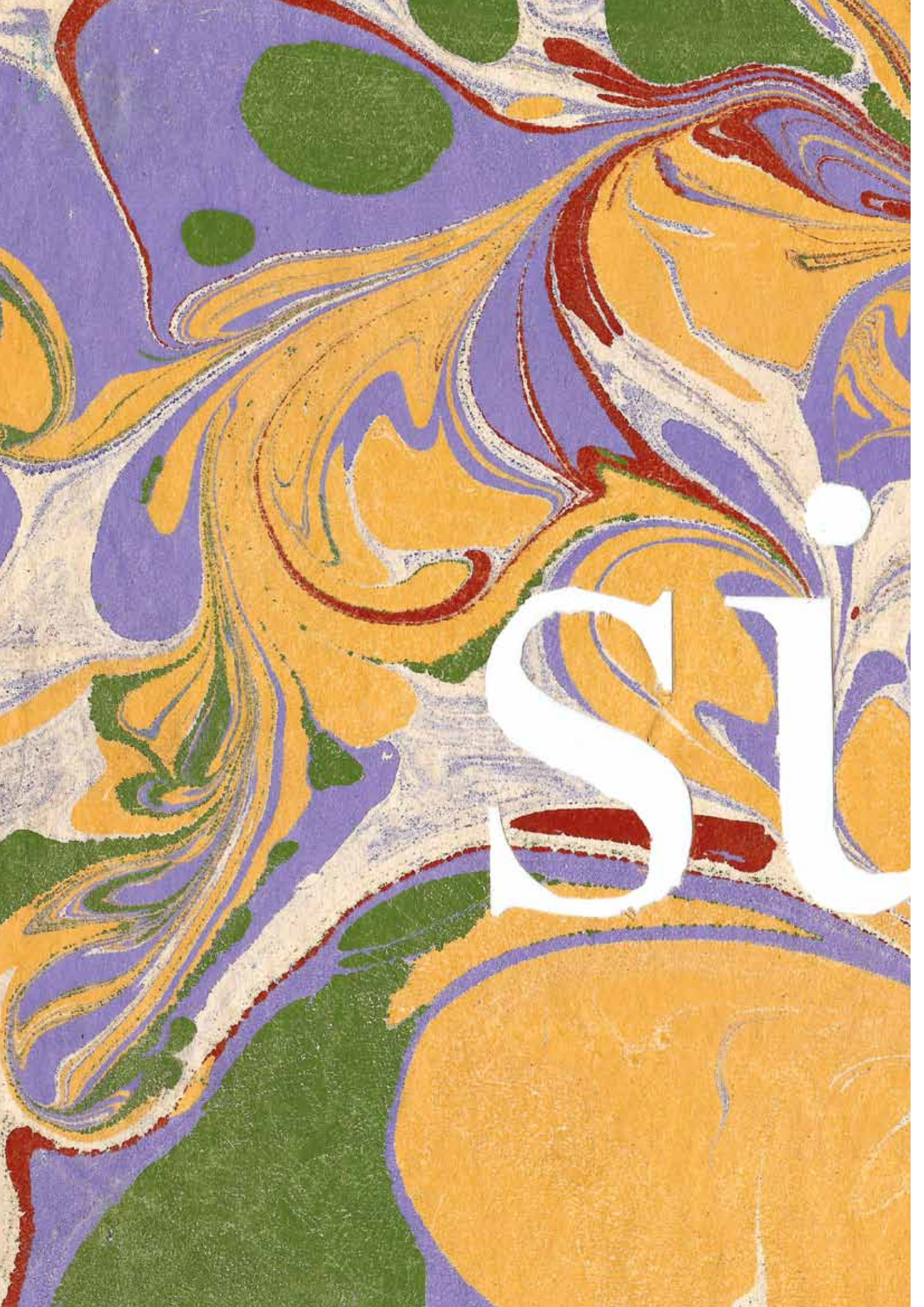


conceptual colors
GENCO GULAN *of*

Marcus Graf



The image features a vibrant, multi-colored marbled paper background. The colors include deep purple, bright yellow, forest green, and a touch of red, all swirling together in organic, fluid patterns. A large, white, serif-style watermark of the letters 'SU' is prominently displayed in the center-right of the image. The paper has a visible texture, and there are some small white specks and a faint circular mark near the top right.

SU





Squidusa, 2011. Squid ink on paper. 160cm * 150cm.

Conceptual Colors of Genco Gülan

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İstanbul, October 2011





Contents:

Introduction.....	13
Interview@university.....	19
Interview@studio.....	41
Interview@gallery.....	53
Interview@museum.....	65
@library.....	see next page
DVD.....	108
Postscript.....	225
Glossary.....	230
Acknowledgements.....	234
Biographies.....	238
Marcus Graf Bio.....	240

(page 2-3) **Sür**, 2007. (face/100/swim in Turkish) Marbled paper cut. 20cm * 30cm.

(page 4-5) **Newist**, 2005. Incomplete film. Performance photo inside the tunnels of Istanbul Subway.

(this page) **CMYK**, 2003. Oil and human lipid on canvas. 30cm * 120cm.

Nilgün Özayten: <i>The Contemporary Art Museum of Genco Gülan</i>	75
Ahu Antmen: <i>Hand & Eye: May Fest at the Flour Factory</i>	83
Bill Barker: <i>Re-construction</i>	89
Zeynep Yasa Yaman: <i>COPY or the Unreality of Disappearance</i>	95
Tim Hailey: <i>Through the Innocent Evil Eyes of Genco Gülan</i>	101
Marcus Graf: <i>Screaming the Unspeakable: Scream Project</i>	109
Andrej Tisma: <i>MR. Camera Men</i>	121
Agricola de Cologne: <i>Interview: Genco Gulan</i>	124
Marcus Graf: <i>Will you Jump, Fall or Fly? On “I Love You” series</i>	131
Özgün Tanglay: <i>YEN! Words Play on the Aquarium and Fall in on her Red Dress</i>	139
Text edited by Prof. David Cedric Bennette.	
Ali Şimşek: <i>SURNAME or the Project that Searches for its Sarai</i>	147
Fırat Arapoğlu: <i>Fish-Man in Istanbul</i>	155
Translation by Pınar Yılmaz.	
Zeynep Yasa Yaman: <i>I am a Museum and Future Archeology series</i>	163
Levent Çalıköğlu: <i>An Artist Who Creates a Hybrid World</i>	173
Translation by Yeşim Özsoy Gülan.	
Zehra İpşiroğlu: <i>CADAQUES: A Striking Project between Life and Death</i>	177
Translation by Şebnem Baran.	
Lale Babaoğlu: <i>Reverse Renaissance</i>	183
Hülya Küpçüoğlu: <i>The Most Expensive Paintings of the World</i>	191
Translation by Şebnem Baran.	
Hülya Küpçüoğlu: <i>Artist Breakes Down the Walls of the Art Gallery</i>	197
Ayşegül Sönmez: <i>TWIN: There is Nothing Like Playing a Game</i>	205
Translation by Elif Met.	
Göknur Gürcan: <i>A Good Artist Can Make Art Out of Garbage and Vice Versa</i>	211
Translation by Aybike Afşar.	
Barış Acar: <i>The Adventures of the Man in Black</i>	219
Translation by Elif Met.	







Çağdaş Sanat Müzesi
Contemporary Art Museum

Marcus Graf

Introduction

*Though I create art with multiple media
[...] I love colors,
[...] as much as I love concepts.
(Genco Gülan, 2007)*

The book *Conceptual Colors* is an analysis and introduction to the work and thoughts of Genco Gülan. Next to a DVD with his video works, the book contains an interview that the artist and I have made during the winter of 2006 in different places of Istanbul. There, we discussed his work as well as the issues of Turkish society and its art scene, which everyday faces the results of various cultural, political and economic struggles: **Pre-modern social systems vs. post-modern lifestyles**, right and left extremism vs. a liberal western orientated intellectualism, Islamic conservatives vs. modern Kemalists, a neo-oriental youth culture vs. an Americanized/ Europeanized one, a very small middle class vs. an even smaller alternative subculture, and a big proletarian class vs. a rich, hard core liberally globalized business elite. Therefore, the earth in Turkey is not only constantly shaking because of earthquakes but also because of the shocks from the struggle of the various models of its civilization and culture.

Turkey is a country on the edge, ready for radical changes. Here, right now, standings still is an impossibility, and moving could lead to any direction. That is why, Istanbul as the economic and cultural capital is the perfect place for artists and cultural producers of all fields. In Istanbul, as chaos rules the city, improvising, spontaneity, flexibility and creativity are the characters of successful survival. There, like in all metropolises of developing countries, the contemporary artist can still function as an activist, because as a creator per se he is a member of society who is engaged by questioning the current status quo and proposing new visions which lay behind the known.

For Genco Gülan, Istanbul's chaos is his source of inspiration. The city, with its monstrous and beautiful faces forms the platform for his artistic investigations in which the border between art and society are often porous in order to involve the spectator in his work. Since the late 1980s, Gülan is dealing with society's interconnection of the private and the public as well as the analysis of personal stories vs. national and international history. Social and political themes as well as an individual research of historical, daily, physiological and personal mythology characterize his work. Gülan often interweaves issues of art with topics like globalization, orientalism, robotics, terrorism, sports, cooking and other. For the artist, the private is the public. For him, nothing and nobody is normal, unquestionable or perfect. Today's loss of absolute truth and belief in reality as well as the destruction of

Traffic Sign On the way to Maiden's Tower, 1998. Poster. 145 cm* 90cm. Collection of the artist. (left)
Horse-man, 2006. Digital photograph. Sizes may vary. (page 8-9)



prefabricated models of life help Gülan to expose our latent passivity in which we stare at the world while we wait for something “real” to happen. For him, art is a strategy for surviving that shows us how to use post-modernism’s freedom of unlimited answers, and be the creator of our own models of living. Art is an instrument for communication and Gülan makes sure he gets heard. His work of the last 20 years is characterized by being a collection of site and time specific projects rather than an “oeuvre” in the classic sense. His artistic fundament is build on a conglomerate of various concepts, forms and strategies in which new media and digital art play important roles for finding new, alternative artistic strategies. The often inter-disciplinary, inter-medial or inter-active pieces analyze our fragmentized reality through a heterogeneous and pluralistic aesthetic. Gülan has no predominant style of preferred medium, and works with painting, sculpture, installation, video, performance, digital media and net art. He is dealing more with the fundamentals of communication, interfaces and interactions than with the issues of the traditional gallery space, its artists and audience.

After European modernism came to an intrinsic implosion through the exhaustion of the historical avant-garde and an extrinsic explosion because of WW II, post-modernism’s eclectic cultural production has lead to a luxurious depression with uncountable artistic strategies. This state, in which we are amusing ourselves to death (Neil Postman), still continues in Europe. Since 1989, it is getting stronger in Turkey, so that also here, today, due to the massive impact of television, everybody can be famous for 15 minutes. However if everybody becomes a star who will be the audience? Who is watching, listening and questioning in a world, in which the only light comes from the flickering of millions of TV screens and in which depression has become a subversive general status. Gülan’s work questions the *Society of Spectacle* (Guy Debord, 1967), reveals through its deconstructive character the beauty of the current disorder and proposes new strategies for a healthier social development.

For Genco Gülan, art is a medium of/for communication. That is why the lack of exchange between the artists and the people, and the absence of a museum for contemporary art in Turkey, made him found his own museum, Istanbul Contemporary Art Museum (iS.CaM), which started in 1998 as an art project and developed into an independent off space. Today, one of its important periodical international events is the holding of the first and only International Web Biennial. His need for artistic and intellectual interaction manifests itself also in the organization of exhibitions, festivals, workshops, lectures and the writing of text about art and cultural politics.

I believe that this book will be another part of his communicative exchange by reflecting Genco Gülan’s artistic attitude as well as his personality, spirit and intellect. I wish you, our dear reader, that you have as much fun as we had during the interviews and the whole project. Gülan would like to thank Yeşim Özsoy Gülan and I would like to thank my wife Şebnem and my son Lukas Tan for their undiminished support. Also, we would like to thank Dağhan Özil, Müzeyyen Çağlar Güler and all of the contributors of this book. Without you guys, this project would not have been realized.







22.2, 2010. QR Code poem. Mosaic tiles on panel. 140cm * 140cm, software and a smart-device. Collection of the artist. As presented at Plato Sanat for *The Knowledge Series 3. Recollection* exhibition, curated by Marcus Graf. (previous pages) **Daily Mythologies**, 2003. Site specific exhibition with digital prints on canvas and oil paintings. As installed at the National Gallery, Beyoğlu, Istanbul.

interview @university

Marcus Graf: Dear Genco, during our next four meetings, we are going to talk about your work. This is our first meeting at my office at the University. I would like to start by talking about your intellectual multidisciplinary approach. The name of the book *Conceptual Colors* comes from this. How do you describe your creation process?

Genco Gülan: I am an idea artist. I search for the pure muse, ultimate creativity. All the time, everywhere, in any condition... New ideas may lead to new images. I try to 'visualize my ideas', not my own dreams. But I try to make people dream. Thus, I deliberately chose to use the professional title, 'artist' rather than any of the others: painter, sculptor, performer, photographer, programmer, director, writer, theorist, etc...

MG: What do you think it means to be an artist?

GG: I think being an artist is the act of exploring, establishing a certain logic of thinking through visual materials. My attitude is to open up one's senses, reflect details and invite other people to expand their senses by sharing. When you open up your senses, information may start to reverberate; to give new pleasure or more pain. When you're overloaded, it may become dangerous. If you can't transfer the excess of energy like a lightning rod, you can burn yourself.

MG: That is tough! Do you think it may lead somewhere? Is it possible to be popular and avant-garde at the same time?

GG: I am not really interested in the popular even though I find it interesting as a phenomenon. The freshness in 'new' is a priority for me and my own work has to surprise me before it surprises all others. When you are pop, you are not yourself. Your message echoes until it gets obese and your references become totally different.

MG: ...and this leads to the aesthetics of the masses, doesn't it?

GG: Yes. It is true. **Personally I prefer to re-discover America again and again...** Today artists constitute the unofficial research (R&D) department of the culture industry. Instead of working on aesthetic values, we build them. It is true that social demands and audience responses are important. However, this bilateral relationship should reflect a communication cycle and not a direct mail-order situation.

"Digital art for the artist, is not only a communication tool, but also a proof to show the transformation in the structure of art. Art as a network of interactions, owes its objective existence, as modernism dreams since Baudelaire, the continuous innovation and renovation, developing a chain of feelings and thoughts." (Barış Acar, *New Media in Art*, Tasarım Merkezi. 2007)

MG: It may seem like asking for your professional secret but I have to pose the question: How would you summarize your artistic strategies?

GG: I start from feasibility rather than imagination. What is available here, now and how do I best fit it into this situation? Will I have enough time, materials, equipment and money to realize a project? If not, what kind of solution should be developed? I design my projects using inductive rather than deductive methods. My formula is simple: First I look at what I have in the kitchen. Then improvise, blend everything together, and always try to cook it in a different way. The food should first fill the stomach, then taste good. People should be able to get the subtle nuances of different spices later but remember you ever after.

MG: Where do you find your recipes?

GG: I never cook by the book, never listen to the advice of the chef word by word. As I prepare, I listen to myself then try to remember old family recipes. I read books, check out the neighbor's, visit good cooks and make research. If I find something great, I may use it again but never word by word. If I eat some delicious food in an exotic restaurant, I think of how I can do something similar with the ingredients at home. Taste is more important than appearance. I never forgot the bitter taste of the Vietnamese shrimp soup of Safa, the abundance of Sarkis's rice or the lemon of Hamsi (marinated anchovy) I have learned from the globe-trotter Sadun Boro. The impression is not, 'I have never eaten such delicious food in my life.' It is something like, 'Why did I fail to realize that this simple dish could be so delicious!'

MG: Continuing with the food metaphor; do you think anything can be transformed into art?

GG: Yes, but, a big but... As Marcel Duchamp says, "everything can be art", Andy Warhol reminds us, "only for 15 minutes..." Anything can become art and everyone can become an artist but there is a smaller chance that the artistic value of their work may continue. Thus we have to become the revolution, as Joseph Beuys says and shifts the tide...

MG: The first time I saw your *Falling Heroes* series, I thought they were hyper-real oil paintings. The transfer of digital prints onto canvas created a striking bright effect that links their illusion with the classical references.

GG: *The Fall of Super Heroes* was a very strong line of work. Even though the pieces were printed with a printer, the composition of light and color in digital prints were as important as in all other media. I created the series with 3-D modeling software packages in a PC, re-composed models and put them on canvas. Final results were powerful enough to escape today's taste and travel in time back to Baroque.

MG: *Daily Mythologies Series*, which I wrote my first article about, greatly impressed me. How did the series originate?

GG: Desperate people were jumping into their tiny chance from the burning Twin Towers. Then I started to think, what did they feel in the air? How did they move?

MG: This image was so deeply engraved in your mind that you began to make this series.

GG: True. I got concentrated on the movement in the 3D space. I realized that it is similar to the movement in water but of course it is somehow different.

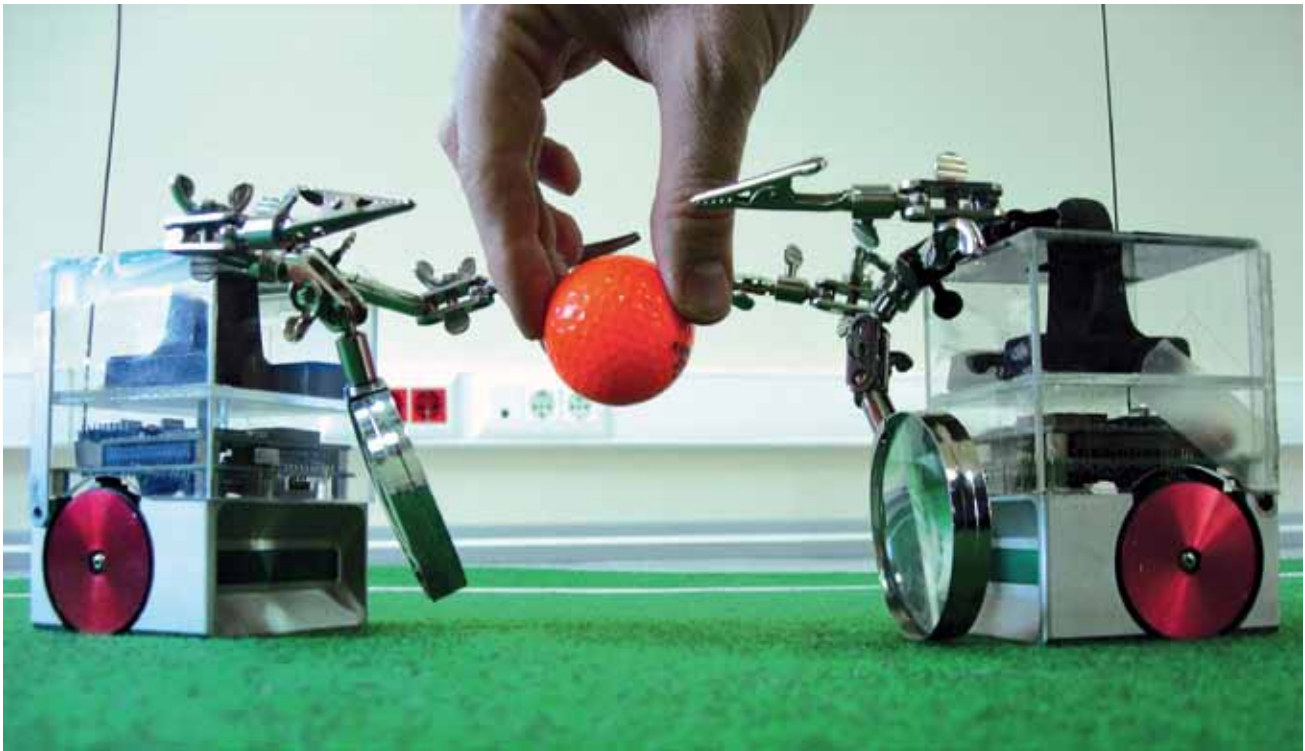
MG: Did you use organic materials together with digital software?

GG: I went back to using oil paint on canvas to represent color code systems. I also tried to combine biological material with digital concepts. I had been working extensively with virtual figures and I needed to move from the digital and return to the 'material' in some way.

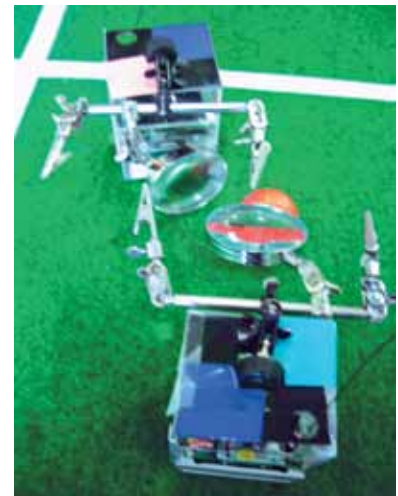


Tele-rugby, 2003. Single-channel video installation. 10 minutes. The artwork is also presented as video-sequences and printed on canvas. (below on the right) **Grundig**, 2003. Digital print, 200 cm * 100 cm. (left) **CMYK**, 2003. Oil and lipid on canvas. 30cm * 120cm. (left)





RFW, 2003. Interactive game with small size 4 Mirobot robots, Football field. Dimensions variable. Video-still of the performance at AI Lab. Bogazici University. Below detail. *RFW* was part of the *Balkan Wars – The Game* project which won the 18th European Media Art Festival (EMAF) in 2005 at Osnabrueck Germany. **Razrushenye**, 2011. Demolished walls of the Art Gallery, iron sculpture, hammer and red nail polish. As installed at Gallery Artist, Istanbul.



“The Square Root Series (of the Daily Mythologies) aimed to prove that electronic art and biotechnology can merge. The human lipid (from voluntary live female donors) added to the oil solvent of the paintings creates a genetic signature. As we all know, the purpose of fine art is to create the unique. On the other hand molecular biology, is trying to do just the reverse; cloning. Every human being -unless he or she has a twin- is genetically unique anyway...” (Ayşegül Sönmez, Güzel diye neye denir? Sabah, 2006)

MG: Did the materials contradict each other?

GG: *Daily Mythologies* was a site specific installation. Frescoes on the ceiling of the gallery were illustrating the beautiful women in the 19th century. Berteaux’s models were more fat than my ready-found athletic Poser figurines. The real difference was in the *Square Root Series*. Using the color systems that create images today on screens such as R.G.B., I made paintings.

MG: When we exhibited this series at the *Beautiful...* exhibition at Siemens Sanat, we emphasized that aesthetic standards had changed in comparison to the previous century.

GG: That was the point. The monochrome painting sequences in the *Square Root Series* no longer carried a representation function of beauty but instead they assumed a genetic containment function.

MG: Let’s return to the main theme of *Daily Mythologies*. Could you explain the process of the whole exhibition?

GG: I loved the frescoes on the ceiling of the National Gallery in Beyoglu. I found out that the painter Hippolyte Berteaux used classical mythological templates which were popular in that period and thus, I chose ready-made digital clichés: the falling poses of the super heroes of the American comic books. However, I ignored the landscapes in the backgrounds of Berteaux’s compositions. I chose to use a simple black background to highlight the uncertainty. With a single exception: I used a single architectural element, a fantastic mosque, which became a masterpiece itself.

MG: How were the responses? How come Greg Wolff ended up comparing the black in your works to terminal despair?

GG: When the feeling is strong, a dark black background may transform cartoon characters into Caravaggio like figures. The light and shading is very important as well as what you show and do not show.

MG: Your works generally analyze the social situations, and question the current values in one way or another. In another project, you combined robots with soccer and the equally political concept of war. Let’s talk about your *Robots, Soccer and War piece*.

GG: I had the opportunity to produce a series of work at the Artificial Intelligence (AI) Laboratory of Bogazici University. After playing with those autonomous machines, synthetic intelligence leaked into my works. I produced several series that utilise A.I. as hardware, software and as a concept.

MG: What did you do with the robots?

GG: I first tried to make the robots paint but it did not worked. They were playing football very well thus in the second attempt I used this but changed the rules of the game. While the robots were playing soccer, a human hand enters into the middle of the field and takes the ball out. When the ball is gone, the robots get paralyzed and the match halts. In this way, the autonomy of robots is underlined and the general impact of human intervention is discussed.

MG: You used an interactive setting for the staging of *Tele-rugby* as well. You transformed the ‘underwater rugby’ into something different. You threw a large used TV in the water instead of a ball and recorded two teams playing the game.

GG: *Tele-rugby* is a new term and a new game. “It’s not only an underwater match with a television but also is a criticism for media industry”. The structure is based on competition and therefore it is

not linear. The work refers to the interactive piece entitled *Semi Tough: You da Bomb!* by Tim Hailey and *The Trial* by Selda Asal, both dated 2002.

MG: How do you differentiate your work from others? For example Jun Nguyen-Hatsushiba? He also makes dreamlike underwater pieces?

GG: Both in terms of subject and object. Especially with the approach to the structure. The hero of *Tele-rugby* is a television; therefore the subject-object relationship totally shifts. It is just like talking about a novel whose hero is a book.

MG: Tele-rugby was shown at Siemens as well as Museu de Arte Moderna do Rio de Janeiro. It was really a crowd pleaser. Why do you think the video was so popular?

GG: The three-dimensional, liquid space creates flying effects reminiscent of Michelangelo's frescoes at Sistine Chapel. The old TV and the clothes refer back to modernity. I didn't particularly try to make *Tele-rugby* beautiful, but it's not a problem that the work is aesthetic. It was a very dangerous production despite its strong visuals. It looked very comfortable thanks to the performers who were champion swimmers however, shooting was tough for girls who dived three meters under water to wrestle with a TV screen...

MG: Why is three-dimensional motion in space so important for you?

GG: In history we see that any change in art is very much parallel to developments in technology as well as changing social conditions. For example, the running horse figure could accurately drawn only after the invention of photography. I am sure that three-dimensional scanning/ modeling software together with digital underwater imaging technologies will contribute more to the development of understanding of movement in space. Humans not only move by walking on a solid surface but they also glide in water or in air. We need a more careful study to capture these actions.

MG: While talking about the relation of technology and art, have you met with Nam June Paik?

GG: I had the chance to encounter with the media art pioneer in the late 1990's in Istanbul. He had a large video installation at the Biennial with a theme similar to mine: belly dancers. In Turkish belly-dancers are called "oriental". Thus I was using this misuseage as a metaphor. He made me realize that I was on the right track, without explaining much.

"Together with its own implications (Ex Oriente Lux), *The Orientalux* concept has been conceived to make already kitsch concepts kitsch again. This is not a play of words; it is a play on concepts. It refers to Fluxus both graphics-wise and content-wise... In one section of the exhibition venue, concave and convex mirrors of Ismet Doğan were surrounded by belly-dancer dolls dancing non-stop. The images and stories of famous belly-dancers and papers that contain excerpts from Edward Said's *Orientalism* were laid on the ground while Gülan extemporaneously played the piano placed in the middle of the venue with a television on top of it. Another television was broadcasting live images of the viewers who watched the event. The performance aimed to point out notions about 'direction' and 'orientation' that stood out in the Biennial and that were emptied of their meanings. It also showed how 'we' and 'the other' melted into each other. It was an interesting coincidence that René Block, the curator of the Biennial, appeared on the television screen during the performance..." (Özgür Uçkan. *Intermedia II. Arredemento*, 1996)

MG: The robot in Paik's pieces appears as a human figure in your work.

