the exhibition is interrupted and the focus turns into a kind of architectural puzzle and the stress of accessing information instead of the exhibition experience. This is why we think that clear label texts, whose design takes a back seat to the artwork, facilitate the experience of the exhibition.

**At every opportunity, you emphasize that you have a fair and inclusive environment that provides equal opportunities for every member of your team to realize their full potential. Can you tell us a little about your working conditions in this context? What is the ideal environment you are trying to establish?**

**D.Y:** Everything starts with language. First of all, we don't use hierarchical words such as chief curator, co-curator, assistant curator because they are incompatible with our working method. Everyone brings what they have to the table based on their experience and skills, and the exhibitions emerge accordingly. Since the first day we started working with Burcu, we have established a ground based on trust, transparency and friendship, where we can truly listen to each other; where we can listen to each other's individual approaches while making curatorial decisions and open each other up to a collective path; where we can criticize each other when necessary. We do not tolerate systems that feed on competition between women. These systems spread poison, normalize labor exploitation and create unhealthy working environments. Our generation no longer believes the lie that competition increases work efficiency. On the contrary, horizontal hierarchical structures create spaces where everyone feels better, embraces their work, and works with positive emotions and cooperation. This is how good exhibitions emerge. In the background of all this, we should not forget the vision of our general manager Tülay Güngör and the flexible and collective space she has opened for us.

I have been working in the field of art for almost 20 years, I have had good and bad experiences. Upon the invitation of Arts Of The Working Class, I wrote an article titled *Working Conditions In Three Acts* criticizing the working conditions in the field of art. I believe that we should continue to think about these issues, be open to learning every day and adopt a critical perspective on how we can question ourselves when we encounter the issues we criticize. As the Yapı Kredi Gallery team, the most important issues we care about are the flow of transparent dialogue and starting the day with a sincere "How are you?" question before getting to work. Instead of sharply assigning divisions of labor to each other, we move forward with more flexibility and dialog. Thus, the division of labor is shaped around each other's interests, skills, life circumstances, moods and individual dynamics.

There is one more parenthesis I would like to open. When I started working at Yapı Kredi Culture and Arts in 2022, my son was not even a year old yet, and I took on and embraced the roles of motherhood and director at the same time. YKKS offered me a working condition where I could balance my workload with the responsibilities of motherhood. It is the system itself that forces me to choose between work and motherhood. Everything is possible when adequate support mechanisms are in place.

**Speaking about the exhibition *Painting Today*, you wrote in the exhibition text that the idea for the exhibition came up during your conversation. Undoubtedly, it is very valuable to make an exhibition of only paintings today. What did you consider when choosing the artists? If we talk a little bit about the premise of "those who think with painting and make art with passion", did you ever think that there might be artists who feel left out?**

**D.Y:** The expression "selecting an artist" doesn't really apply to this exhibition. To be more precise, we never choose an artist, we think with artworks and talk to artists while preparing the exhibition. The artists of the exhibition become clear in this process. In the case of the painting exhibition, we thought in a work-centered way instead of an artist-centered way.

Deniz Pasha's *Birlik Apartment* was the first spark of the exhibition. The artist's painting of a black deformed female figure with a distorted perspective in a restless and mesmerizing composition drew our attention. We were impressed by the striking use of yellow and the depth of her subject matter, as well as her treatment of social issues that are not given enough visibility, such as people coming to Turkey as refugees and missionaries and structural racism.

As for the second part of the question, every exhibition has certain limits. These limits have very clear legs such as labor capacity, spatial qualities of the ex-

hibition space and budget. We tried to be as inclusive as possible with the means at our disposal; we took care to do justice to what we do, and we worked by considering the subjective and objective balances.

Let's briefly touch upon the reasons why we have framed them as artists who think and paint with passion. Two of these reasons are the fact that not every artist in the exhibition has a degree in painting and the fact that the names that first come to mind when we think of painting in Turkey, mainly academy professors, are not present in the exhibition.

**B.Ç.:** There were artists whose work we have been following for a long time. While we wanted to show the diversity of the contemporary art scene in Turkey, we also took into account the issues that we think the artists represent. We thought about what today's painting expresses, both in terms of political meaning and approaches to painting and the search for innovation in painting.

Today's painting stands in a vast, deep and rich field. We have discovered a lot in our research while trying to understand this field, and we will undoubtedly benefit from this research while constructing our future exhibitions. This is a curatorial selection and it is inevitable that there will be artists left out. While planning the exhibition, we were also aware that we had to set certain criteria for ourselves. Some of them were that the exhibition should not only be centered in Istanbul and to limit the exhibition to the last five years. We set out from the fact that the exhibition should have a pluralistic structure like Istanbul's art scene.

**The exhibition has a choreography within itself and in this way all the works can be articulated one after the other. Can you describe this choreography for our readers?**

**B.Ç.:** We wanted to play with the fiction shaped around a theme in exhibitions. Our aim was to create an artist-centered exhibition where we, as curators, stepped back. Avoiding the possible pressure that thematic exhibitions can create, we kept an open dialogue with the artists, discussing the works that they think best represent themselves and their practices in recent times, and proceeded together with the artists at almost every step.

The narrative language is also created by the juxtaposition of the works in the exhibition. The exhibition was shaped by the harmony the paintings established within themselves. Where the works of Ahu Akgün, Yaz Taşçı and Taner Ceylan were exhibited, the works were shaped in a bodily narrative language. In the area where Figen Aydintasbaş and Cansu Çakar's works were exhibited, a connection can be established between these two artists through the miniature they practice. Likewise, the layers formed by the works of Leylâ Gediz and Sevil Tunaboylu. The area with works by Rojbin Ekinçi, Deniz Pasha and Nalan Yirtmaç was shaped by works that make visible subjects that are less common in contemporary painting. In other words, we created a plan based not only on the narrative, but also on the common points in their practices and the relationship established between the works.

**D.Y:** When we say artist-centered, we mean working on themes that come from within, from the subjects the artist works on, rather than curatorial themes coming from the outside. As Burcu explained, the painting exhibition developed in this way. The narrative of the exhibition was naturally shaped by the dialogues that the works established within themselves. Antonio Cosentino, Tayfun Gülnar, Ecem Yiğit and Toygun Özdemir's riot of colors and bold compositions create a narrative and mood in themselves. There are different paths and paths within the exhibition. One of these paths is the human relationship with nature. Fulya Çetin's pictorial installation in the form of a book, *The Day the Mountains and Stones Cry*, opens the way to thinking and feeling with nature. Likewise, Nalan Yirtmaç's triptych proceeds through the relationship between nature and human beings, emphasizing that nature is an endless source of hope and the cycle of life. Although their approaches are far from each other, the geometry and abstraction in Yağız Özgen and Kırkçor Sahakoğlu's works have similar aspects.

**The place of painting in contemporary art is quite important and diverse. Traditional painting is being updated and diversified by contemporary artists, reinterpreting it with new techniques, materials and concepts. From the integration of media and technology into painting to experiments with materials, performance and installation paintings, what are the works of contemporary art that you find extraordinary in the field of painting and why? What did this exhibition want to say to its audience?**

**B.Ç.:** What impresses me the most in experiments with painting is the search for expression with material and the use of material as an element that will strengthen and develop the narrative, rather than just being the medium of painting. Expanded painting is a concept we want to include in the exhibition that pushes the limits



Burcu Çimen ve Dilem Yıldız | Fotoğraf: Berk Kur

Painting Today, Exhibition view, Yapı Kredi Gallery, 2024.  
Photo: Kayhan Kaygusuz



# Change your world



Levent Dokuzer, Photo: Berk Kir

**Levent Dokuzer**, after taking part in the marketing and brand management processes of **Rihanna, Iron Maiden, U2 and RHCP** giant concerts, **Rock'n Coke, One Love, Pozitif Days** projects in Turkey, has been continuing his career at **Zorlu Performing Arts Centre (PSM)** since 2015. He was creating marketing plans and strategies for festivals such as **Sónar Festival, PSM Jazz Festival, MIX Festival** held at Zorlu PSM. He also led the teams that managed all digital areas of PSM, such as **Vestel PSM Radio and Zorlu PSM Youtube Channel**. In 2023, Dokuzer assumed the position of **Assistant General Manager of Programming, Production, Operations and Marketing** at Zorlu PSM. We asked him everything we wondered about PSM

I would like to start with a personal comment about PSM, but I think many people think alike. When PSM first opened, it seemed very cold and distant. We asked ourselves if we would go to a shopping mall to have fun. This perception has transformed over time and we have come to a point where we buy tickets more comfortably if an event is at PSM. What could be the reasons for this transformation of perception?

I feel that the idea of buying tickets comfortably is based on a sense of trust. Turkey has changed a lot since PSM opened. Economic situation, socio-cultural situation. Some structures have also changed. In this process, since the day it was founded, PSM has always provided the same quality of service in a very stable manner and has always continued on its way by adding to this service. Compared to Turkish standards, PSM had very good production technical equipment and a good sound system. No matter how much fluctuation there is in Turkey's culture and arts scene, PSM has managed to make a programming that can present the trends followed by the world, everything that is popular in the world, sometimes more, sometimes less, in front of the culture and arts lovers in Turkey. It worked with very good teams and always had very good internal staff. Its external contacts were very good, its relations with other players in culture and arts were good. I think this stability is very important in the impression you mentioned.

There have always been events that appealed to older people, but now younger generations are also intensively involved in PSM. In my opinion, one of the most interesting examples of this is the fact that an alternative music festival such as **Sónar** can be held here. What would you like to say about this? As an insider, how did you experience this demographic transformation? Did you have any concerns at the beginning?

When PSM opened, it had an audience that I can define as senior, but it started to host and increase the number of events such as **Sónar** or PSM's own brand **MIX Festival**, which can appeal to every musical taste, every musical genre and every age. Now PSM has a line where it owns the stage show, entertainment, and amusement areas and makes plans on having a good time. In the process of establishing this line, we conducted a research in which we asked focus groups what they expect from the places they go to when they go out at night or when they want to spend money on culture, arts and entertainment. People wanted to have a very good time at an event where they allocated limited money and time. When they came to PSM, they wanted to leave their daily life stress and purpose aside and want their world to change in that hour interval. The concept of **Change Your World**, which we have been using for many years, actually emerged as a result of this kind of research. We have provided this very well in every field for different demographic groups, so that we have reached the point you mentioned.

It still surprises me to see that you have managed to put some activities that we would call underground scene into a very on the ground and shiny form. I think this is something important.

We are a bit proud of this. There are nights where, for example, there is a **Borusan Philharmonic** concert on one side and a **techno party** on the other. There are evenings where gentlemen in suits and very elegant ladies come together in the same place with young people in their 20s who have come to have fun. They go out together for smoking and drinking. This is an unrealistic image from time to time, but it is a very good fusion for everyone. Therefore, this place is a arts and culture hub where people from all age groups come together on the same evening, following everything in every field of arts and culture.

And in this way you create a new culture, your own culture. You do this by transforming the things required by the existing conditions. PSM Loves Summer is one of the products of this culture. What's this year's festival, which has been going on for three years?

PSM is in its 11<sup>th</sup> season this year. During this period, many things have changed such as the way it is used, the functions and profile of the venue, and the positioning of the brand. The venue is so big and has so much technical equipment that it has been discovered that it can function with much more diverse functions over time. For that reason, the building structure has far exceeded its intended use and has continued to develop day by day. In the past, since we were a closed venue during the summer periods, we used this time for works such as building maintenance, repair and construction, but on the other hand, of course, it was not possible to leave a venue of this volume empty all summer. For this reason, we started to organise concerts for the summer months in parallel with the European tours of artists and the dates and routes of major festivals. The starting point of PSM Loves Summer, organised with the contributions of 100% Music, was our desire to use PSM a little more effectively in the summer months. We had two other brands that developed with PSM Loves Summer. One of them is PSM Loves2Dance, which became a festival this year; the other is PSM Loves2Gather, where we host new bands coming to Turkey for the first time. One of the important points of such events is that we, as Zorlu Performing Arts Centre, create a culture and arts tourism agenda. People now come to Istanbul from nearby geographies for the concerts at PSM. Both PSM Loves Summer and Sónar have an importance in this sense. We have seven concerts as part of PSM Loves Summer this year. On 26 May, French pop band L'Impératrice; on 1 June, Kerala Dust; on 5 June, BAD-BADNOTGOOD from Toronto, Canada; and on 8 June, Blonde Redhead, one of my favourites, celebrated their 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary last year. We have Black Pumas on 2 July; Blondshell on 13 August; and Fontaine's DC, an Irish punk band that I think everyone should come to PSM that night to experience the concert even if they don't know the band specifically, on 20 August. This is the line-up for this year.

I would like to talk about *Unseen*, curated by Bengü Gün and the installation and experience design by artist Bilal Yılmaz. When I experienced *Unseen*, I found it very impressive. When I told my circle about it, people were very interested, and I was surprised when I visited it myself. I knew that PSM offered many technical facilities, but I did not know that they were at this level. I learnt that PSM is the only stage in Turkey where some big productions can be shown. How did *Unseen* come to life?

The starting point of *Unseen* is curiosity. Our guests are always at the front of the stage and look at the stage. When it comes to the back of the stage, they make some assumptions. If they admire the artist, they have the desire and expectation to go behind the stage. So, backstage is always a matter of curiosity. There is a very serious technical infrastructure and an incredible number of people working behind there. This is another subject of intrigue. In addition to these, so many artists came to PSM, spent time backstage and left us memories and gifts... We wanted to share these in a proper format. *Unseen* emerged with these motivations.

Kibritin Ucunda, Zorlu PSM, 23.01.2023



Aile Yalanları, Zorlu PSM, 19.12.2023

The Whale, Zorlu PSM, 02.11.2023



Unseen, Zorlu PSM, 2023

This tour actually has two legs. The *Unseen* Tour, where you have the chance to see the equipment such as pianos, very special microphones and the rooms where they are located, both of which have been at PSM for years. If you are a little more adventurous and curious about more, we have a tour called *Unseen Extreme*, where you can go to much higher points, see the much narrower and darker corridors of PSM, and climb the catwalks at the top of the main stage. We do not recommend those who are afraid of heights to join this tour.

Both of these tours are full of surprises because there are a number of sound and light installations placed along a tour route. Also, depending on which day you do the tour, the situations you may encounter on the backstage change. So maybe you will come across a day when a musical like *Notre Dame de Paris* is on; you will witness very different hustle and bustle backstage, witness the preparation processes of the artists, or come across a rehearsal of a musician you like very much.

**PSM also has a publication. How often is it published, where can you get it, what's in it?**

For the last nine years, we have produced a wide variety of magazines and newspapers at PSM, which we have taken a little beyond the monthly brochure format. At the beginning, this was a version we developed like a monthly calendar, but since it was well received, we created a very nice pool where we included bloggers, journalists, everyone who likes to write in the culture and arts sector, our regulars from time to time, and even our employees. Currently, this publication comes out every two months and is distributed free of charge at PSM. This is a mini-publication, which we prepared with great pleasure and which includes very good review articles and interviews, and which was created within the framework of PSM's programme.

**How did your membership programme for PSM audiences, which you recently launched, was born out of a need?**

We made a very serious digital investment during the pandemic period. We developed our YouTube channel, renewed our website, made a new application, and developed our newspaper. PSM is a versatile brand. Over time, our regulars have formed. There are even people who come to an event just because it is at PSM. In fact, Zorlu PSM is the website that receives the most traffic after some ticketing websites. Therefore, when we consider all these, we thought it would be very useful to have a membership programme because there is a very loyal audience that follows us here and we have come to a point where we want to get to know them a little better. This membership programme not only offers certain rights at PSM, but also privileges at many different brands and venues that cooperate with the PSM brand. We have three different cards. This is a membership programme that can appeal to everyone, where everyone gets very different rights according to their preferences and the frequency of their visits to PSM.