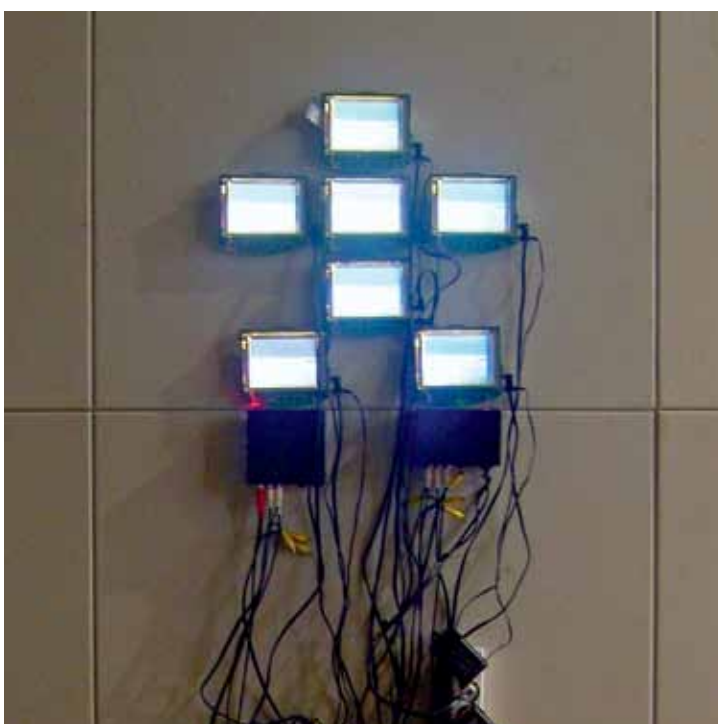
GG: They look similar but they are different, especially in terms of technology and as well as ideology. For example, Paik used black and white televisions and transistor radios in his 1964 *Robot Men*. With *PC Man* (2003), I used an old-fashioned PC, with a DOS Operating System, connected the computer cases to screens, and transformed the static visuals into an interactive sculpture.

MG: How did you integrate the live information flow into your *Cam-Man*'s?

GG: By using Internet and some coding I re-shaped the flow. Actually before building the physical *LCD-Man* with monitors, I made various immaterial human figures utilizing different real-time audio-visual online content. The form of the image was made up of pure Java and HTML. Their content was streaming live video feeds from different locations in the world. Hence the *Cam-Man* has been made



PC Man, 2002. 14 inch 7 monitors, PC, keyboard, DOS operating system. 105 cm * 112cm * 45cm. Now destroyed. (below) **LCD Man**, 2006. 7 Monitors, DVD, player and wires. As installed at the Incheon Arts Center, Korea. Tal Lee Collection.





Interactive Poem, 2002. Flash Action Script. 800 px * 600 px, 6k. As exhibited at the istanbulmuseum.org/ (below detail)



“Our object in this seminar (Reading Code) will be to consider digital texts (artistic and literary) that thematize the relations between language and code. The critical discourse on new media writing (in different accounts “cybertext” and “electronic literature”) asserts an intricate and necessary connection between the text and the medium. In its analysis of the materiality of texts, this discourse does not necessarily seek to identify a radical difference between the computer as medium and earlier writing machines like the typewriter; rather, it continues to develop analytic and semiotic paradigms particular to the technological substrate of the text. In this vein, our central concern in this seminar will be the interrelation, exchange, and encounter between text and code – broadly, the tower of programming languages (from machine language up to fourth-generation programming languages) that produces the textual interface. Issues and genres that we will study throughout include the poetics, aesthetics, and politics of code; electronic English; codework; operational text; text generators; machine translation; and the Free Software and Open Source movements. We will also discuss codeworkers and the virtual class in relation to the “California ideology” of entrepreneurial innovation and individual freedom. Art, experimental writing, and poetry by John Cayley, mez, Talan Memmott, Genco Gulan, Komninos Zervos, Ted Warnell, Giselle Beiguelman, Jodi, and others.” (Rita Raley. Reading Code. <http://transcriptions.english.ucsb.edu/curriculum/courses/overview.asp?CourseID=227>. 2005)

up of live information from multiple sources. It can be seen as the blending of medium and message, hence the ultimate incarnation of McLuhan's utopia.

MG: The transformation of the material figure into a virtual body with the Internet?

GG: Or making a figure made up of a pure real time data stream. As Rauschenberg incorporates elements from daily life, I made a collage with live streams that my code was leaching and combining from all over the world. Since it was a net-art piece, it circulated very fast; the work was shown in Thailand, Armenia and Serbia. But the work changed all the time and in every exhibition. And it needs to be made from scratch again if we want to exhibit it tomorrow.

MG: What is the difference between Net-art and Web-art?

GG: **Net-art is like a jellyfish. It is beautiful in the sea but evaporates if it is taken out of water.** Likewise net-art (for example the online *Cam-man* figures) will disappear when they are unplugged. However web-art is like a sea-horse. It does not disappear out of the network and can be saved and stored as information. But you may assume that without online interaction, participation and user input may be as dull as a dried sea-horse.

MG: Your online works are all around. They leak into dictionaries, museums, the curriculums of Universities; for instance, *Interactive Poem* has been a part of the syllabus of English literature at the University of California San Diego.

GG: *Interactive Poem* is an experimental literary text, in English and Turkish. There is a multi-dimensional movement in words engraved in Flash. It gives the impression of a third dimensional movement. The words and letters of the poem seem to float in space back and forth. References can be made to different cultures as you read words right to left to Arabic and top to bottom to Chinese. If you leave the sense of direction to the viewer in three-dimensional space, the situation distorts the perceptive linearity.

MG: You are not a writer but you do write.

GG: Every literate person should write. It is rather instinctual for me. For example; during a hot August day, forty days before 9/ 11, I started to write continually as I walked in the streets of New York City. I kept on writing to a *Green Notebook*, as I rode on the bus or on the subway, like a mad man. I kept on writing and rarely drawing where ever I go. For more than a month. I did not know what would happen but after the airplanes crashed into the twin towers there were few pages left. I could not really write how I felt into the last pages.

MG: Dadaists changed the structure of language for the sake of visual poetry. De-constructivists always existed in literature. In the literary field, you could always use language freely because it is literature BUT playing with the text is a crime to academics! In this context how can you explain publishing this article // *O Automata No Longer Considered Harmful* without writing it?

GG: In the article, I shift the subject/object relationship. Instead of writing about the advancements in artificial intelligence, I produced an example of this using an Automatic Article Producer. It got published in the catalogue of the Symposium. It became one of the first published examples.

"I just received word of a new SCIGen based publication, this time in a Turkish Media Design conference. It was submitted by Professor Genco Gülan of Yeditepe University in Turkey. The title of the paper is *I/O Automata No Longer Considered Harmful* describing a system called Thumper, and it appears in the proceedings of the 3rd International Symposium of Interactive Media Design, pages 103-107, published in 2005 by the Yeditepe University Publication House. ... Professor Gülan was kind enough to mail me print proceedings of the conference, however, and the paper is indeed in there. Gülan ...submitted it "as an example: both to show the problems of the academy and the possibilities of electronic interactivity." ... An amazing thing about this paper is that Professor Gülan added an endnote to the paper explaining that it was randomly generated by SCIGen, and it was still accepted!" (Jeremy Stribling, <http://pdos.csail.mit.edu/scigen/blog/ 2006>)

MG: You also insert intelligence into painting as well. The series entitled *Paintings that Robots cannot Read* managed to interlace the questions of A.I. and painting.

GG: True. I compared perceptions of humans with those of machines. Today robots are so advanced that humans do need to prove that they are different. What strikes me most is that, even to try to prove that the user is not a robot, systems use images produced by robots.

MG: In the Middle Ages, paintings represented the stories of the Holy Book, the Bible, illustrations were designed for viewers to believe. Today artists are free to create anything. They can combine their internal quest with their environment.

GG: In the first cave paintings, men not only drew animals but also drew tools on the walls with bare hands; arrows and spears. For ages humans did keep on painting not with hands but using tools such as; brush or palette. As a very important radical change, today, tools have started to paint themselves. Hence to underline this important shift, I returned to the classical methods and repainted the robot's paintings using oil on canvas.

MG: You say that your exhibitions become installations. How come?

GG: I mostly create series that are composed of individual –interdependent- units that may make a whole all together as well. **The sum of my art is different than the calculation of the individual parts.** I hope that as the layers of narration multiply, the overall communication becomes stronger.

MG: You use photographs in your installations as well. Do you call yourself a photographer?

GG: I always take photos however I am not a photographer in the classical sense. It is part of the whole process for me. Occasionally I use it as is; in its pure form, just to document. Building the scene is more complex than capturing the moment. I make photos all the time but I am very selective in terms of showing them.

MG: In what conditions does photography become a must?

GG: It becomes a must when it is not just a media but also the subject. For example, I used photography for the *Lifeguard* that was installed on a city boat. I replaced the old instructions on the wall with my own photos without changing their exact locations and old frames.

MG: You use photography for documentation. However the image you created with *Playing the Artist at the Daily Mythologies* is a manipulated image.

GG: I use both fiction and non-fiction simultaneously in my work but I mostly try to keep the media as bare as possible. In that specific work I used digital manipulation as well as make-up because I was searching for a specific feeling. Of Bertaux. When I re-interpret the works of other artists, my aim is to put myself in their shoes and understand what he felt and what she saw. For *Daily Mythologies*, I tried to understand what Hippolyte Berteaux was thinking while making the frescoes. What was he feeling in that construction space? I could not find his portrait but I inserted my face into a satiric relief that I found on the stairs.

MG: You refer to another grand master in the *H/ear Cut*.

GG: Vincent van Gogh. The very well known story about him having amputated his own ear is the biggest cliché in the history of art. However the act of cutting is never displayed graphically anywhere. My video series entitled *H/ear Cut* explicitly shows the never exhibited scene of cutting off an ear. There is a continuous signal tone on the right channel which is also turn off with the cut. This detail refers to the speculation that a ringing inside his ear had made van Gogh extremely uncomfortable and made him circumcise his ear.

“As you turn around (at Pyramid Sanat Gallery), you feel your stomach turn upside down seeing the video installation, showing an ear-cutting scene. Then you see a Van Gogh picture at the background and sigh. (Genco Gülan's) Video is actually made for that purpose... Van Gogh never lost popularity both with his works, his life and his ear-cutting epic. Especially the fact that he cut off his ear thrills everyone both with its meaning and visuals... The actor (artist himself) looks like him physically too. He makes an allusion simply by cutting off his ear and dying his white shirt red, with a sense of estrangement... And in an equally impressive way...” (Tülay Cellek, <http://www.tulaycellek.com>, 2007)



Hiç, 2004. *Paintings that Robots cannot Read* Series. Collage, letter cut with oil on canvas paintings. h 110 cm * w 180 cm. Gallery Artist.

“Since he started painting, Gülan has used texts in his paintings. These texts and words sometimes come to the foreground in his electronic works (*Interactive Poem*). In *Paintings that Robots cannot Read* words are transformed into simple syllables. Each word is picked with all its connotations but still these words should be perceived as independent codes and not as constituents of a sentence. Gülan chooses the three-lettered words of his mother tongue Turkish with a purpose. These bare, simple but poly-semantic words are ready to compete in visuals and call for new metaphoric meanings on their own. The words he picked such as *sor* (ask), *kul* (subject), *yaz* (write/summer), *düş* (fall/dream) and *sev* (like/love) are short and meaningful verbs like the first versions of Internet codes.” (Marcus Graf, *Artist Magazine*, 2005)



Paintings that Robots cannot Read, 2004. Exhibition with paintings, computer, internet, website as installed at Gallery Artist, Istanbul. (above) **Yaz**, 2004. Ink and artist blood on canvas (dedicated to Uğur Mumcu). 200 cm* 150 cm. **Saç (Hair)**, 2004. *Paintings that Robots cannot Read* Series. Human hair on canvas. Gallery Artist.



H/ear Cut, 2003. Two versions. *No Collar* (above) and *White Collar* (below). Video, 02:48:02. and Video installation. Spy Mirror, ceramic tiles shelf, shaving utensils, silicon ear, bathroom utensils, painting brushes, paint, cologne etc. Approximately 130 cm * 90 cm* 50 cm. As it is presented at the *Mixed Technique* exhibition at Pyramid Art Gallery, Istanbul.



MG: How did you feel in Van Gogh's shoes?

GG: Well, it was difficult. I wore a plastic ear on top of my own and recorded cutting it off as if shaving. The glue was very strong, it hurt. The cold bleeding of paint –with a hidden pump system- irritated me badly. Being a painter must have been very painful during those times. Unfortunately, today, the price you have to pay is even more than just one ear.

MG: I watched that video on Youtube.com What do you think of the Internet as a space for showing video-art?

GG: The invitation to show a selection of videos at YouTube came from a curator named Carlo Sansolo from Rio de Janeiro. I had produced the piece in 2002 in Istanbul. The combination of the post-earthquake era in Turkey with post 9/11 warfare was very depressive. Both of them together made me produce that bloody video. It struck me as well so I could not show it to anyone else. When Carlo asked me to exhibit the video, I could not turn down his request. He was in Rio so I was kind of safe. And YouTube was not popular then and I did not expect it to become so popular, so soon...

"In the history of art, few afflictions have generated as much curiosity as Vincent van Gogh's severed ear. Not Michelangelo's broken nose, not Degas's blindness, not even Toulouse Lautrec's misshapen body. The story of the ear (and the purported insanity that led to the self-mutilation) endures with the tenacity of myth—and sparks renewed argument whenever the myth gets tweaked. The prevailing account is that on December 23, 1888, van Gogh stalked his housemate, Paul Gauguin, brandishing a razor, but instead of attacking Gauguin, he went home and cut off the lower part of his left earlobe, wrapped it in newspaper, and gave it to a prostitute named Rachel... A clutch of videos on YouTube documents the dissemination of the ear legend in digital culture. In one, Genco Gulan, a Turkish artist, offers up the remarkably realistic removal of his left ear with a straightedge razor... All of this raises questions: What do we really know of van Gogh, and how important is his story to understanding his art? And why do theories about the artist—whether they concern his self-mutilation, his supposed insanity, or his suicide—have such a powerful grasp on the public imagination?" (Ann Landi, *What They See in Van Gogh's Ear*, ART news, 2010.)

MG: Let's fast-forward and re-replay. How did you move from object to subject in video art?

GG: In my earlier works, screens were very important objects. Then I have focused inside, and started making video tapes. The monitor, TV or a computer screen, as an icon, still continues to appear in my work.

MG: Why do you use it like a signature?

GG: TV was a magic box for us. I still remember clearly the first ever broadcast in Istanbul. I was a little kid and we were all very excited. We watched the shiny box, altogether as a large family, at our grandfather's old house in Şehzadebaşı.

MG: The monitor takes the leading role in your films as well...

GG: Yes, for example an old Grundig TV is the secret star of *Tele-rugby*. Also at the *Film alla Turka* (which I shot for *Play alla Turka* of Yeşim Özsoy Gülan, 2000) starts with an old broken television, displaying a blurry screen, touring Broadway on a wheeled cart.

MG: Did you construct hardware for your videos?

GG: Rarely. I have made lots of cable and wireless, open and closed circuits by using cameras and screens. For example, I designed a wireless camera system that could be fastened on a performer's arm for the show *Year 2084* (Özsoy Gülan, 2001). The point of view of the camera changed with the movement of the arm. By recasting the relationship between the cameraman and the camera, I aimed to create a different approach to shooting and acting.

MG: What about virtual cameras? Does the virtual camera angles of 3-D modeling help improve physical shooting?

GG: I try my best but it is not so easy. In the animation entitled *semaZen* the camera enters into the

eye of the character, walks around in its head and then goes out through the neck before affixing itself to the hand – like in *Year 2084*- but then whirls in the air attached to the hand. In order to create a similar effect in real life for the movie *Newist*, I installed the camera on the actor with a small tripod. Again, I used a similar technique for the *Zeybek with a Camera* which I shot in Berlin. Dressed in a black suit holding a camera in my hand, I danced Zeybek, in front of the Pergamon Museum. After returning home, I repeated the dance in Bergama on a rainy day. The raindrops on the lens reflected my feelings.

MG: From Berlin to Bergama, a long way indeed! Not only for the video but also for the temple. Anyway, what are your criteria for site-specific works?

GG: I love to make site-specific art and work with endemic things. It is not easy to find, make and keep them. Timing is also important for me. I try to work in specific time periods if possible. If time and space overlap, stories multiply and they turn into unique experiences that you may walk into... Those are the ones that I like most personally.

MG: What do you think of the shock effect?

GG: It is important. **My art is not only to please the viewer but also to shake them.** Take them back to their childhoods and kick their legs. My aim is to offer an unforgettable and preferably one of a kind experience. However humanity is losing its perceptive capacity under an increasing media bombardment.

MG: What kind of a perception should the viewer try to develop?

GG: I work hard for the viewers and they should work hard to understand me. Almost like a novelist working on his novel, I try to build layers for different levels of perception in the same work. A kid should enjoy my art as well as his parents. Or an art historian should find something to write about as well as a street vendor should enjoy the colors. I ask peoples opinions to develop details for building my shows.

MG: How can they gear towards new directions and come up with new readings?

GG: I always start with an investigation. If it is site specific; the history of the space, place, the pieces inside the depot, scrap materials in the backyard, what use may they have? How will all artworks interact with each other? What sort of a dialogue will they develop in their new environment? What is the best way to communicate this interaction to the viewer here? I work on all these small details building for a big show. And I expect the viewers to investigate themselves, read their environments and be open to non-linear relations.

MG: You brought pieces of an airplane into a theater. For the play *Last World* (Özsoy Gülan, 2007) at the Istanbul Theater Festival you have used a 737 on stage.

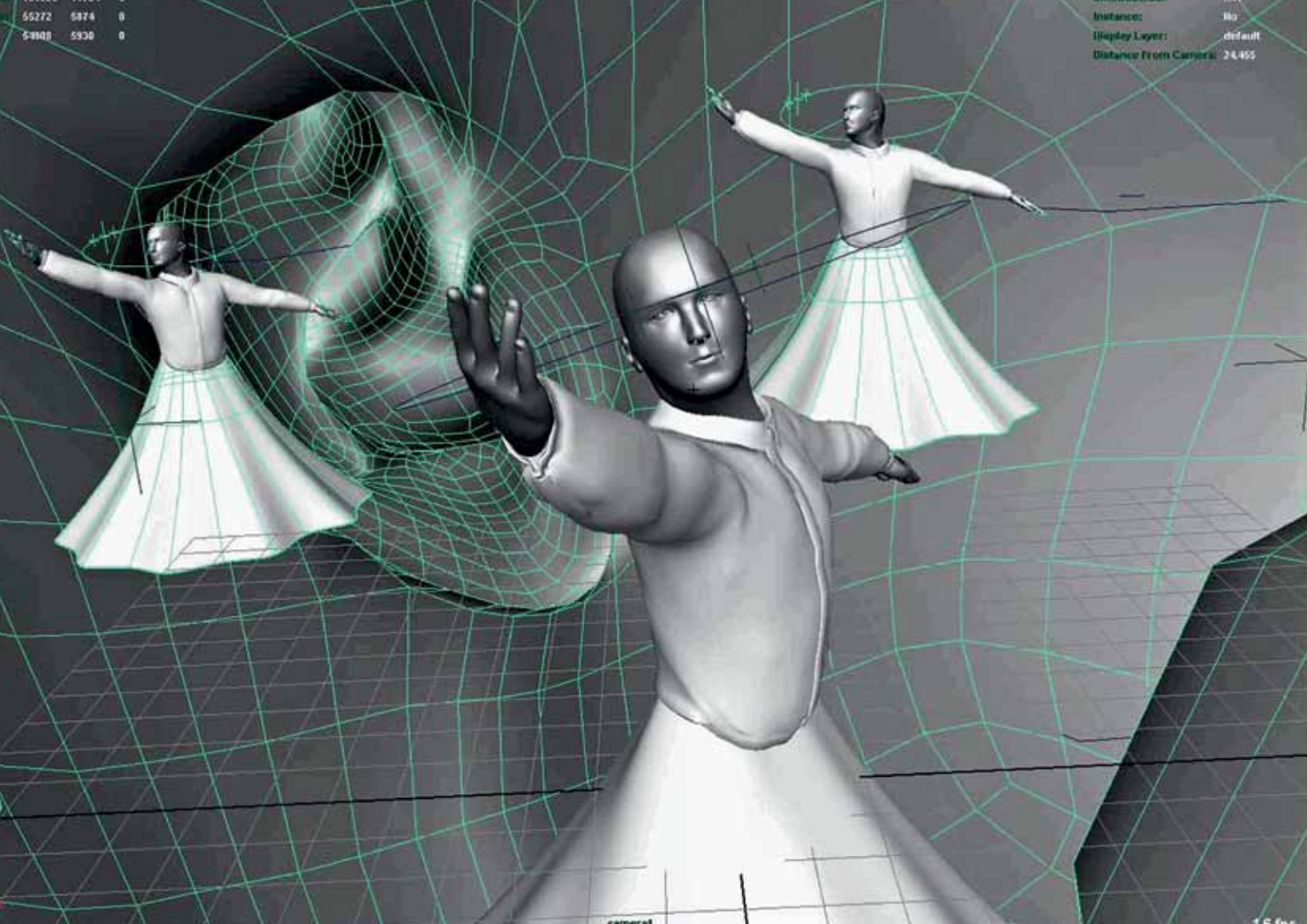
GG: We come across crashed planes mostly in Hollywood movies but a real airplane on stage is a different thing. Unfortunately, we couldn't get the main stage of AKM and I could not get a full 737. Thus I re-planned the installation, used the several parts parts of the 737. And all of them were hung in the air: The pieces of the Boeing, two actors and one actress all were suspended from the ceiling to re-create the moment of the falling. To freeze the time in a plane crash during free fall.

"Noah Airlines, flight 71/71 disappears at an unknown destination. During the free fall, three passengers find themselves in limbo with no time and space. They try to understand where they are and what they are doing?...The stage installation by Genco Gülan deserves praise as an integrated part of the visual impact. Actors playing several meters above ground, hang from the ceiling together with the pieces of the airplane. I have no doubt at all that the act delivered in a desired form of thinking and proper form of the transmission of this intention. Genco Gülan's approach overlaps with the logic of induction and deduction methods in relation to semiotics, overlapping part-whole relationships." (Üstün Akmen, "Son Dünya" : Kaçılacak Yer Nerede? Evrensel Newspaper, 2007)



Black Box is Orange, 2006. Networked installation: Used Boeing 747 airplane pieces, black box, Internet, computer, Java software, live tower/ airplane conversations from JFK and Boston Logan Airports. As Installed at Karşı Sanat Gallery for the 'Limits of Continuity Exhibition'. (below) **Last World**, (2006) Theater play by Yeşim Özsoy Gülan inspired from Genco Gülan's *Fall of the Super Hero*'s. Same objects, together with performers suspended in the air, as a stage installation, as presented at Biennale Bonn. The piece won an award from the Lions Jury in 2007.





semaZen, 2004. Computer animation. 00:02:24:00. Collection of the Artist. Above pre-rendered computer view. Below rendered screen-shot. Small photograph is a recording of artists performance at ZKM, Karlsruhe. The piece also got exhibited at Niche Gallery, Tokyo in 2010.



MG: After the Festival, the pieces of the plane appeared in the *Limits of Continuity* exhibition at Karşı Sanat curated by Gülşen Bal. What kind of a relationship did you try to establish between the theater and visual arts?

GG: Re-using the pieces underscore the parallelism I try to build between the theater and the art gallery. At Karşı Sanat, I made a different installation with the same pieces this time without suspending them from the ceiling but mainly laying on the parquet floor. The orange color black box was placed in the center. Additionally I have used two overlapping layers of live Pilot Tower communications through the Internet as the sound part of the installation. The viewer was able to sit on one of the airplane seats, but if they chose the seat on the right, he or she could have fallen down. This time the piece was called *Black Box is Actually Orange*.

Marcus Graf: Swinging from the actors in the air, let's return to performers and talk about Live Art and see where it leads us to...

GG: All art disciplines are constructed around the issue of recording techniques. Drawing, painting, photography and video that we just mentioned are all documentation methods developed for recording an idea, an emotion during a specific time or situation. However, live art is about going beyond these methods. The content is alive and real time, like a jelly fish. You have an idea in our mind; how to process and transfer this idea in the best way and with the least distortion? Or to record and keep it for the future what are you going to do? In performance art, you have the chance of expressing yourself immediately. Beware! You will have many problems there as well. If I want to reach out to a thousand people by talking one-to-one with them, I will have to sit down and talk to each one of them one by one. Which may mean spending thousands of hours with them. It is possible to enhance the communication process but there is always a price to pay.

MG: You act in your performances and you use other actors as well. How do you transfer your character for different pieces?

GG: I develop actions to transfer perception but they also transform me. I change my visual appearance, my hair and my body. In the *Barber Shop* series; I grow my hair, beard and then shave them off. Sometimes I do modify my volume. I gain or lose weight, like an actor. For example, once for the *semaZen* animation - to look more like my virtual self- I lost about 10 kg in a month and I shaved all my hair in a Turkish barbershop in Karlsruhe for the opening of the show at ZKM.

MG: Do you keep record of your performances?

GG: No, no, no. I am terrible with record keeping. I do not plan thus can not record most of the performances. In this book there are only a few of them. Actually I do not prefer to store or restore them either. My performances were mostly –unscheduled- actions any way. Some disappear, some remain in some way or another.

“In a Performance Art conference in New School, New York, I asked Rosa Lee Goldberg a simple question. The panelists didn't understand the question and asked me to repeat it. I repeated the question in Turkish again. When they realized that the question was originally in a foreign language, they looked for someone in the room to translate the question. Silence. They couldn't find anyone. Then silence was followed by giggles and the audience started to applaud.” (Göknur Gürcan, unpublished interview, 2002)

MG: What do you think of the relation between the real body and the virtual one?

GG: In my opinion, the body is not a must in performance art. There is life, a step beyond it. My definition is clear: live-life versus still-life. I work with humans but sometimes also with animals or plants or info streams in the form of live sounds, images or data. Sometimes interaction is crucial. The bits of software in the artificial evolution environment or robots with artificial intelligence are the actors that have recently joined my Club. Artificial or not, I prefer to have intelligence in art.

MG: Clever. You got your DNA sampled a couple of times and carried out several different projects with it. How does it feel to move into wet laboratories from your safe studio?

GG: Laboratories used to remind me of my childhood nightmares! I had problems with my kidneys and had to visit the hospital every week to give blood to get tested. They were all saying that I was

a brave kid. Today I am OK and my hands are not in chemicals as much as those of Damien Hirst. But with the developing bio-technologies, the possibilities that the labs offer make me really excited. Thus it was a smooth transition from digital technology into biotech in my case; they were both new. I first cloned my genetic information digitally than biologically. Now I am working on a long term project entitled *Twin*. For this series, I got my DNA analyzed and then cloned at the Bogazici University Department of Molecular Biology and Genetics.

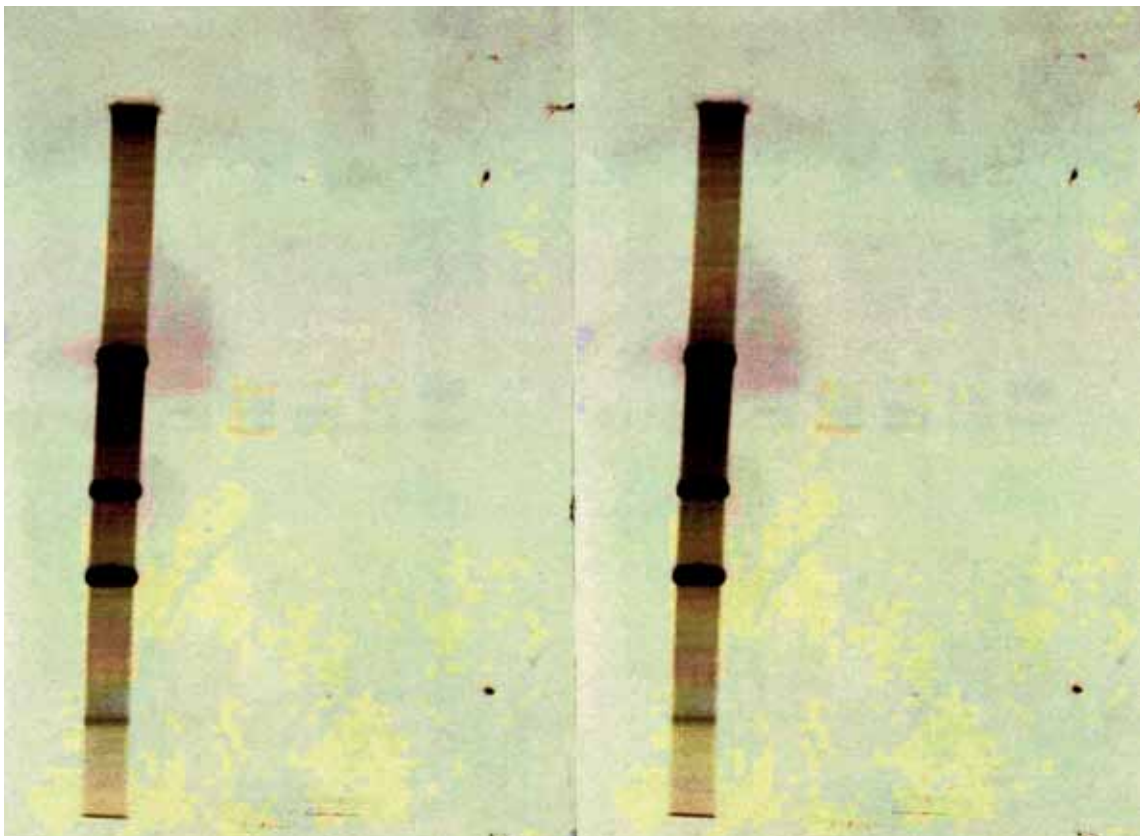
MG: ...Gesamtkunstwerk...