**There is also PSM Academy, which continues in cooperation with Bahçeşehir University Continuing Education Centre. What do you do at PSM Academy?**

For years, Zorlu Holding has always had the aspiration and desire to establish a university. Then Zorlu Performing Arts Centre came to life. The idea of being involved in the field of education was always in our DNA. We laid the foundations for this on many different legs. The first one was PSM Workshop. With the pandemic, we started to produce our own productions. When we launched these productions, we realised that there was a shortage of personnel in the sector. PSM Workshop set out to fill this shortage and has been going on for three years. We also have a stage technician programme. Our stage technician programme was launched for the same purpose, but this time to overcome the lack of technical staff. There are no universities in Turkey that provide training in this field, in other words, there is very limited training. Therefore, until today, in order to do a job related to stage technicians, one had to be a graduate. We change the rule here a little bit and we also provide training for this.

As the third branch of our educational initiatives, we are involved in elective courses at certain universities in order to transfer our knowledge and experience at PSM. Students take their classes at PSM during the season. As professionals in this field, we attend these courses and share our knowledge and experience on culture and arts and venue management through the functioning of PSM.

**Finally, dear Levent, what do you bring to this whole process?**

I actually have a marketing background. Although my education, master's degree and professional field is strategic marketing and brand management, I have worked in very close contact with all departments and units of the institutions I have worked in. Since I have worked in institutions that have adopted the project management part very much, I actually have a very good command of all areas of the operation. On the other hand, my personal tastes include following this business and developments in these fields globally, attending festivals, and watching new shows. Therefore, I am currently in a structure where I can transfer my knowledge in every field required by this sector and this organization, and where I can be fed by my experienced friends in this field. The position I am in is an assistant general manager position that covers marketing, programming, operations and production. I think I have a plus, since I have been at PSM for nine years and I have risen from within, we have fed each other very well from all teams. Hence I can be a bridge that both understands the management area very well and understands and recognises the team very well.



Pınar Öğrenci, Photo: Berk Kir

**Pınar Öğrenci's last solo exhibition *Glück auf in Deutschland* took place at Galerie Tanja Wagner between 26 April and 8 June 2024. We talked with the artist about the topic she deals with in her practice through her works**

# Unseen, unshown

Your last solo exhibition included concepts such as immigration and colonialism, which you often deal with in your practice. If we talk about the emergence process and conceptual framework of the exhibition, how does this exhibition integrate with the previous ones?

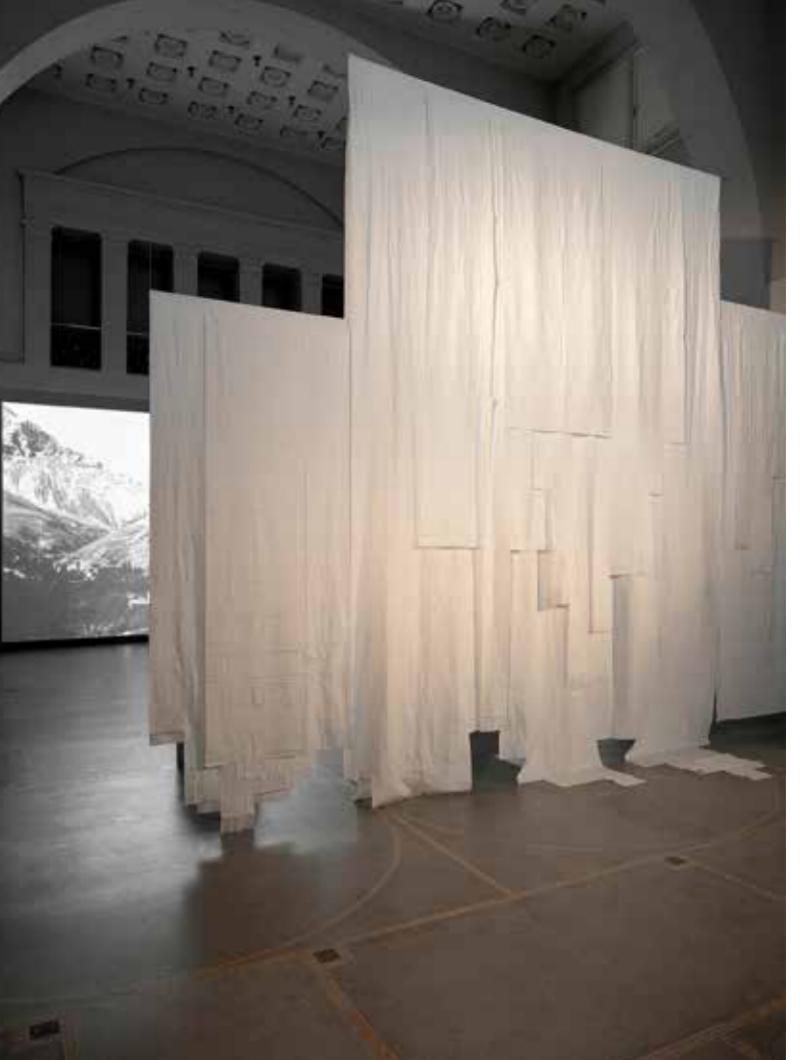
I moved to Berlin in 2018. Between 2018 and 2020, during my first years here, I tried to understand and explain Germany's immigration policies and the immigration experience of the generations before me by looking at the recent history of Kreuzberg, the district I live in. In the first work I produced in Germany, *Gurbet is a home now* (2020), I focused on issues such as discriminatory policies related to architecture, from urban planning to housing production, as well as the absence of Kurds, women, exiles and political immigrants in the migration narrative. This film was made thanks to my collaboration with two women: Academician and Architect Esra Akcan and Architect Heide Moldenahuer. Afterwards, I made a remake of the film *Inventory*, which Yugoslav director Želimir Žilnik shot in Munich in 1975, in Chemnitz, a former East German city. This was the first time I worked in a former GDR city and saw the social dynamics there.

My latest film, *Glück auf in Deutschland* (*Good Luck in Germany*), looks at the Ruhr region, the heart of German industry, and the discriminatory and racist policies in the mining sector, which was the region's biggest source of income until the 1990s. The film focuses on issues such as the invisible and unrepresented labor of immigrants in the mining industry, injustices in the health and insurance system, as well as the ignored unpaid labor of women who were never mentioned.

On the one hand, all of these works can be seen as an effort to learn about the place I live in as a new immigrant. They are also stories of resistance. While the first film is about the effort to make foreign land (*gurbet*) a home, the second film is the story of immigrants resisting racism in Chemnitz and holding on to the city. The last film wishes good luck to the old and new generations who came to Germany to live in prosperity and free conditions. This film, which I made during the crisis of freedom of speech that emerged with the Gaza issue, is more pessimistic than the first film. While in the first movie I say that *gurbet* is now a home, in the last film, at the end of it, I ask whether *gurbet* is a home or a temporary space.

As part of this exhibition, you say that you searched the photo archive of the Ruhrmuseum in Essen to find visual documents about the first generation of immigrants, but you found almost nothing in the archive. How did you find the Fördergemeinschaft für Bergmannstradition-Linker Niederrhein, which is dedicated to preserving the traditions of mining communities, of which you had access to a few documents? Your inability to find these documents also tells us something about historiography and archiving. Can what is intended to be erased be erased within a few generations, without leaving a trace behind? Who writes history? At this point, what kind of responsibility do you think you take as an artist?

I reached the institutions I worked with thanks to the curators at Kunstmuseum Bochum, Eva Busch and Özlem Arslan, who supported the production of the work. Since the Bergman Tradition was created with photographs collected from miners themselves, it includes photographs in which immigrants appear. However, since the Zeche Zollverein, also known as the Ruhr Museum in Essen, is a former mining company, the archive that opened to the public mostly consists of photographs ordered by the institution itself. These commissioned photographs define mining as a national industry in which immigrant miners are not represented. Mining is the biggest source of the post-war revival of German industry



and economic boom. But when it comes to pride, immigrant labor is ignored. While working in the archive, this issue of representation was not at the top of my agenda. However, as I saw the photos, I asked "Where are the immigrants?" I started asking the question persistently.

On the other hand, especially in the photographs taken in the first 10 years after the war, miners' wives and children were seen more than miners. In the photographs, women cooking together, sewing, gardening, looking after children; children were playing sports, studying, participating in reading competitions and praying in church. At first, I couldn't understand why I came across these almost propaganda images while searching for miner photographs. However, as a result of my readings and interviews with three academics I collaborated with, Energy and Women Expert Petra Dolata, Verbal History and Mining Traditions Expert Stefan Moitra, and lastly Lung Diseases, Silicosis and Mining Expert Daniel Trabalski, I learned that community building was an important factor in convincing miners to go underground, so investment was made in the miner's life above ground. On the other hand, the creation of all these groups were for social control purposes. These are propaganda photographs aimed at preparing boys as potential miners and girls as good miners' wives, while not giving women the opportunity to work other than from home. As a result, working in the archive led me to ask questions and seek answers to these questions.

Going back to your question, the function of us, artists, is to look at subjects with different glasses. Artist sensitivity sees minor or major details that no one else sees or notices. Of course, the artist does not have to look at these problems like a detective. However, I think that the courage to tell what they see and the sense of urgency they feel are important factors in making an artist a good artist.



Pınar Öğrenci, *Aşit*, 2022, Video installation view at documenta fifteen, Kassel, 2022

Pınar Öğrenci, *Aşit*, 2022, Video installation, sound, color, hand-sewn paper tissues, 60', 5+2 edition

In your solo exhibition, we see that you produced collages for the first time. How did you start? Can you tell us a little about the process?

Video editing is actually a kind of collage making, where the cutting and combining process is done at a desk. You have to work in a digital environment. Since I mostly produce films with photographs rather than moving images, I spend a long time with each image; I print them on cheap paper, put them side by side and create stories. This time, I took this process a little further and established a closer physical relationship with the photographs. I cut out faces, hands, landscape and architectural details, disassembled and reassembled them in other fictions. I distorted the harsh reality of immigrants and workers and created new, free, sometimes romantic, imaginary worlds that included free time and play. I can say that I held on to collages during this difficult period of following the crime against humanity in Gaza.

The references you use, not only in this exhibition but also in your other works, also serve as a reminder to all of us. Are there new functions of being a reminder in the transforming world where we foresee resources being depleted? As an artist working with video, what is going on in your mind about the future of this practice?

Production features such as spontaneity, spontaneous shooting, and the possibility of producing with a low budget in the first years of video art were replaced by large budgets, productions, and high-resolution shooting. This situation restricts the display conditions of video art to museums and large institutions. In this respect, I think video practice is moving away from experimentation and getting closer to cinema. This situation narrows the field of the video artist.

On the other hand, I believe in the power of film. The film provides the opportunity to reach large audiences and different geographies through festivals. The world of cinema and academia reads and discusses film productions much better than the world of contemporary art.

You participated in the 60th International Exhibition of the Venice Biennale, curated by Adriano Pedrosa, under the title of *Strangers Everywhere*, as one of the Disobedience Archive artists who embody The Zoetrope. Within the scope of this archive, with your work titled *Inventory 2021*, you offer an alternative to the perspective drawn by the director by remaking the film *Inventur-Metzstrasse 11*, shot by Yugoslav director Želimir Žilnik in Munich in 1975. Based on this work, which is about the stories of immigrants integrating or not integrating into a country today, we would like to hear



Pinar Öğrenci, The man who doesn't burn, 2024, Poster print, digital collage made of archival material from the Photography Archive of Ruhr Museum Essen, 270x209 cm, Edition of 5+2



from you the story of this work and the Disobedience Archive process, which can focus on the definition of the immigrant in the eyes of a society where the word immigrant is perceived negatively and the immigrant is always the primary label.

It is a good question, thank you. Before shooting *Inventory 2021* (2021), I thought a lot about the staircase metaphor used by Želimir Žilnik. Immigrants descending from top to bottom stop at the landing of the stairs, introduce and give information about themselves, such as work, language and family. I started by conceptualizing the staircase. Why stairs? Why do these immigrants, who we assume live in the same building, go down from the top but not up from the bottom? The staircase is an intermediate space, one of Benjamin's porous spaces. Both public and private; both inside and outside. It is a place of transition as well as a meeting... I thought that a similarity could be drawn between the position of the staircase hanging between the floors and the position of the immigrant in the middle/limbo between his/her destination and homeland. This guest situation is also precarious and ambiguous. Just like stairs are the most unsafe places in unexpected situations such as earthquakes. After establishing the conceptual framework with these ideas, while I was thinking about what I needed to change and what contribution I could make other than the change of place and time in a new production attempt, the idea of bringing the immigrants from the bottom up instead of taking them from the top down developed. I wanted the guest worker immigrant, who did not know how long he would stay in Germany, to be seen walking from the street to his home, where they are safe, instead of taking them up the stairs to the street. This difference arose because I wanted to define Germany as a permanent home, not a temporary shelter. The people I spoke to talked about the advantages and disadvantages of living in Chemnitz, formerly known as Karl-Marx-Stadt, their fight against racism, and the spatial opportunities the city offers. Therefore, the film was completed as a portrait of the city as well as a portrait of the new generation of immigrants.

I am glad that the film is part of the Archive of Disobedience by the invitation of Marco Scottini. It was a wonderful feeling to have this film, which I shot at the beginning of the pandemic, under extremely difficult conditions and with a low budget, be exhibited side by side with Želimir Žilnik's original film *Inventory*, at the entrance of Arsenale di Venezia, one of the main venues of the Venice Biennale.

In 2022, you showed your work called *Aşit* in documenta fifteen, and that was a polemical edition. From your perspective, what are your reflections of this exhibition, spearheaded by the Indonesian art collective ruangrupa, which emphasizes collectivity and collabora-

tion, but controversially, through Taring Padi's mural called People's Justice, the event has faced significant problems, including accusations of vandalism and antisemitism how was it?

I do not think that Taring Padi's or other artists' works were anti-Semitic. The pioneers of Germany's hypocritical attitude towards the Israel and Palestine issue had started to circulate even before documenta fifteen. We said at that time that this issue should be discussed urgently, otherwise bigger problems would arise. For me, the most instructive aspect of documenta fifteen was the solidarity between the artists. Almost every two weeks, with the news of a new "scandal", we came together, held meetings and wrote joint statements. When we heard about the possibility of Subversive Film's Tokyo Reels project being removed from the exhibition, that is, being censored, we, as artists, signed a statement stating that we would all withdraw our works if censorship occurred, even though there were still two months until the end of the exhibition. Today, I understand better how radical the decision we made was, considering the importance of documenta for every artist's career and the possibility of hundreds of thousands of viewers expected in August and September. There was great unity among everyone, except for one famous artist who left the exhibition without attending our meetings and without even informing us. This is an unforgettable story that I am incredibly proud of.



Pinar Öğrenci, Glück auf in Deutschland, Exhibition view, 2024

Pinar Öğrenci, Inventory 2021, 2021, HD video, sound, video still, 15' 56", Edition of 5+2

Today, events such as major museum exhibitions, conferences and workshops throughout Germany are being canceled due to the anti-Semitism debate. For me, documenta fifteen served as a litmus test to see the other side of Germany. On the other hand, although the German press covered up the work, the comments of the audience and art professionals about the work I produced were extremely positive. I think *Aşit* was one of the most watched works. The biggest reward for me came from the audience. I received congratulatory and thank messages from hundreds of people I have never met via social media and emails.

*Aşit* met with the audience again during my three-month-long solo exhibition at Berlinische Galerie. Starting from June 14, it started being shown as part of a solo exhibition in Frac Bretagne, France. There will soon be screenings and discussions at UCLA Los Angeles, Berkeley and Columbia universities. *Aşit*'s echo in the academic environment; Prof. Michael Rothberg and Prof. Andreas Huyssen's discussion of memory and genocide through *Aşit* paved the way for the film to be watched in America. It was vitally important for me to talk about the genocide issue of Van, the city where I was born, and the land where my father came from, which always bleeds inside me like a wound and for which I feel ashamed. The film was an act of apology to the Armenian people who lived in these lands and their children, at least on behalf of myself and the people I spoke to.