GG: In the opposite sense. Opera is called the union of all arts; genetic art might be totally the reverse. Non use of any media and the artist's self-reproduction can be seen as the highest form of art. As an artist I would say that a perfect self-portrait would be to clone oneself as an artwork. It is a primal instinct to reproduce. But also just like Wagner called opera the most sublime form of art, the need to free oneself from everything else and free from all intermediaries, lies beneath this urge. Then my clones may help me to tell the story.

"We applied the PCR method by using the DNA of the artist... The tube number 1 has the genomic DNA distilled from blood. This DNA is dissolved in a solution called TE Buffer and this enables to preserve the DNA for a long time. The tube number 2 is the product of a Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) of the Factor 8 gene whose Exon 14A region is reproduced. Apart from the DNA, this tube contains distilled water, buffer, MgCl₂, Dntp, primer and enzyme. If the DNA is kept at -70 °C, it will survive for a long time." (Esra Soydan, B. U. Molecular Biology and Genetics Department Specialist, e-mail, 2005.)

MG: Do you think human cloning will happen in the near future? If this happens how will this effect the arts?

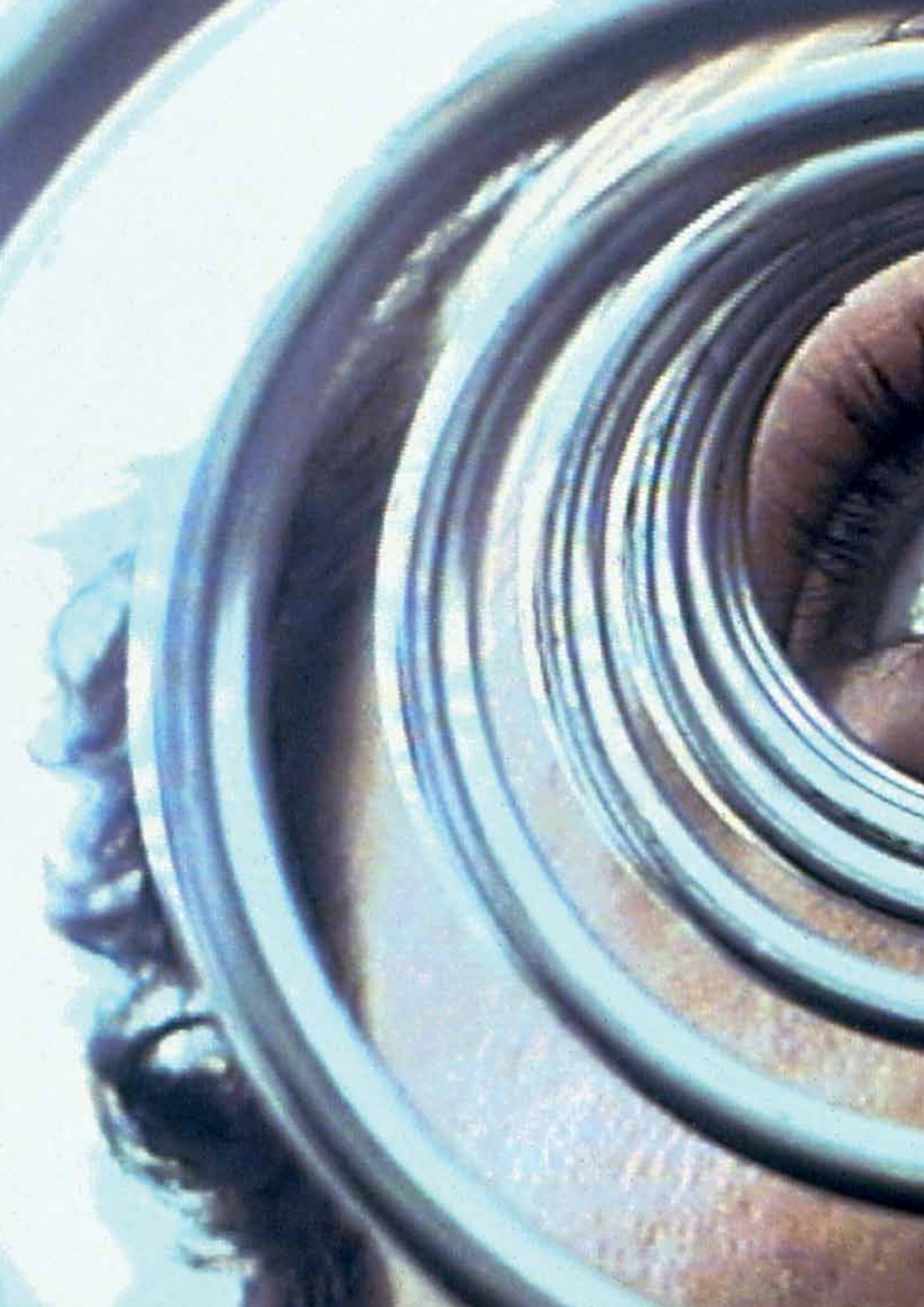
GG: Sure. Genetic technology today is more advanced than we can perceive. Laws try to prevent this. Art always –has to- change faster than the boundaries. If humans can be cloned easily (legally) there won't be any more need for painting and sculpture. The fact that patrons in the Middle Ages had paintings and sculptures of their own figures was actually to reproduce their images, just like the videos of wedding ceremonies and/or the engagement photos of today. Therefore, if humans can really be cloned, from head to toes, there might be no further need of artists. Or art could have been freed from its chains.

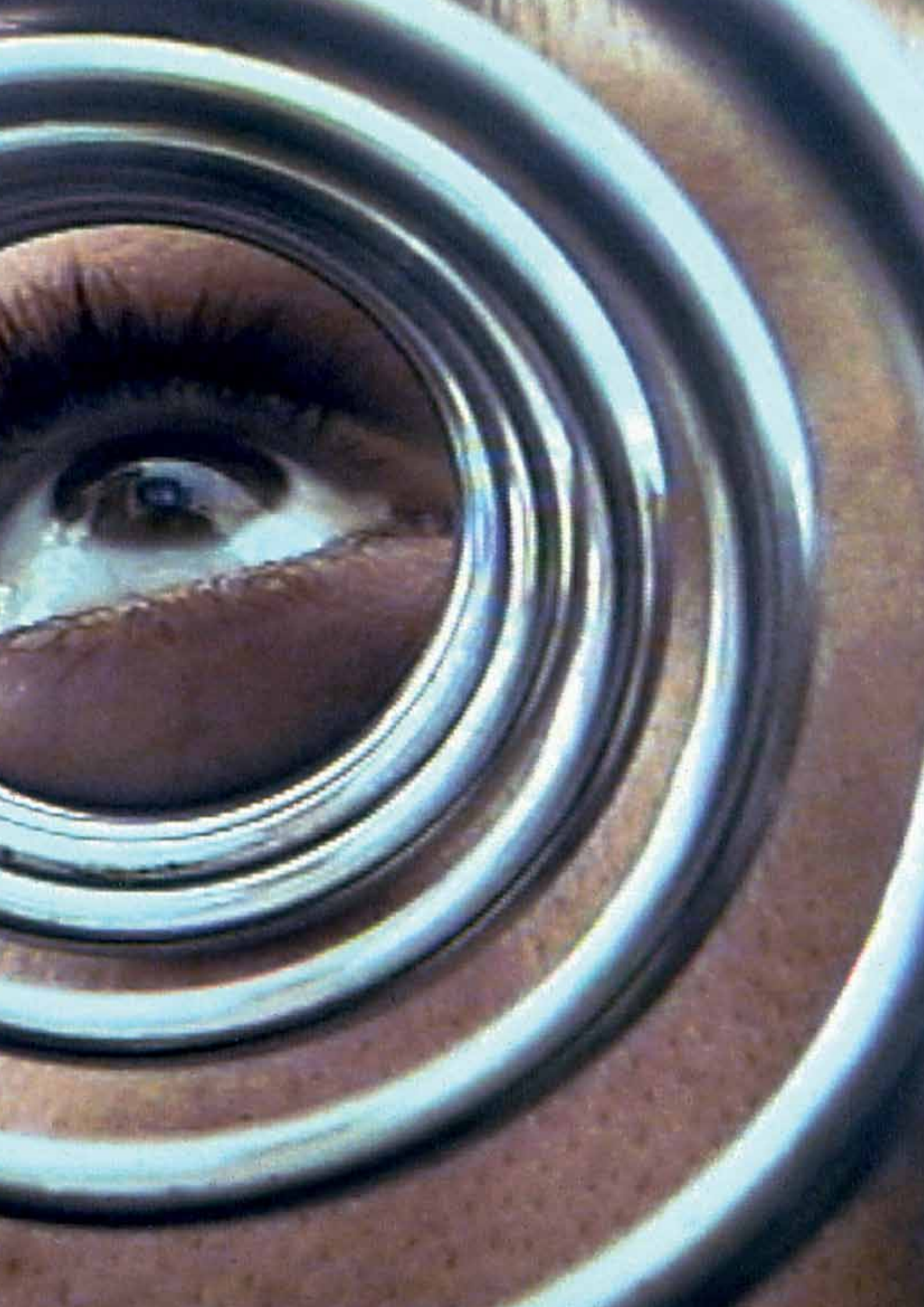


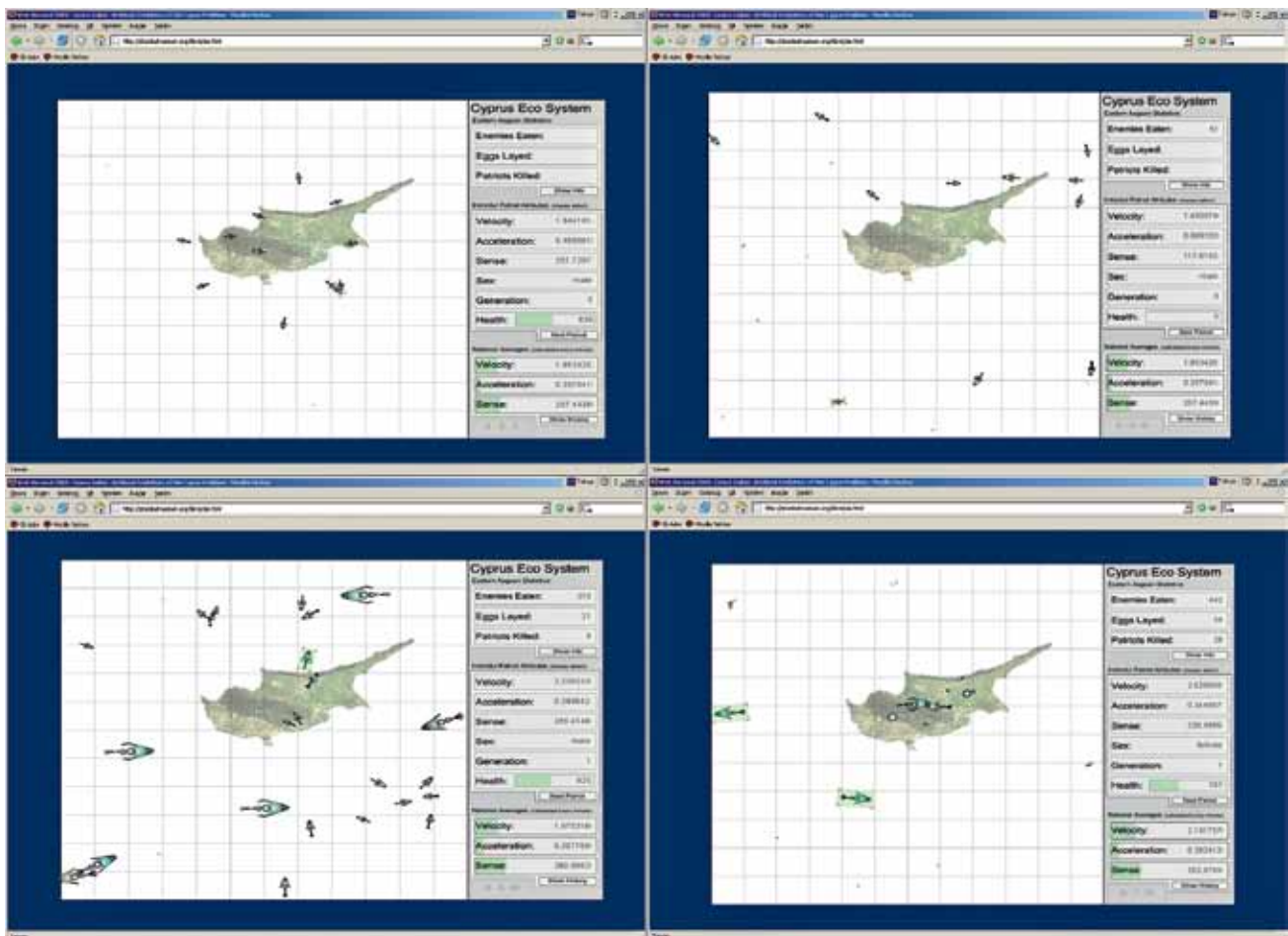


Twin Brother, 2005-2008. Two identical commercial refrigerators. Genetic material of the artist and its clone in two small tubes. As installed at Save As exhibition curated by Derya Yücel at Triennale Bovisa, Milano Italy. (below right) **Twin Brother**, 2005. Artist's DNA and it's clone in to small tubes. (left) **Twin Brother**, 2005. Digitally reproduced artists DNA analyses. Currently the artist is working on a transgenetic mutant fish.









Artificial Evolution of the Cyprus Problem, 2005. Simple Life Simulation model with Action Script. As presented at the *Web Biennial*. (below) Drawings of Genco Gülan from 1974. When he was five. (previous pages) *Cyclopedica*, 1998. Digital photo. As presented at the *Chaos in Action: Eurinomes's Gambit* online exhibition which was also presented from the portal of Center Pompidou, Paris.



@studio

Marcus Graf: Now we are at Galata in your Studio. We know that you are not much of a studio artist but still this is a nice place to think and work. You have studied Political Science. Why did you move from Social Sciences to the Arts?

Genco Gülan: Short answer; **I switched into art in order to draw more and write less.** Longer version; I realized that there is more freedom in art than in science. However as I go deeper into the arts, I write more and more, can't draw as much as I want.

MG: At the University you took studio classes from Greg Wolff. He was an office mate, close friend and a good painter.

GG: His unorthodox approach to painting and his philosophy of art were very influential for me. I have learned a lot from him yet I ended up being different. He still paints and I make many different things.

MG: How come?

GG: I had the chance to study with important scholars such as Kemal Kirişçi, Faruk Birtok and Nilüfer Göle. They helped me build my conceptual background. And also the diversity and the liberal environment of my University nourished me. First I went to the Theater Club because of my first name - which I inherited from the famous actor Genco Erkal-, but they were talking too much politics and doing nothing. Then I moved to the Fine Arts Club, started producing my own stuff, independently and immediately. All the student clubs; Theater, Photography, Chess even Diving but especially the Fine Arts Club played a big role shaping my vision over my social sciences foundation.

"The adventure starts as you enter the door. One can easily understand that this is something different. Inside you there is a disorder that leads to a harmony, a visual harmony. Here's Bogazici University, Fine Arts Club; GSK. Beyond the discussion, whether all the arts are fine, or all the beauty is art, the members agreed on certain branches of production. The Club president Genco, in our interview which lasted a couple of days, with me, counts the following immediately: painting, sculpture, collage and totally crazy other things." (Başar Başarır. G.S.K. Adı: Güzel Sanatlar Kulübü, Başkanı: Genco Gülan, İşi: Sanat. Boğaziçi Dergisi, 1989)

MG: Actually I want to go back more. How did you start painting and how did it develop?

GG: Both my mother and my grandmother were painters. My father is an architect thus I did not have much alternative. I went to kindergarten in Frankfurt and I was the only outsider. It was a big cultural shock. I started to do charcoal portraits of my friends at the fifth grade in Karşıyaka and the photocopy was newly invented. First I made drawings and then photocopied them. Later at highschool I used to cut art classes. There was a long list of required materials and I always forgot some at home.

MG: Some of your current themes come to the surface from your childhood memories?

GG: I often try to bring earth the treasures of my subconscious. I try to dive into the treasure chamber of my memories like a diver, and come out with souvenirs and nightmares. Sometimes the dive results in a long-term catch. I swim in my personal history as well, that's inevitable... Sometimes the



011 Nights Tales (Climb and Read), 2000. 11 channel unfinished video. Approximately 5 minutes each. Performer Yeşim Özsoy Gülan reading loud from 1001 Nights Tales. Photo stills of a performance at the New School, New York.

011 Nights Tales (Run and Read), 2000. 11 channel unfinished video. Approximately 8 minutes. Performer Yeşim Özsoy Gülan runs bare feet reading outloud. Photo stills of a performance at 46th Street and Manhattan Bridge, New York.



works end up all alone, like an island in the ocean and years later I realize that they somehow relate to one another like a chain of islands. For example the line of work that are related with Cyprus: *Blue Filter* and *Artificial Evolution of the Cyprus Problem*, are mainly emerging from my childhood nightmares. During the war, we were right on the Aegean coast, first in Izmir and then in Bodrum. We were scared of air-raids and I was drawing the island all the time.

Marcus Graf: Back to today and back to interdisciplinarity. If there are no professors working on an interdisciplinary basis at a university, here in Turkey the approach will not easily be integrated into the education process. Professors Ferhat Özgür and Turan Aksoy are two promising examples. They are both good academicians, painters with a strong background and they are also artists who produce installations, photographs and videos, just like you...

GG: They are good friends and good artists. But I did not choose the tenure track and prefer to be an artist and not a full time academician. We have to differentiate. I always ask myself: How can I associate the real-timeliness of the Media with the texture of my own material? Or the reverse; how can I get out of the lubricity of the oil paint and slip into the glitter of the video that resembles the paintings of Ayvazowski? And finally, when I use both of these media, how am I supposed to define the final product? Producing unique works is more important for me than not being able to classify them. But I am afraid that the audience is addicted to fast-food.

MG: Genco, you are like a *mediatore*, you use all sorts of media. You never got content with expression and you always kept on searching for the medium that best fits to your thinking. I believe that these are the most significant characteristics of your signature.

GG: Today the artist is forced to become a social critic. Society furtively pushes us towards the front. Being a pioneer naturally comes with certain responsibilities and challenges. If you are dealing with a concept, the references become as important as the work itself. You need to have strong philosophical and sociological references in whatever you say. To compete in a global context, you need to invent technologies, utilise materials that are never used before.

MG: How do you see the role of the artist in society today?

GG: Artists need to criticize things and people that have never been criticized before. And balls, yes you need to have balls to take all these risks. Nerves, you need nerves to carry along...

MG: Where did you get enchanted? You told me that *The Magicians of the Earth* exhibition affected you very much. What makes this exhibition so important?

GG: The first time I travelled to Europe in 1989, I coincidentally came across *Les Magiciens de la Terre* at Centre Pompidou. The magicians had amazing works. This exhibition opened the doors of a "World Art" concept for me: "No one can monopolize art!" The exhibition showed that the local culture and the universal (I am not saying modern) do not have to clash and that they can coexist together. There I also realized that museums don't have to be boring places and they don't have to display dead art... If the structures I have built today resemble the clean chaotic mess of those magicians that would only make me happy.

MG: Is it also how you started collecting things?

GG: Collecting is an old habit. After *The Magicians of the Earth* exhibition, I started to collect visual materials on culture consciously. Then assembled them together in two and three dimensions. Some were religious and some were political symbols, thus together they were explosive. A couple of curators, who are very famous today, found my works too politically loaded to exhibit at that time. Hence I had to develop some other ways, for example; *Portable Installations*.

MG: Let's move to the period when you lived in the US.

GG: I first went to New York in 1998, it was early fall and the City was so charming. Multiculturalism was so inviting. I loved Chinatown and realized how the traditional spice vendors in Istanbul originated from the Silk Road connection of thousands of years. Likewise, I saw how the Upper West

Side buildings were kept alive and rich; whereas similar neoclassical buildings, probably by the same architects in Beyoğlu, Tarlabaşı are empty and poor today because of the forced migration.

MG: The work you showed at Game Show depicted your life in NYC?

GG: Yes. After we moved to New York in Winter I realized that the real life in the city was not that warm. Homeless people were sleeping on the streets in snow. *Liberty Game* was an aquarium, with two live lobsters, plastic tapes tied around their chelae. Plus two blindfolded Statue of Liberty bibelots right under them. Their condition resembled mine; immigrants are on display windows in U.S. but they are free as long as their hands are tied. Liberty is for all as long as your eyes are closed.

MG: And then you were in Manhattan during 09/ 11/ 01. What did you experience?

GG: We heard the news early in the morning on the phone from an intercontinental call but couldn't figure out what was really happening. I tried to go to work in Midtown but my bus stopped the service on the way. I tried to walk through Central Park, came across to thousands of businessmen in suits, passing slowly towards uptown, with blank faces as if we were in a zombie movie. I asked one: No work today? He just said: Well... I don't think so... Later, I learned what happened but again I could not believe my ears. I thought, those pilots were hypnotised by the **Martians attacking to our planet...** Strangely, it was quite silent in the afternoon...No one was crying in the streets... I decided that I didn't want to live with people who do not cry...

MG: How did the attacks affect you?

GG: Immediately; both directly and indirectly. Racism, hatred against immigrants raised immediately and we had to move back to Istanbul. Indirectly, it touched me deeply and started to affect many of my works...For a long time we got scared when we heard a plane passing close by. That is how I created the sound piece *Whenever I Hear an Airplane*.

MG: Can you compare New York and Istanbul?

GG: New York is a grand arena. You are in the middle of a big spectacle and you have to fight and win all the time in order to keep fighting. Again, again and again... In NYC there are many carrots hanging, there is certainly the possibility to reach the carrot, yes, it is possible but if you do not have a heart attack before. Istanbul is the dungeon of the same arena. There is no carrot but there is a stick. Running and reaching the carrot is unrelated. In other words, whether you run or stand still, there are a lot of sticks and possibly no carrots. To sum up; no carrots in both cities if you do not transform into a dragon-fish, lots of sticks in Istanbul and lots of running in New York.

Marcus Graf: When you mentioned running, I remembered the incomplete video series entitled 011 Night Tales that you shot with Yeşim in New York...

GG: Machine City is where everyone runs all the time. Run, run, run. Istanbul is a limping city while New York is a running city. Moreover, New York is a city of books; Istanbul is a city of small talks. Everyone reads something all the time in NYC and everyone talks in Istanbul. In the *011 Night Tales* video, the tales are not told but they are read out loud. Our hero, my wife Yeşim, just like Scheherazade, is trying to read the tales that she will not be able to finish while running barefoot on the streets. She reads against a machine, sometimes against an escalator, sometimes against a treadmill. The slow and repetitive operation of the machine goes on and on, the performer slowly gets tired, fades out and disappears.

MG: Improvisation is important for living in both chaotic cities... How important is it in your videos?

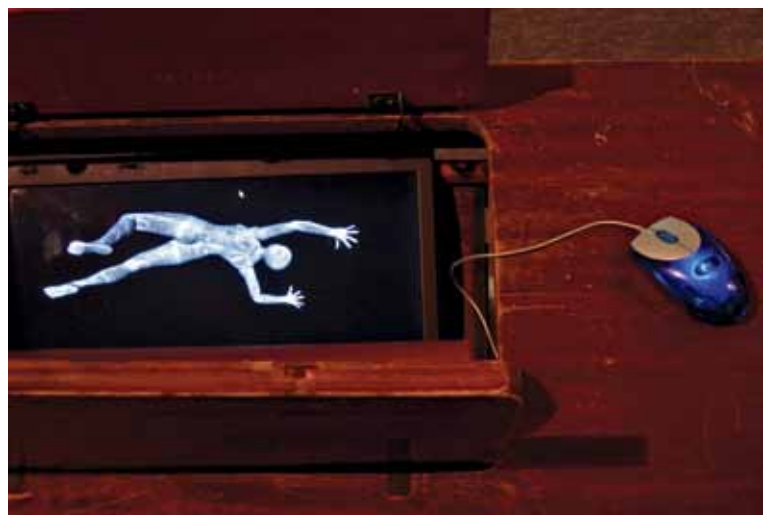
GG: Very important. I always give my performers an action framework that they have to improvise. I expose them to physical challenges so that they won't be able to find the strength to act – but instead just be.

MG: I really liked your approach in 011 Nights Tales and Tele-rugby videos. As Muammer Bozkurt put it in his book, they can be defined both under the categories of performance video



Fall/dream, 2007. (*Düş* in Turkish) Interactive installation. Broken glass remaining from a terror attack, airplane pieces, blue neon, used wooden cabinet, laser imploded crystals, blue LED lights, bird nest, old sewing machine, computer, projector, VRML etc. Dimensions may vary. As presented at the *Mediterranean Dialogues*, Citadel, St. Tropez, France, curated by Suz van Hagen. (below detail). Also details on page 117.

“In the post-modern era, anything that enters a gallery or a museum is accepted as an artwork. What if objects accidentally enter the art space as a result of an extraordinary happening (a terror blast for instance)? Should we take these objects as artworks, immediately discard them or should we study them? That’s how I started to reflect on the reasons of things that happen to us, as I was looking at the broken windows in the museum gallery.” (Genco Gülan, *Cosmopolis 1*, 2004.)





Man with a Yellow Raincoat, 2007. Video installation and digital photograph. 00:07:00:00. Boğaziçi University Library. (above) The photo that needs to accompany the video installation.

“The primary question is: Why did the artist (Genco Gülan) dress up like Osman Hamdi? Once you realize the fact that Osman Hamdi is another important artist from history the question becomes larger. Why did Osman Hamdi need to be Osman Hamdi? Why did he establish a museum, open an academy, and publish regulations? As a well educated painter who had his education abroad, why didn’t he content himself with this? Why did he create a mission in his paintings, of being a leader in society? We know the answers to these questions historically. But we don’t know why his artistic sensitivity turned to outside instead of inside.

...

After this point, being the engineer of a public mission is transmitted to Genco Gülan from Osman Hamdi, as an extension of the enlightenment tradition. Gülan’s ruler starts to measure the opportunities which come along for a new reality, like a pray counting rosary. The aspect of the two artists in the same frame is parallel but the reality they see cannot be the same. Ancient Istanbul is hidden in the mosque mysteriously behind the artists and in front of them there is a huge world which needs to be measured. Osman Hamdi in his work measured the unmeasured. And Genco Gülan, by making this video, is setting free the measured. In this way the artistic identity of Osman Hamdi returns to his art by eluding the corporate personality.” (Bariş Acar, The Portrait of the artist himself as Osman Hamdi, Rh+ Sanart Magazine, March 2008)

and video performance. This definition refers to the recording of artistic action but does it also enables them to transform the recording into an independent “aesthetic” value?

GG: Live recording and recorded material are two different things. Although medium similarity creates an aura of familiarity video-art is video-art, performance recording is a video document. The length and media might also be determining -as in the case of Andy Warhol films- I think twice before naming my moving images.

“Video art is different from films content-wise as much as material-wise. And this brings a different dimension to the narration. For instance, video doesn't have to have a beginning and an end like in Hollywood movie format. Film and video is like the difference between a novel and a poem... Another significant aspect of video art is that it can be independently produced and distributed, just like in other digital or Media arts... In practice one can write, direct, play, shoot and edit the video on computer and then broadcast it all by herself.” (Cem Tanır, Video Art: Yeni bir Lehçe. Bogazici Magazine, 2002)

MG: During an interview with Tomur Atagök in 1998, you were saying that “you were fighting an individual war in the culture field.” What is the significance of this struggle in your work?

GG: Every artist, like Goya, makes works about the wars on civilians of his age. From the primitive cave pictures to net-worked computer games of today, war has been one of the most pivotal concepts. And at the moment, we are right inside it and we are the true subjects of this bloody game.

MG: You have an article *Terror as an Art Form or Code of the Broken Windows* you wrote for the catalogue of *The Balkan Biennial* of the Thessaloniki Contemporary Art Museum. The topic is one of the most critical issues of our day and it is about the worries surrounding us worldwide.

GG: All the windows of this room we are sitting in ‘now’ were broken during the twin bombings a few years ago. A piece of arm was lying in front of our main door. Many of my paintings in the studio, my brother Görkem's car got damaged. Some of our neighbours died, we could have died too.

MG: In Turkey we live with terrorism every day.

GG: Sure. Now the entire world is living with terrorism all the time and there is no escape unless a serious global change -in social justice- somehow takes place. As an intellectual, I believe in the transformative effect of art and science for the society. Thus I think our influence should be as powerful as terrorism's. We should be able to change things with art, to stop terrorism.

MG: In the past, there used to be two armies combating on the battle field and now you press a button and a target miles away is destroyed. A single computer is enough to control this and one can observe all the action of airplanes, satellites and missiles from the monitor. We, the passive viewers, watch all these wars almost every day. Since the Gulf War, wars are broadcast live on TV or on the Internet. Just as you mentioned, this is a social disease and just as Paul Virillio puts it, “the camera turned into a weapon.”

GG: Art shouldn't be only the aesthetics we hang on the wall, but a dynamic to shape the society.

MG: You are talking about social art parallel to the tradition of classical avant-gardes?

GG: An idealist approach today might smell ‘old school’. My approach is still utopian but different. I use the causes and effects together in the language I construct. But I do not show a direct cause and effect relationship. My work does not promise a simple solution. I show possible solutions; a multiple choice test with multiple correct answers.

MG: Democracies can integrate opposites into existing conditions or tolerate them. How to determine the right balance between *Utopia* and *1984* in terms of power relationship is another question. Even the Internet can become a tool of control besides being an open structure.

GG: Electronic communication has to be as free as possible. This is the most prominent objective for the projects I have been making since mid-1990s. The vaccine for the electro-phobia, pumped by the possibility of cyber attacks on the NET, can only be developed if we can create beautiful artworks out of viruses. We no longer can talk about offline systems. We constantly need to stay connected even

to share virus definitions. No commercial software cartel can last forever in the electronic space unless they utilise self-generating open operating systems whose content is developed through sharing:

MG: You are saying that art should have a political, cultural or social content. Although the Europeans today do not fully believe in politics, science or religion, we can still ask the question: How to raise the awareness of the alienated individual of our age?

GG: Politics is very crucial but not indispensable. I do a lot of things that seem apolitical at first glance. For instance, the *Twin Alexander the Great* sculpture on the ground, on your left is entirely apolitical at first glance. But it carries an ideological saying about presentation of power: Dialogue instead of monologue.

MG: As far as I can see, you are growing a beard now. Is this for a new project?

GG: As you know, I shave regularly and grow this beard for the occasion of this project. I have been working on a new piece with reference to Osman Hamdi Bey's painting *Man with a Yellow Robe*, (1906). I will be posing, in front of Rüstempaşa mosque, the original location of his reference photos.

MG: Why do you think did Osman Hamdi picked that location and pose for that painting? And what traces did you follow –like an inspector- to find the exact location?

GG: It is build by Mimar Sinan and its tiles are from Iznik. When I went to Tahtakale to find the mosque, I found the ceramic decorated door right away as if I had known it perfectly well beforehand. I came to believe that the master made use of photomontage only after the shooting. While editing the photos I realized the proportions were not matching so I arranged a second shoot.

“Among all the articles in this Dictionary the hardest one is the article under the vague title of “popular culture and contemporary art.” Because it carries the inevitable risk of subjectivity...Genco Gülan's work named *Man in a Yellow Rain-coat*, in one way differentiates itself from *The Tortoise Trainer* and in another way visually refers to *Mumin with Roseary* (San Cübbeli Adam) but interprets the content differently. As in the terms of Barış Acar; “with a tricky gaze from his own century he looks at the same framing with Osman Hamdi.” (Edhem Eldem, Osman Hamdi Bey Sözlüğü, Kültür ve Turizm Bakanlığı Yayınları, 2010.)

MG: Doesn't your work become absurd or grotesque sometime?

GG: Humor is important. Personally, I don't think that conceptual works have to be boring for the sake of seriousness. Osman Hamdi Bey used to dress up for his photo-collages hence I did the same. But I interpreted his perspective: While my master put on traditional clothes and took photos of himself, I got my photos with the daily costumes of an engineer.

MG: Growing a beard has religious and political implications, especially in Islam. Which references do you use?

GG: All and none of them. Yes the beard refers to tradition but shaving refers to fashion. A lot of men shave every morning despite cutting their faces and bleeding badly. It hurts. But if you have an office job, you have to shave – that's it. As in the *Hair Cut Loop* you cut either your hair or your beard over and over... Every day. This is sometimes a written rule and sometimes a hidden social pressure. Associating shaving with antique sacrifice rituals or castration ceremonies is not that indirect. In fact, the shaved man looks more like a woman and/ or like a boy: we pretend to be rewinding the aging process or travel cross gender, after shaving. There is one thing for certain: By the simple act of shaving, our appearance changes. Men look more -quote, unquote- modern.

MG: Actually, do you consider yourself a modern artist?

GG: **I am not modern. My works do not promise completion or absolute perfection.** They are not simple, minimal, categorizable. Modernism has already finished and post-modern is out of date. I mention in my articles that we are living in the 'post-post-modern' era. History is finished and an 'Al-story' is very near. I always imagine myself dancing on the flying carpet of the cultural heritage, with bare feet. It hurts, but it's fun. While the centrifugal force of the richness that thousands of civilizations gathered on this land has sufficed to enlighten all of Europe, we find ourselves in a vacuum of the eye of a storm. We will keep rising despite the feeling of emptiness...



Nose-Star, 1993. Steel bars, paint and wheels. 3m * 3m * 3m. Now destroyed.
 (below) Video-still of the site specific performance as presented at the Festival
Ah! Güzel İstanbul at Yıldız Palace, İstanbul, curated by Hüseyin Katırcioğlu.



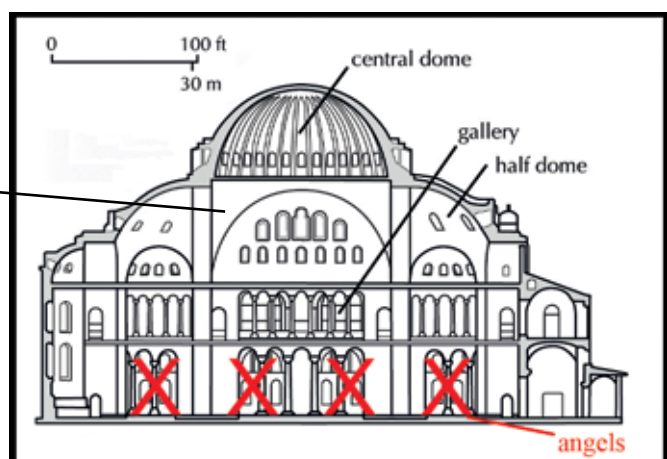






Narthex, 1995. Site specific video installation. Used lead panels from the dome of Hagia Sophia, 50" TV monitors, wooden construction. 3m * 3m of 4 pieces. Now destroyed. (previous pages) Installation general view as installed at the garden of the Saint Sophia Museum. (below) The original angel figure and the plan of the installation at the outer narthex.

“Within the Project of *Narthex*; the play *Balance and Connections* which was initially announced to be performed at Hagia Sophia’s garden but was not realised because of the pressure from the religious protests, was staged (at the Istanbul Archeology Museum.) Minister of Culture Ercan Karakaş mentioned that the play expressed the interconnections in between the different cultures of the city and said that thus the reactions to the play was not appropriate.” (Archeology Museum Instead of Hagia Sophia, Cumhuriyet. 1995)



@gallery

Marcus Graf: Genco, now we are at the exhibition entitled *Beautiful* at the Siemens Sanat to continue our interview. Today, I would like to talk about the exhibition we are inside at the moment and as well as the ones that played a key role in your artistic career. Let's begin with an overview of your projects from the 1990s and let's start with; *Ah! Beautiful Istanbul* at the Yıldız Palace which had a similar title with our show.

GG: It was an interdisciplinary event in an Ottoman palace. I was invited to the festival by Hüseyin Katircioğlu. While researching the palace and the last sultan who lived there a century ago, Abdülhamit II, I encountered the era of despotism; Istibdat Period. I learned that the words 'nose' and 'star' were banned at the time because the first word made reference to the Sultan and the latter to the Palace we were in. In order to recall this censor, I started building a sculpture of *Star with a Nose*. Interestingly enough, my work got censored again after almost a century later.

MG: How did you react?

GG: They renamed our work without noticing and we had to develop a way to respond properly. With my colleague Ali Can Yaraş, we decided to change the text while strolling around the garden of the palace carrying the metallic wheeled star & nose sculpture. We would be shouting out loud the banned words: 'nose', 'star', 'Abdül' and 'Hamit':

MG: Later you continued working with Ali Can Yaraş. For example, you sent him in front of a jury as a piece of art work.

GG: Yes. After meeting with him, I started to take performance art more seriously but my approach to performance art was from a plastic arts point of view. After Marcel Duchamp I thought that everything can be a ready found artwork. Human beings are physical creatures anyway. So they could be turned into sculptures.

"In 1998, I was into ready-found objects. I decided to submit Ali Can Yaraş for the *Contemporary Artists Exhibition* as an artwork. Ali Can was a *Contemporary Artist*, thus he could become a ready-found artwork as well. I paid the application fee for the exhibition, got a number. No problem. Then on the day of the judgement he showed up in front of the jury on time and said "I came". They asked "Why did you come?" Ali Can replied "I am a work of art just like the bicycle and the chair sculpture over there." The head of the jury asked "So what will you do at the exhibition?" He said, "It doesn't matter what I do, I am the work of art here." The jury did not like the uncertainty of the unfavorable situation and the project was rejected." (Interview with Gökür Gürçan, 2002.)

MG: Another important project during that period was the *Narthex Project* at the Hagia Sophia and Archeological Museums in 1995. It generated a lot of speculation.



Gecekonu, 1995. Brick building constructed in one night. Site specific video installation with two pieces 50" and four pieces 35" Monitors (total 6 monitors), antenna, local TV broadcast, chicken, rooster, plants, second hand window frames, used curtains, six pairs of used shoes. As installed for the TÜYAP İstanbul Exhibition Center for the *Genç Etkinlik* Exhibition curated by Hakan Onur. Approximately 5m * 7m* 3m. Now destroyed. (See: Raife Polat, Milliyet Art, 1995)



GG: It created a big fuss. We were invited to the museums by the director Alpay Pasinli. It was an official invitation for the Week of Museums. After investigating the sites; the Archaeological Museum and Hagia Sophia which were operating together at that time, I decided to concentrate on the concept of Narthex which means 'outer corridor' and to use the words 'links', 'balances' and 'transitions' as subtitles. I planned installations for the corridors in both museums. For the outer corridor of the Hagia Sophia, I prepared a video installation about the angels that believed to be holding up the dome.

MG: You have focused on the concept of tolerance while building the sculptures.

GG: The Hagia Sophia was under restoration as always. The company in charge of the restoration allowed us to use pieces of scrap lead plating left over from the dome restoration. I reconstructed my interpretation of abstract six-winged angels with lead layers from the sacred dome. In order to respect the non-figurative principle, I did not depict the body or faces of the angels and instead, I put TV screens in the middle to televise the faces. These screens would show faces that are related with the holy building: faces of tourists, faces of mosaics etc.

MG: You were careful indeed. How did the controversy arise?

GG: When our interdisciplinary project appeared in the front page of Hurriyet newspaper's weekend supplement, the discussions around Hagia Sophia immediately got heated up. Extreme right-wing press called for protest. No one was talking about art but everything else. On the opening day there were more protesters than audience. **Police told us that they were not going to be able to protect us.** My statues were destroyed and we almost got killed.

"A group of artists organized an art event at Hagia Sophia and the Archaeological Museum. Some artists danced in Hagia Sophia as a part of this event. The well-known 'provocation' gun was thereby fired. People fought with each other, the cloaked and turbaned provocateurs immediately stirred up the crowd. The 'intellectual branch' of these people began to write about 'respect' because from then on, 'tolerance' and 'conviviality' have been laid aside and forgotten. The cloaked and bearded people severely insulted the artists but the insults weren't classified as the 'provocation' favored by some of our writers. This was because 'provocation' fitted this definition only when it was used against them. The 'Turkish-Islamic Synthesis' once found pleasant by everyone, gradually turned into an 'Arabic-Islamic Combination'..." (Hami Çağdaş, *Either What I Say or What I Say*. Gösteri Magazine, 1995.)

MG: So you could not show the project. Shortly after that you were drafted into the military but you still continued producing art.

GG: I served as a full time private in Navy (Bahriye) and it was forbidden to do anything else. Curators kept on inviting me to exhibitions so I sent them whatever I had: For example, *He is in the Navy Now*: an official military photo with flowers. I carried the same photo in my military ID all through my service. My military photographs were compared to the works of Gilbert & George. I was transforming the real document into art. Their kitsch was fictional; mine was real.

MG: It is argued that military painters marked the beginning of a 'Western-oriented' Turkish Art. Do you relate your military experience to old school painters?

GG: Yes and no again. *He is Now a Soldier* series is also related to the argument that modernism came to Turkey via the military bureaucracy. The military has been assumed to be the peak of Turkish modernization model thus even academic painting is linked up with this. The flowers I am holding in the picture and the Mona Lisa smile on my face were my only critical responses to these arguments.

MG Your most significant work immediately after the military service was the *Re-construction* exhibition in AKM in 1996.

GG: The neverending social research I did during my graduate studies on modernisation theory, revolutions and reforms, combined with my tough experiences during the military service prepared the ground for this project. I got invited by Nilgün Özyayten, I spent a long time in the AKM building, looked around its warehouses. Then I did archive search about the space at the library of Cum-

huriyet. I found marvelous large, 8 meter long used Opera decoration pillars in the backyard. They were waiting to be demolished. I purchased them, we carried them to the gallery and created a huge exhibition with all that I had found.

MG: *Re-construction, in a way, ended with a De-construction.*

GG: I had to do it. The columns were too large and I had no place to store them. So I had to demolish them but I decided to share this sad moment with friends. Thus I cut the large pillars with a motor-saw insitu during the first DAGS Performance Days Festival.

MG: But you have constructed something else before that.

GG: I built a *Gecekondu*, a real size shanty house, in one night, together with my neighbors from Armutlu, like a community project. It was a two room brick house with second hand wooden frames, built inside the TUYAP Istanbul Exhibition Center. It was a real size full house. The chickens and roosters were in the backyard singing throughout the exhibition. A small TV family was living in it: the mother and the father were 50' screen and the four kids were 35'. And traditionally, they all kept their shoes at the door step. *Gecekondu* was a project about the transformation of Istanbul which is % 65 percent of illegal housing. The work also evolved during the exhibition. During the show the plants in the back yard died but the chicken laid eggs and they were stolen by the guards. The piece was very popular but it did not get a proper reference from its successors.

“Barbers are among ‘the craftsmen and artisans’ who can best follow what’s going on in Turkey. While you –well, of course, in accordance with our topic, who carry a blue ID card (for men) in their wallets- are savouring the delicious tea you drink from traditional Turkish tea-glasses and feeling the warm shaving brush at your throat, your ‘barber’, if you are among his clients, has already started to tell you about life in line with the identity he ascribed to you and began to record your life...” (Evrin Altuğ, *Identities Cut on the Floor of the Barber*, <http://www.gazetem.net/> 2002)

MG: A year later you made another important installation with ready-made material; *Copy*. This time you combined your own DNA print, human hair and mirrors in the *Apartment Project*. We had the chance to exhibit the work with a different arrangement in our first exhibition here at Siemens Art. It is one of your most written about works. Why?

GG: It looked and felt very familiar but it was different. I had been working with hair for a long time, but with this piece I started to use biotechnology. The space smelled lemon cologne like a traditional barber shop but the barber was not around.



(right) *He is in the Navy Now*, 1995. Official photograph taken at a Turkish Navy base, Izmir. Presented at *the Other* exhibition, Antrepo 3 for Habitat. (left) *Forbidden Zone*, 1995. Print on paper. 20cm * 30cm. One of 100 multiples of an Installation at TUYAP, Youth Action exhibition. (above) Photograph at NATO Navy base in Çanakkale.





Bir (one), 2007. *Orientalist Series*. Black and white oil on canvas. 220cm * 140cm. (After Delacroix)

Sifir (Zero), 2007. *Orientalist (After Edward Said) Series*. Oil on canvas. 140cm * 200 cm. Julia Thinkerbell Van Hagen Collection.



MG: Let's move through the time, from West to East. For the interactive installation *Star Wars Mosque* in the exhibition *Wherever It is I will be There*, you extended the Internet connection into an archaic tower. How did you bring meters of wire into the city wall?

GG: Diyarbakır city walls are longest after the Great wall of China. I guess it was the first time that the Internet was brought to the Keçi Tower in the thousands of years of the old history. We got the cable connection from a hospital in the neighbourhood. We laid tens of meters of cable first on the roads then inside the tower and put signal amplifiers in between. Local people really helped a lot.

MG: What kind of a contact did technology and concept make with this place?

GG: Both the thick walls of the fortress as well as the real-time military satellites whose routes I exhibited were ultimately built for 'defence'. They matched very well indeed. I tried to combine the distant and abstract arguments of North-West with the nearby and concrete fears of the South-East.

MG: What was the other piece you showed in Diyarbakır?

GG: *The Lost Airplane* was about the fourth airplane which got lost on the day of 9/ 11. In New York we weren't able to learn what happened to the lost airplane all day long. For many hours, we lived with the fear of that plane come and crash on top of us. Years later I made a short animation about that Airplane. **A plane was crashing into the Capitol but kept on flying.** As the visuals of the work were published in the Daily News newspaper, the British Council, the sponsor of the exhibition wanted to remove the piece from the show. The problem was hardly solved with the insistence of curator Gülşen Bal (See Étienne Boileau, *Beelden* magazine, 2007). Contrary to our sponsor, the local visitors said that they really loved the animation.

MG: Your works seem very isolated from each other. How do your art works relate to the previous ones?

GG: When they are viewed one by one, they seem to be so different. However, a profound research could reveal the relationship between the works, periods and also the way of thinking.

MG: Can you give us an example?

GG: For instance *Alevi Pop-Art* series came into life in the late 1990s while I was studying the pictures that people hung on the walls of their homes. I found out that, contrary to popular belief and against Islamic iconoclasm, the picture and the figure making in the Anatolian culture never disappeared. Animal and plant imagery from the shamanist rituals continue to exist to this day in pictures and pictographs for example as "back-glass" paintings. I visualized and exhibited my findings during the workshop I held at Marmara University in 1998. Nowadays, about ten years later, I am working on digital versions of similar visuals. Using various kinds of software, I take these images and re-transform them into code pictographs like ASCII drawings.

MG: Do you have any completed work series that you have not exhibited yet?

GG: I constantly produce a lot of work and I become more and more picky about exhibiting them. I lay some series in the cellar and let them mature like wine. Some of the works have the chance to be exhibited right away, some never come out. Some of them get lost; some alter or reappear when the proper context comes up.

MG: What is your latest series at this moment?

GG: Nowadays, I am trying to re-read Orientalism through color and text. I am preparing a new series entitled *Orientalist* by re-evaluating the imagery created by leading orientalists such as Ingres, Gerome and Delacroix. Art history clearly shows that the true origins of these paintings were black and white photographs. Western photographers used to visit exotic lands and bring these photos as souvenirs to painters who color them up with the brightest colors. Now when I deal with them I first take back that color. I work on them with black and white oil on canvas. Then I write text on the top, mostly numbers of Arabic origin in Latin Turkish letters. I believe that reducing the colors to black

and white will help re-think the master-slave emphasis, labor-machine relationship. The exhibition launched at the Siyah Beyaz (Black and White) Art Gallery in Ankara.

“Ayşegül Sönmez: You are playing with Orientalist images... What are you doing that Gülsün Karamustafa has not done before? She was approaching to the issue through post-colonial thesis. I could not understand the point how you differentiate from women’s perspective?”

GG: I try to bring a different approach by carrying the de-construction to another level. I keep the familiar image, I do not deform or deconstruct it directly. I am discussing with the popular culture and the so called high culture through these imagery. These images have entered all of the houses so there is a fight we need to make...My approach is new because I keep the figures but layer them with new abstract ideas. In Turkey abstract art have not been imported with abstract thought. This is our biggest problem at home.

AS: What can you say about the orientalists in us? For example Prof. Edhem Eldem argued that the writer Murathan Mungan’s inviting folk singer Müslüm Gürses to sing Western Lyrics for *Aşk Tesadüfleri Sever* is the orientalism we are living today...

GG: Today when I question orientalism I question the prejudices about ourselves. When I use my Turkish passport the officer not only starts thinking about the orientalist paintings but also the *Midnight Express*. Today’s orientalism is the discrimination I experience because of my nationality. Not only the guards on the borders but also the curators in exhibitions have certain expectations -about our religion or nationality- from us just because of the colors of our identity cards... You have raised the example of Gülsün Karamustafa but I believe that we are not discussing orientalism enough in Turkey.” (Ayşegül Sönmez, 2 Super Films Together, Radikal)

MG: Just like in the *Orientalist* series, the past is very often reflected in your works. How do you approach tradition?

GG: I have no problem with tradition. **I am curious about history and I am not afraid of it.** This has two meanings: Firstly, I am neither afraid of using tradition in my works nor of the sanctions that tradition may put on me. Secondly; I am not interested in a single tradition but many traditions. I know that the contemporary culture is made up of layers just like in archaeology and one should be taking risks when dealing with history as well as the hierarchies while doing research. Yet we, the artists, have to add new ones to these layers.





Feel Yourself at Home, 1997. Installation with hand-woven carpets and few other objects. Dimensions may vary. As presented at Yıldız Yüksel Sabancı Art Center. Curated by Tomur Atagök. The installation was also presented in Graz at Raum für Kunst during Steirischer Herbst Festival in 1997 curated by Margarethe Makovec and Anton Lederer. (left) ***Portable Video Installation***, 1995. Old chest covered with printed thin, two 35" TV, local broadcasts. Ismet Doğan collection.

"Theodor W. Adorno stands looking into the lens next to his own photograph he stuck on a wall on the street in 1977. A couple watches him within that same photograph. A thin scratch in the course of life... When you take out the photo, Theodor can stand in front of that wall for hours and no one would even look. But it is a very thin scratch, in other words, a lot of things change with the deviation of real life created by the photo of the artist himself. I think that's what I see first when I look at Genco Gülan's works. When the shanty houses we see everyday come and occupy the exhibition hall with a little scratch, it immediately draws our attention and we reach another level of awareness. Or when carpets found in every house or mosque are trapped in an exhibition venue and all are put on display, the viewer/ participant takes off their shoes and walks barefoot on the carpets. This is what decontextualizes a ritual which is so much a part of our lives and brings it right before our eyes." (Yeşim Özsoy, art-ist, 1999.)







Portable Museum, 1997. Nylon shopping bag with small size original and reproduced art works. 50cm * 70cm. Now stolen. (below) Detail: The two sides of the bag in two languages. Now stolen. (previous pages) **Shopping Water**, 2006. Single channel video. 7 minutes. (Performance: Catharina Müller, Music: John Plenge) In association with Latife Tekin and Gümüşlük Akademisi. Location: Ancient Myndos Sunken City, Milas and Turgut Reis. Proje 4L, Elgiz Contemporary Art Museum Collection.



@museum

Marcus Graf: Genco, you are not only an artist but also an activist. You founded Istanbul Contemporary Art Museum, iS.CaM in 1997 before all the other fine art museums we have right now. And interestingly enough, iS.CaM outlived most other art museums in Istanbul. During the last ten years you have build a collection, made shows, collaborations with numerous international institutions and other museums; your projects were mentioned in many academic and popular publications including Newsweek and the International Herald Tribune. How did the museum adventure start?

Genco Gülan: Until the early 2000's there was no modern or contemporary art museum in Istanbul and we needed one. Therefore in artist run NGO's, including the International Plastic Arts Association (Unesco AIAP) we were always discussing how to make one. At that time I realized that, there was lots of debate but no one was doing much. Hence I decided to take up the initiation and establish the first one myself.

MG: What did you do first?

GG: I made a proposal to hang up a museum sign at the door of the historical Royal Mint of Ottoman Empire. But the jury of the DAGS Performance Days Festival -actually consisting of friends-rejected the project, claiming that it was not a performance piece. Still, I participated to the festival off the program with a new artwork. I took a large transparent nylon bag, wrote the name of my museum on it, walked around the venue carrying the bag. The response of the audience was encouraging; I even got invited to an exhibition. However *Portable Museum* couldn't make the final cut again, the work disappeared while waiting for the show.

"The Portable Contemporary Art Museum, the artwork of the young artist Genco Gülan, expected to be showcased at the Contemporary Artists Exhibition, has been stolen from the storage that contained other works of the Painting and Sculpture Museums Association scheduled to appear on the exhibition. There is now a police record on the wall of the exhibition in AKM reserved for the artwork." (Ahu Antmen, Cumhuriyet, 1997)

MG: Prof. Tomur Atagök was one of your role models. Who else?

GG: I had the honor to work with Hüsametdin Koçan at UPSD Unesco AIAP ruling committee. I benefited from his ideas a lot. Also Prof. Tomur Atagök and her approach was important for me. Later I met with Peter Weibel at Karlsruhe, the big guy was the director of ZKM. He also showed me that a former performer could become a museum director. Among all, my most important role model was Osman Hamdi Bey who proved that a great artist could also be a museum founder.

MG: Today, museums in general are not only professional research laboratories but also insti-



Traffic Sign, 1997. Acrylic on wood panel. 165cm * 60cm. As installed at Taksim Square, Istanbul. Collection of the artist.
Traffic Sign, 1997. Video. Performance recording. 00:15:00:00. Collection of the artist.



tutions of public education and entertainment. The museum should have the complex role of collecting, restoring, preserving, analyzing, communicating, teaching, experiencing and presenting art. As public institutions, museums not only reflect the identity of the society but also aim to shape it. Now I would like to ask you; what was the underlying idea of your Museum project?

GG: The underlying idea came from my research on revolution and reforms on Turkish modernization. The social structures of the developing societies would break easily, during the course of rapid and inevitable change. This process led me to the idea of a Museum, as a new institution, for the ultimate cultural collecting pots where differences may meld together to create the basis for alternative social relationship models. Reaching a theoretical solution meant the redefinition of the basic concepts. What is a museum? What should it contain? How should we present the collected materials? I tried to re-generate the theoretical solution with practical answers and the practical answers with theoretical approaches. *iS.CaM* was born as a result of this cyclical process.

MG: With your first line of work, you were more concerned with the labeling of the museum than the museum itself.

GG: Yes, indeed. I am a visual artist and I search ways to visualize my thoughts. After *The Museum Bag* I made a yellow *Museum Traffic Sign* and hung it at the city center in day time. It was a crowded, busy day in Taksim but no one cared. Nobody said anything to me. A lady asked the address of the museum; that was it. I made another gigantic *Museum Billboard* right in front of the Atatürk Cultural Center and it remained at the square all summer and there was no reaction. I didn't inform the press to test the situation and there was no news at all. Later I made an *Istanbul Museum T-shirt* in English and Turkish and started making photos wearing it.

"What happens if museology which dates back to the 19th century is questioned by the most famous artists of the world at one of the biggest museums of the world, MoMA? A big, spectacular exhibition comes out, one that we should learn from. The exhibition entitled *The Museum as Muse: Artists Reflect* will last until June at MoMA. I am visiting the exhibition with Genco Gülan, the founder of the Virtual Contemporary Art Museum of Turkey. The T-shirt on Genco says "Istanbul Contemporary Art Museum, Date: Now". With his *Museum t-shirt* piece, Genco Gülan represents Turkey at the *The Museum as Muse: Artists Reflect* exhibition. And we find this idea very amusing." (Ayşegül Sönmez, *Is the Museum a Good Thing?* Milliyet newspaper, 1999)

MG: When did your museum start drawing attention?

GG: The turning point came after we decided to go online. When we launched the museum on the Internet, we began to receive an intense social feedback.