When we look at your personal life, we see that you move frequently. How do you evaluate the reflections of immigration, one of the topics you frequently deal with in your work, on your work? Are your observations or experiences more effective? What does the concept of belonging mean to you? What are the reflections of this concept on your life and work?

All of my recent works emerged from discriminatory stories that I personally faced as an immigrant. For example, my last film has a lot to do with the fact that I couldn't find a single doctor to treat me urgently as a result of pneumonia I caught after having COVID-19, and had to go to Turkey. The doctor I saw in the emergency room said that my situation was not urgent because I could breathe and made an appointment for 3 months later. A few months after my illness, I found myself listening to the lung and respiratory problems of migrant workers. Again, before 'Gurbet is a home' film, I had to move 4 times and each time I was subjected to discriminatory behavior from my German hosts. Since it was too early to tell my own story, I told the story of the generations before me, other women, Kurds and political exiles. In fact, on the one hand, they are all my stories, but just like in *Aşit*, my personal story is just a starting point and an excuse to tell about the violence and injustice that large masses of immigrants are exposed to and the oppression regimes that surround us all. 

# A spotlight on photobooks from Turkey

The combination of photography and books has a long and rich tradition in Turkey. It dates back to Ottoman times, when the Sultan's Palace commissioned the Armenian photographer Sébah and his French partner Joaillier to take two panoramas of Istanbul, which were then printed and sold as a concertina of 10 prints. Bound in red and blue leather and published in 1888 and 1890, these views of Constantinople, taken from the Galata- and the Beyazit Tower, were sold in great numbers and the original album are now valuable collectors' items.

Visual books have always been important objects in Ottoman and Islamic society, and the Sakip Sabancı Museum in Istanbul is not alone in holding an exquisite collection of highly crafted and strikingly illustrated books and printed matter of all kinds. Turkey was also an early adopter of the newly invented medium of photographic reproduction.

The aforementioned Sébah was one of the many photographers who settled in Istanbul, opening his studio on Grand Rue de Pera as early as 1857. This early use of the new medium led to a great demand for photographic images, not only from Istanbul's very open and international bourgeoisie, but also from the Sultan's palace. Abdul Hamid II, avid supporter of photography, appointed Sébah&Joaillier, Abdullah Frères and others as official photographers of the Palace. They were sent not only to photograph the city of Constantinople, but also to undertake several photographic missions to document the vast Ottoman Empire. These images were compiled into 51 large albums, some of which were published and made available to a relatively large number of people. Sultan Abdulhamid himself donated a collection of albums to the Library of Congress in the USA in 1893. He also gave an almost identical collection to the British Museum (now the British Library). These are very early forms of photobooks.

The next great fan of photography was Kemal Atatürk. The young Turkish republic used photography early on and discovered the medium of the photobook as the perfect tool to spread its ideas of a new state not only to its own people, but also to a large

Western audience. The result was countless "propaganda" books printed on the first imported industrialized printing presses to arrive in the country after its foundation in 1923. The book as a mass medium and photography as a language that almost everyone could read led to a huge boom. British photobook collector Martin Parr has more than 180 "photobooks from the Atatürk era" in his famous collection, now housed at the Tate Modern in London. A subject that deserves further study...

As I make my way through the history of photography in books in Turkey, I have to make one more stop: While Istanbul was rapidly modernizing in the 50s and 60s, the old flavor of the city was captured by the legendary Ara Güler, who avidly used the photobook as one of his favorite media. Together with national and international publishers, he produced a huge number of books with his iconic images of 'old Istanbul' for both Turkish and international audiences. He provided a backdrop of iconic visual memories for many photographers to come.

Having mentioned these three important historical examples of an early but enduring photobook culture in Turkey, I would like to focus on a period just after the turn of the millennium. I first came into contact with photography from Turkey in my early days as a photography student on one of my first trips to the legendary Rencontres d'Arles in 2004. I quickly met a group of young, vibrant, communicative, and very talented photographers from Turkey, all gathered around the table of the Swedish photographer Anders Petersen, showing their portfolios and book dummies to anyone who was interested.

Halil Koyutürk, a Turkish photographer of an older generation, had moved to Sweden in the early 80s for reasons of necessity. He got in touch with Anders Petersen and together they somehow managed to invite a group of 12 promising photographers from Turkey to a series of workshops at Biskop's Arnö Nordens Folkhögskola near Stockholm. (Yusuf Sevinçli, Serkan Taycan, Ali Taptik, Coşkun Aşar, Gökşin Varan, Özlem Şimşek, Aylin Ünal and Şeyda Sever to name the ones I know) This exchange

changed the course of photography in Turkey in a way that cannot be underestimated. Anders Petersen, an early believer in the medium of the photobook as an autonomous artistic expression, published his masterpiece *Café Lehmitz* very early in his career and continued to produce photobooks. Halil published his book *Lukten av thinner (The Smell of Thinner)* in 1998. Now a rare book, it definitely brought Northern European photography into contact with viewers in Turkey. It led to an exchange of experiences between young photographers from Turkey and Sweden. Apart from their specific, always very personal form of storytelling in a very honest and grainy style, Halil and Anders above all transmitted the photo book virus to these young photographers, who were eager to use it for their personal expression.

A few years later, when I was in Istanbul on my way from Beirut in 2009 or 2010, I got in touch with Ali Taptik, one of those young photographers I had met in Arles back then. He showed me some of his books and other publications by his friends. He had published *Istanbul'u Resmetmek* a year earlier and *Kaza ve Kader* recently. And he also showed me copies of Halil's *Cloud of Black Smoke*. At the time I was working at Schaden.com, a now legendary photo book shop founded by Markus Schaden in 1998. So, I phoned Markus and flew back with an extra suitcase full of books to sell in our bookshop. My interest in photo books from Turkey had caught fire!

I moved to Istanbul with my wife at the beginning of 2012 with the intention of staying for a few years. What I immediately found was a very active and interesting photography scene, led by the very photographers I had met in Arles years earlier. From the very beginning, our conversations and dialogues started around photo books. With my background, having worked for schaden.com for a few years, and my training as a book designer, a fruitful dialogue began. In a vibrant scene that, for all its dynamism, had a very limited art market and few opportunities to exhibit, the photobook seemed the natural way to go. Most of the photographers I met and got to know

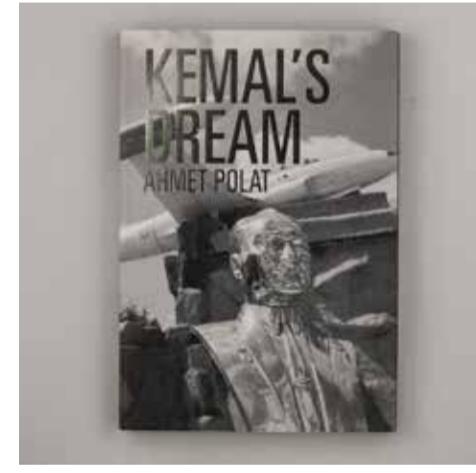
were showing me their books and dummies. I still remember one of my first *meyhane* dinners with a group of Turkish and foreign photographers and leaving the table with a copy of Selim Süme's *289KD*, Sevim Sacantar's *Transformers* and a copy of Serkan Taycan's *Homeland* catalogue.

The more I got to know the city, the more I discovered amazing underground infrastructures. BAS, an artist-run non-profit space initiated by Banu Cennetoglu in 2006, housed a collection of over 1000 artists' books, magazines and other printed materials by artists and artists' collectives, including a large number of photobooks. It was an important resource for books in the city, and I was not alone in spending hours browsing her collection as a source of inspiration.

Small shops such as Merve Kapitan's Torna in Kadıköy - pop-up events such as Jeff talks, initiated by Esen Karol. Events organized by Bandrolsiz, a platform that brings together various small publishing initiatives such as Onagöre, Torna, Too many books, recollective and Bakkal Press. They have published their books, zines and printed matter with great enthusiasm, taking advantage of good printing opportunities, especially the rise of digital printing technologies and their contacts with a number of really good printers (A4, MAS and Ofset Yapimevi). The quality of the print and the variety of materials and designs were astounding. All this little boom needed was places to sell and an ecosystem behind it.

At the end of 2011, Hüseyin Yılmaz opened Espas Kitab, a photo book shop in Tatar Beyi Street in Beyoğlu. His shop, and especially his back office, became an important part of the scene, providing a much-needed meeting place for Turkish photographers interested in the medium and a place for exchange with foreign photographers visiting or moving to the city. Vanessa Winship & George Georgiou, Carolyn Drake and Andres Gonzales, Jason Eskenazi and Arjen Zwart, to name but a few.... Looking at books, exchanging ideas and sharing knowledge.

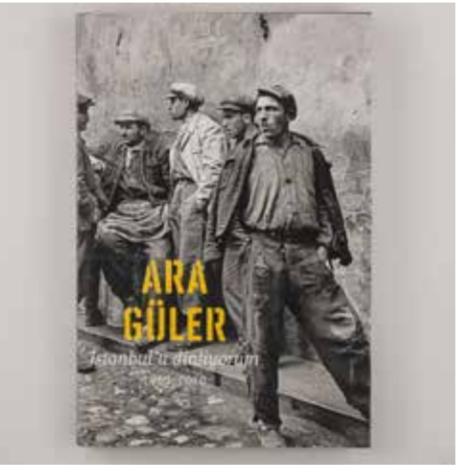
Text: Frederic Lezmi



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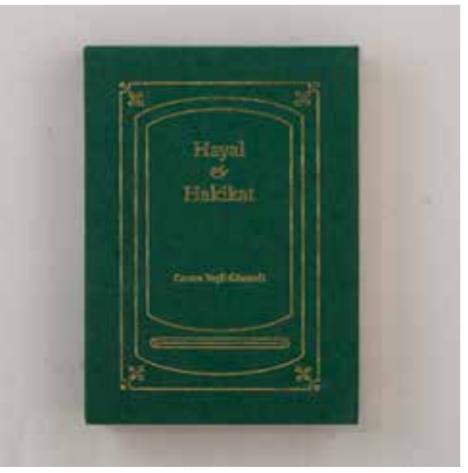
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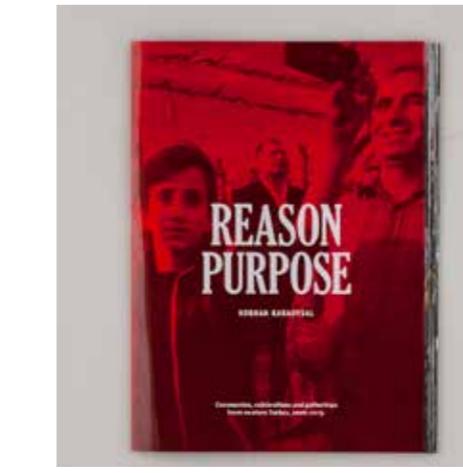
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A few weeks in the city, Yusuf Sevinçli, another member of the original Halil Petersen crew I met in Arles, asked me to help him design and edit his first book, *Good Dog*. Soon after, I was sitting with Kerimcan Gülcü, a kindred spirit who ran the Empire Project, one of the two galleries dedicated to contemporary photography in Istanbul at the time. Elipsis in Karaköy being the other. He asked me if I had an idea for a show at his newly established side gallery, Polygon. I quickly suggested organizing a project around the production and experimentation of photobooks, and together we founded the Book Lab.

For me, it was the perfect way to maintain contact with many of the photographers and artists I met in that first month. We invited 10 artists to work on book projects with me (Sevim Sankcantar, Serkan Taycan, Selim Süme, Gözde Türkkan, Ali Taptik, Cemil Batur Gökçe, Memo Kösemen, Carolyn Drake and Anna Heidenhain) and for a little bit more than a month installed myself in the Karaköy gallery with my computer, scanner, printer, a few stacks of paper and a box of bookbinding tools. It was a month of fruitful exchanges and amazing editing sessions. In the end, we presented ten prototypes (dummies and maquettes) in a final exhibition to an interested public.

The response from the artists and the public was so overwhelming that we organized a second edition a year later. Okay Karadayılar, a blessed graphic designer back then publishing under the label Onagöre with Ali Taptik, had joined the Book Lab Team. The second Lab was set up in 2014 at the Studio X project space in Karaköy. (Sevgi Ortaç, Sena, Begüm Yamanlar, Volga Yıldız, Civan Özkanoğlu, Duygu Aytac, Deniz Güll, Alexis Şanal and Mathias Dardon) This second edition of the book lab not only resulted in prototypes, but together with Contemporary Istanbul Art Fair and Mas Matbaa as a production partner, managed to produce 25 copies of each book, which were exhibited and sold in a special showcase of the 2013 CI fair and an exhibition and event at Studio X. Book Lab created a hub and exchange platform, connecting protag-

onists with a growing audience. Alongside the Book Lab books, there was a small book market and a series of talks and discussions - not that such events did not exist before, but there was an interesting dynamic around these two Book Lab events, creating a creative space for photobooks and their consumption.

My next engagement with photobooks was initiated by Volkan Kızıltunç, photographer/videographer, book maker and assistant at the Mimar Sinan University Photography Department. Together with colleagues from the department, he had initiated a series of workshops and lectures that led to an invitation to hold a regular photobook class at the Mimar Sinan in 2014 and 2015. We were both very surprised at how much interest there was in working with and exploring the book form, so my class was quite full. Together with Prof. Yusuf Murat Sen and a number of other assistants and students, Volkan applied for funding and initiated FUAM - Turkey's first photobook festival, hosted by Mimar Sinan and held for the first time in 2016.

With lectures, a book market, exhibitions, a series of workshops and the FUAM Book Dummy Award. Korhan Karaosyal's *Reason Purpose*, Serkan Taycan's *Agora* or Zeynep Kayan's *Untitled* were all winners of Turkey's first photobook-dummy award and were published. It was wonderful to see the huge interest and the audience for photobooks grow so quickly. For the second edition in 2017, FUAM invited Martin Parr, Susan Meiselas, David Campany, Markus Schaden and other important figures in the international photobook world for talks, lectures and as jury members do the dummy award. Unfortunately, after smaller editions in 2018 and 19, the festival was discontinued, presumably due to the end of municipal funding. What a pity!

It is impossible to talk about photo books from Turkey without talking about the amazing printers. One of them, Ufuk Sahin, who inherited the MAS printing company from his father Lokman (a master-printer in his own right) has played a major role in this success. Photobooks have always been the ultimate challenge in printing, requir-

ing a great deal of knowledge, accuracy, skills and experience. Ufuk Sahin is an avid collector, sponsor and promoter, and above all someone who has taken printing and binding "made in Turkey" to a new and international level. Over the last few years, a large network of artists and photographers have taken advantage of Ufuk's talent and expertise in this field. I shouldn't forget to mention Ofset Yapimevi and, in the early days, A4 Matbaa as other important printers who have helped bring so many photobooks to life.

I have to admit that, having lived in Istanbul, my focus has been mainly on the city. This does not mean that there is no scene for photobooks elsewhere in Turkey. With Torun Art Space co-founded by Cemil Batur Gökçe and Ka Atölye in Ankara, there is a small but very active photobook scene. The week-long photobook-workshop we held, together with Markus Schaden at Ka in early 2014 was a very creative experience. The results were shown at the Goethe Institute alongside the shortlist of the legendary Kassel Dummy Award, which made its first stop in Turkey on its exhibition tour in that year.

Since 2013, Ka has been organizing an amazing photobook event called *Look What I've Brought You*. For the event, publishers, artists, editors, critics and designers from Turkey and abroad are invited to select photobooks for Ka's library with a given budget and present them to the public. The aim is, as they say, "to see the world of photobooks from different perspectives and to closely follow new trends in photobook production". As far as I know, the programme is still going and I can only imagine how their collection has grown over the years.