MG: You started the Museum with guerilla actions but at a certain point you asked for legitimation. Why?

GG: New Museums started to open up and I was not getting proper credit. Hence I applied and got an official trademark for the Istanbul Contemporary Art Museum.

MG: Why did you move your museum into a physical space?

GG: After I returned back to Istanbul I hired a studio and called it a museum. The place worked as a wunderkammer, i.e. a workshop, office and a storehouse but never as an exhibition hall, gallery or Kunsthalle.

MG: You launched an unorthodox guest program entitled *I Live in a Museum* with no local public support.

GG: The first guest came from the Netherlands, Ryanne de Boer. When the visitors were able to find funds from abroad things were going easily. Then we had guests from Spain, Germany, Azerbaijan, USA and even Hong Kong.

MG: Is your guest program an art project as well? Do the participants become a part of the museum or do they transform into an artwork?

GG: Yes. I think so. Like the museum itself, the hospitality program became an art event. Instead of looking at Vermeer's painting *Girl with a Pearl Earring*, you came to our space and met the girl in person. When we announced it online, some members of the Dutch Academy was not very happy about this project and I did not really understand why?

MG: One of the important activities of your museum is organizing the first and only Web Biennial in the world: A major international series of electronic art exhibitions that requires no physical space or sponsors. The project is not only compatible with the structure of iS.CaM but also contributes to the field by opening a new electronic discussion platform. How did the Web Biennial begin?

GG: The Web Biennial was born while we were searching for the best way to exhibit Internet art. (Zuhal Borcesku, Rh Sanat, 2006) What should a virtual museum contain or exhibit? We really needed to discuss these questions for a long time. Then we made the first major Internet exhibition called *Re-load* in 2002. As the exhibition drew international attention, the Web Biennial started in 2003. Tens of websites started to list the Web Biennial by translating the call into their own languages voluntarily and we got hundreds of applications.

"The ever-present phantasmagorical rupture in the possible: ... a passage from the *il ya* of the multiple to the localizable 'being-there,' from *être* with the big 'E' to the appearance of a determined and specific *être-là* ! or in Deleuzian lexicon: a passage from Being as the virtual One or being as the actual multiple ... In his introduction, Genco Gülan describes the nature of the first Web Biennial as 'a framework for integrating heterogeneous artists that exist in a variety of environments... based upon the virtual space. [...] As a result Web Biennial ... not only aims to offer an alternative approach to exhibiting online art but also for exhibiting art online.' " (Gülşen Bal, *Subjects in Space: WB05*, 2005)

MG: A few years ago at Galata Perform, I also organized a screening in which we presented the anthology of 12 artists from the WB. How many artists have participated in the WB so far?

GG: Hundreds of artists participate in the Web Biennial every two years. This is a very big number considering that we are independent and we have no public support at all. Each artist publishes their work in their own server and adds the WB code to their page as a sign of participation in the exhibition. The special navigation system that we developed with tags, facilitates the direct access to the artists and their works to the viewers.

MG: So can we wrap up like this: At first the Istanbul Contemporary Art Museum developed as an art series in the manner of Duchamp and Broodthaers until the end of the 1990s. Later it evolved when it was transferred to the Internet. It turned into a new age institution that organized exhibitions, workshops and provided logistic support on cyber space.

GG: Correct. We developed a new model for a new generation of artists. Classical museums, for example natural history museums exhibit the dead: bones of animals or their stuffed versions. Modern Zoos replicate habitats of animals. However, in the new conservation techniques, you keep both the animals and the environment, you protect the natural environments where animals live.

MG: Instead of detaching the artwork from the artist you detach the audience from old habits.

GG: I aim to specialize in live art and/ or bring the artwork from the artist to the viewer directly with or without new technology. But always with an alternative methodology.

MG: As we are coming to the end of our conversation, let's talk about the current situation in culture and the arts in Turkey. Most fields of art in Istanbul depend on private sponsors or are already part of big companies. The danger lies in this structure. One who gives the money does whatever he wants. Can this problem be solved, via the public and/ or its representatives?

GG: There is no simple answer to this question. However, for Turkey, utopia was always outside which is why it's even more inaccessible. Maybe first we have to bring it down and let it rest by our



Museum T-shirt, 1999. Mens t-shirt with text. XL. Photograph of a performance in front of MoMA, New York. Collection of the artist. (below). **Museum T-shirt**, 1999. Photograph of a performance at MoMA, New York during *The Museum as Muse: Artists Reflect* exhibition.





Istanbul Çağdaş Sanat Müzesi, 2002. Outdoor sign with light. As installed upstairs of Galata Perform, Istanbul. Now destroyed. (below) *I live in a Museum*, 2004. Photograph of a performance of Ryanna de Boer at Istanbul Contemporary Art Museum. (on the right) **Museum Location Traffic Sign**, 1998. Metallic outdoor traffic sign. As Installed at Kabataş High School for an UPSC AIAP meeting. Now stolen.



side for a while and then we have to strive for turning it into reality again.

MG: In Turkey the government is not much interested in the arts and culture either. If you take a look at the Museum of Painting and Sculpture founded by Atatürk in 1937, you will see how much importance the state attaches to plastic arts. The collection is travelling to other venues but the museum is in terrible condition.

GG: It is true. We don't have a sustainable art environment in Turkey. Import oriented economic policies of the former governments made us a culture importing society. The shrinking local production shouldn't be the cost of a developing pseudo multi-cultural environment. With a globally rising capitalism, the whole infrastructure is changing inevitably. However, there needs to be safe zones for independent creation.

MG: Any positive change?

GG: Even though the domestic market is shrinking, the circulation of alternative art across the globe has gained speed. For example, the article about my works exhibited in Brazil could be published in Vietnam. Or I can collaborate with my friends from New York online for an exhibition in Germany. The positive change is that now we can speak out about alternative artist networks and collaborations in the international arena. As the thinker Hakim Bey puts it, "temporarily independent zones" are still possible in electronic networks.

MG: I agree with you. In Germany, it's common for artists to organize exhibitions together. The situation here is different. In Istanbul, independent artist spaces are very rare.

GG: In Turkey the bond between art organizations, the state, local governments, the artist and the viewer is cut off. Yes, we need to build this link again somehow. The private and the public sector should continue to contribute to art indirectly like in other countries. It should be fixed on certain criteria and must definitely be channeled and spread to the base.

MG: A simple question: Why do you think we don't have more independent sites and artist initiatives in Istanbul?

GG: The easy answer may be the impossibility. When we delve into the depths of the question, the answer is not having the habit of taking priority. In every country, independent sites are necessary for art production, and autonomous institutions are necessary for independent artists. The non-commercial third sector that is not the public or the private sector is the only chance of survival for fresh art.

MG: How shall we end our conversation?

GG: Let's find a way of never ending it. Lets say; to be continued... Or let's not tell the ending or let's not talk about a conclusion so that it goes on forever...

Marcus Graf: See you later then..





İstanbul
Çağdaş Sanat
Müzesi

Yürütücü: Mehmet SİNAN
Tarih: Şimdi



Museum Billboard, 1998. Plastic sticker on a objet trouvé commercial Billboard. 200cm * 150cm. As installed at Taksim in front of AKM. Now destroyed. (below) **Museum Billboard**, 1998. Video. 00:12:00:00. As presented on a Mac at *Contemporary Art Museum* exhibition at Yapı Kredi Art Gallery in Izmir. (previous pages) **Looking to West**, 1998. Museum t-shirt series. 35 mm Slide Collection of the artist.



Nilgün Özayten

The Contemporary Art

Museum of Genco Gülan

Arredemento, 1999.

A 'virtual' museum that does not exist on its own but the signs of which are scattered all over the place... In various platforms it appeared, Gülan pretended that this museum existed and invited those who are interested in an ironic game. Could there be a more meaningful initiative than this for the inhabitants of a metropolis that has no public modern art museum let alone a real contemporary art museum?

The line of works Genco Gülan made between 1997-1999 is collectively entitled Contemporary Art Museum Project. Even though he is currently studying media in New York, he had received his bachelor's degree in Political Science and International Relations when the project was launched. Therefore, the project which can be called a 'Virtual Museum' consists of his comments on our recent political history and the findings he underscored within this framework. Gülan thinks that the 'reconstruction' principle of Kemalism hasn't been sufficiently lived out in the Republican Turkey. According to him, this is because the traditional culture and Modernism in Turkey clash in many fields more than they overlap. As a result of lack of dialogue in political, social and cultural fields, a common platform cannot be built and in return it is hard to say that democracy has properly developed. Even though Turkey has accelerated its transition to globalism after the 80s, it had its own share of market culture for which no infrastructure was prepared. In the 90s, political ideology shifted to the cultural base. But this was again a sort of fight, and not a dialogue...

Was the solution a union of the global, traditional and the modern? What kind of institutions could there be where cultures meet? 'Polyphonic' institutions where cultures can establish dialogues... I guess that's exactly the point where Genco Gülan started to develop interest in his museum concept. Museum was the social memory. An article he read in Newsweek at the time was very provoking for him –referring to the fact that there is not a single contemporary art museum in our country: "The number of museums in Berlin is larger than the number of rainy days per year." There were serious attempts at founding a contemporary art museum in Istanbul in early-90s. This initiative was launched by a common protocol signed by the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality, Eczacıbaşı Foundation for Culture and Arts and the consultancy group was made up of artists, gallery owners, art writers, collectors and members of related associations. Feshane was renovated for this purpose. But the museum couldn't be founded. If only the representation issue (51%-49%) and the financial problem had been settled... There was definitely a sufficient supply of artworks - both quality and quantity wise- that could have filled up the exhibition halls and even the warehouses of the museum. Maybe at first, the museum could have been restricted to Turkish works of art. It is only natural to assume that the purpose was, above all, to compile and preserve the art of the last fifty years and

our recent social and cultural consciousness. The contemporary art museum issue was forgotten amid the political and economic turmoil of Turkey. Feshane, picked as the museum building and overhauled albeit with defects, sank back into deep waters after a while; and now the rumor has it that it will be opened as a touristic institution of handicraft.

During this process, Genco Gülan saw the hopeless *Contemporary Art Museum project* as a 'work of art.' What came forth now was the act itself. Couldn't a museum exist without a site? Does a museum have to be real? Answers of these and similar questions came with the design of the 'Virtual Museum' project. And from 1997 onwards, Genco Gülan carried out a series of works that were born out of one another. Some of these works were suspended at the draft level as they were rejected by the institutions to which they were proposed, and some others were put through but it was out of bad luck that they couldn't make it to the exhibition phase. Still, the first work of this series is the Portable Contemporary Art Museum that he designed for the *18th Günümüz Sanatçıları* (Contemporary Artists) Exhibition. The museum of Genco Gülan is distinct from that of Duchamp in that Gülan's museum was placed in a nylon bag and the bag contained not his own works but mainly original works, small size art objects of various other artists. Small works that several contemporary Turkish artists produced for *Corridor* (Mail art) exhibition, the Campbell's Soup tickets that are identified with Andy Warhol, a signed photograph of Oleg Kulig, facsimiles etc.

The organizer, Association of Painting and Sculpture Museum, has no fixed location; therefore four different locations were used for the compilation, assessment, storage and exhibition of the works. And the objects in the bag were scattered around, some of them got lost, and ultimately, this project couldn't end up in the exhibition. The only evidence about the prior existence of the work at the exhibition was the police record hung on the wall of the AKM gallery. The second and for my part the best work in the series was the yellow/ black traffic sign that read Contemporary Art Museum both in English and Turkish. The work acquired its meaning when this standard sign that redirects people to museums, historical or archaeological sites was erected at the heart of Istanbul: Taksim. This is because there was neither such a contemporary art museum in the direction the sign points to, nor anywhere else in the city. And I think, throughout the single day the yellow sign stood in Taksim, many people who are strangers to this city or art, might have unavailingly tried to find that contemporary art museum. In my opinion, what makes this work so important is that it suggests that a non-existent thing exists and draws the concept to virtual dimension. Its importance also lies in the fact that the work has a content similar to the witty example we see in Rauschenberg's telegram text which Rauschenberg claimed was a portrait of Iris Clert. We can say that Gülan's work even has an additional irony to it.

Following this work that well-clarified the existence of the contemporary art museum in the virtual sphere, Genco Gülan designed a more permanent work for Taksim. This was because nobody had asked what he was doing when he was erecting the previous sign, nor did his act require prior authorization from any institution. This time, he made a billboard and there was no reaction from anyone or from the institutions that were supposed to authorize the use of the already existing billboards. This indifference had proportions that could have become a topic for a social study.

"The European Union and its bureaucracy are sometimes lampooned for living in a parallel universe. Looking at the voluminous proceedings of its committees that decide on the annual European cities of culture, you could be forgiven for thinking that in 2010 the eyes of the Continent will turn to the German mining city of Essen and the obscure Hungarian city of Pecs. You would be wrong. Although it qualified by a backdoor route for countries still outside the Union, the real European capital of culture will be Istanbul, confirming the rise of Turkey from a long cultural sleep.... « Istanbul these days has as much dynamism as New York, » said Genco Gulan, director of the Istanbul Contemporary Art Museum – older, smaller and edgier than the Modern Art Museum. « If anything it is more alive. » That may be so, but still the best and most challenging young Turkish artists – like Kutlug Ataman, Ayse Erkmen, Ergin Cavusoglu and the Cypriot Hussein Chalayan – either live or do most of their work abroad." (Fiachra Gibbons, *Contemporary Art: Istanbul set to stamp its culture credentials*, International Herald Tribune, 2006)



Museum Location Traffic Sign, 1998. Metallic outdoor traffic sign. On the move at Boyacıköy next to artists studio. It was so heavy that could only be carried by four men. Now stolen.



Indoor Sign, 1998. Plastic sticker on foam board. Multiple 120cm * 20cm signs. As installed at TUYAP Istanbul Exhibition Center at Tarlabaşı. Now destroyed. (below) **Trademark**, 2002. Official documentation of *Istanbul Contemporary Art Museum* trademark. A Metal version of this document is at Yahşi Baraz Collection. **Museum Location Traffic Sign**, 1998. Poster, as installed at Yapı Kredi Art Gallery, İzmir.



The last part of the series that reached the public was prepared for the Exhibition of Youth Action of 1998. Eight yellow indoor signs that read 'Contemporary Art Museum' were hung at the exhibition hall of TÜYAP, starting from the entrance and in four sections in the same axis. The style in which these signs were arranged redirects the visitor first to the ground floor and then to the upper floor again and when it becomes clear that the museum exists nowhere, the museum comes into being once again in virtual space. A museum that does not exist on its own but the signs of which are scattered all over the place... In various platforms he appeared, Gülan pretended that this museum existed and invited those who are interested to a beautiful and an equally ironic game. Yet the project has been completed and the series has been terminated. Still, the note I am seeing on the business card of Genco Gülan shows me that the museum has moved to a different place this time: <http://welcome.to/IstanbulContemporaryArtMuseum>

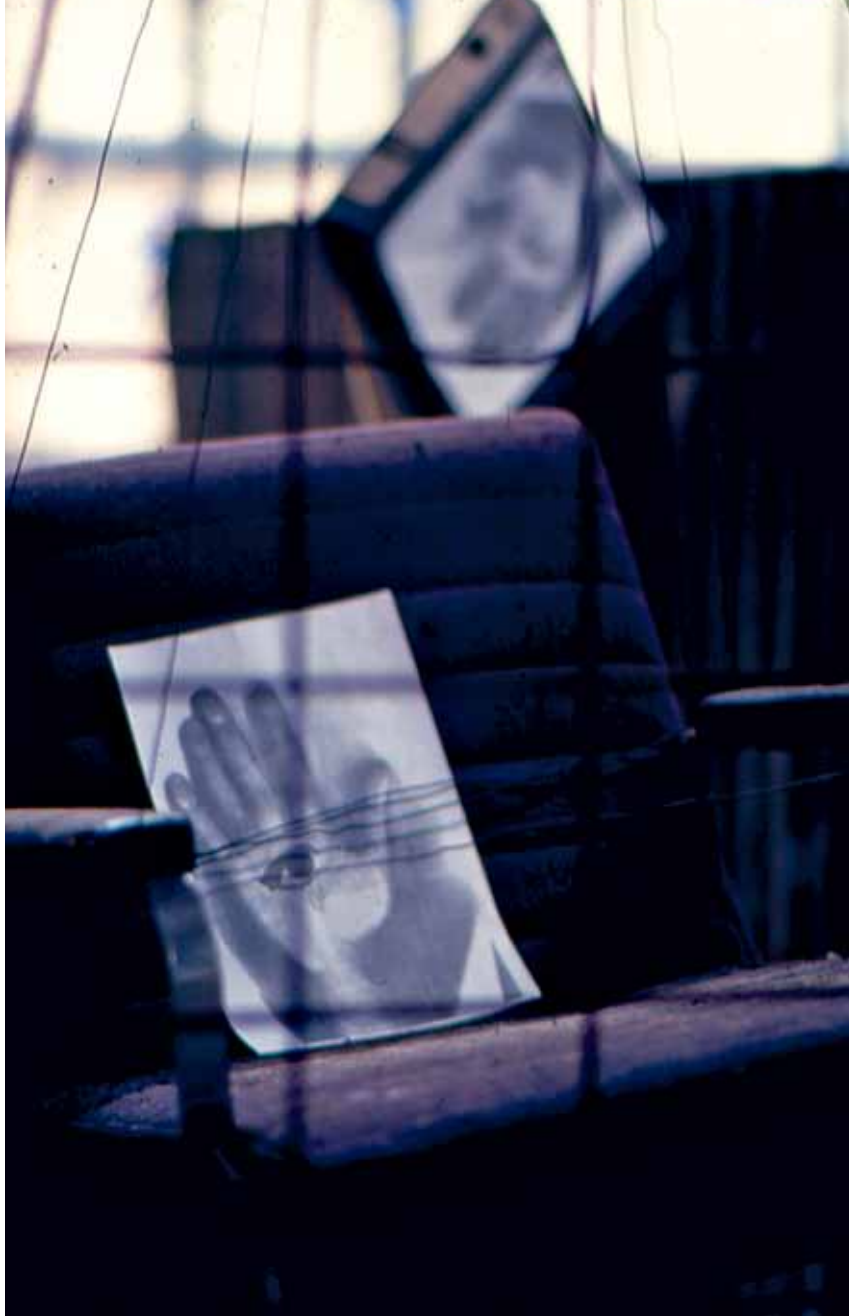
"After so many decades of trying to become Western, Istanbul glories in the rediscovery of a very modern identity. European or not, it is one of the coolest cities in the world. Spend a summer night strolling down Istanbul's Istiklal Caddesi, the pedestrian thoroughfare in the city's old Christian quarter of Beyoglu, and you'll hear something surprising. Amid the crowds of nocturnal revelers, a young Uzbek-looking girl plays haunting songs from Central Asia on an ancient Turkic flute called a saz. Nearby, bluesy Greek rembetiko blares from a CD store. Downhill toward the slums of Tarlabasi you hear the wild Balkan rhythms of a Gypsy wedding, while at 360, an ultratrendy rooftop restaurant, the sound is Sufi electronica—cutting-edge beats laced with dervish ritual. And then there are the clubs—Mojo, say, or Babylon—where the young and beautiful rise spontaneously from their tables to link arms and perform a complicated Black Sea line dance, the horon. The wonder is that each and every one of these styles is absolutely native to the city, which for much of its history was the capital of half the known world....In every area of life, a new generation of young Turks is reaching outward. This year's Art Biennale will draw artists from Bosnia, Iran, Egypt, Greece and Lebanon—a most uncommon mix—while the Web Biennale will feature work by Armenians, Ukrainians, Serbs, Macedonians and Romanians. "Istanbul these days has as much dynamism as New York," says Genco Gulan, director of the Istanbul Contemporary Art Museum. If anything, he enthuses, 'Istanbul is more alive. There's more interest here in doing something new.' " (Owen Matthews and Rana Foroohar, Turkish Delight, Newsweek 2005.)

Souvenir Mugs. 1998. Ceramic mugs with text. Two R 8cm. As presented at Bebek Kahve, İstanbul









Hand & Eye, 1994. (Göz-el in Turkish) Site specific installation with photocopy of hand of the artist, pop icon eye sticker and old office materials. As installed at the old Kasımpaşa Flour Factory, Istanbul. (below) **Portable installation**, 1994. Wooden luggage case with objects. 127cm *120cm*15cm. Collection of the artist.



Ahu Antmen

Hand & Eye

May Fest at the Flour Factory

Cumhuriyet Newspaper, 1993.

For the past couple of years, the young artist Genco Gülan has been drawing attention with the exhibitions he has participated in the high-ranks he secured in several competitions and his ‘protest’ actions [ex: *Alaturka* (Turkish toilet) he showcased in front of the Mimar Sinan Academy for the *Yeni Eğilimler* (New Tendencies) exhibition this year], he may be a ‘stranger’ to the art world, but he is not that ‘estranged’ to it. His installation entitled *Göz-EI* (Hand & Eye) at the Kasımpaşa Sinangil Flour Factory, refers to the history of the factory, now used as a party or exhibition venue, that furtively overlaps with the economic history of Turkey.

For nearly a year he searched for a ‘space’ for this project at the Kasımpaşa Flour Factory. The factory was founded after the Crimean War, was sold to the famous Sureyya Pasha by its first Greek owners, then it was handed over to İş Bank in the Republic period, and again to Sinangil when it failed, and finally closed down with the other factories in the Golden Horn in the 1980s. The significance of the factory is indisputable.

However, there is one thing more important than space in the Hand & Eye installation: Time. The fact that the exhibition is scheduled in May is a completely conscious choice: many of the festivals; be it official, unofficial or religious, are celebrated together in this month of the year. “What made this project possible is that the history of the factory coincided with the concepts that came forth,” states Genco Gülan. Besides the project at Sinangil, Genco Gülan has exhibited his *Portable Installations* at Harbiye Muhsin Ertuğrul and then at Kadıköy Haldun Taner Theaters, also in May. Here is our interview with him.

Ahu Antmen: First of all let’s start with the Eye-Hand installation at Kasımpaşa Flour Factory, if you like...

Genco Gülan: This exhibition is a kind of a celebration of May. 1st of May Workers Day, 19th of May (Official Youth and Sports Day), 27th of May (1960 Constitution Celebration) and the Islamic Feast of Sacrifice. The month of May contains most of the concepts that I have used in my works. My concepts were ready, the time was right and the work came about when I found the site. **I was going to do something totally different at the factory but then I decided to use the objects that belonged to the site itself.** I tried to mark the spots that I preferred in the site in an effort to attract attention to these forgotten things and locations. I used the images of ‘hand’ and ‘eye’ that are used as evil-eye symbols in popular culture. People wear the blue-beads in Turkey and in the Middle East to ward off the evil-eye.



Hand & Eye, 1994. (Göz-el in Turkish) Site specific installation with photocopy of hand of the artist, pop icon eye sticker and old office materials. As installed at the old Kasımpaşa Flour Factory, Istanbul. (On the right) General view from the video. (above) in the detail you can see the signatures of the workers. **Göz-el**, 1998. Digital manipulated Image of the artist's hand and eye. 35k. As it is presented at the Chaos in Action online exhibition which is presented at the portals of the Center Pompidou, Paris.



I use the evil-eye image (visualized with photocopy) to focus attention on certain points in the factory. When concepts shift to visuals, I stick to the tradition of non-figuration by using ready found objects. Therefore, the photocopy helped me reproduce the visual data I had found. I used my hand directly and produced original prints by photocopying them. The lines in one's hand are unique, so when you put your hand on the photocopy machine and copy your hand, the print is already an original work. And when you put an eye on that hand print, it belongs to us as Turks (and Middle Eastern people) but it is also universal and it is an object that belongs to me. Let's turn back to the factory: Thousands of people lived there. Workers, bosses and bureaucrats all left behind traces of themselves. I have left my handprints in this place in order to draw people's attention, to remind them of these forgotten, invisible people. I wanted to refer to the people who have lived there and who might live there in the future.

AA: When we take a look at your work and activities, we see that the 'protest' element is always there. Considering the fact that you come from a different background, can we say that you make art just for the sake of protesting?

GG: **My aim is not to protest everything.** When I have an idea, I feel an energy inside me, my aim is to express it. But everything I have touched on has ultimately turned into a protest... Art is a form of expression for me. The most important reason for me to create these works is the idea that art has to be infinitely free. I am striving to make different things and to make them freely. Every door I try to open brings challenges to me, because no one tries to look inside like I do. The data of their own culture... With the 'objectivity of a political scientist', I approach things objectively and naively, like a doctor examining his patient.

AA: Why are you doing this with the method of installation? The method that everyone in the art world 'tries' in Turkey?

GG: Actually, I often bring together ready found objects and produce assemblages. I collect cultural objects, use them together and come up with works. The sentence "This has been done before" seems ridiculous to me in a city like Istanbul and in a country like Turkey because there are incredibly virgin, untouched concepts, things and cultural objects. I cannot believe how one can use that sentence when there is all this treasure. Finally I decided to produce work for this factory because the site embodied my concepts.









Re-Construction, 1996. Site specific media installation. Printed stainless Steel Atatürk and Mustafa Kemal cut-outs: with uniform and without. (six pieces of 200cm * 100cm 3 each) Opera and Ballet set columns (six pieces 6m to 8m), three 50" monitors, ready-found fire video, Turkish Primary school history banners enlarged and printed on metal plates (ten pieces 200cm *100cm). ready found Turkish history CD Rom (Boyut publishing) projection. Documents on fire at AKM from Cumhuriyet. Still clocks without numbers inserted inside columns. As it is presented at AKM. Various collections. (previous pages) General view. (following pages) details. (right) Reflection of fire from the clock with no numbers.

"Genco Gülan gives new meaning to the word "inspiration". In English the word, in ordinary sense, means to breathe in. It also, however, refers to the breath of life. Now Genco's last show at the AKM, with its stencils, antiques and Atatürk, was one breath away from being obvious and silly. But ah, it was that one breath, the fire video, that turned those who know into those who don't. Genco's medium is politics and humor. Art that takes politics seriously is endlessly boring, as witness David and Soviet Socialist Art. You may deal with tragedy – Goya's Horrors of War- and the tragedy of politics- the loss of present and perfect. But humor is a little bit more difficult to explain". (Greg Wolff, The Politics of Humor, Turkish Daily News. 1996)

"We can recall Altan Gürman as one of the leading artists that used the symbols referring to the Republican regime to criticize the deficiencies they see, with the language of art. Artists like Aydan Murtezaoğlu, Gülsün Karamustafa, Güven İnciroğlu, Genco Gülan, Hakan Onur also investigate Republican history with a critical approach...He tries to approach the East West conflict both through the eyes of a Westerner, as well as an Easterner modernized by West. What Genco Gülan does is something similar. He converts the idea of establishing a Republic into an archeological investigation on a computer and makes us feel the possibility of re-constructing." (Zeynep Yasa Yaman, Bellek/ Gelenek Sorunsalı Üzerine bir Deneme, Dip-Not, 2004.)

Bill Barker

Re-construction

Arredamento, 1997.

Minimalism redefined: the barest of materials, the burial of our common past and its shibboleths. A bleak prospect as we file past steel plates in fleeting comic strip glimpses of popular iconography. In the words of poet John Ash, “history reduced to dioramas, techniques without utility...”

Here, however, technique was put to good use, with no interference in the artist’s own hand; the artistry shown in the choice and arrangement of solid objects occupying an ungrateful tomblike space. A zigzag of recumbent Doric pillars pointing the way forward, lit by virtual internal fires. These were not mere adjuncts, video afterthoughts, but symbols of the necessary purification, the consigning of so much baggage to the devil. And here the artist was giving his muse a shove as well, asking nothing in return save our attention as he turned himself inside out.

For what Genco Gülan dares to offer up at the altar is not only his inner waste, his barren Gobi desert, but our contemporary desolation. This is a hollow time, a time for hollow men. We may stand before his row of metallic Atatürk’s in familiar outline, but cannot find even a distorted image of ourselves there. We are lesser, and lessened as we face this Western Wall, which as also, by the way, the one left to left of the entrance. This was a brilliant stroke, to please the Father Figure smack in the blind spot. Genco leaves you hungry for more, in this mortuary chamber so artfully employed. This was not Hell, but Limbo; there was an exit. In this reconstructed deconstruction through whatever black holes await him, Genco will find his way to the light.





“Vahit Tuna: Though the name of the show is Re-construction, there is the plastic of a de-construction in the gallery space.