In mid-2015, my time in Turkey came to an end and I had to move back to Germany with my family. Back home, I put my energy into a new project: the creation of the world's first PhotoBookMuseum. In fact, the idea was born in Istanbul, on my balcony in Elmadağ, when my old friend Markus Schaden came for one of his many visits. The

first prototype of the museum was planned in Istanbul, as was the catalog, which was designed together with Okay Karadayılar in the summer of 2014. So, Istanbul and Turkey played an important role in the founding of this museum.

Looking at the situation in 2024, especially due to the volatile economic situation in recent years and skyrocketing production costs, the domestic production and market for photobooks has decreased significantly and become very difficult. Nevertheless, Ali Taptik still publishes photobooks through his publishing house Onagöre, and Cemre Yeşil Gönenli still runs Fil Books her publishing label and photobook shop in Karaköy, and I hope they will continue to do so for as long as possible.

On the other hand, many international photobook publishers print their books nowadays in Turkey, at Mas Matbaa and Ofset Yapimevi. Photobooks from Turkey are appearing more and more on the international market. Highly acclaimed titles such as Sabiha Çimen's *Hafiz* by Red Hook Editions, Emin Özmen's *Olay* by MACK Books, Silvia Bingaz's *Japan Coast* by André Frère Éditions, Çağdaş Erdogan's *Control* by Akina or Olga Bozalp's *Leaving One for Another* are just examples from recent years.

I think now is the right time to think about a publication - a "photobook about photobooks from Turkey". Together with Ufuk Sahin and Yusuf Sevinçli, we plan to embark on this mission, and this issue of Art Unlimited is just the beginning of a much larger exploration into the world of photobooks from Turkey. 



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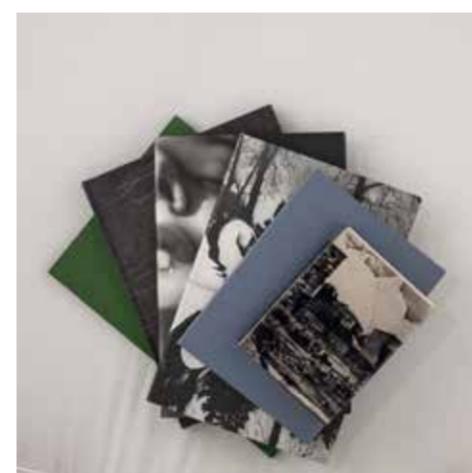
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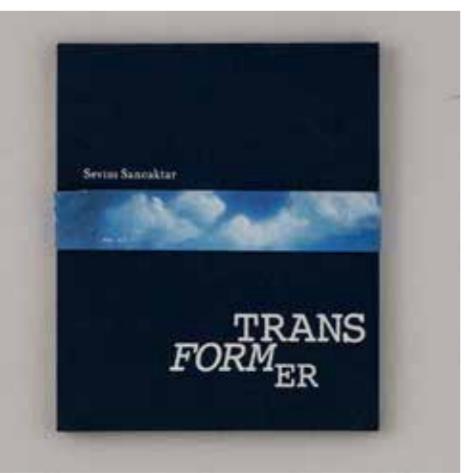
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1. Ahmet Polat, Kemal's Dream, Foam Books, 2013
2. Ali Taptik, Various books, 2010-2015
3. Ara Güler, İstanbul'u Diniyorum, Masa Yayınları, 2013
4. Cemil Batur Gökçe, Magara Albino, self-published, 2020
5. Cemre Yeşil, For Bird's Sake, LaFabrica, 2015
6. Cemre Yeşil, Hayal ve Hakikat, Fil Books, 2020
7. Çağdaş Erdogan, Kontrol, Akina Books, 2017
8. Ege Kanar, Hamer For Scale, self-published, 2018
9. Emin Özmen, Olay-Mack Books, 2023
10. Halil, A Cloud of Black Smoke, Focuskop Fotoform, 2007
11. Halil, Smell of Thinner, Förlag Publisher, 1998
12. Halil, T.S., Förlag Publisher, 2003
13. Korhan Karaosyal, Reason Purpose, Masa Yayınları, 2016
14. Kürşat Bayhan, Away From Home, Self-published, 2013
15. Mine Dal, Halkın Atatürk'ü, Frey Editions, 2020
16. Olga Bozalp, Leaving One for Another, Void Editions, 2022
17. Sabiha Çimen, Hafiz, Red Hook Editions, 2021
18. Sébah&Joallier, Panorama de Constantinople, 1890. Replica edition, Masa Yayınları, 2015
19. Selim Süme, Tekerrür, RecCollective, 2015
20. Serkan Taycan, Agora, Füam Kitapları, 2016
21. Sevgi Ortaç, Baş Aşağı Anıt, Dutch Art Institute, 2010
22. Sevim Sankcantar, Transformer, REC Collective, 2011
23. Silvia Bingaz, Japan Coast, Frere Editions, 2014
24. Volkan Kızıltunç, Sonder, Self-published, 2022
25. Yusuf Sevinçli, Various books, 2011-2024
26. Yusuf Sevinçli, Good Dog, Espas Yayınları & Filigranes Editions, 2011
27. Zeynep Kayan, Akina Books, 2018



**FL:** This is a window, Versprechen we call it in German, it's a promise. Something coming there. We have this lady. It's not clear if she's going or coming. We see where she's going to. She's going to that city. Even there, we don't know where it does exist. But this is already, this sets already the tone for it. And for me it was interesting to see how Yusuf thinks, how he gets the images together and also trying to open his mind from time to time where we say -ah we can combine these things together- although they don't belong for you they don't belong together for you in the first instance. I remember there were some combinations that were hard for you to grasp you never saw these images together they are from different times, from different persons.

**YS:** I saw the prints on the walls, but I mean when you see it on the spread of the book dummy or on the PDF of the screen then it's a different perception. You think differently. I mean same images but same images act differently.

**What's the mechanism of the decision?**

**FL:** There are rules, but these rules are not understandable. You have to somehow make a combination so that both pictures benefit from it. If you put two good pictures next to each other, they'll kill each other.

**US:** They shouldn't compete.

**FL:** If you put two weak pictures next to each other they are not getting better.

**US:** But in some part of the book where you might want to get the viewer to this peak, to this other place, and then you could put four very strong photos and it would just create something else.

**FL:** A photo book is somewhere between novel and film. You have to create this interconnectivity of things. It's like knitting a carpet.

**US:** You could say you're using the weaker image to support the stronger image. From the moment somebody looks at the book sees a weird color and unexpected color to when somebody touches it it's designing a mood and experience you know you're designing. So the story is a big part of it. If you have to put a text in the book, it is important what kind of paper you do it on. For example, in Mine Dal's book, the text part is designed to be on this red coded paper. To me, this is saying "don't miss this part".

**How do you position the text in a photobook design?**

**FL:** I like it at the end, but there's no rule about that. Maybe just a rule. You can tell from the text whether a book has a good designer or not. If the book doesn't have a good designer, it's ruined by the text.

**YS:** Because sometimes the text is an important part of a narrative, a book or a work of art. Sometimes it occupies another space, such as a preface, epilogue, or curatorial editorial text accompanying the book.



**FL:** And I think I have a theory, there's different levels of participation in a photo book. And a good photo book has to serve them all. A good photo book has to be flippable. You have to be, because no one starts a photo book from the first page and ends on the last page with reading all the text.

**US:** I ask this question to people who buy books quite a lot, and the feeling is similar, I think, what I do as well. When you're buying it, you don't go through the book from the beginning to the end, you do skim through it.

**FL:** But these are the different levels of participation, I mean. So, if you have, a complex story -I try to tell this to my students as well- we have a very good example of what to do: Sochi Project. It's a book by two Dutch photographers, and a writer where they photographed Russia over the course of 10 years. It's very complex. But they managed to work with big headlines and solved the problem of complexity. This is what I mean by saying flippable.

**US:** Yeah, that's what he means when he says designing an experience for the audience.

**FL:** And that's the beauty of photo book can. You, even by looking at one third of these images, you still get it.

**We're talking about photo books from Turkey. So, do you think like all this culture of photo book in Turkey is built up on like big names of photos like Henri Cartier-Bresson, Diana Arbus, Robert Frank, Koudelka, Avedon... Do you think it takes its roots from there?**

**US:** I don't think so. I think it's more common coincidental if you look at older, irregular books or you know where it comes from. Even today by default I get a lot of, every now and then I get PDFs and everything and you look at it it's not designed in a photobook way. It feels like it's not designed by, feels like it's just photos put together.

**FL:** But I think there is something there. This is something that only photobooks can do. If you tell these names, for me; Avedon, Robert Frank, or Diane Arbus... I have a very good photobook in mind. But and I think this is also something that photographers learned from books. Yusuf has a very big photo book collection. Ali, I know, has also quite a big photo book collection. They've been buying, looking at books, and educated through books.

#### Can you tell us about your experience in publishing a photobook?

**Yusuf Sevinçli:** My first book is *Good Dog*, which consists of the photographs I took between 2004 and 2012. There was a small photography festival in Bursa, and I won an award there. The winner was given financial support to publish a book. Ellipsis Gallery (my gallery at the time), my gallery in Paris and one or two collectors contributed to the printing of the book. I worked with Lezmi for the design. If I had the chance to reprint it, I would change a lot of things, but 1500 copies were printed, which is a lot. 1000 for France and 500 for Turkey. It was distributed to bookshops in Turkey, which is very rare. There were even in D&Rs and it was completely sold out.

These are my second and third books. *Marseille* and *Walking*. I was invited for an artist residency to Vichy, a small town in France. When I look at them now, I see that they are the same size and format, whereas one was the result of photographs I took in a month and the other in eight years. I was not involved in any part of the design and editing, I just handed in maybe 100 high-resolution photographs and they printed the book. Why is the cover green? I have no idea. Two months after I left Vichy, UPS knocked on my door and delivered me five copies of the book. I was a little upset that they didn't ask me anything, but I was happy that they had the French journalist Natasha Wolinski write a foreword. There was a similar story in *Marseille*. It was not a perfectly produced book, but it was small and modest.

The photographs in my book *PUT* were taken over a period of eight years and came together in two months. It was published on the occasion of my invitation to a group exhibition titled *Envy, Enmity, Embarrassment* at Arter and became my most conceptual book. Six years after the exhibition, together with a friend of mine, Atalay, we made a small self-published book and only 250 copies were printed here at Mas. There is a small text written by Nilüfer Şasmazer and 20-25 images. When you self-publish, you can be more experimental, you can play more.

This is a completely different story. A French publisher, IIKI Books. A photo book publisher and a record label. For each project they invite a photographer and a musician. They ask the photographer to deliver a certain amount of work. They also ask the musician to compose music for these images. This is Aaron Martin, an American composer and violinist who plays electronic bass and ambient music. I sent Aaron maybe a couple of hundred of my pieces, and he selected them and composed the music for them. I love Aaron's music, but it's a difficult thing for a photographer to put his work in the hands of a musician. They published the recording and the book, and then they packaged it in this box.

This is another book I made in Spain. There was a photography festival in a small town called Cadaqués where Salvador Dalí lived. I was invited there by the photography festi-

val, and they asked me to take some photographs while I was in Cadaqués, a small town, for two weeks. I went twice, once for 10 days and the second time for a week. I took these photographs and then we made this little book that accompanied the exhibition at the photo festival. It was also a kind of residency program. It was a small festival with a limited budget, and we printed this kind of booklet, and it was a kind of free copy. Visitors could get a copy when they entered the venue. There is also a hard cover version that we printed only 100 copies.

*Oculus* from my gallery publications. It was also the title of my first exhibition at Galerist in 2018. This is not an exhibition catalogue, but an artist book. A photography book accompanying the exhibition. I care about this distinction. There were about 40 works on the walls in the exhibition and there are only 13 works in this book, including the cover. It doesn't have to include all the works in the exhibition, it's not a catalogue, it's an artist's book.

We published *Tumult* for my last exhibition a few months ago. It's the same story, *Tumult* was accompanying my exhibition. The design and style is the same. I hope we will publish the third one soon. Then it will be a trilogy and maybe we will make a box set... 



# How to build a house of *art* in paradise

## A manual of architecture in the imperative

Text: A.S. Bruckstein Çoruh / House of Tasvir

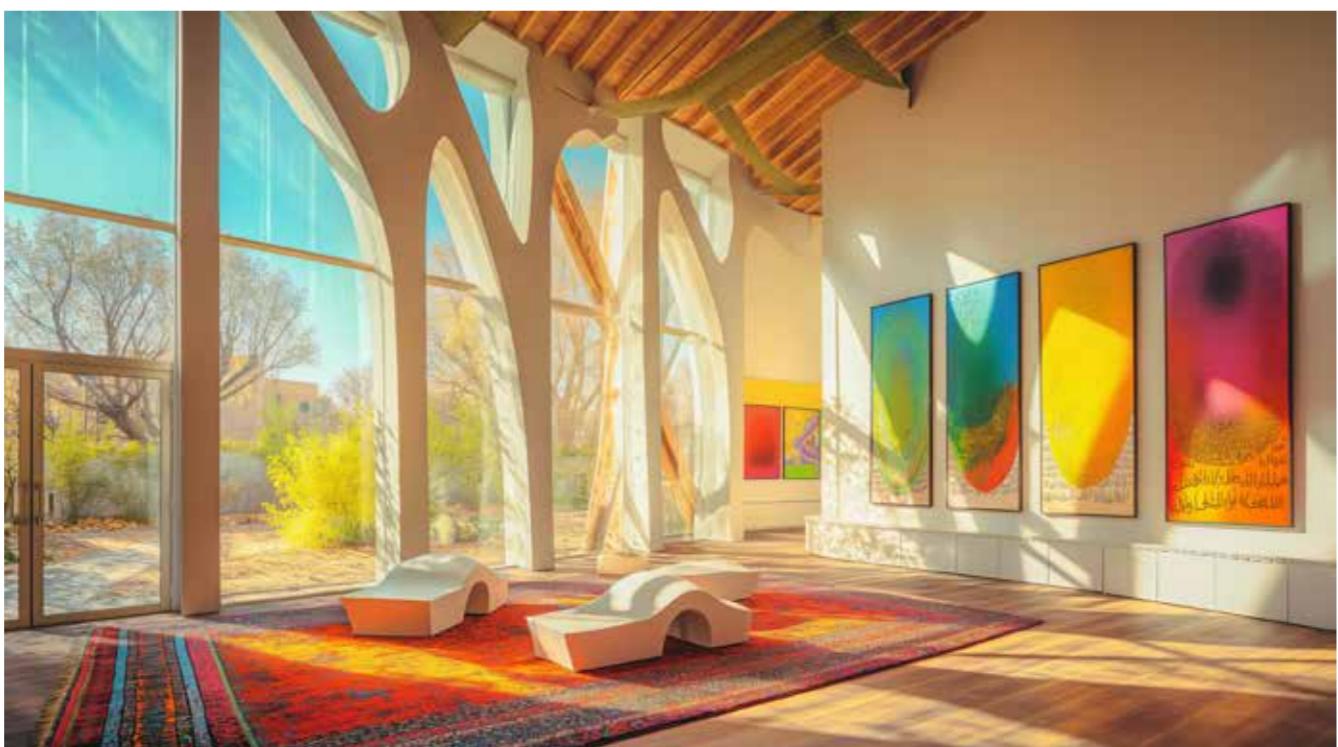
### Preamble

Dedicated to Julia Gyemant and Nantume Violet,  
close collaborators,  
curators of vibrant contemporary art networks,  
courageous theorists.

In these trying times of war, injustice, genocidal violence, censorship, screams of pain, and an excruciating loss of humanness (and yes, I am thinking of Palestine), I have a sudden urge to speak up in a language that is clear and distinct, in the midst of the ambiguities, multiple perspectives, open margins, and fragmented ways of thinking that determine the creative work of our House now and will continue to do so in the future. Now, more than ever, we urgently need collective formats of intellectual, moral, and artistic independence that often characterize off spaces for contemporary art, their spontaneity, creativity, and dissemination of works, ideas, and actions across borders. We pray for the courage to speak up in acts of solidarity when members of our House are strangled by oppression, torture, hunger, and death. As I think about how to do it, a grammatical case comes to mind that I have despised and neglected in my professional and personal life for decades: the grammatical case of the imperative. The time has come to exercise clarity. How to build a house of art in paradise?

### The Foundation

Convene. Convene some of your friends. Think of yourself as a collective. Convene colleagues, artists, thinkers, writers, filmmakers, anyone. Ask people you love, whose work you appreciate (even admire) and whose thinking you trust. With such a handful of people, go found your own institute. Organize and register it as a nongovernmental, nonprofit organization. Give it an agenda that is inspiring and specific, but open enough to allow you to do literally anything you like in the name of that institute afterward and forever. Give it a face. Invent a branding that is simple and that works wherever you'd like the institute to act.<sup>1</sup>



Bruckstein Films, Manual of Utopia #1,  
2024. AI Generated Image. Prints on  
Demand. Size: Variable. Edition of 10 + AP.  
Concept and Courtesy House of Tasvir.



Bruckstein Films, Manual of Utopia #2, 2024. AI Generated Image. Prints on Demand.  
Size: Variable. Edition of 10 + AP. Concept and Courtesy House of Tasvir.

### The Faculty

Think of your institute as nomadic, almost imaginary. Build a loosely associated faculty. Materialize and dematerialize your institute in collaboration with members of that faculty in various places. Follow your faculty to places; allow their networks to become dispersed knots echoing the collective creativity of your house. Give up control, but do not compromise on the ethos of poetic creativity, courage, critical acumen, intellectual rigor, and passion for justice. Trust your intuition. Keep the faculty informal. Go by personal adhesion and intellectual eros, not by fields of knowledge, abstract agendas, or formal requirements. Take each encounter seriously, however brief or unexpected it may be, whether the encounter happens incidentally or officially, in private or in public, whether you know that person face-to-face, or whether you meet her by reading, by hearsay, by public appearance, or dreaming. Consider any personal encounter that promises a compelling artistic or intellectual path related to the materials of your house a rare gift. Include such person in your imaginary faculty. Know how to connect themes by material adhesion and follow them even into territory you know nothing about (yet). Be poetic in your associations when imagining a collaboration with a desired faculty. Do not be afraid to contact a desired faculty. Mix private and public. Stay faithful to the faculty you are working with already. Invite the faculty you love, and whose work you appreciate (even admire) to your home. Know that any encounter has its future public moment (project), and that your projects follow encounters, and not vice versa. Convene the faculty of your house partially and ad hoc. Channel initial talks about projects in intimate settings, preferably à deux or à trois. (→ À deux.) Consider collectors, friends, supporters as part of your faculty when things fit; do not distinguish fields of knowledge, status, occupation, or location when it comes to realizing projects. Think platonically: budgets follow ideas, not vice versa.

### The Art Space<sup>2</sup>

"When creating a ritual, I become the house that is open to all."  
Jassem Hindi

Build an art space. Keep it personal. Make it part of your living quarters. Create a space full of light and color no matter how small it is. Celebrate festive hospitality. Greet your guests with an abundance of artworks, objects, interiors, *çay*, and sweets. Make them feel they are entering an open book, a narrative of living relations. At its heart, create a scene to talk (about anything). Be open to all mediums, including poetry, plotted texts, classical paintings, works on paper, photography, sculpture, and all forms of conceptual art. Show art works by artists of your faculty, artists whose thinking you respect and whose working methods you admire, whose work you have shown in exhibitions before, or who you have come across somewhere, famous or not famous, living or with lives past. Stay away from all territorial parameters, whether national, geopolitical, ethnic, or otherwise. Quote object constellations; form visual connections to former projects. Practice *savoir faire* in dealing with the repetition; create a palimpsest by using minimal material hints. Trust the magic of personal adhesion: remember that object relations are born from personal encounters/speech acts. In terms of representation: do not represent artist(s), but rather singular works. Build a personal air of commerce around those works: make them available to singular guests. Give all eventual monetary gains back to your artists and your institute. Be mindful that there exists a story of desire between every object and a future guest, a story that is personal and cannot be known in advance. If a transaction is sealed, and a work leaves your space, be aware that the transaction creates a hole in the body of the space. Recreate the constellation of the Mnemosyne around that hole. Know that any cohesive fullness is a result of knowing how to address the empty spot. Treat the entire Mnemosyne as a diasporic body that knows no territory but the ever-shifting constellations of its own (relational) renewal. Whenever a new work arrives, open your house to the public, announce public exhibitions, dedicate them to singular works, create a couch of scholars engaging the work during openings, keep public hours short, just to give a glimpse to moments when the object constellation shifts.



Bruckstein Films, Manual of Utopia #3, 2024.  
AI Generated Image. Prints on Demand. Size:  
Variable. Edition of 10 + AP. Concept and  
Courtesy House of Tasvir.



Bruckstein Films, Manual of Utopia #4, 2024. AI Generated Image. Prints on Demand. Size: Variable. Edition of 10 + AP. Concept and Courtesy House of Taswir.

#### Object Talks/Object Love

When acquired by a guest, follow the trace of the work and take interest in the constellation that an object creates in its new environment. Seek permission to participate in the transition of the object from your space into hers. Consider the collector who acquires it as part of your creative faculty (→ Faculty). Appreciate the complex object relations in the art lover's space. Offer to co-organize an artist talk at her living quarters in a format of her choosing, intimate or public, kitchen or living room, crowded or with a select few. Investigate the many facets of an object in such an event, using books, texts, talks, and discourse, triggering a longing for the infinity of knowledge. Do not interfere with the guest list of the collector in her space, and celebrate meeting her associates and friends. Co-curate such artist talks in collectors' spaces whenever possible<sup>3</sup>. Turn these "provenance-forward exhibits" into a series of strictly object-related events. Learn how to ask any artwork in your vicinity the question "Where are you heading?" more than "Where did you (originally) come from?"

Manu Bruckstein, À Deux, 2020. Photography. Prints on Demand. Size: Variable. Courtesy House of Taswir.

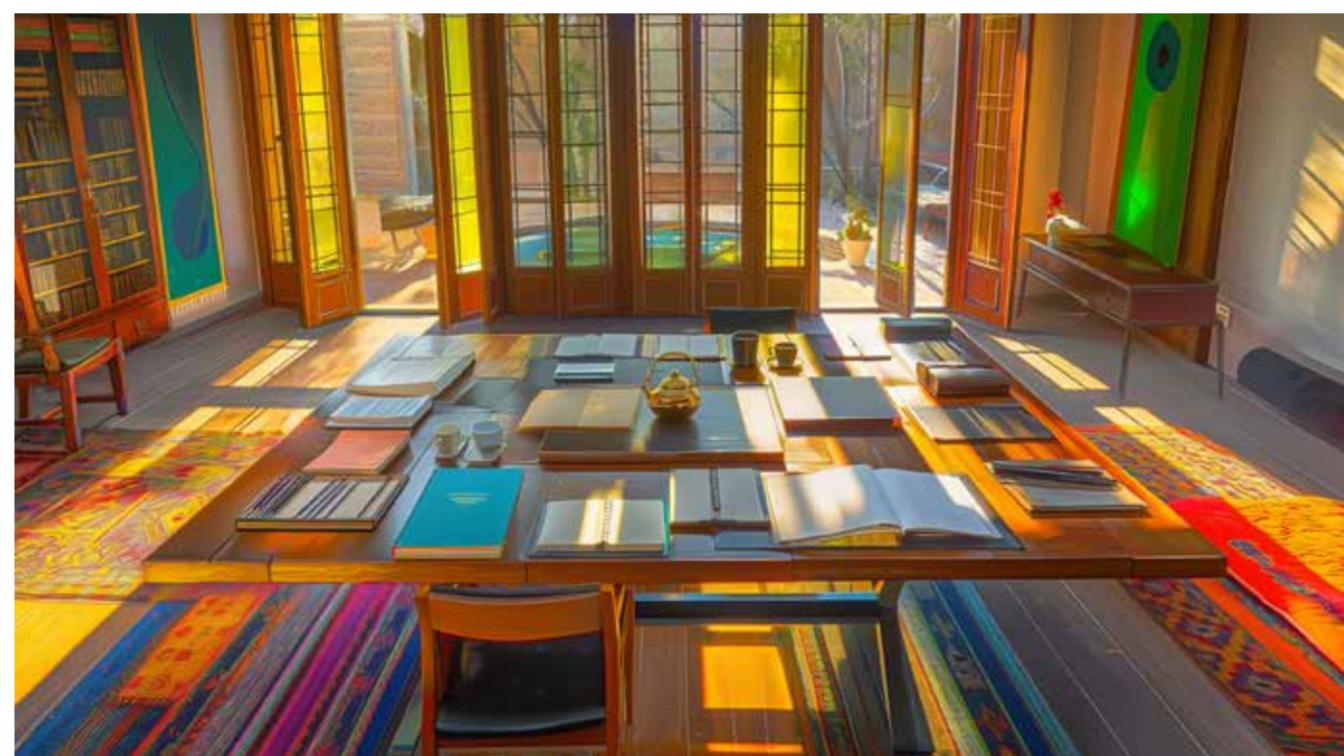


#### À Deux

Use your art space as a place for conversations à deux that promise imaginary beginnings. Invite members of your faculty, or people you desire to speak to, apart from any gallery interest (thinkers, writers, diplomats, psychoanalysts, neighbors, poets, activists, or anyone). Follow a protocol of welcome and hospitality that is strictly personal; never mind whether you've known the guest for many years or are meeting for the first time. Dedicate the space to the guest in advance, change details in the artistic order of things, and create a specifically designed face of the space just for her. Keep the beginning of the conversation indeterminate, let the conversation flow freely, and be aware that only indeterminate beginnings can lead to yet unexplored territories. Follow surprising turns, enter fields and materials you know nothing about, stay tuned to moments of interruption, and let the guest take you to the heart of an unknown matter. Trust the conversation, since this matter will eventually unfold and get woven into the work of your house in miraculous ways; very specific threads and contents (projects) will materialize. Give them space. Develop a shared technique of (subjective/objective) connectivity, celebrate the shortcuts and tunnels in time and space that flash up, and connect places, acts, time spots, and concepts in your imagination. Give projects that are unfolding a name and, wherever possible, make them real (an impossible task). Treasure and remember those invisible moments of miraculous beginnings<sup>4</sup> when they have transformed into museum exhibits, gallery projects, public discourses, publications, workshops, performances, artist talks, international collaborations, and more<sup>5</sup>. When developing public projects, play with architectural mimicry: an ancient text may pose as a museum's exhibit, letters as art objects and vice versa, exhibition spaces may hide psychoanalytic chambers, etc. Develop a habit of crediting those who inspire your house, cite their names, keep a living archive for transformative encounters.

#### Tisch University

Take the most inspiring conversations you enjoy with your faculty (→faculty/→à deux) and announce them as topics for a colloquium of scholars and artists you convene in your home. Open a living-room university.<sup>6</sup> Gather members of your faculty around your table at publicly announced times. Make sure the table is richly set with books, texts, artworks, poetry, çay, and sweets. Ask a member of your house to explore a theme before a quorum of ten ("Tisch"). Do not distinguish between fields of knowledge, status, working methods, materials. Stay undisciplined.<sup>7</sup> Trust the threads of poiesis connecting epistemic fields. Do not stick to preconceived agendas; welcome overwhelming complexities. Follow any interesting interruption, sidetracking, marginal note, detour, meandering that is materially productive and poetically precise. Follow the material traces that unfold, create a living archive: take notes, experiment with the position of a scribe, but protect the intimacy of the space. Give in to partial and subjective documentation, and allow for the chaotic dissemination of materials produced. Do not claim Tisch authorship for disseminated matters, and celebrate the afterlife of Tisch matters should they appear in publications, exhibitions, seminars, academic thesis, and essays elsewhere. Practice connectivity-in-retrospect, that is: catch threads related to your house in retrospect whenever possible. Create your own publishing house for Tisch members who desire to publish proceedings in the name of your house.<sup>8</sup> Open a colloquium for researchers seeking your advice. Allow for external bookings of the Tisch (→Taswir micro), but in principle: keep it a joyous faculty affair at the threshold of an open private.



Bruckstein Films, Manual of Utopia #6, 2024. AI Generated Image. Prints on Demand. Size: Variable. Edition of 10 + AP. Concept and Courtesy House of Taswir.

1. House of Taswir was founded as "ha-atelier, platform for philosophy and art" in 2003 in Berlin. The founding members were a handful of international artists and scholars, including A.S. Bruckstein, Navid Kermani, Daniel Boyarin, Anna M. Schafroth (1961–2021), Beral Madra, Julia Gyemant, and Wendy M. K. Shaw. For more insight into its activities, exhibitions, and publications, see [www.taswir.org](http://www.taswir.org).

2. House of Taswir opened its own contemporary art space "Meine Kleine Mnemosyne" in Berlin in 2015. We currently show works by Walid Raad, Elisabeth Masé, Ali Kaaf, Taycir Batniji, Maryam Mortallebzadeh, Nouri Almashhour, Anita Kapraljevic, Chaza Charfeddine, Željka Mićanović Miljković, Ekin Su Koç, Emin Turan, Patricia Lambertus, Furkan Akhan, Razan Nassreddine, Alexander Polzin, Chris Newman, Raziye Kubat, Mohamad Al Roumi, Maliheh Afnan, Joseph Sassoon Semah. In this text the term Mnemosyne is used interchangeably with the term art space. Since 2020 our art space is also referred to as MKM Gallery. See [www.mkgallery.com](http://www.mkgallery.com).

3. House of Taswir also creates image films for object-constellations in the collectors' space: "Object Love is a series of video portraits through the lens of private object constellations." See <https://www.object-love.com/>.

4. This is an expression coined by the artist Walid Raad.

5. The public projects of our House can be viewed at [www.taswir.org](http://www.taswir.org).

6. House of Taswir founded its own living room university (Tisch University) in the year 2020. For the various Tisch sessions, see [www.taswir.org](http://www.taswir.org).

7. House of Taswir owes this expression to writer, art historian, poet, and artist Wendy M. K. Shaw, who is a founding member of the House.

8. Taswir publishing was founded in Istanbul 2019.

9. For the methods of Taswir and its diasporic ways of thinking, cf. A. S. Bruckstein Coruh, House of Taswir: Doing and Un-Doing Things; Notes on Epistemic Architecture(s) (Munich: W. Fink, 2014).

Text: A.S. Bruckstein

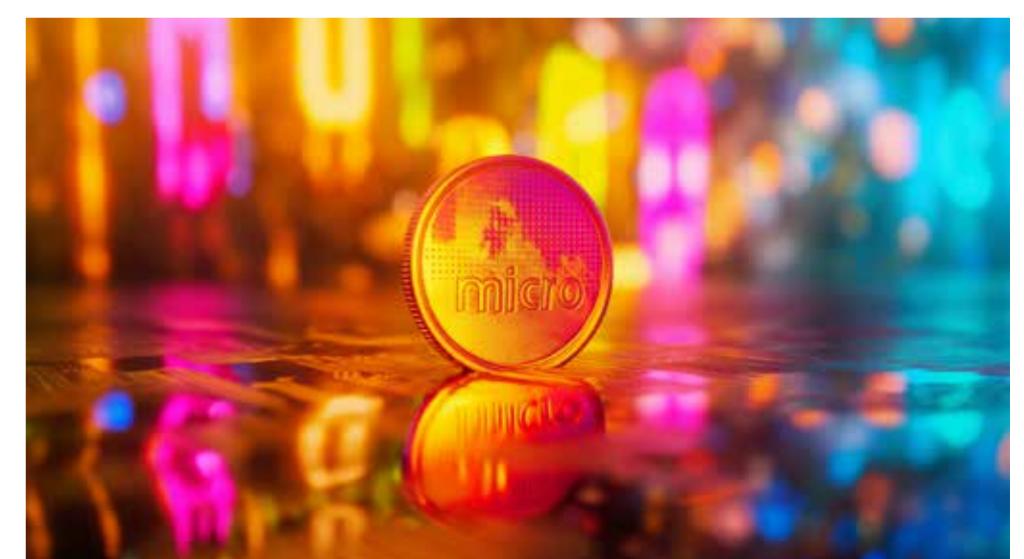
AI generated images: Immanuel Bruckstein. [www.bruckstein-films.com](http://www.bruckstein-films.com)  
Images: Bruckstein Films. Manual of Utopia #1 - #7. AI Generated Images in Collaboration with House of Taswir. Prints on Demand. Size: Variable. Edition of 10 + AP

Institutions who inspired and continue to inspire our house:  
Homeworks (Beirut), Addar (Istanbul), The Atlas Group (NY/Beirut), RAW MATERIAL Company (Dakar), La Colonie (Paris), Underground (Kampala), and more, with many thanks.