GG: I used five different plastic units in the exhibition and attached different meanings to each one of them. The decor pillars rank first. These were the decor pieces that Istanbul State Opera and Ballet sold for the purpose of demolition. I found them as I was searching the AKM and tried to save them by buying them from the junk man.

VT: Different concepts for different piece groups. What are these?

GG: I used five different plastic units in the exhibition and attached different meanings to each one of them. The decor pillars rank first. These were the decor pieces that Istanbul State Opera and Ballet sold for the purpose of demolition. I found them as I was searching the AKM and tried to save them by buying them from the junk man.

VT: What did you feel when you were carrying the modern columns into the modern gallery?

GG: The columns were very heavy but I thought it was part of the burden I had to suffer. Everyone thinks that ready-founds are easy but it is another kind of labor you have to put in. The columns were artifacts that were built by the set designers of the State Opera. **What I did was move the columes from the stor-age back to the art gallery.**

VT: Why is referentiation so important for you?

GG: I think it is a discipline I got from my graduate studies in social sciences. As an example I will mention the “time line” piece: It was a time line dating back to 1968 and signed by Samim Utkun. I tried to use it as if it was like all the other pieces. It was enlarged and printed on large metal pieces. As a result I got a shiny but erased visual effect.

VT: You mention a one to one effect but the time line is both cut and it is mixed.

GG: After being printed on a plate, each piece became interdependent. While hanging we did not strictly follow the chronology. We built a virtual feeling of continuation. Every ideology has a difference reference for the beginning of history and that was important to me. And of course, it was to show how you can re-construct history to build a new ideology.

VT: Were these the Ataturk sculptures that were making this mixture?

GG: The steel human size figures remind me of monuments. The monuments are of the people that changed history. If you enter the gallery you can realize that they are the figures of the founder of the Republic. If you come closer to the mirrored steel, you can choose someone else from the history time line or you can even see your face.

VT: There was a projection at the very end of the gallery.

GG: That was the wall where the cult of the broken temple was standing. I used a multimedia CD ROM to generate those images. In this interactive setting you could have re-constructed my deconstruction.

VT: Did we skip the flame video that was running on the screens?

GG: Optically the video worked for all the other pieces. The virtual fire image was incorporated with the news from Cumhuriyet Newspaper about the fire in AKM back in 1970.”

(Vahit Tuna, Interview, Arredemento, 1997)









Zeynep Yasa Yaman

COPY

or the Unreality of Disappearance

Sanat Dünyamız, 2003.

Genco Gülan's work entitled "Copy" is about the transformation of the unseen into the plastic and its intellectualization. The exhibition deals with such problematics as birth, death, reproduction and the essence of existence which become complex when piled up together. Gülan prefers a minimalist expression and governs a difficult, complicated and irregular subject. Genetics study the relationship between the personal/hereditary distinctions and the transference of hereditary information from parents to children. Individual, social, biological and psychological concepts of genetics such as migration, elimination and change are transferred to visual language with *Copy*.

Gülan, a city-dweller, confines his relationship with nature indoors but he also opens windows and makes sure that he carries the visualscape outside. This exhibition also aims at deciphering the genetic code of a 'family' in a circle as part of the Apartment Project. The outsider can look inside through the window and thus that perspective, becomes the ocular and consumptive construction of the showcased 'family.' Copying is recounted in a site isolated from the outer world. 'Hair', the strongest structure of the body - stronger than bone, has the same youth codes with a different material; blood that is posthumously transferred to the future. Using these two components of the body, blood from inside, hair from outside, Gülan got his DNA analyses from the Forensic Medicine Institute at the Istanbul Faculty of Medicine. With special permissions, he transferred the visual data of the DNA analysis results to digital media and then magnified them and put them on canvas. Gülan created three visual reproductions of the DNA analyses that he was made up of and he hung them on the wall on three different canvases, with mirrors above and a clump of hair in front of the canvases. He collected hair from barbershops.

The analysis of the molecular structure of the double helix which defines the function of the DNA identification is an important code for paternity identification, criminal detection and cloning and is also associated with 'identity' problem. Gülan uses the traditional 'holy trinity/ holy family' model in the DNA copies installed in an apartment and shows reproduction as being between the father and the son as in the Christian discourse excluding the other sex from the scene. The clump of hair in front of the canvases, composed of the DNA of Gülan, metaphysicize the road that open to the outside/future like holy relics, and enables this holiness to be seen and watched from the outside. The mirrors above the DNA canvases crown them with half-circular forms; they draw the outside in the room and create a spiritual aura. In 1950s, Lacan theorized that the phallus is a sign that distinguishes between the two sexes and that the male sex focuses on it, wants to own it, and the female wants to be it. In Gülan's copies, it might be possible to seek a correlation with the approach that the fate of Man and Woman is not to shake the phallus but to renounce it. Lacan's ruling that "Woman doesn't exist" and his idea that there is no signifier for the woman in the unconscious, and that "there is no sexual intercourse" are all put into question with Gülan's presentation of the copied family that he created and repeated in his fantasy.



Copy, 2002. Installation. 3 digital print copies of artists DNA, 3 identical mirrors that resemble barber-shop mirrors and human (male) hair (mostly dark brown) from a mens babershop. As installed at Apartment Project, Istanbul. (Also on 92-93 and 94)

“The artist reproduced the images three times with the ‘cloning’ method but none of the prints is the same with one another; the differences of tonality between them are remarkable. Such a level of margin for error can be seen even in cloning. Each cloned sheep or human being has the same DNA, but the copy may not be identical. According to Baudrillard, the immortality and perfection gained from cloning and genetic engineering will only be the immortality and perfection of the ‘mediocrity’ of an average formula of the species that reaches a grand power. Furthermore, the DNA on its own... is perhaps just an average formula... The singularity of an individual, as the name suggests, cannot be multiplied, that which can be multiplied infinitely can only be a very low definition... A few questions can be raised here: Can you dare to go into the exhibition venue? When you go inside, can you touch the dead hair which is still alive or can you stand its smell? Do you have the courage to go inside, to be yourself and to live in your circumstances? As you turn into yourself and as you try to understand your sex and circumstances, do you have the courage to leave the virtual behind?” (Nancy Atakan, Türkiye Sanat Yılığ, 2002.)

When rethinking Freud, Lacan says that a baby first combines the look and the voice as a tangible response to the mother's recognition of the baby; the mother is involved in the Lacanian 'mirror stage' as part of the baby's perception of itself; this perception contains embrace as well. The result is that the subject occupies the space of the other, the public space. After this, the 'impulse to gaze' (related to the eye) becomes fundamental for the subject to form a relationship with others. "Impulse is oriented towards making oneself seen. Acting on impulse focuses on making oneself." Therefore, the subject in the gazing fantasy comes into existence only with an imaginary look, related to the look of the other (mother).

The definition of identity in unity (holy family), a part of the imagination that Gülan created through the 'three orders' of Lacan, actually shows that the subject is not a whole and that Gülan repeats and reproduces its fragmentation and narcissism. On the other hand, 'identity' is formed at the imaginary level without resorting to the phallic and there it doesn't need a symbolic order for its ultimate formation. The distinction between male and female subjects is parenthesized in this way. The signifier-signified relationship between the mirror that forms the sense of 'self' mixes with 'other' images that enter the room and threaten 'self', and the relationship is thereby subject to a suspicious reproduction.

The united and holistic image of Gülan, the world of mirrors that he is trapped in, opens up to the outside, meets the look of the other and is being watched. Baudrillard points out that the radical difference between man and woman cedes itself to the cloning of the millennium based on aimless sex, that there is no need for sexual functions for reproduction and that we are stuck between simulated roots and simulated ends (fossils and clones.) In neo-individualist terms, 'alienation' is abandoned and thus the dream that an individual can be different has been lost. When the subject is offered with a chance of 'identical reproduction' through cloning, the concept of 'humanism' changes and gets surrounded by human rights that aim at protecting the individual as an identity and species. The genetic code that replaces parents and becomes the real universal particle, has the chance of copying and destroying its original as a form of immortal return. The proportions, distortions and transformations of Damien Hirst's mechanism of protection, gathering, collection, creation and existence and their confrontation with materials are a part of the problematic of Gülan as well. Two basic factors which can be defined as 'creativity' and 'protectionism' that determine the relationship between the individual and art affirm protecting art works of the past, preserving and stacking them in the form of collector-mania, passing them to future generations, positioning them in the cultural history of the city/site and thus showing that today is more competent than the past, dominating what came before oneself and claiming it. The Modern city has changed its function as required by modernization and garnished itself with galleries, museums etc. that are relatively new to art as well. Modern city also brought a new kind of 'protectionism' against the old one and a conception of 'existence' against old protectionism. Art has always been directly linked with tradition and cities that house tradition and resistance; both the artist and the viewer have maintained their assessment criteria according to this history and place. In this vein, Gülan is maybe trying to create his 'identity' by making it come to terms with the values of the system and liberating it from these values, just like Damien Hirst. Identifying himself with the nickname 'Young Turk', like the name Englishmen gave to Hirst who resisted against order, Gülan attempts at perpetuating 'disappearance.'

"Reminiscent of painter Neşe Erdok's works in which she approaches the relationship of hair with "power and identity", the problematic of Gülan (in Copy installation) is similar even though the presentation is very different. In the picture series she called "discipline and punishment", she questions the discipline and pressure the power or society reduces to hair and then punishing the figure even when there is no crime committed. The discontent of the figures whose hair is being cut is sometimes visible by a gesture or by tear drops smudged by eyeliner. There is a hair-cutting figure representing power, a hand or scissors, dominating those who sit on the barber chair. Besides that, when we return to the "hair and identity" relationship Gülan underscores, we can come closer to the identities of the figures in the barber chair of Erdok. The figure in the chair (mostly a woman) is in a situation where she is obliged to cut her hair." (Göknur Gürçan, <http://www.geocities.com/guncelsanat/kopya.htm/> 2002)



STANDING
ANYTIME
←→





Liberty Game, 2000. (below) Saltwater aquarium, two lobsters, pump, two blindfolded statue of liberty bibelots. As installed at Game Show, curated by Tim Hailey, presented at Here, Soho, New York, NY. (above) Statue of liberty bibelots from the installation as presented stand alone at ENKA in 2011. Collection of the artist. (previous pages) **Film alla Turca**, 1999. Silent Film. Approximately one hour. In the photo puppets are searching for their shadow in front of UN headquarters in Manhattan, NYC.



Tim Hailey

Through the Innocent Evil Eyes of Genco Gülan

rhizome.org/, 2004.

Written entirely on airplanes over North America.

I've thought this to myself for so long that I'm afraid it's a cliché—that Genco Gülan is the Andy Kaufman of visual art. Naively charming, vaguely annoying, disarmingly intelligent, wackily political, naturally unclassifiable—the Turk Gülan shares much with the late American Kaufman. They even share a physical resemblance.

I'd realized I had a Turkish pick-up line, though I'm not the type of guy that would try to pick-up Genco. "You're Turkish? Orhan Pamuk is my favorite writer." It was 1998 and a comment like that from an American was sure to raise Ottoman eyebrows and generate warm feelings of kinship. Genco was a frequent visitor to an art piece I was doing with collaborator Matt Vis at HEREart in New York. I wasn't sure at the time what attracted him to my undisciplined work, but as I've gotten to know Genco's work I can hazard some guesses. Maybe it was the constant change, the plethora of media, or the public intervention. But surely it was its determined humanness.

Genco's work shares these qualities, especially the human one. Sometimes the humans are defying classification, or trying desperately to classify themselves. There is the man changing his identity through barbering, the artist Van Goghing his ear, the *Star Nose* figures dancing around a plaza.

The humans in Genco's work are often engaging technology, whether it's girls pushing a television around the deep end of a pool, a 3D graph of a hooded head, or two people exchanging glances aboard mass transportation. Maybe it's live webcam images of New Yorkers moving about their city, inset over a video of ancient ruins beneath the Aegean in Gümüslük.

Or another web piece that shows similar webcams of New York coupled with webcams from Istanbul. Mostly traffic cams, the humans in these images scurry about their streets and advertisements like ants on their mysterious missions, or they drive around in their "shiny metal boxes." When you press the button that says "click here to listen," voices literally from above cackle out of the computer speakers with New York's JFK airport tower transmissions. The title *Whenever I Hear a Plane* reminds me that Genco and I were both living in New York on September 11th, and that while I was worried about my home he was worried about his two homes.

The Sunday following September 11th, Genco and I met up and ventured downtown. As we walked onto West Broadway, which always featured a perfectly framed view of the World Trade Center at its southern end, Genco gasped and (I'm paraphrasing) said "Holy shit! It's really gone!" It's as if the last 6 days of watching the TV and seeing the pictures in the paper and looking south from his Columbia University area apartment weren't enough to register for Genco, and he was seeing this omnipresent reality with new eyes. And that, like Kaufman, is Genco's greatest talent—to see that which has been seen so much and see it freshly anew.

Genco often expresses what he sees through technology, and at times he can look like Andy Kaufman again when fumbling with it. Because for all his interest in technology, its mechanics do not seem to come easily to him. His physical efforts with laptops, small video cameras, transmitters and thrift store TV's sometime resemble the kinetic disasters of Lucille Ball. Few viewers actually get to witness this marvelous performance element to his work.

When Genco's work is up and functioning, it facilitates the position of armchair voyeur. The viewer simultaneously monitors East and West, his home and my home, past and present, on stage and backstage without leaving his or her seat. Genco is at his most mischievous with his Istanbul Contemporary Art Museum. Like Kaufman's work in professional wrestling, *Art Sanat Museum Müze* is Genco's ongoing masterpiece of deception. Along with his thriving and elusive institution, founder Mehmet Sinan's reputation is spreading far beyond the boundaries of the Museum itself.

My only trip to Istanbul so far came at Gülan's invitation. He had set up a workshop at the Gümüslük Academy and invited some of his New York artist/friends, including me, to come teach. He and I disagreed a bit on what that meant, but we got over it because we are brothers. After an incredible week there, we road tripped to Istanbul via Genco's parents house at the beautiful beach in Cesme. His father, the Turkish-gangster-character-actor/ architect and his mother fed us like royalty and we bought corn-on-the-cob on the beach.

Genco hoped my experiences in Turkey would lead me to create a different piece than the one I've planned, but it didn't happen that way. I made a piece called *Semi Tough: You da Bomb* at Selda Asal's The Apartment in Taksim. I striped out the floor of the room upstairs like an American football field. In the end zones, I built cardboard cities, a blue city and a red one. We assembled a blue team and a red team and played a game of football. As players from each team scored, flinging ourselves across the goal lines, we destroyed parts of the opposing team's city until both were completely flattened.

“...Located in the entrance of the gallery (Apartment Project), Genco Gülan installed his net art work displayed on a laptop computer: *Global Warning!* On the screen, one could see the view of underwater ruins (the sunken ancient city of Myndos), and placed above it, there was a smaller frame from a webcam from Time Square in New York (London this time). It was the refusal of a reconciliation, the disagreement of today's speed with past's calm stability. From the spectator's point of view, the images from New York (or London) serve to become the ruins that will be underwater in the future....” (Özgün Tanglay, *Global Warning*, NY Arts Magazine, 2002.)

Genco was working with little robots at the time, playing a Battle Bot sort of game with them. He decided to put his robots on a scaled down version of my playing field, with little cardboard cities. Where my piece turned art viewers into weaponry, Genco's piece removed humans from the war game completely, emphasizing the way the West purports to fight its wars.

In another game, the ensemble all-girl cast in Tele-rugby acclimate themselves to the pool they're in. They develop some control over the TV at its bottom and literally begin pushing it around, sometimes fighting each other, sometimes with the TV. Are they fighting with television and its representations? It's cultural intrusion? Or for their own chances at celebrity?

Lobsters stood in for the fighting humans in Genco's Liberty Game, shown at the Game Show at HEREart in 2000. The lobsters' heroic struggle was cut short when an unwitting HERE employee



Museum Shave, 2001. 4 channel video. Approximately 2 minutes each. (above) Metropolitan. (below left) Whitney (below right) Guggenheim. The fourth video is shot in front of MoMA, New York.





Urban Romantic, 2000. Performance photos of walking in the streets with an easel and canvas at Manhattan, New York. Both collection of the artist. **Ali @ NYC**, 1999. Single channel animation with sound. Approximately one minutes. (below)





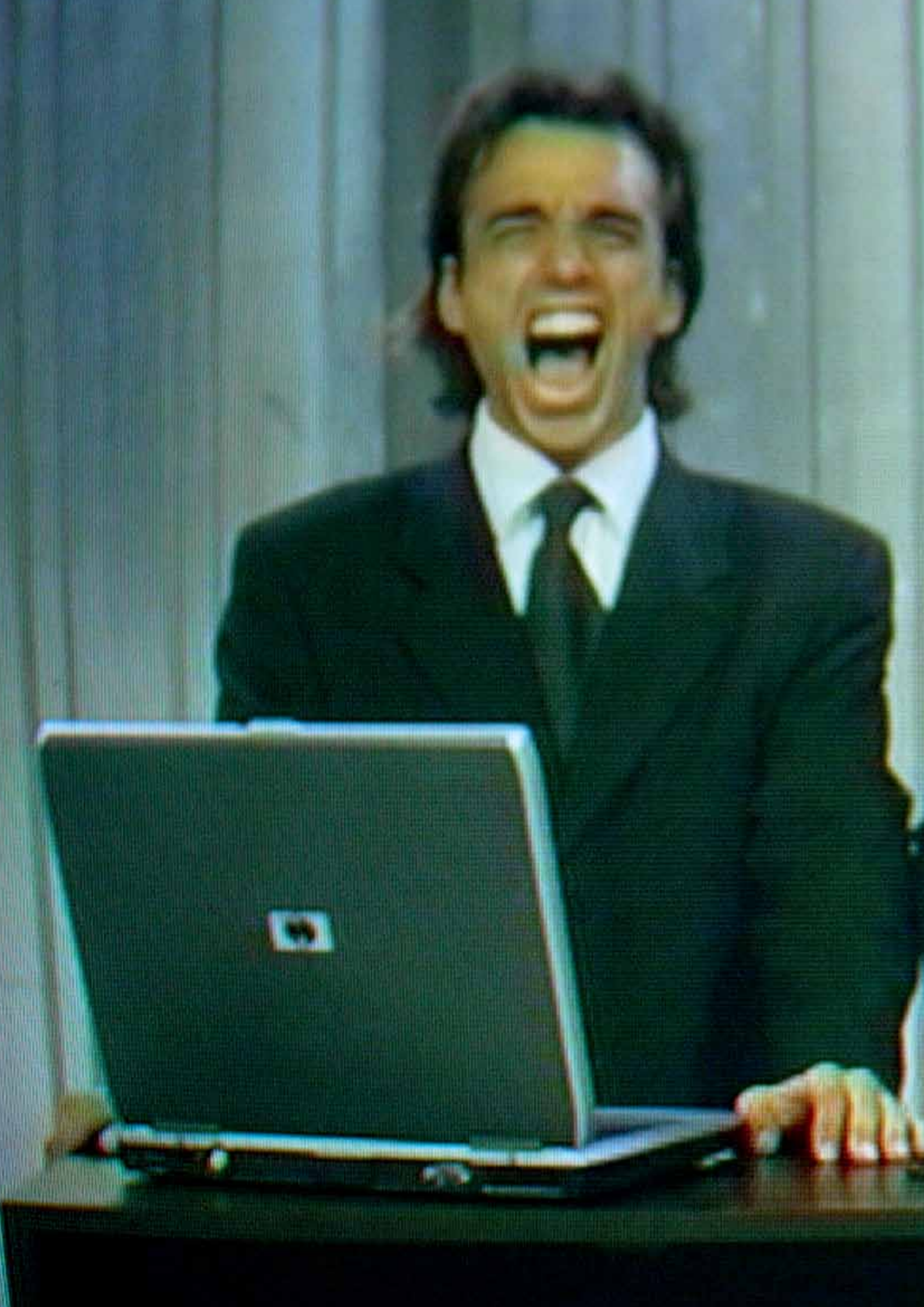
Whenever I hear a Plane. 2002. Time specific net-art. Live video streams from New York, Istanbul and Baghdad. Java and HTML. Now disappeared.

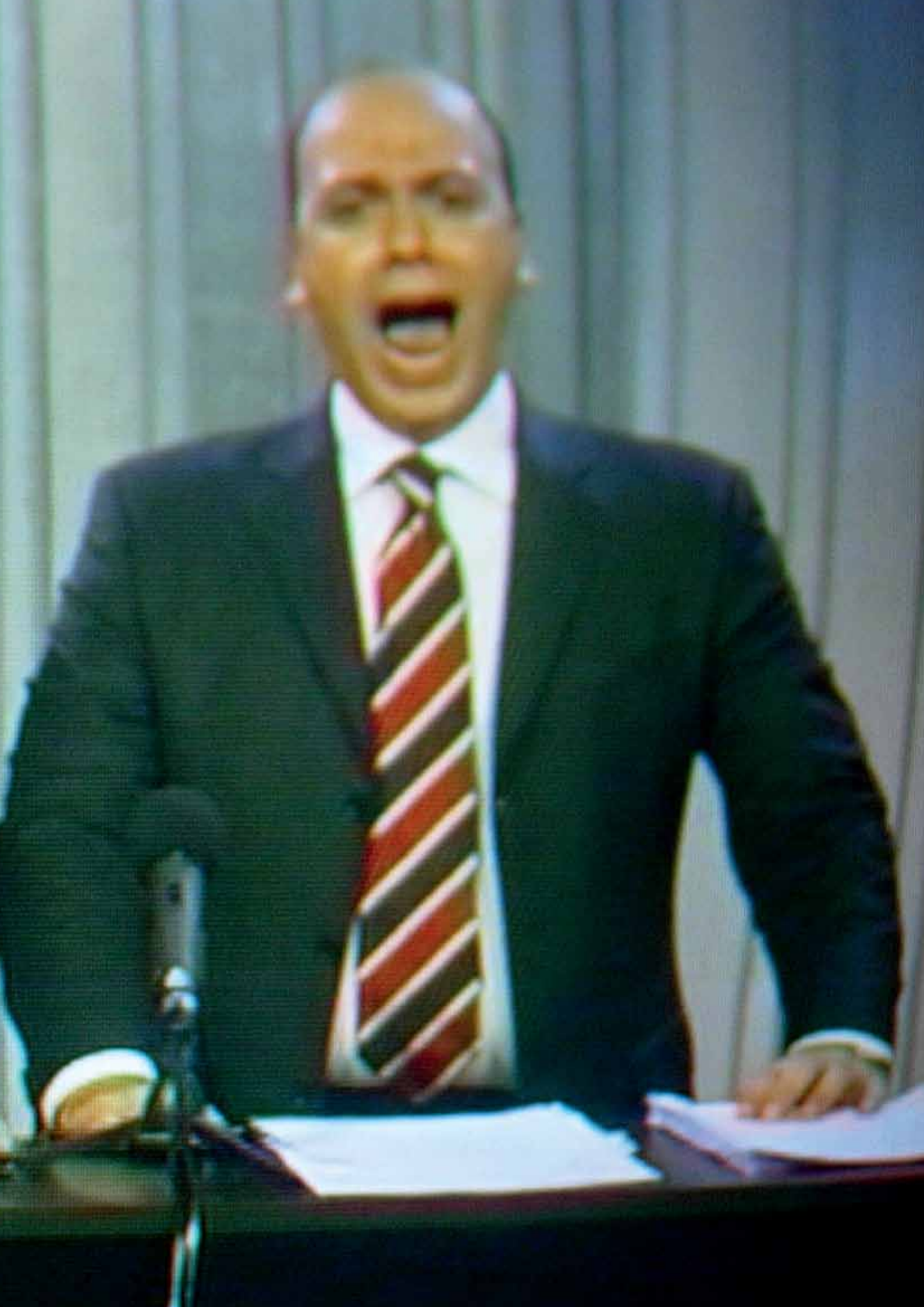
turned off the lights for the night, shutting off the power to the pump that kept the lobsters' tank percolating with oxygen. The collision of Genco's planned piece and it's unplanned plot twist reminds me of why more people should travel. Traveling reminds the traveler that all of us in everywhere we go through our daily routines, aim towards our long-term goals, and lodging our complaints about our governments, bosses, etc. All the while we all rely on the system to function just enough to serve our basic needs. Then someone, somewhere, who thinks they know what they're doing flips, a switch and lobsters perish.

Six years after I met Genco, Orhan Pamuk is now passé amongst Turkish intellectuals—"Too popular." Genco and his talented green-eyed bride Yesim have a family, their son Sinan Can having been saved by the wrestling gardener of Gümüşlük. Mehmet Sinan, the ghost in the machine, has curated shows outside of his own museum and country. And Genco might visit New York next year. Maybe we'll go to JFK and cut our hair in the security line before surrendering our scissors and razors and fly back to Turkey. Or we'll barbar in my living room and keep tabs on it all online.

"After reading Michael Rush's article "New Media", it is apparent how important performance art is. Many artists that have participated in performance art, such as Rauschenberg, have discovered the relationships that exist between different mediums of art and the audience it is exhibited to. You become a part of the experience, rather than just a viewer. The art involves you in itself, and as Rush said in the reading, you become another material used in the art piece. The way performance art is done has remained traditional, as well as changing into other forms. Now that we have newer technologies, the Internet has become a tool for showing people art, and it is very easy to use this tool to involve the viewer much like a performance piece from the 1960's.

After I read this essay I went into rhizome.org to look through the projects and see if this theme throughout Rush's essay is re-enforced by projects done today. The project on rhizome.org that caught my attention was Genco Gülan's piece, *Whenever I see a Plane, I remember the smell...* The reason for this is that this project uses an experience from one specific person, that is a very relatable subject for people in America, more specifically people from the tri-state area. This piece takes video stream from NYC and Boston, specifically videos of planes flying over. It is supposed to evoke a correlation of planes to NYC that is linked to 9/11. Therefore causing you to walk away from the project and always think of 9/11 and New York when you see a plane in your daily life. This piece can be categorized as a performance piece for sure, but has tweaked the rules. You are not walking into a room but in a sense you are going into a set up environment made to evoke certain feelings." (Rachel Cutler, *Rhizome vs. Rush*, <http://a.parsons.edu/~ngoh/interaction/?p=1013/>, 2011)







Scream, 2005. Interactive video, produced in Istanbul and Rio de Janeiro. Collection of the artist. (from 106 till 111.) Scream project is exhibited at *Güncel Sanat* exhibition at Zeidraumexit in Mannheim curated by Wolfgang Sautermeister in 2009. DVD is at the back cover of this book.



Marcus Graf

Screaming the Unspeakable

On Scream DVD.

2005.

Our existence is framed by scream and silence. At the beginning of every human life, there is a scream. In the end of life, our last breath is covered with silence. Today's pressure on the individual is high. We are forced to develop an independent identity in order to become a member of the modern project called 'free and liberal subject'. At the same time, our existence is squeezed into a certain 'common social and cultural behavior.' This paradox can cause either resignation or rebellion in the self. The expression of resignation is silence (the sound of death). The expression of rebellion is the scream (the fury of life). A baby screams for food and attention because it has no other way of making itself heard. It fights with all its power against the limitations of nature. Thanks to the scream, in the end, the baby gets what it wants. When we grow up, we get formatted into a certain pattern, in which we should neither run nor scream.

The scream is an antidote against the sterilization and uniformity of modern life. Screaming is an existential gesture, which expresses fear and horror, which often results in anger, aggression and rage as one of the strongest and oldest instincts we carry in us. That is why the scream has an animal power, which frightens us, because it reminds us of our oppressed self. Until the beginning of modern, art was not "screaming" at all. It was concerned with holy beauty, used as a tool by the religious, economic and political elite of society. Art was only public in the religious context or later since the 17th century in the museum. In both places, screaming is forbidden!

However, is modern life silent, easy, comfortable, and enjoyable? Is not the scream actually very accurately describing the status quo better than any contemplative and passive silence? The scream became the march of modernism, and the metropolis became the platform for the struggle of various social groups screaming for attention. Therefore, many modern art movements like DADA, Fluxus, Happening or Performance left the museum and the gallery to meet the people on the streets of the city.