Copy Editing: Tas Skorupa

Turkish Translation: Sinan Eren Erk

In Collaboration with UNDER GROUND Contemporary Art Kampala, Vodo Art Society & Lab, and blaxTARINES, Kumasi. This essay is also forthcoming in OnCurating Zurich/supported by Pro Helvetia.



Bruckstein Films, Manual of Utopia #7, 2024. AI Generated Image. Prints on Demand. Size: Variable. Edition of 10 + AP. Concept and Courtesy House of Taswir.

# Rabih means “spring” in Arabic, do I look like “spring” to you?

Text: Ayşe Draz  
Photos: Larissa Araz

Rabih Mroué's performances *Riding on a Cloud* and *Make Me Stop Smoking* were presented for the first time in Turkey in April at Kundura Stage as the guest of Kundura DocLab. Rabih Mroué is a Lebanese theatre director, actor, visual artist and playwright whose work in the field of contemporary art, theatre and performance has been widely discussed in the international art world. We wrote about Mroué, who is known for his subjective paintings of political situations



Rabih Mroué, *Riding on a Cloud*, Courtesy of Kundura Sahne



You can read the interview with Rabih Mroué as a guest of series Ten Questions Conversations, which has been running for five years on [unlimiteddrag.com](http://unlimiteddrag.com), led by Ayşe Draz and Mehmet Kerem Özal, focusing on performing arts, by scanning the QR code.

My first personal encounter with Rabih Mroué took place on Zoom during our series of *Ten Questions Conversations*. After postponing our meeting several times due to life necessities - Rabih traveling to Lebanon for family matters and me having to take care of my 8-year-old daughter who had a fever - we were finally able to meet. The man I saw on the screen greeted me with a heart-warming smile and a demeanor as uncomplicated as our e-mail communication. I remember with gratitude, the generous kindness and friendliness with which he greeted my daughter and her friend who had decided to play around my desk that day, because I had to take care of them and finally have this meeting at the same time. Although we were “apart through screens”, I immediately felt that Mroué is not only an inspiring artist, but also a human being with a unique introspection on life. At one point in our conversation, he asked me if I knew the meaning of the word “Rabih” and wanted to know how to say “spring” in Turkish. While I was pronouncing the word “spring” in Turkish, he asked me whether he looked like “spring”. Looking at this man on the screen with long curly hair, a warm smile and a loving look in his eyes, I felt that he could be the spring we miss.

Mroué, a well-known Lebanese artist, actor and playwright, describes himself primarily as a theater maker, although his work spans a variety of visual media, including film, photography and installation. Although some describe his work as blurring the line between reality and fiction, he rather describes the reality of what is happening around him in the world and his daily life as his main sources of inspiration. In connection with this, the fact that he comes from a region where crises of all kinds are constantly occurring finds a creative reflection in his work. As we learnt from the two works exhibited at Beykoz Kundura, Kundura Sahne in April, Mroué is closely interested in political and social issues, especially since there are people in his family who are interested in politics. The first of the two works, *Riding on a Cloud*, is a theater piece centered on the personal experience of Rabih's brother Yasser, who suffered from aphasia at the age of 23 after being shot in the head by a sniper during the Lebanese civil war.

Combining pre-recorded videos, images and texts, this emotional and subtle piece is both highly personal, intensified by Yasser's presence as a “performer”, and highly universal, as it is never tear-jerking at any moment. Accompanied by distinctive analogue sounds, such as the opening of DVD/CD boxes, this emotional and subtle piece proves Mroué's superior ability to construct time not only through actions but also through sounds. At the end of the performance, when Rabih joins Yasser on stage and the two brothers sing together - rather a bare stage consisting of a chair, a table, a table lamp, some props such as a CD on the table and a projection - the audience is left to reflect on the relationship between memory, fiction and political reality, especially as both the mental and physical disabilities experienced by Yasser are made “visible” during the performance.



*Make me Stop Smoking*, the second work presented, is a non-academic lecture, an intimate and personal encounter with the audience, oscillating between presentation and representation, as well as between the real and the imaginary of contemporary Lebanon. Although his family's political leanings are left-leaning, as the performance progresses, Rabih maintains a critical distance and humor towards the left and nationalist wings of politics, as well as all fundamentalist and radical tendencies, even poking fun at himself from time to time, proving to me that he is a humanitarian with real but rare signs of a true artist. *Make me Stop Smoking* is a haunting exploration of artistic creation, memory and the inextricable link between personal and collective history, inviting the viewer to engage on a deeply personal level. Through a series of evocative images projected on a screen, Rabih explores his own problematic relationship with archiving and naming his work. The performance is a narrative journey through Mroué's mind as he navigates the weight of material he has obsessively collected over the years, ranging from found newspaper clippings and images given to him by others to his own photographs of street lamps and sewers. Mroué's reflections on these themes are interwoven with highly personal anecdotes and philosophical musings that subtly underline the struggle between the need to remember, the desire to preserve the past and the desire to forget, the necessity to move forward, especially in the context of Beirut's turbulent history. In a performance that takes on the principle and structure of a lecture, the audience witnesses the artist questioning the process of weaving our intimate and collective memory through the archive. This poignant and intellectually stimulating, at times humorous and cynical work resonates with Turkish audiences in a special way, as evidenced after the talk.



Rabih Mroué, *Make Me Stop Smoking*, Courtesy of Kundura Sahne

When I think about the performances, some of the images are still with me today, such as the photograph of the smiling Wafa, the suicide bomber girl who left a letter about her martyrdom before she died, and how beautiful her smile really was, as Rabih mentioned. The images presented in the performances act as visual anchors, grounding abstract ideas in real-world images, each image becoming part of a larger mosaic, depicting not only personal stories or the artist's internal struggles, but also the socio-political turmoil of Lebanon's past and present. I realized that Mroué's works are not only artistically inspiring, but also give me a perspective on Lebanese history that I am ashamed not to know enough about, as we are so close not only geographically but also geopolitically. Rabih masterfully juxtaposes visual and spoken word in both performances, bridging the personal and the universal. He reminds me of the ghosts that haunt both my memory and our collective history. 





# What makes a painting

Leyla Gediz, Photo: Berk Kir

Interview: İbrahim Cansızoğlu  
Photos: Berk Kir

**İbrahim Cansızoğlu's *Focus: Painting* interview series started in the fall of 2019. Many names who continue their production only through painting or prioritize painting in their art practice were the guests of this series. With artists such as Sarkis, İnci Furni, Evren Sungur, Tunca, Gökçen Cabadan, İhsan Oturmak and Nuri Kuzucan, we discussed both their own practices and the position of painting in local and international contexts. Over time, *Focus: Painting* started to become cover stories. We continue our journey, that started with Fulya Çetin, with Leylâ Gediz, whose works can also be seen at the exhibition *Painting Today* at Yapı Kredi Culture and Arts this summer**



Leylâ Gediz, Serpilen exhibition view, The Pill, Istanbul, 2017, Photo: Hasan Deniz

I remember talking to you about Lisbon when you were about to make the decision to move from Istanbul. On my first visit to Lisbon, I thought that the similarities mentioned by other Istanbul residents who went to see the city were true. The hilly streets of Lisbon overlooking the sea looked very similar to Istanbul. However, the fact that it was built on the shores of an ocean made Lisbon a very different place from Istanbul. The city had an air that was similar to Istanbul, but felt much more spacious than Istanbul. Speaking in the context of your painting, what kind of mental space did Lisbon open up for you and how did the process of being accepted in art circles in Portugal progress for you?

I remember we talked about this similarity! I told you that Istanbul and Lisbon are nothing alike! First of all, I am an Istanbul lover. Not only me, the whole world admires Istanbul! How many cities can hold a candle to Istanbul? Okay, Lisbon also faces the water, but the city doesn't work both ways. When you cross the bridge, it is a different city. Almada, a city that Lisboners don't really like and even despise a bit... An ordinary Lisboner crosses Almada only when he wants to go to the beaches along the Caparica coast. There is also maritime traffic between the two cities, but where are the city line ferries and their puffing decks? The best way to experience Istanbul in all its splendor is to take a ferry and sit outside! On the Lisbon-Almada line, there is no deck, not even a window. Do you know what I mean? The only thing that makes you think of Istanbul while living in Lisbon is seeing the river, the opposite coast and the bridge from the top of the city. Otherwise Lisbon is nothing like Istanbul. Of course Lisbon will be more spacious, the area and population speak for themselves. But there is also a third factor: light! We are already talking about one of the most sunlit cities in Europe. But the reason why Lisbon shines so brightly is the cobblestones on the ground. The twisted limestones echo like a disco ball. Imagine a light ringing and singing in the air. For a painter, a photographer or a cameraman, Lisbon is heaven!

I see everything much better in the light. I feel mentally refreshed. When I was in Turkey, there was a curtain in front of my eyes. A monotonous filter that monotonizes everything, like a prison. I had to get rid of it; otherwise my art would become rote and boring. That's why I left my country, ready to start from scratch in a place where I didn't know anyone, where I didn't even speak the language. Of course, I didn't know how hard it would be... I don't know how I endured the first three years, what I held on to. Maybe I gritted my teeth so as not to be called a "lonely failure."

I'm not someone who gives up easily anyway. But no matter how hard I tried, I had to wait four years to step on stage. The pandemic was behind us. Everyone was mobilized to revive the market, new expansions, business lines, opportunity campaigns, announcement after announcement were coming. The art world would not be left behind! One day, at a meeting of friends, I heard a call for support for artists being mentioned. One of the friends who was talking fervently stopped, turned to me and said, "Everyone is applying, you should apply too." I immediately took action. Later I heard that Margarida Mendes backed my project, she convinced the jury. Thanks to the Gulbenkian Foundation! When I received the news, I was aware that this was a milestone. For the first time, Portugal was opening its hand and giving me something. I savored this moment to the fullest, celebrated it with my circle. Everyone from friends and family got involved, the venue was found, the paintings were finished, installed, the book was prepared, interviews were organized... In other words, it was a complete exhibition.

I had spent close to two years in the studio with some of the paintings I showed, and the isolation of the pandemic allowed me to give them my full attention. So, they were very serene. I would say meditative. They were based on delicate equations, like the anatomy of fragility, and they contained metaphysical games/propositions that only the language of painting made possible. Technically, none of them were finished. Over time, this state turned into a perception of fate. They were comfortable as if they had found themselves in the ambiguity of unfinishedness. I saw that there was no point in pushing, so I finally accepted the paintings as they were and signed the backs.

In the following year, with the initiative of my gallery, I had exhibitions in Paris and London. At the end of this work, I started to receive exhibition offers from Portugal, one after the other, which I couldn't even imagine. Of course, I couldn't say no to any of them, after all, I've been waiting for this moment for years! So, inevitably, I found myself in the middle of a terrible work traffic. I got into a lot of stress. As the exhibitions opened, naturally, my visibility increased and my circle became wider, but frankly, I couldn't pay much attention to the environment in the rush to work on projects such as exhibitions and books. For example, how many exhibitions have I missed in the past months, exhibitions of artists I love and follow... This is unheard of me! In this new busy schedule, because I don't have as much time to paint as I used to, my solutions to technical problems also change, my

expectations change, I rethink about aesthetics, form, tactics, everything, I make decisions and then go back to the painting. If the painting goes back to its usual way, I have to stop and listen. Before the end of 2024, I will have new exhibitions in Istanbul and Portugal. I miss painting without fighting with myself, not with panic, but with serenity. I hope I will find the recipe!

In 2022, at the *Cosa Mentale* exhibition you organized at L'Atlas Gallery in Paris, you exhibited your recent works on displacement and migration. I think the phrase "archaeology of emotions" in the exhibition's introductory text makes it easier to understand the networks of relationships you have established between everyday objects and still life, as well as autobiography and portraiture. Would you like to talk about the perspective of this exhibition?

A poetic exhibition text. It likens me to an archaeologist studying "slices of everyday life" and more concretely claims that I am working on an excavation to unearth the emotions emanating from these slices. Really, kudos to whoever wrote it; isn't this Expressionism? I didn't realize I was so close to expressionism! Since my figurative expression/figure language is based on photography, I have always associated myself with the Realist movement. It's a historical mistake for someone who drifts in the whirlpool of emotions, but this self-satisfied version of Realism is absurd anyway! Anyway, the author is right! Because both still life and portrait are carriers. What they carry is important - and that is emotions. If I go further, I can also say this: Emotions are what make a painting. Going back to *Cosa Mentale*, it was an exhibition where I questioned the relationship between ground and figure. In most of my paintings, I constructed this relationship as an illusion without reality. In cases of displacement, displacement or migration, there is a landslide. Can the migrant's relationship with the land be the same as that of the ancient citizen? Isn't the landless person liberated to the extent that he or she is freed from gravity? To summarize, the relationship between the ground and the figure, which is one of the fundamental issues of painting, is as much political as it is formal. When we first met to talk about this interview, you were packing up your belongings and notes from the house you once used as a studio in Istanbul. After a long separation and moving to a new city, what did this retrospective make you think, feel and what did it trigger for you? I had embarked on quite a feverish spring cleaning, and it was a good thing! In September 2017, when we pulled the door shut and moved to Lisbon, I left behind my studio as it was. Of course, I've had some minor tidying up attempts here and there, but this time was different. It's like reformatting the computer and updating the applications. First of all, I got rid of all the unnecessary

stuff from the babyhood of our 9-year-old son, including the furniture. Don't worry, I won't actually list all the junk I've collected here, but I'll get to the point: old images. The reason I went through them was to find a favorite, award-winning painting of mine from my student years. This painting is a thin-long vertical rectangle. At the bottom of the painting there are some regular stripes that can be considered an abstract composition. Towards the middle of the painting these stripes form the outline of a wardrobe. The door of the closet is not fully closed, it is slightly ajar, but not enough to show the inside of the closet. Towards the top of the painting, one can clearly see a black suitcase lying on its side on top of the closet. Just as the lower part of the painting/the buttonholes of the closet was abstract, the top of the painting is surreal because there is a blue sky when we should see a ceiling. If the closet is a pedestal, the suitcase is a sculpture and it seems to be located in the open air, in a public space or on a metaphysical plane (like an ancient city). Anyway, we were talking about displacement, migration... My migration life started when I went to London to study at university. This is a painting of my longing for home, for my country, for the sky that surrounds my country. The suitcase is an inviting, seductive object insofar as it signals that I can pack up and leave at any moment, but it is also a cruel object insofar as it keeps feeding this impossible dream. It fascinates me that it's been 25 years since I painted it, but it hasn't lost any of its relevance and freshness!

In *The Crab Trainer*, you depict your son Anka standing with playful curiosity among the cardboard boxes that we often see in your recent works. The references to and interrogations of Turkey's canvas painting tradition, which began in the Ottoman period and continues to the present day, contain a plurality and depth that a careful observer of your practice will be confronted with in many different dimensions. What would you like to say about the creative process of this work, which indirectly references Osman Hamdi's *Tortoise Trainer*, and the different ways in which it has been exhibited so far?

*The Crab Trainer* was exhibited once in Vienna and appeared in the printed media. But there was something about it that didn't feel right, so when it came back from Vienna, I reworked the painting. The painting was exhibited in its renewed, final form in Paris this time and then it left my hands. I prefer to have finished a painting in my head before I start it, because then my work is easier and my mind is at peace. That's what happened with this one too. When I started working, there was no figure in the composition, our boy. I was playing with pieces of paper, cardboard and styrofoam. Play is the first and most important stage of my creative

process. At this stage I question the nature of matter. I approach the objects I choose as building blocks or theater props, and with them I experiment with all kinds of architectural, spatial, relational (aesthetic) and theatrical (narrative) possibilities (whatever my imagination allows). On one such day, I was turning over a piece of cardboard when I realized that from a certain angle it looked like a crab. As the game continued, I thought of my son. The previous week I had taken a photo of him by the sea looking at the potholes. I thought that if I replaced the pothole with a crab, the two of them would talk. It was natural that I remembered *The Tortoise Trainer*. How many paintings are there in which a human figure standing in the center observes animal figures walking on the ground? It was funny, the similarity between the misery of the tortoises and the trinkets I had made for myself. Just as *The Tortoise Trainer* can be interpreted as a self-portrait, *The Crab Trainer* is of course not simply a painting of my son Anka; it is a self-portrait in the form of Anka. And so the painting was finished in my mind and its name was given. *The Crab Trainer* brought me together with Osman Hamdi; if he were in my place, he would have looked at that crab and laughed. This is friendship, something we need like water, like air; a friend who understands our situation, who laughs with us and cries with us, even if he lived in a different era! I had such contact with Hale Asaf, Ercümen Kalmuk and Philip Guston... May their souls rest in peace!

I know that at first you were not very warm to the habit of evaluating a painter's works within the framework of different periods in art history studies. From where you stand today, what do the concepts of period and style mean to you in the context of painting?

Yes, I really hated this thing called style! When I think back to my twenties, of course I find myself a bit naive, but I am not totally wrong in my reaction. At the end of the day, the history of art is a cultural construction shaped by economic, political and social preferences. Like every pile, it has an overwhelming power. For example, it can exclude dark-skinned people or women for centuries. It determines what is art and what is not. As you said, looking at art production in terms of periods and style has become a habit, a tradition. These concepts may work for art historians, but for the artist, every repetition is a sanction, every concept is an imposition. If the artist produces what art history writes instead of the artist producing and writing art history, a new page will never be added to art history. The way to enter art history is paradoxical, that is, it requires thinking and producing outside art history. To summarize, none of the art historical concepts work for the artists, they only tire their jaw!

I think only those who have visited the house you once used as a studio in Istanbul have had the chance to see some of the canvases you produced when you were still a student. In these canvases, it is possible to sense some of the approaches that would later form the basis of your painting practice, such as monumentalizing furniture and presenting the landscape in an abstract order. If you were to exhibit these early works today, how would you choose to do it?

First of all, I want you to know that I don't show those paintings to everyone! But I couldn't get enough of looking at them with you, your observations and observations were extremely valuable for me too. As for your question, dear Emre Baykal actually gave a very good answer to this question within the scope of the *OyunBu* exhibition he curated at ARTER in 2022. Again, on his initiative, he exhibited three paintings from my student years, which have been in the collection since 2016, in a group of their own, one above the other, in a marvelous way. I couldn't have done better. I would have exhibited them again in groups, close to each other. Maybe I would have laid one on the floor and leaned the other against the wall, just to detach it from the wall. As you have identified, it is quite easy and enjoyable to imagine those depicting furniture-like objects side by side with my current paintings due to their thematic kinship. As for landscapes... I have not painted landscapes for a long time, I wonder why? Could it be that I have forgotten the distance and lost my wide-sightedness due to focusing on the near? Should we necessarily understand the outdoors when we say landscape? Don't the exhibitions I set up constitute a mental landscape? What if a giant painting covers the entire field of vision like a theater stage, even if it has no natural motifs, is it not a landscape? I think what I would do is to place my most abstract and poetic landscapes as stops between my newly designed painting collectives, to use them as promenades.

In 2017, in your exhibition *Serpilen at The Pill*, you had a work in which you depicted a man examining a canvas he was holding in his hand. As part of the exhibition, you also produced a poster with this work and you gave me one of them as a gift. I hung this poster on a wall in my house. That rectangular strip separating the man looking at the canvas; and the canvas, the same color as the background of the painting, had a great effect on me from the first moment I saw it. I don't remember how long I watched that image. Looking at it from today's point of view, I realize that this painting is the basis for my five-year-long *Focus: Painting* interview series. Where did you encounter the image in this work and how did you decide to paint it?

Are you serious? What a nice compliment; I'm so happy that my painting inspired you! Now it makes sense that it's my turn in the interview series! Let me put it this way; I have a large family. We read a lot and every house has a library that is always overflowing. When a house or office closes (due to the death of the landlord, a house being rented out without furniture, a workplace closing/moving), the remaining belongings are distributed. At such times, my studio is not forgotten and whatever is thought to be useful to me, is mailed to me. One day, at the door of my studio, I found 15-20 burgundy bound books, A3 sized and about 10 cm thick (you guess the weight), lying on top of each other in columns. These were Life magazines that a family member had collected over the years. Although I can't remember the exact date range of the collection, let's say post-World War II. Of course, I took them all in, and then I went through each page one by one, marking the pages

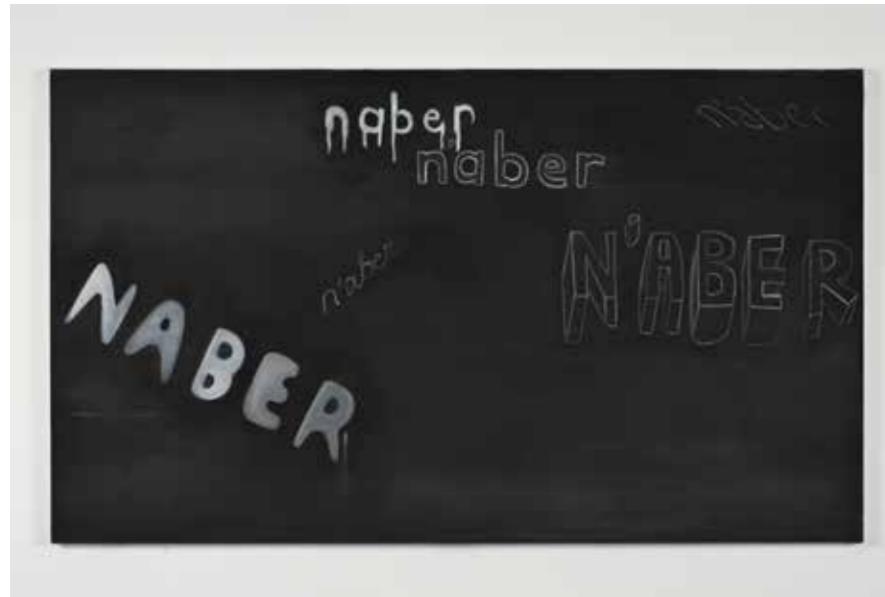


Leyla Gediz, The Crab Trainer, 160 x 180 x 4,5 cm, Oil on linen, 2022  
Photo: João Neves



with the images that interested me. The man you are talking about was an expert. The painting he was holding was a Christian-themed, classical painting that had changed hands for the first time in many years. Unfortunately, I couldn't memorize the name of the painter, but the painting had been auctioned and appreciated in value. The man was approaching the painting with great seriousness. However, the painting I saw did not have a number, all paintings of the period resemble each other; it was impossible to detect the difference in such a small black-and-white reproduction. I thought, what can I give the man? So I replaced the painting with an abstract scribble/stain. I was amused by the idea of making his job difficult. What I didn't tell him at the time was that this image was right in the middle of the layout in the magazine, cut off in the printing and only reunited in the index. The man was on the left page and the image in his hand was on the right page. When I opened the book wide open to scan the image, this disconnect became apparent, that line you see in between. When I transferred the image to the canvas, I had two options: transfer this line or close it. It seemed more interesting to me to transfer it, because if you didn't know the story, you would surely trip over that gap and fall into it - like you did! I did it right! It is always necessary to leave something intriguing in a painting, an incompleteness, a riddle... These things trigger the viewer's imagination, give them the possibility of interpretation, open up space. In short, they involve the viewer in the painting!

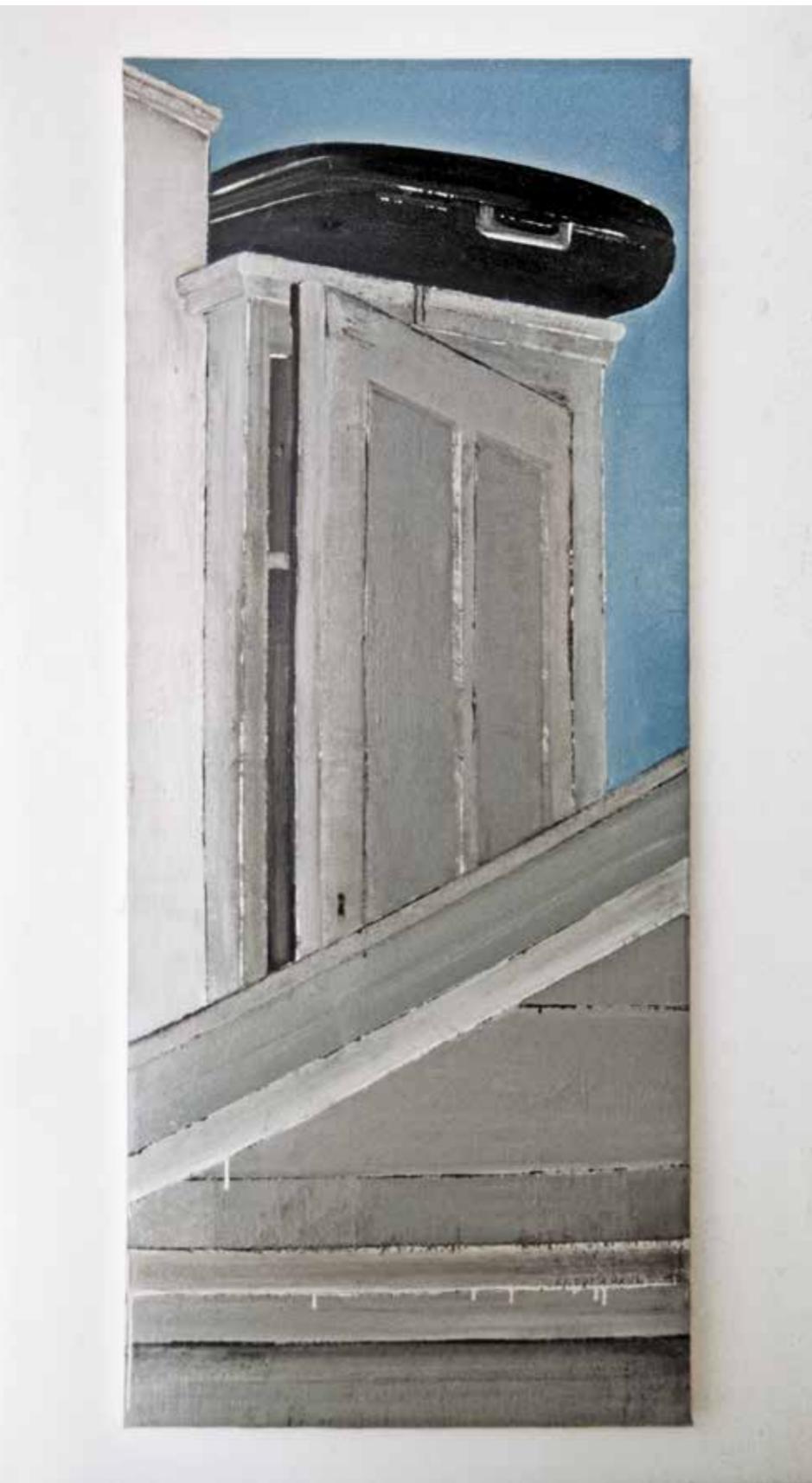
Although autobiography is always a constitutive element in your work, you manage to make paintings that are not only introverted, but on the contrary, deeply connected with the viewer. I think one of your most extraordinary works is *What's up* (2009) considering the distances between your life, painting and the viewer that you transform constantly. How did this painting come about?



I can't believe you asked about *What's up*. I thought very few people knew or remembered that painting, let alone dwell on it. I don't remember when I exhibited *What's up*, or if I exhibited it. Where could you have seen it? Maybe on my website? If so, come to me again one day in Istanbul and I will show you the original. It is a painting I love very much. My paintings with words on them already have a special place in my heart. Do you know what is the coolest thing about writing words on a canvas with paint? Within the framework of the autonomy principle of painting, even if the world knows that you wrote the words, the painting itself seems to be speaking. I remember a similar feeling from my school years: When I was a student, there were blackboards and chalk in the classrooms. Many classes were held in the same classroom, but for some classes we had to vacate the classroom. Classes such as sports, painting and music had their own halls, and the biology and chemistry laboratories were separate. Sometimes we would leave these classes and come back to the classroom to find notes written on the chalkboard and pictures drawn in our absence. Most of the time the content was deer, that is, jokes that we all knew. But on rare occasions, what was waiting for us on the blackboard would really puzzle us, and we would be stunned and bewildered by it. I've had such attempts, I've drawn pictures on the blackboards of other classes, I've quoted song lyrics or written poems. In 2009, inspired by these times, I made a series of works with anonymous messages. *What's up* is one of them. As in the whole series, there is an uncanny in this work. The painting clings to mold that affirms the existence of the other, that initiates a conversation by asking how you are doing, but instead of using it for its intended purpose, it toys with it. It twists and turns it, multiplies it, disguises it... In this way, a line of questioning ceases to be a means of communication and turns into a dark parody of itself. It was a period when I was playing with fire a bit, but I think the painting conveys the feeling of isolation quite well, even revitalizes it. I'm not sure if it connects with the viewer or not, to be honest, but this is how it makes me feel.

You are among the artists of the exhibition *Painting Today*, which opened last May at YKKS. With which work are you participating in this exhibition and what would you like to say about the exhibition?