Contemporary art has always been a tool which tries to show the invisible by connecting the reality and existence of the artist with the spiritual and imaginary world of the artist. Art creates fictive parallel worlds and evaluates every aspect of life critically. That's why it deals with the sadness, fear and rage within us. You see e.g. the existential anxiety of the modern man expressed in Edward Munch's scream and you see the rage and sadness in Marina Abramovic and Ulay's screaming performances which, by the way, always result in a total exhaustion of the body. Genco Gülan's *Scream* series contain human screams from the Brazilian cities Niteroi and Rio de Janeiro and also Turkey's me-



“Since Genco uses a variety of media, his work cannot be classified simply as “painting” or “sculpture”, rather his work must be considered alongside that of artists who use “hybrid” forms in art. In the 1990s, like many other Turkish artists, Genco Gülan began to use video independently or as a part of an installation. Furthermore, when trying to classify his work, one must realize that his work oscillates from performance art, video art, installation, ready-made art (objet trouvé) to digital photography. Sometimes he even uses classical forms within a contemporary practice.

One of Gülan’s works that can be classified as a video installation or video-sculpture is *Portable Installation*. In an interview with Marcus Graf, Gülan emphasized the importance of using screens in his subsequent sculpture and installation works. “Monitor, as TV or computer monitor, continues to appear in my sculptures, installations, stage-designs, paintings almost like a signature”... I Love Screens...” (Graf, 2008, p. 31). An old television without a signal strolls around Manhattan streets in *Film a la Turka* (1999). The monitor becomes a ball in the midst of four girls playing a match underwater in *Tele-rugby* (2003). A television and a keyboard can be found in the play *2084*. His computer-installation is used as a stage-design of the play *Romeo & Eliza*.

In his composition, *Portable Installation* (1995), the artist exhibits television programs broadcasting on the screens of two 55 flat monitors located in a tin-bin. While from its name appearing to be an installation, by dealing with volume, mass, surface, depth, and symmetry as well as using two monitors, this work that can be separated from the exhibition space, also has a sculptural quality and fits the classification of video-sculpture given by Christian Fricke (2005, p. 597). On the other hand, a television or a monitor already has a sculptural quality when exhibited in a different context. David Hall emphasized this by saying: “... a video displayed on a monitor is already and always a sculpture.” (Elwes, 2005, p. 146).” (Firat Arapoğlu, *Genco Gülan’s Video Sculptures and Video Installations*, 2010)

tropolis; Istanbul. The documentation's structure is net and simple and devoid of a deviation from reality. Every contributor has 15 to 20 seconds to record their scream. The lens follows people of different ages, races and social standing. For example, a kid who looks at the camera curiously and only shouts with a short and high pitched voice or a menacing old lady who shows her fist before screaming, a painter standing in front of his art work and screaming his anger towards life, a junky who had lost his scream and can't make a single sound, a shy woman who after a long pause shouts suddenly with fury...

Even though the intensity of the people and the screams vary we find similarities between certain characters because they are connected by the impressive and incredible mask of the scream. The face which is crinkled with rage, pleasure and anger takes on a shape wherein all race, language, religion, sex and social status disappear. The strong instinct of nature gets broken passing through all the legal obstructions of our culture. The reaction of the viewer goes back and forth between shock and emotional empathy. It is very fascinating to be a part of the intimate relationship between the contributor and the camera. **The video at first becomes the eye of the artist and then the eye of the viewer.** Despite all this, the screen creates a safe distance between the people and us where we can make observations. The camera, which is directed like a gun, captures the victim behind the victim. We see them shout with pain, pleasure and fear, but, in the end, we become the victim of our own voyeurism. At the same time we realize that the Scream, apart from what has been discussed above in terms of individual expressionism, involves a social and political dimension. Although the screamers include representatives of all classes, races and colors we can understand the Genco Gülan favors the others. We do not much see many people of the middle or upper class in the video. The majority constitutes painters who are screened in their studios or academies. Screams can transform into symbolic explosions with which the artists try to attract the attention of the people. Every artist has something to say because communication is the basis of artistic production. Even so contemporary art is neither popular nor is it of general interest to the public...

Despite all this, Gülan demonstrates that screaming is a powerful way to make oneself heard. Genco Gülan has chosen his cities and their inhabitants wisely. The cities of Brazil and Istanbul are chaotic centers of the 3rd world (post) modernism which has been spreading frantically. All of this suffers from an overload of everything. The inhabitants are struggling each day in order to be able to move ahead in this urban jungle. Scream creates a platform for people to discharge their suppressed feelings. The artist uses video as the most appropriate tool in order to record the rage and joy. This allows for a reconsideration of today's silent existence by using the videos realism to reach a conceptual dimension. After watching the video, when the last scream dies into silence, the echo continues in the viewer's head and merges with the crinkled lines of the face. In the end we understand that the scream and the silence are connected with each other. There is silence before and after each scream. This is the prerequisite and the result of the scream.



Scream, 2005. Interactive video produced in Istanbul and Rio de Janeiro. Collection of the artist. Special thanks to State Academy of Rio de Janeiro and prog: me festival curated by Carlos Sansolo







Madame Jesus, 2007. 3D Digital model printed on Canvas. *The Fall of the Super Heros Series*. 90 cm * 90 cm. Bülent Özsoy Collection. (previous pages) **Woman**, 2003. 3D Digital model printed on Canvas. 90 cm * 90 cm. Turan Özcan Collection. (below) **Man**, 2003. 3D Digital model printed on Canvas. *The Fall of the Super Heros Series*. 90 cm * 90 cm. Mustafa Dilber Collection.



Marcus Graf

Frozen Stars

*A few thoughts about Genco Gülan's
'The Fall of the Super Heroes'.
New York Arts Magazine, 2007.*

“And then the hero comes along, with the strength to carry on...” (*Hero*, Mariah Carey, 1993)

In general, the hero is the one everybody looks up to. He is the one we liked to imitate in the games of our childhood. He is the police officer chasing the gangster, the fire worker saving the baby from the flames, or the cowboy driving away the Indians. He is the one who always wins and survives... Later we grow up and realize that even a hero can die. But we also recognize that through a heroic death, he achieves a dream of mankind: Immortality.

Next to the hero, only Gods, Warriors and Artists become immortal.

Before god was a DJ, god was an artist. Ovid describes Prometheus as the creator of man. He is a sculptor who created the first man out of water and sand. Later in the Renaissance, the connection between the man-creator Prometheus and the artist as a “second” creator becomes one of the leading motives in describing the artist’s role. In the 20th century, the connection between warrior and artist becomes obvious through the transference of the term *avant-garde* to the art world for describing the artist’s role as a visionary leader of society.

Within this triangle, Genco Gülan constructs in his series *The Fall of the Super Heroes* an artistic research of different realities, in which he examines the connection between life and illusion. A formula for this effort may be *Hayat (Life) + Hayal (Illusion) = Haya(l)l*. It points out that in today’s pluralistic and heterogeneous world, life and illusion, they are existentially interconnected.

Genco Gülan created “The Fall of the Heroes”, a series of digital prints for his exhibition called “*Daily Mythologies*” at the State Fine Art Gallery in Beyoğlu at the end of 2003. There, naked heroes of war, lying with their swords and shields in a garden that resembles paradise were painted on the ceiling of the exhibition space. The scene above the heads of the spectator is full of peace and harmony; calm like a summer breeze.

As its counter point, Gülan’s canvases hang on the walls that surround the visitors. There, we see what happens, if something shakes this world. Or ends its time and tears the paradise apart. The earth splits, and heroes fall, carried through darkness by a cold wind into another world. And yes, it seems like Gülan’s figures fall forever, surrounded by emptiness and absolute silence. Their naked

bodies' perfectly shaped virtual skin shines before the plane and dark background. These figures look like falling stars, for a moment, captured and frozen by the artist before they will be dark forever

...

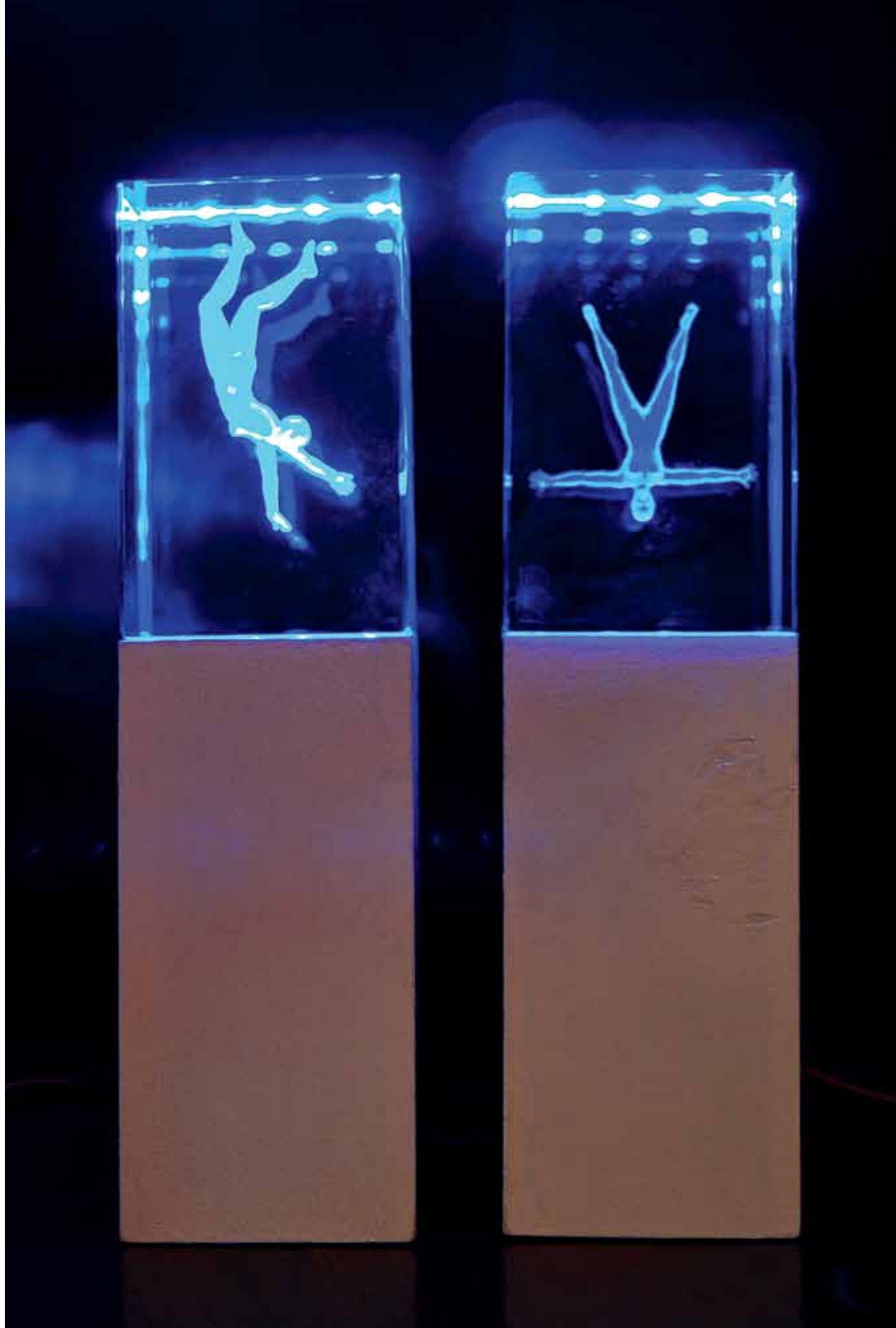
On 09.11.2001, transmitted via digital information technique from New York City to our TV screens at home, we received images of falling people. For a second, it was impossible to distinguish between the real and unreal. This moment of distraction caused a shock at being unable to recognize a reality on the screen that, normally, reproduces the world. After 09.11., images of falling people are culturally and ichnographically determined. Because of their impact, they burned themselves into our visual memory.

Genco Gülan lived in New York at that time. Although emotionally moved, as an artist, he created a work that deals with this literally "indescribable" horror on a meta-level. The series' hyperrealism is aesthetically clear, simple and obvious, but its concept and content is hidden in ambiguity. With the help of the computer's cold aesthetic, he creates an artwork that reflects the shocking moment without losing the perspective that gives the vision power. Because of a reflective process that shapes the figures in virtual reality, Gülan subversively deals with the horror of New York, without showing any kind of kitschy pathos. Out of samples of reality, he forms a fragmented mirror, in which we see broken images of us and our world. The spectator assembles its' pieces and forms his own stories which coalesce with public perception; the private acquires the public. The artist creates an illusion of life by using a medium that reproduces reality. As a result, darkness filled with hollow figures in virtual emptiness is created. It is a game with illusions: The prints resemble oil paintings, the motives are known but unseen, and from a distance, the figures look like "real" humans, but are virtually designed.

Genco Gülan is absent, not present in his work and has left us alone with ourselves. The computer allows no handwriting as if, in the end, together with his figures, the author vanished in darkness. The spectator stands in front of the canvas, alone, where his thoughts cover the skin of the figure. For a moment he takes part, falls, flies, guesses, remembers, just to return back to the open black background. Pause, silence and in the end, the only thing we see is a black screen ...

"We can be heroes, just for one day, We can be us, just for one day." (*Heroes*, David Bowie, 1977.)
"... a hero lies in you" (*Hero*, Mariah Carey, 1993.)





Hands first and V, 2003. 3D Digital model, laser imploded crystal . 4 cm * 5cm * 9 cm two pieces. Led light and small wooden pedestals. ***Jesus***, 2008. C-print. *I love You Series*. 90 cm * 90 cm. (page left)





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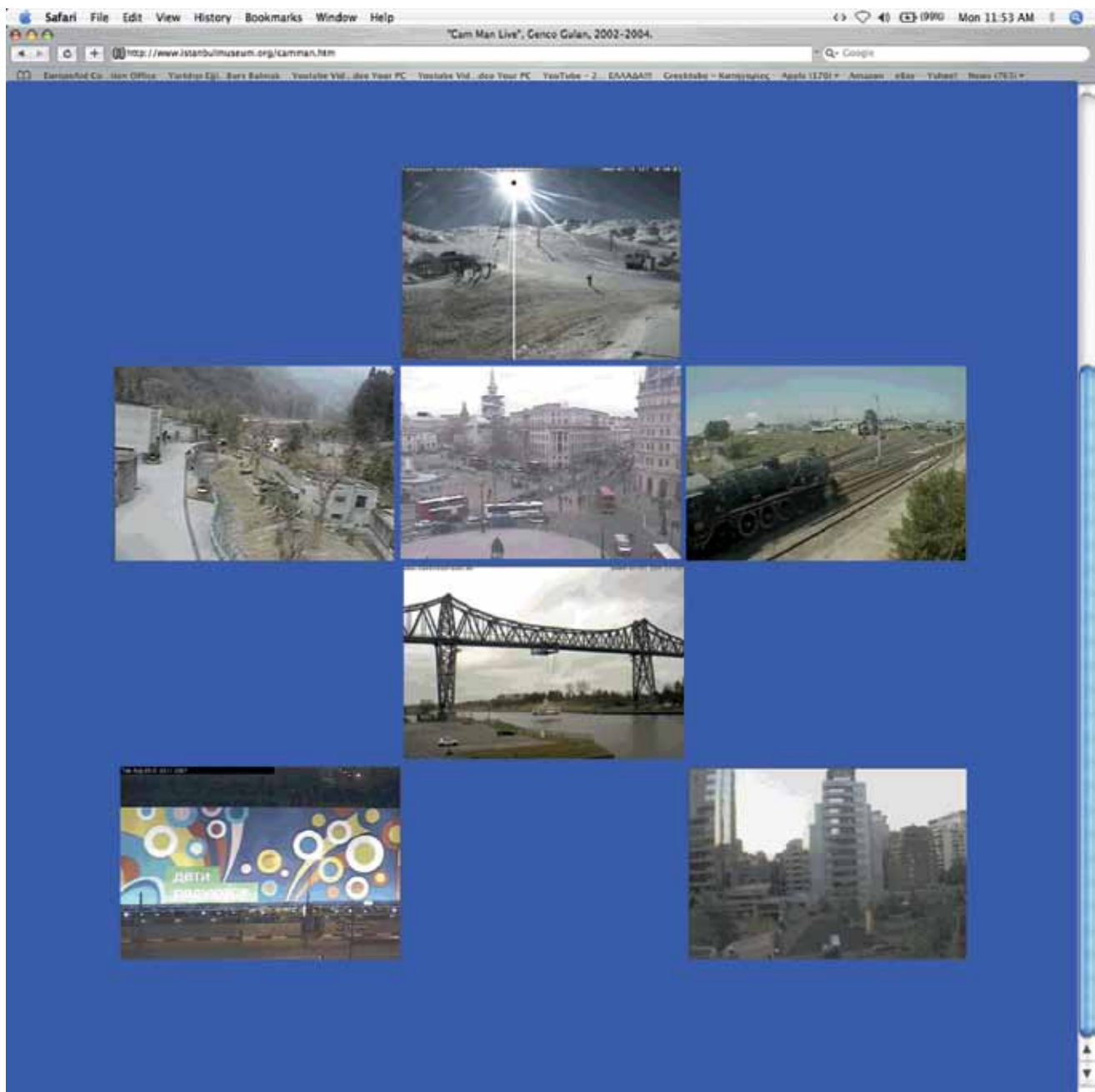


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Cam-man, 2002. Live video streams from seven different locations from the planet. Java and HTML coding. Now partially disappeared. (below) **The man from Istanbul**, 2005. Live video streams from seven different locations from Istanbul. Java coding. Now disappeared. (right) Day time (left) night time city. Now disappeared. (previous pages) **Transcontinental**, 2011. 16 channel (live) video. 7days and 24 hours. Work in progress. Thanks Fatih Can.



Andrej Tisma

MR. Camera Men

Interfejsi Bezgranicnog, Novi Sad, Serbia.

2007.

Genco Gülan is an international multimedia artist based in Istanbul. In the sphere of electronic and digital arts he usually deals with the virtual and interactivity. One of his early projects is *Istanbul Contemporary Art Museum*, (1997) which he established as an online, virtual institution in lack of such a real museum of that kind in Istanbul. This virtual museum has activities such as organizing and producing online and on-site exhibitions, also the *Web Biennial*, the first international Biennial Contemporary Art exhibition created exclusively for the World Wide Web. Web Biennials have been organized since 2003, announced, produced, exhibited and documented exclusively on the web. This approach marks Gülan as an important web activist, who also organizes international online discussions, linking established international net theorists and artists.

Gülan is also active in making interactive video and media installations. One of his famous online live camera installations *Cam-man* was shown in the Novi Sad Outdoors International Digital Arts Exhibition in 2004. Seven small monitors forming a human shape were linked to seven live web cameras in Istanbul, New York, London, Montreal, Kuala Lumpur, Moscow and Taipei. Those live broadcasting from streets, main squares, fields and airports world-wide, by the shape that the monitors formed, suggested the unity of humankind. On the other hand Gülan posed the question of private life under the more and more advanced methods of surveillance. The installation also showed that **thanks to the developing means of communication, places on different parts of the planet are beginning to look very similar.**

One of Gülan's latest video installations shown in the International Contemporary Arts Exhibition "Balkan Art 07" in Novi Sad, named *ASCII Double-headed Eagle*, deals with the traditional symbol of double-headed eagle used in heraldry of different nations in history (Hittites, Armenians, Byzantines, Serbs, Albanians, Germans, Seljuk's etc). As viewer approaches a book, on Seljuk double-headed eagles, his/ her face caught by a video camera is projected on both heads of an eagle (as well as on its body as code). This work shows the complex ways of interwoven cultures in the Euro-Asian Region that pledges for more understanding and collaboration among the two cultures today. Using the latest electronic and digital technology Gülan sends strong and poetic messages about universal values that should be respected and developed further.







Add Man, 2005. Geometric humanoid figures with multiple live adds leached from MSN websites. Now disappeared. (right) **Bannerland**, 2005. Web pages with multiple live adds leached from MSN websites.(previous pages) **Star Wars Mosque**, 2003. Rendered 3D printed on canvas. 100 cm * 70.cm. Sema Özsoy collection.

Agricola de Cologne

Interview: Genco Gulan

JIP - JavaMuseum Interview Project, 2006.

Genco Gülan is an Istanbul based multidisciplinary artist and the creator of the Web Biennial. He belongs to an art scene which uses new technologies; he is an active representative of a genre dealing with Internet based art, called 'net-art'. When those artists started producing net-art, the education in New Media was not as advanced as it is today. Often the artists migrate from different disciplines and have an interdisciplinary approach. Those young artists who start today have partially more advanced education but rather not much experience in other disciplines.

...

Agricola de Cologne: The term “net-art” is widely used for anything posted on the net, there are dozens of definitions which mostly are contradictory. How do you define ‘net-art’ or if you like the description ‘Internet based art’ better, do you think your work belongs to this specific genre, do you think ‘net-art’ is art, at all, if yes, what are the criteria? Is there any aesthetic criteria for an Internet based artwork?

Genco Gülan: Personally, I differentiate between net-art and Internet based art. For me net-art is simply ‘networked art’. And this network may mean Internet, cable or wireless but must be a two way -send and receive- system. According to my own definition, net-art cannot exist without a networked environment as the fish cannot live without water. A salmon fish is called smoked salmon or sushi outside the water.

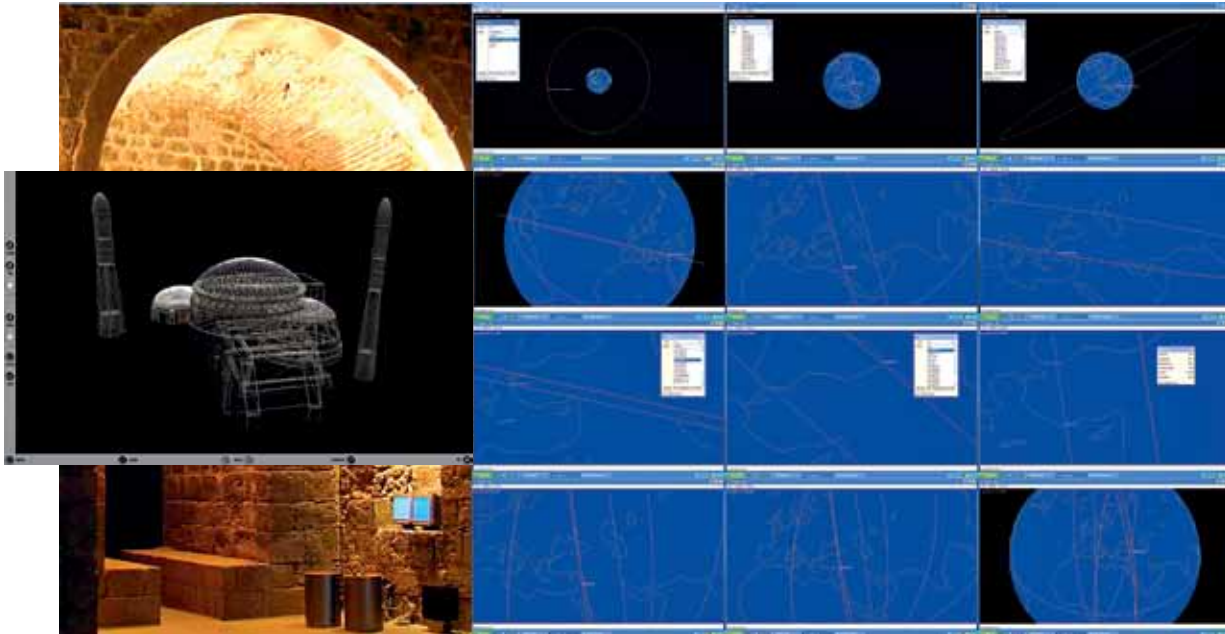
...

AdC: What kind of meaning does the new technologies and the Internet have for you? Are they just tools for expressing your artistic intentions, or do they rather have an ideological character, as it can be found with many “net-artists” or what else do they mean to you?

GG: Net-art is avant-garde because it is relatively cheap to learn, produce and distribute art and information. The conservative forces move rather slow and they cannot adapt to the change in technology – or social behaviors- fast enough to capture or purchase the activism in the field. Hakim Bey refers to this relative advantageous field as; temporary autonomous zone. Hence we have to keep up with the technology to preserve our artistic autonomy.

Media can be a message but not an ideology. Internet has helped new ideas to flourish and it proved that possibility of collaboration, solidarity is still possible on different platforms even in our post-post modern situation. More important than everything else, new communication technologies proved that the dynamics of the world is changing. So today it is clear that the consumer society is ending and it was the rise of Internet which showed the first signals. The paradigm is at the point that the non-material (information) owes its existence to a material infrastructure.

AdC: Many ‘Internet based artists’ work on “engaged” themes and subjects, for instance, with social, political, cultural etc. concerns. Which contents are you particularly interested in? What subjects are you working on and what is your artistic message(s), if you have any, and what are your personal artistic visions for future (if you have any)?



Star Wars Mosque, 2005. Interactive networked installation. With permission from NASA. (Above) general view and screen shots from the routes of military satellites. **Lost Airplane**, 2005. 3D animation loop. Approximately 30 seconds. Collection of the artist.

“The ironic installation of Genco Gülan entitled ‘Lost Airplane’ juxtaposes the satellite systems developing new control mechanisms by keeping track of the world from above, the technological clarity and the illusion of pomp created by culture industries through movies such as *Star Wars* and the desire to destroy USA’s imperial fiction even if on a planar level. The balance of this impeccable functionality prepared by digital materials is broken down in the background when the tower conversations taken from the websites of two airports in the USA mix into each other and become incomprehensible.” (Erden Kosova, Birgün, 2005.)



GG: As an artist born in a 3rd World country, my work has always been engaged with politics and culture. However I also produce non-political, non-conceptual art. When I produce net-art or web art, technical boundaries or possibilities shape or limit my work very much. So sometimes technique, sometimes the concept or sometimes the budget comes first. In the future I prefer to keep on producing and communicating as independent as possible.

...

AdC: Dealing with this new, and interactive type of art demands an active viewer or user and needs the audience much more and in different ways than any other art discipline before. How do you stimulate the user to dive into this new world of art? What do you think, represents an appropriate environment to present net based art to an audience? Is it the context of the lone-some user sitting in front of his personal computer, is it any public context or is it rather the context of art in general or media art in particular or anything else?

GG: Most of my art require mental and/ or physical engagement. In this regards I do not think that my net-art pieces are radically different than the physical work. However I know that my online audience is more crowded and physically more distant. Hence I try to keep them as easy and simple as possible. Still I know that new media is very demanding in terms of education on many levels. I know that they are teaching my net-art in many different Universities abroad but I cannot easily teach them to my own students at home.

AdC: If you would be in the position to create an environment for presenting this type of art in physical space, how would you do it?

GG: I exhibit my net-art works both online and on site on single, multiple computers with screens or projections, on flat or different surfaces. Still I think that when we are talking more about physical presence, we start to talk about other arts such as installation, sculpture, sound installation, multimedia etc. Whenever I exhibit the works on site I start to call them networked installations or sculptures.

AdC: Internet based art, as well as other art forms using new technologies are still not widely accepted, yet, as serious art forms. What do you think could be an appropriate solution to change this situation?

GG: I think we have to develop new exhibition, institution models because new art can not fit into old school art institutions. At the same time becoming a discipline requires developing a different intellectual ground. We also have to build our own digital art theory. The art of tomorrow will be built on new media, new methodologies and new theories.

AdC: The Internet is called a kind of 'democratic' environment but the conventional art practice is anything else than that: Selective by using filters of a different kind. The audience is mostly only able to make up its mind on second hand. Art on the net might potentially be different. Do you think the current practice of dealing with Internet based art is different as such or rather like the described conventional way through (curatorial) filtering? Do you think that speaking in the terms of Joseph Beuys, anybody who publishes anything on the net would be also an artist?

GG: Internet is a temporary haven for us. Soon mobile systems or the new IM's will take over. But up to that point Internet will keep on providing certain liberties and boundaries. It is clear that Internet helps us to get over certain borders but it will eventually build up its clergy. Still we try to keep it free. For example Web Biennial is a non-curated project. It is like this because it is possible. Not only ideologically but also economically and technically. I think that anyone (even robots) can be artists. But he or she or it should work for it. And being an artist may not necessarily mean being a good artist.

AdC: Do you think the curators dealing with net based art should have any technological knowledge in order to understand such an art work from its roots?

GG: I believe that net-art requires a basic knowledge of technology to operate. We are not only talking about art as an "object" but art as a "relationship." Hence, as you have to learn how to survive in the narrow streets of Venice to see the Biennial you have to learn how to navigate in the Internet to observe the *Web Biennial*.