Ah, I would like to thank dear Didem Yazıcı and dear Burcu Çimen for this beautiful initiative and Tülay Güngen for embracing us all! On the occasion of the opening of this exhibition, meeting them, their valuable technical team members, my dear artist friends and the Istanbul art audience that I have been longing for - especially in the heart of Beyoğlu... It was like a dream! Who knows how long it had been since I had participated in an exhibition of this caliber, which deals with painting as a discipline in itself and explores its different applications! Wouldn't it be nice if such exhibitions were repeated at regular intervals and became a tradition? The synergy of the crowd that flocked to YKKS on the opening day alone said it all. What should we do if not be grateful to the host institution for bringing hundreds of people together under the same roof in one of the most controversial squares of the city and hosting them generously? We should embrace these institutions and keep them alive together. Of course, there will be aspects to criticize in the selection and presentation, language and expression of the exhibition! Let's criticize, let's shape, let's make the second, the third, always better, more comprehensive, more coherent and exciting exhibitions. Because this is good for us. For my part, I tried to bring as much of my practice as possible to the exhibition. I have an installation in front of the security gate as soon as you step into the building. This work, titled *Intro II*, is a semi-permeable curtain/fly screen covering the doorway and consists of standard, one-way lined canvas strips. Camouflaging the security passage, the installation instead allows the visitor to come into contact with the canvas first. On the other hand, in this spilling, fringed form, *Intro II* is in a pleasing affinity with İlhan Koman's Mediterranean sculpture and winks at the Şadi Çalik sculpture in the square, which is also based on the repetition of sections of another material (stainless steel). You know how important these friendships are for me. Inside, of course, I am in contact with the other artworks in the exhibition. My wall is in a very public place. My curators' desire was for me to take an alternative stance as much as possible. So I covered the wall with Photoshop's infinite background and presented my paintings on this wallpaper in order to em-

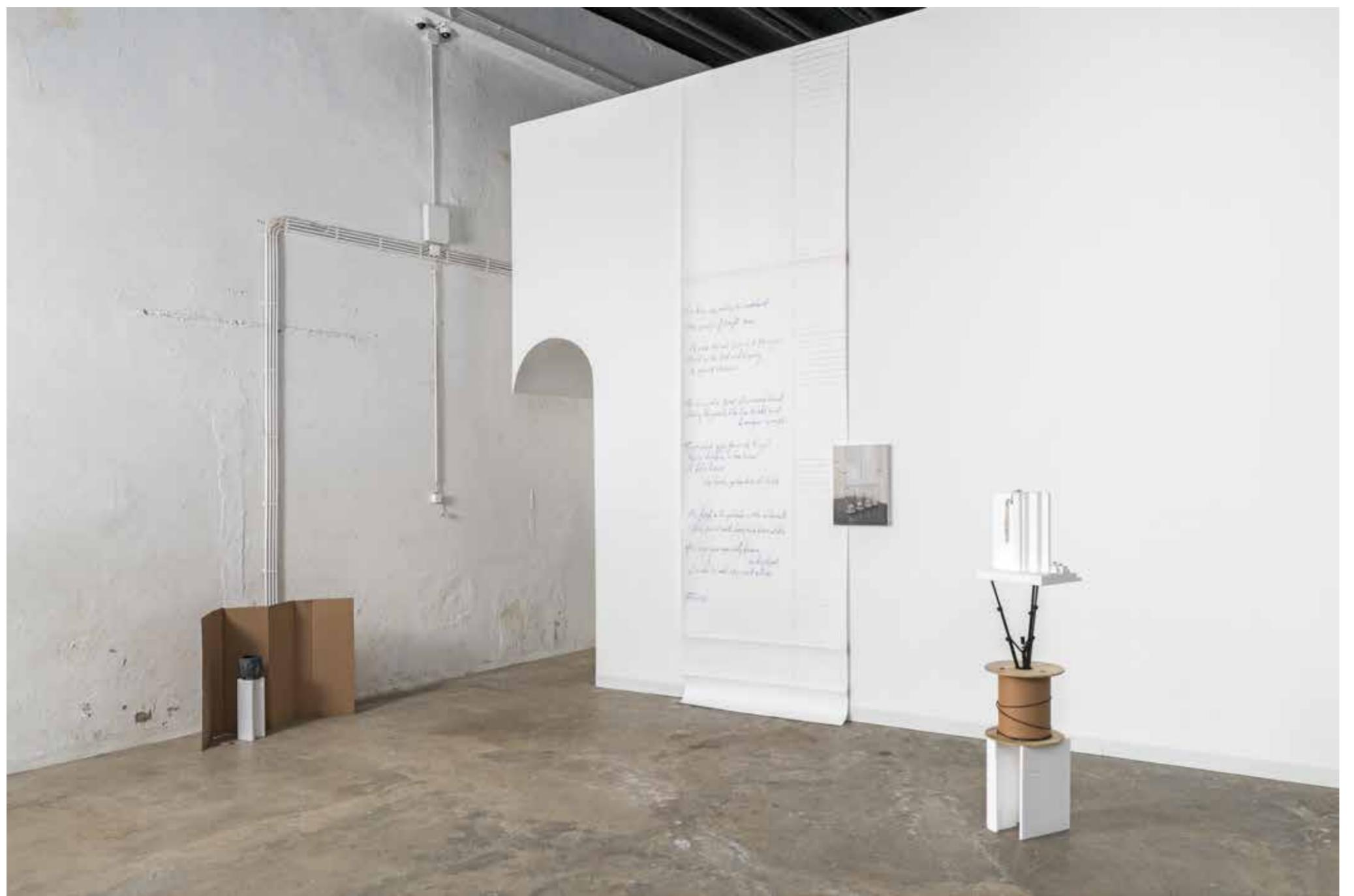


Leyla Gediz, *What's up*, Oil on canvas, 70 x 120 x 2,5 cm, Photo: Nathalie Barki

Leyla Gediz, *Suitcase*, Enamel on canvas, Winner of Still Life Competition, The Slade School of Fine Art, London, 1996

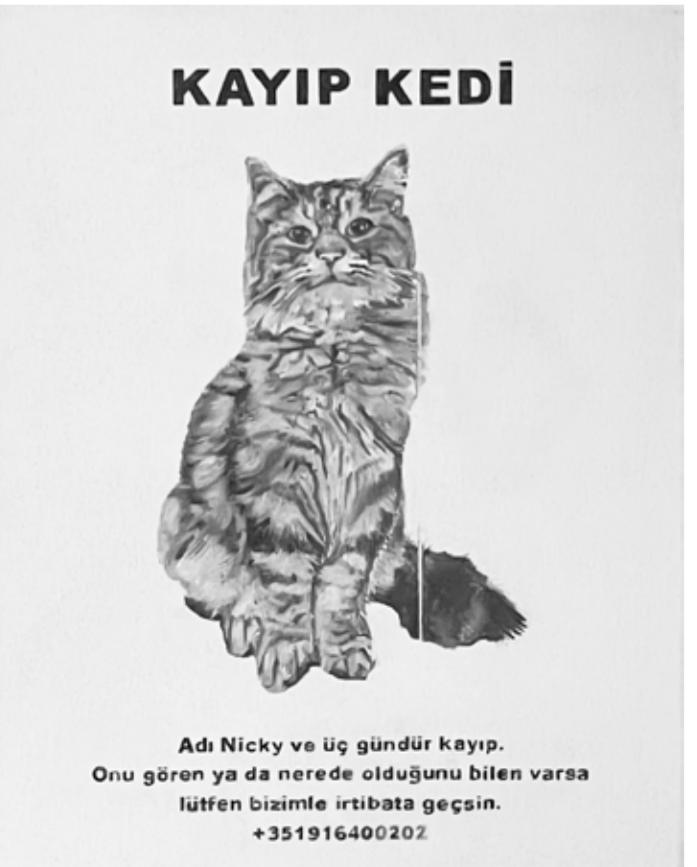
Leyla Gediz, *Untitled (Hommage à Guston)*, 40 x 40 x 4 cm, Oil on linen, 2022





Leylā Gediz, *Eu Estou Aqui* exhibition view,  
Curator: Isabel Carlos, 119 Marvila Studios, Lisbon, 2024

Leylā Gediz, *Missing Cat*, 50 x 40 x 4 cm,  
Oil on linen, 2024



phasize the concern for process that underlies my work. Finally, as part of the exhibition panels, I gave a reading. In this, in memory of my beloved Komet, I performed the poems I selected from his book *Olabilir Olabilir*, published in 2007.

From the very beginning we talked about publishing this interview in a summer issue. When we talk about summer, it is impossible not to remember the *Sahibinden Sayfiye* exhibition organized at Depo in 2014, curated by Borga Kantürk, in which you participated with an installation. Would you like to talk about the projects you will continue to work on this summer?

In *Sahibinden Sayfiye*, I brought together two of my works. One of them was my sky series titled *Five Days in Buones Aires*, which I painted by observing the weather during my visit to the city (*buones aires* means good weather). The second was my portable studio installation, which we positioned close to the only airy window of the Depo. As a reference to being a painter in the countryside, I had set up my painting *Butterfly*, which I was working on at the time, on a very light easel, with my tiny work table right next to it, the plastic soap box that inspired *Butterfly* on the table, the wet paint palette, a few brushes, the metal turpentine bowl and everything else. It was a complete scene and gave me the feeling that I would come back and continue painting at any moment. If you ask me where I will set up my easel this summer, I think I will spend the whole summer in Lisbon. We are currently working on a monograph with my gallery The Pill and we are planning to launch the book in September with a boutique exhibition. For reasons beyond our control, it could be October or November, it's not finalized at the moment. In mid-July, I will have a solo project titled *Tracey Leaving* at an artist initiative called Figura Avulsa in Lisbon and I will be doing a prose-poetry reading performance. For the new season, I have shaken hands with a gallery called Dialogue in Lisbon; they have given me a *carte blanche*, let's see, it's not time to concentrate on that exhibition yet, but I will continue the way I started this year, that is, they will all be projects where I will work on painting and writing together. This is what excites me the most right now: the dance of painting and poetry! ☺

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## STATES OF MATTER

Oğuz Karayemiş

# The endurance of matter

With the rise of "relationalist" approaches in the humanities and arts, the stability of beings and the ways in which they acquire and maintain this stability have become invisible. This is because forms of relationalism have generally been frameworks that emphasize becoming, change, and process, and this has meant ignoring an important dimension of beings, namely their tendency to persist. In this article I will call this tendency to persist "endurance" and try to think about this endurance through art. But first, I would like to explain what I mean by relationalism. Then I will discuss a video installation from Buşra Tunç's *Leftover* exhibition.

### Two styles of relationalism

What is usually understood by relationalism is that the ways in which things are related to each other are relatively more important than the things themselves. This proposition implies that a property or power of this or that entity never occurs in isolation, but always as a result of an interaction. It is possible to call this relationalism, which emphasizes relationship over entities, "weak relationalism". In this sense, we are all relationalists to some extent, in more or less different ways.

There is also a "strong relationalism", however, that says that properties, powers, and even beings are composed of relations not only in their emergence but in their very existence. The philosophical grounding of this relationalism is found in philosophers like Donna Haraway and Karen Barad. In the universe of strong relationalism, there is no room for endurance. Because, in fact, in this relationalist approach, there is no "being", everything that exists (however much it can be called a "thing") consists of its relations.

### Thinking about endurance

Of course, one should not forget the virtues of relationalism. For example, it is rarely possible to explain the fact that an entity is a work of art except in terms of being in the relations between the artist, the spectator, and the exhibition space. But it is not at all clear why it would be necessary to invoke strong relationalism to explain such phenomena, which weak relationalist approaches can easily explain. Moreover, the costs of strong relationalism are much greater than its benefits: Not being able to explain phenomena of endurance whose empirical existence cannot be doubted.

I define endurance as the ability of an entity to maintain its composition despite the effects to which it is exposed. Given that a "relation" is a repetition of an effect, it becomes clear that it is the relation that endurance resists. In other words, endurance is the tendency of an entity to maintain its existence despite the transformative effects to which it is exposed through these relations. In this respect, it can also be said to be a kind of resilience or resistance. But by endurance I mean the positive side of this tendency, which ultimately manifests itself as resilience or resistance, namely the preservation of compositional unity. In this case, the phenomena of resistance would be the negative side of endurance as a symptom of it.

### The omnipresence of endurance

The empirical presence of endurance traverses reality from beginning to end. For example, one of the most fundamental events in our universe is the star formation. But for a star to form, the free hydrogen atoms must be compressed and pressurized to a certain degree so that the synthesis of helium, which will become the early nucleus of the star, can take place. Here, "a certain degree" of pressure is defined by the endurance of the hydrogen nuclei in the face of compression and fusion. Hydrogen nuclei want to preserve their unity of composition and do not fuse easily to form helium. This truth, which cuts across nature, underlies our entire industry. To take a closer look at this, I will discuss a work from Buşra Tunç's exhibition *Leftover* (2024). I should also add that this exhibition offers other opportunities to think about endurance.

Curated by Ekmel Ertan and on view at Fener Evleri 2 between April 28 and June 28, 2024, the exhibition focuses on the remnants of the formation processes of materials that are seen as industrial raw materials in various fields of production. Since these processes follow a kind of logic of efficiency, they basically aim to transform all inputs into the desired products as fully as possible. But it is the endurance that determines "as much as possible". The video installation *WP275BAR* (2024) in the exhibition focuses on the functioning of an



Buşra Tunç, WP275BAR, 2024, 4x65" LCD Screen, 5'30"

industrial machine and the production of leftover as well as end products. Spread across four screens, the video shows how many elements have to be mobilized to produce even a very simple product. Moving parts, hydraulic systems, electronic circuits, and the rhythms of each of these elements are there to prevent leftover. But the only thing that can be achieved is the relative minimization of leftover. Moreover, thanks to the mounting of the video, one can sense that leftover occurs not only in the raw material but also in the machine itself. While the machine is doing the work it was specifically programmed to do, it occasionally misfires, its designed function is interrupted, its rhythmic composition is disrupted.

### The universe has a few words

What needs to be heard through the endurance of beings is that nothing in the universe simply yields to the desires of other things. Thus, whatever fantasies about the domination of nature prevail among humans, the leftover in the factory testifies to the limits of human formative influence. It is art, not industry, that can develop this testimony in a positive way, that is to say, that can treat it as a problem to be deepened rather than solved. Buşra Tunç's *Leftover* exhibition can be seen as one of the exhibitions where such problematization and research carry an important weight. Because the exhibition, which focuses on the leftover that occurs because the material is enduring, builds its works with them and invites us to think that what lies behind the endurance are the capacities that cannot be utilized within this or that industrial (and even artistic) assemblage. The material is able to move between assemblages with little change in its "nature" (unity of composition) and to be part of different processes.

Of course, it is not possible to say that artists have always explicitly embraced endurance as a problem. However, it would not be excessive to claim that endurance has always been a fundamental dimension determining artistic practices. For example, painting, one of the most ancient media, is the mobilization of the endurance of painted surfaces to liquid paints. Whether on canvas or paper, the construction of a painting requires attention to the limits of endurance of the surfaces and adjusting the chemical composition of the paints accordingly. Most installations today, on the other hand, demand an apprenticeship of the endurance of the materials involved in their media, which are constructed with found objects. With each new medium the artist has to adjust the force he or she exerts on the material according to the endurance of the material in question. This point is one of the grounds where art comes very close to craft, or rather where the boundaries between art and craft blur. It is also now possible to rethink the relation of the "relational" existence of the work of art to endurance: The work functions only within the relations between the artist, the exhibition space and the spectator, but its ultimate meaning can neither be absolutely limited by the artist, nor can the space alone make a failed work successful, nor can the spectator penetrate the work and the work penetrate the audience one hundred percent. In other words, endurance traverses all these relations in terms of both meaning and existence. Therefore, a weak (or cautious) relationalism must always be blended with attention to endurance.

So, it becomes clear that endurance, which marks the boundary of a meaningful relationalism, is not only a fundamental dimension of the universe, but also a constitutive dimension in art, first and foremost at the practical level. Within the posthumanist and ecological interests of the day, spending as much time on endurance as relationality can open new horizons in thinking about the expressive forces of art. For, if artistic expression arises from the expressive qualities of the material, it is its own compositional unity that grounds the traits of expression of this or that material. Therefore, the study of endurance and the study of the expressive possibilities of the material are one and the same research.





# DÜNYA OLASILIKLARLA DOLU

**Karşınızda Rolex tarafından 1926'da tasarlanan ve patentlenen, dünyanın ilk su geçirmez kol saatı kasası olan Oyster kasamız.** İçinde dişliler ve özenle üretilen parçalardan oluşan karmaşık bir dünya bulunan, eşи benzeri olmayan bir özellik. En rafine bazı alaşımlardan üretilen Oyster kasa, her tür dış etkene karşı benzersiz bir dayanıklılığa sahip. Diğer yandan onun kadar hermetik, onun kadar sabit olup, olasılıklara ise bu denli

kapı aralamış olan başka bir nesne daha yok. Bir çerçeve, bir kasa kapağı ve orta kasaya bastırılarak vidalanan bir kurma kolundan oluşan patentli ilk tasarımlı saatçilik tarihinin rotasını ciddi anlamda değiştirdi ve tüm kol saatleri için su geçirmezliğin yeni standartlarını belirledi. Oyster kasa, saatlerimizi ve içlerinde yer alan mekanizmalarımızı korumayı bugün hâlâ sürdürüyor. Daimi güvenilirlik arayışımızın su götürmez kanıtı.

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