Run, 2007. C-print. *I Love You Series*. 100cm * 100cm. PG Art Gallery. (previous pages) **Students**, 2007. C-print. *I Love You Series*. 100cm * 100cm. Collection of the artist.

“After climbing onto a 10-meter tower and jumping down, they fall with a 55 km pace and touch the water in 1.2 seconds. These photos were taken within that short period of time. Therefore, there are no digital tricks; these people really do fly! Turkish Tower Diving champions Çağla Tokat and Erinç Kuzucu have been on the tower a couple of hundreds of times and they let themselves into the pool, posing in accordance with Genco Gülan’s directives. Gülan’s recent exhibition, *I Love You*, has emerged through this artist-athlete collaboration.” (Ezgi Başaran, No Tricks, These People Can Fly!, Hurriyet, 2009.)

Marcus Graf

Will you Jump, Fall or Fly?

On “I Love you” series

IDOMÉNÉE, Paris, 2008.

Flying is one of the oldest dreams of mankind. The image of birds in the sky which are able to leave the earth with all its chaos and mess left behind, can trigger various feelings like romanticism, sorrow and sometimes jealousy or even anger. In contrast, falling is one of the worst nightmares of people. It even hunts us in our dreams in which we wake up before we slam to the ground. People cannot fly, but they can fall. Therefore, flying is a poetic fantasy and falling is a hurting reality.

Both actions represent another sphere into which we earthlings are normally not allowed to enter. Physical laws are stricter than any human made law and prevent us from entering this clean, pure and infinite area. On planet earth, you have to deal with its people, animals, buildings, diseases and wars. In the sky, you are alone with yourself and the clouds. There, in the silence of the void, you are able to hear yourself while the whispering of the wind is telling you secrets about the stars.

In Genco Gülan's photo series *I love You*, we see people who are in the state of falling down. Nevertheless, it looks as if they were freed from all the ballast of the planet and all the weight of their bodies. In these images, in the stillness of the moment, these people fly forever. The artist is using photography's power to stop time, and freeze a fragile glimpse of reality so that the spectator can carefully observe the incident.

Genco Gülan is an interdisciplinary artist who is often using photography to create images that draw connections to real incidents, in order to review reality. He usually merges found situations and other environments in order to go beyond the generally accepted ideas about the world we live in. In Gülan's works, the spectator is confronted with fragmented reflections of our current reality in which a strange balance between beauty and ugliness, as well as poetry and politics create a visual platform for analysis of today's society.

In the current series *I love You*, his focus is on the moment of the artistic process where reality and imagination melt into a new construction called art. Through observing and deconstructing the known, Gülan reveals the contemporary world's unstable essence in which the “obvious and ordinary” are perpetrated by the “wired and irritating”.

Genco Gülan is not creating fiction, and the protagonists of his series are really falling from extraordinary height. We neither see the beginning nor the end of the jump. Various men, women and children dressed in suits, skirts or school uniforms fly as if they were falling out of nowhere. Gülan freezes the



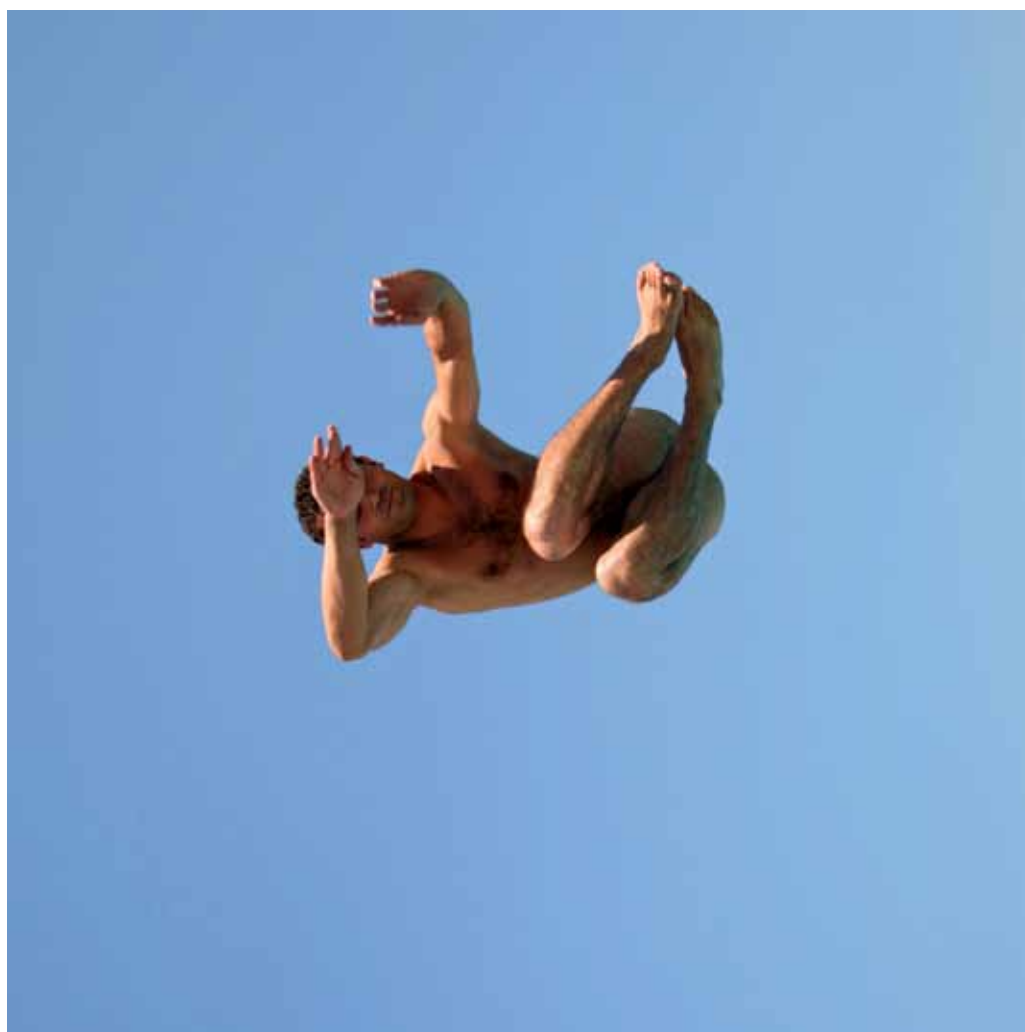
HOP! 2008. C-print. *I Love You Series*. 100cm * 100cm. PG Art Gallery. (previous pages) **Students**, 2007. C-print. *I Love You Series*. 100cm * 100cm. (right)

people with the help of his camera. In the image, the high speed of the fall pauses for a moment so that we can observe certain details of the people and their accessories: Strange expressions on the faces, which vary between concentration and sensation, as well as the wired positions of the bodies, occur. Shoes fall off, bags open and water spills out of bottles.

Although we witness a part of a very fast action, the images seem calm and silent. The peace of the moment is supported by the interconnection of space with the figures. The clear blue sky in which the people hang, gives the scenes a contemplative background. In the endless blue, your mind can travel and draw lines in the sky like airplanes do. On the other hand, some small details of the buildings make reference to the concrete set of the scene. Nevertheless, the architectural parts seen in the images are more compositional parameters than story-telling factors. Genco Gülan needs them to show the parting of his figures from the real world. On the ground, the figures would be imprisoned by the walls of our buildings made out of concrete, steel and glass. In the air, at least for a moment, they are free.

Genco Gülan's series points to the possibility of photography's **moment of freez time for observation and creating parallel worlds for imagination**. In his photos, the spectator has the chance to choose between the poetry of the flying moment, the sensation of the jumping action or the danger of the fall. Whichever side he takes, he will have the chance to transfer his mind into the body of the protagonists in order to be part of the image. There, he will see, whether he jumps, falls or flies; in love. At least for a moment, hopefully, he will be able to forget all physical laws and separate from his concrete reality. We believe in images so why should we not believe in the possibility of flying?

Cenin, 2008. C-print. *I Love You Series*. 100cm * 100cm. Tony Ventura Collection.



“Yves Klein, one of the pioneers of post-war European modern art, is seen jumping from the top of a wall towards the concrete floor, spreading his arms. In 1960, he took this picture, “Le Saut dans le vide-Leap into the Void”, to demonstrate that he finds NASA’s passion to send people to the Moon stupid; by taking it, Klein implied to NASA that “he can go to the Moon without their help”. Of course, NASA did not bother to notice the message in this photo, but the photo itself became a significantly remarkable one in the art world. Genco Gülan had been obsessed with the photo for eight years. “We know how people move on the land and in the water, but what about the air? I have thought about this a lot. First, I tried it on 3D cyber models by using an exposure program on the computer. It didn’t work. Then I worked with stage people and dancers. I even used a steel rope system, which was used in the movie Matrix and which made people seem as if they were hung up in the air - didn’t work either.” He had to find someone professional who jumped from a height and remain that way safe.

...
He (the artist) met Women’s Champion Çağla Tokat (20 yrs.) and Men’s Champion Erinc Kuzucu (29) when he went to watch the Championship in İzmir. He said to them, “I would like to take pictures of you during the few seconds while you are falling from the tower.” The two athletes regarded this offer as fun adventure. “Posing while falling from the tower, jumping into the water according to an enactment... It seemed weird but also expanded my horizons. Erinc Kuzucu tells us that he accepted the offer unhesitantly.

...
We must have gone on the tower and jumped down a couple of hundreds of times to get the picture he had in mind. We would go into the sun and get dried up when the clothes were wet, yet sometimes we jumped in still wet clothes,” says Çağla. In Erinc’s words, if you don’t know the technique for jumping in the water from 10 meters, you will crash onto the surface of the water. Genco Gülan himself gave it a try once. “10 meters was too high for me, so I tried 8. The next two weeks, I was dying from muscle pain,” he says.

The name of the exhibition is *I Love You*, because, in Gülan’s opinion, the most powerful sensation that may sweep someone off their feet is love. “In English, to begin to love someone is expressed as ‘falling’ in love. You really go up on a tower and fall into love. You black out. Only love keeps you hanging in the air.” When one lets himself fall from the tower, what does he actually feel? “Something beyond love,” says Erinc, adding “I expect some things from my sweetheart when I fall in love, but you cannot expect anything from the tower. You are what you are up there. You have to clear your head and do your best.”” (Ezgi Başaran, *Hile yok Bu İnsanlar Uçuyor*. Hürriyet, 2009)

Stop! 2008. C-print. *I Love You Series*. 30cm * 30cm. Collection of the artist.





Orange, 2008. C-print. *I Love You Series*. 100cm * 100cm. **Pompidou**, 2008. C-print mounted on plexi. *I Love You Series*. 30cm * 30cm. (right)









YENİ, 2008. Interactive audio visual site specific performance on colors. Photograph of a performance at Pera Museum in the context of 16th International Istanbul Theater Festival. (above) Blue; Gökçe Akyıldız and Neşe Mengüloğlu performing the conjoined twins after reading *Mai ve Siyah* of Halid Ziya Uşaklıgil. (below) White; Pelinsu Öznel is singing *Conceptual Colors*. (previous pages) Red; Münibe Millet in an aquarium and Green; Neylan Özgüle on roller skates singing the colors.



Özgün Tanglay

YEN!

WORDS PLAY ON THE AQUARIUM AND FALL IN ON HER RED DRESS...

<http://bagimsiz-seyir.blogspot.com/>, 2008.

In the midst of sounds, words, colors, forms and light - on top of each other, next to one another, side by side. In an atmosphere where one cannot tell who is watching whom - when there is no place for the lies of everyday life...

Genco Gülan's project, entitled *YEN!* (New!) started outside and then moved inside the Pera Museum as part of the 16th International Istanbul Theatre Festival, May 2008. During this interactive performance, I was sometimes right by the side of an aquarium, staring at the girl in the red dress on whom words were dancing, and at times walking through this “work” on display, or putting myself in front of the light, feeling close enough to the artists' bodies to touch them. In this performance where I wandered, no dividing lines using the spatial partition called “stage”, had been drawn between the audience and the performers, so relativising the question of who was watching whom.

Where should I start trying to introduce the work? If I was a copywriter attempting to advertise my product, I would have called it “a festival of sound and light”. But the event under discussion was an anti-show in the truest sense, an atmospheric chaos, despite the aesthetic values it incorporated, and the intense revelry it created, by its explosion of color. *YEN!* might have been defined using cliché sentences, but that would have rendered clear that it had been misunderstood; for the work itself was making a stand against those fixed, rigid definitions. Sounds, words, colors, forms and light were superimposed, juxtaposed and there was no place in this work for deceit and the lies of everyday life.

The performance started with a young lady dressed in white, reading arias outside the museum's main entrance, while holding Marcus Graf's book “Genco Gülan: Conceptual Colors”. The medium of her voice transformed these lines into music.

YEN! became here an object of interest and even scorn to the people who happened to be passing by: one man swore while walking past, another went on his way to Beyoglu, clapping and laughing, while young men in football uniforms went past saying “What's this mate?” A young member of the audience was showing kindness to a homeless kid, asking “Look, do you like it?” Meanings, understandings, emotions, efforts and ideas gliding by each other and hanging suspended outside the entrance of Pera Museum.



YEN!, 2008. Interactive audio visual performance on colors. Photograph of a performance at Pera Museum in the context of 16th International Istanbul Theater Festival. (above) Pink; Pelin Batu is performing her color interacting with AI chat bots. (below) Grey; Business men and woman drawing and writing while running on treadmills.



The show was staged at the entrance level of the Pera Museum. When we entered the gallery, the actors had taken their places on white pedestals and were already improvising slowly. Clashing objects of difference were present: beautiful, senseless, ugly and meaningful exclamations; sounds, women, men, costumes, lines dividing up the face, digital projections, colors danced together in the evening air.

The endless fight of two actresses unified by a single blue costume continued throughout the performance. A girl on skates skated incessantly while reading aloud from a technical book about colors she held in her one hand, smiled tirelessly, all through the duration of the performance. A man and a woman continued running non-stop on treadmills. And we, the audience, kept watching them and they us...reciprocally for the duration of the performance.

All that was uttered was losing its meaning, all meanings were rapidly gliding away from one another. The environment was chaotic and the elements could neither be added to nor subtracted from each other; they only had the power to create chaos together. This was a performance. A NEW! performance. No answer corresponded to the questions drifting in the air. This was a performance and nothing here overlapped; neither time-wise nor meaning-wise. No act belonged to its context. Songs, treadmills, words... Consequently neither did the colors, and not even the audience. They were not where they were supposed to be and neither were the actor! Was this because in the global world the true location of all that is dislocated is unknowable?

Each body here was of a different color, yes, but the colors were not on the same plane. Some were in motion, some stood still, some were inside water, some in the air, some were low down, some were high up, some made sound, and some were silent... Technology had also assumed a position in this performance, pointing to its place in time. NEW belonged to this age, not the one before, and it was not an attribute of the forthcoming either.

For a moment I grappled with a sentence "Let life depart". At that moment I thought the question "WHY?"... seemed misplaced in the context of this performance.

When one of the performers dived into the water in her red dress, the little girl inside me exclaimed: "Look at that, words stuck on a giant red fish!", probably because the fantastic aesthetic vision of the red dress in the water took her back in time. The motion of the dress in the water was poetic enough in spite of the waving motion of a silk scarf. Words from a projector – that she wrote under the water – were reflected on it and seemed to chill her. I could not take my eyes off for a long while. The image still adorns my cell-phone screen.

To expect a flow of events, to wish for it to have a beginning and an end, to try to confine YEN! with such linear definitions would be a mistake. Just as "space" gains meaning by the functions it takes on, and writes its own history, this performance is like an empty space that is presented to the audience. A box into which you yourself will put the meaning; or a concoction where you will choose the meanings you want from among a dozen others. If I had not happened to hear the performer, who sang arias while in motion on top of an exercise device for the duration of the performance, say "Oh my, I'm going to have extremely shapely legs" when the performance ended, I could easily have said that all the actors were conscious of what they were expressing with their bodies. But I guess they all were beautiful worldly toys created by the artist.

The festival brochure says "The subject is electronic colors which multiply when added to the natural ones. YEN! uses six of the colors frequently used in machines: blue, red, yellow, green, grey, and pink. The show works by making use of and transforming these new colors and technologies." I have not touched on these subjects. This is a more original reading, a perspective based on the feelings and sensual experiences I went through while watching the performance. I am sure that other watchful eyes will have different things to say about YEN! because it certainly gives anybody who sees it the opportunity to do so.

“Breathing life into restricted spaces and restricted times; the simultaneous performances of Yen! were like a snapshot of the city and the century I am living in. Istanbul “whose streets are paved with gold”, as the saying goes, is shining brighter while unfortunately turning grayer with new buildings rising up each day. I was looking for a place where I could see idle stars locked up beneath these artificial colors and glitter.

I strolled around the Pera Museum amid colors; red on one side, blue on the other. The green performer was reading excerpts on colors from the book “Genco Gülan: Conceptual Colors” as she roller-skated around us. Green seemed to symbolize Mother Nature; she was setting in motion and directing other performers with her touch while continuing to roller-skate around us throughout the entire performance. The performers on the treadmill started to walk when green touched them. Both wear gray suits and sneakers, one of the performers was drawing and the other was writing “Nowhere else to go?” in the note pad in his hand. The moment he ripped and slipped the paper into my hand, I thought of many places to go. Actually, everyone wants to go away and move to the south, to the land of authentic colors. Only the sun and the sea; authentic yellow, authentic blue... While time flows seamlessly in the land of authentic colors, life in a metropolis flies so fast. We can neither catch anything nor can we fit into this “metropolis.” It’s as if we are all on top of treadmills like the grays. And moreover, we aren’t actually arriving at a destination even though we run faster and faster. We are all covered in gray, stuck in our places.

Green roller-skated towards the performer in pink on the pedestal right across her and set her in motion too. **Pink started to alternate between speaking the words of a computer and her own words.** She was speaking the words of the computer when she held a mask close to her face and spoke her own words as she put it away from her face. There was a dissonance between the dialogues, they were speaking different languages. Mankind and technology couldn’t communicate. Having trouble in catching up with it, man has also become a slave of the technology he developed. We cannot move an inch without our mobile phones or our computers. We are hiding our pale faces behind computer screens all day long. Instead of sitting down and talking to our friends face to face, all we can do in our limited time is to open a “chat window” for them. As we try to communicate this way, we suddenly find out that we have been “disconnected.”

There were two performers on another pedestal tied up against each other by a blue costume, somewhat resembling a mermaid. They quarreled with excerpts from Halid Ziya Uşaklıgil’s novel “*Mai ve Siyah*” (Blue and Black). It was very natural that they were fighting; they weren’t able to go anywhere! How difficult it is for us to move on our own; we are always attached to, we always depend on something or some person. We cannot readily make our own decisions; we cannot go on the fly. As our living spaces dwindle, we fight more and consume each other more. Why do you think everyone turns into a monster in the traffic? In the mean time, a girl in red constantly turned somersault in the aquarium right beside me. How beautiful she was in her red dress contrasting with green and how scathing it was that she was constantly twirling inside that aquarium that she barely fit into.

I didn’t go too far but at least I wandered around somewhere among colors. Maybe you have travelled totally other places. Colors, meanwhile, were trapped inside their spaces amid all that chaos. Neither red, nor green could go anywhere. Only green walked around us, stood by us sometimes and kept reading calmly. Though we tried to listen to and understand what she said, we could only partly grasp it, the rest was surplus information. Thanks to the new colors and technologies dazzling our eyes, we opened up new paths for ourselves on the dead-end road we entered as we broke off with nature. We deviated from our path in search of real knowledge; perhaps we should have solely listened to the voice of nature. The most tragicomic side of the story is that we couldn’t make room for ourselves in this world we created. Has green also touched you quietly and passed you by roller-skating?” (Yeşim Tuncay, YEN!, 2008, <http://bagimsiz-seyir.blogspot.com/2008/06/11-yen.html>)

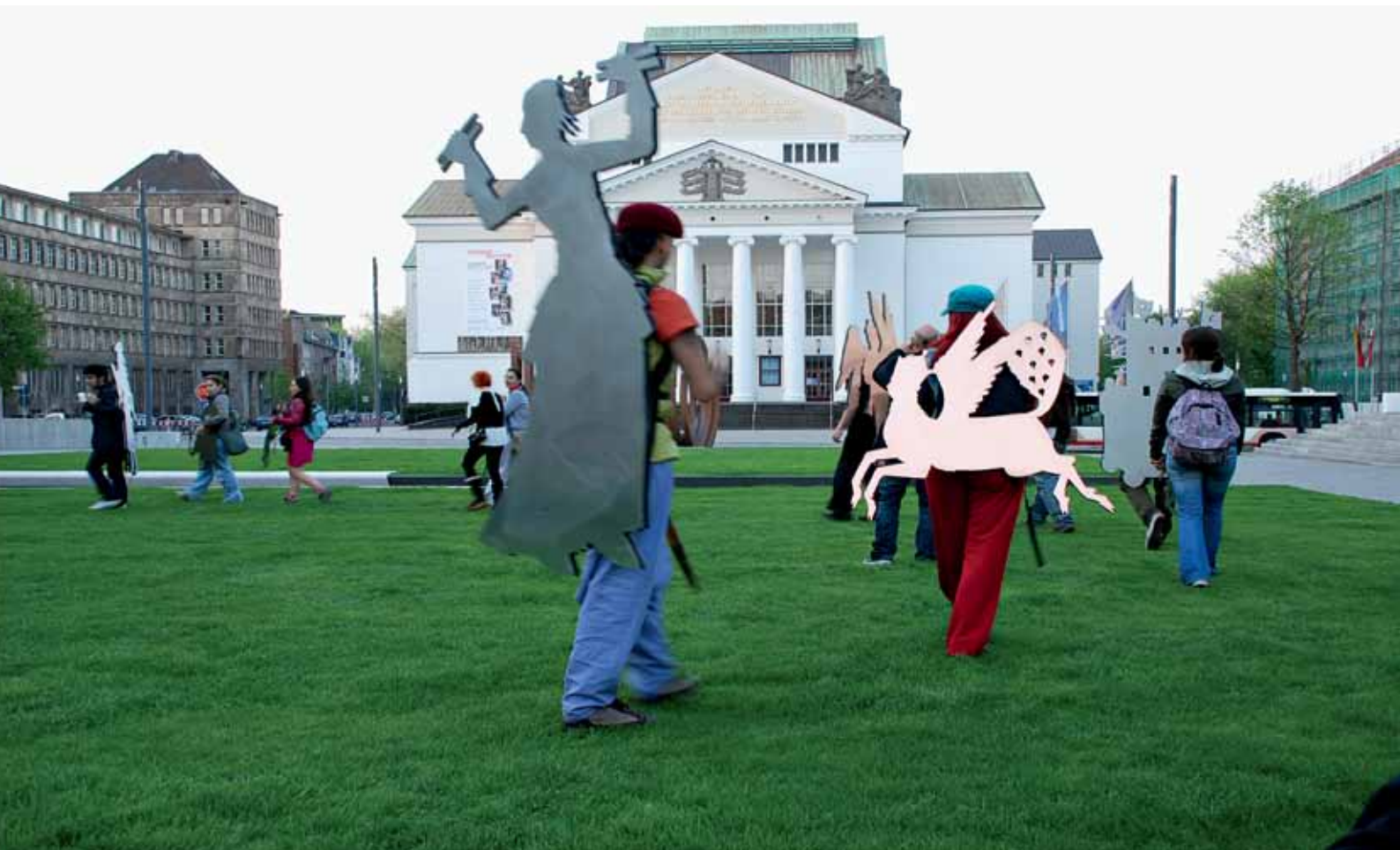


YENI, 2008. Interactive audio visual performance on colors. Photograph of a performance at Pera Museum in the context of 16th International Istanbul Theater Festival. (above) *Red*; Münibe Millet typing under the water, the text becomes an animation and falls on her dress. (below) *Yellow*; Anderske Kasperma is singing the codes from a Pantone color chart while making a drawing that is projected on her dress.









Surname, 2008. Interactive audio visual site specific performance with metal sculptures. Photograph of a rehearsal at König-Heinrich-Platz in the context of 32. Duisburg Accente Festival. (above) During the rehearsal *Zenne* (left) and *Burak* (right) and the others in the front. (Below) Aluminium Nahil in front of the office building. (previous pages) Performer Alper Akçay is wearing his sculpture for the rehearsal.



Ali Şimşek

SURNAME

or the Project that Searches for its Sarai.

Birgün Newspaper, 2009.

Genco Gülan is one of the most promising names in Turkish contemporary art. He draws attention with his combined usage of video, oil paintings, sculptures, web and digital technologies in his inquisitorial works. We remember him by two of his last works; one at Karşı Art Gallery where they opened an exhibition called *Two Super Films Together* with Burhan Kum where he exhibited his works which “distort” famous Orientalist painters’ works, then in the other exhibition at PG Art Gallery, called *I love You* where he exhibited “flying people” photography. Gülan interprets the Ottoman tradition of miniatures and the famous Surname book with a performance he realized in Germany in the past months. These works are different from other contemporary works where predominantly tradition is parodied. The most appropriate place for the exhibition which Gülan wants to bring to Turkey, is The Topkapı Palace if he can overcome the bureaucratic obstructions, of course... We talked with him about tradition and the present day.

Ali Simsek: The world premiere of your performance, *Surname* was realized at the opening of the Akzente festival in Duisburg, Germany was not as much discussed in the Turkish press. I should say **I was quite impressed with the sketches when I saw them. Was your intention just to carry out a big wedding in the *Surname* ?**

G.G.: Yes and no. Think of a big noisy Istanbul street wedding at the city square of a calm small German town. We had two brides and a circumcised boy, Sinan Can. Yeşim and I, we wanted to have a kind of a big feast with drums and horns. Thousands of Germans danced Halay (Traditional Folk Dance) with Turks carrying large sculptures. We had so much fun together, got tired and this was just one of our objectives. Another objective was to show that Ottoman Plastic arts exist. For this project, I referred to two big ‘*Surname-i Hümayun*’s from 1582 and 1720.

A.S.: I am guessing the most famous book is the second one, right?

G.G.: Right, the *Vehbi*’s is more famous, but 1582 *İntizami Surname* was older. The drawings in the 1582 piece are more naive yet richer in terms of content and variety. The most significant finding of my research was that in the Ottoman era three-dimensional objects, which would today refer to as ‘sculptures’, were manufactured and exhibited.

A.S.: Rich? Do you mean fireworks and all?

G.G.: Not actually. Shows in those times are more similar to what we refer to as performance art today, or, for instance, to the richness that Metin And relates to contemporary art and the happening. My personal opinion is that the Ottoman visual and performance art cannot be considered any less than that of the West just because it misfit the Academic format.

A.S.: I presume there are not many discussions on this matter?



Surname, 2008. Interactive audio visual performance with metal sculptures. Photograph of a performance at König-Heinrich-Platz in the context of 32. Duisburg Accente Festival. (above) Shahzadeh on Wheels mounted on top of an Audi. (Below) Alliminium Nihil in front of the office building together with the Ottoman Obelix and Dragon with Seven heads.



G.G.: No, unfortunately, this field is known but not discussed. Those who claim to advocate the Ottoman, remain on the superficial level of wars and ornaments. However, Ottoman has a culture that is so deep that one who does not know how to swim should not dive in it. Following the footsteps of Metin And to get somewhere, in this project, I produced a series of animated sculptures and I tried to make all of them moving such as the ones of that era.

A.S.: When you say ‘animated’ do you mean kinetic?

G.G.: Similar to kinetic sculptures, but mobile objects. Of course it is impossible to compete with the festivities of the Ottoman era, since they had the Sultan as the sponsor and it was their golden years. The sculptures were carried by people while they were having fun. As the sculptures gained movement from the people, it all turned into some kind of a puppet show, like the Kabuki theatre.

A.S.: What was the material used for the sculptures?

G.G.: All metal. I used supportive materials as well but the common base was the use of different types of metal such as iron, aluminum, copper and steel.

A.S.: So there was a kind of engineering involved?

G.G.: I really had to strive with the material, because I insisted on using metal but lightness of the pieces was crucial for the performers as they were carrying them. Also, I specifically worked with two-dimensional sculptures mainly because most of the criticisms of Ottoman miniatures were about lack of perspective. I believe the main reason for that is the use of templates in production, which are unique unto itself. I referred to these templates with my sculptures.

A.S.: When you carry the two-dimensional objects outside, they naturally gain a third-dimension. Is this third dimension created by the performer and the object behind them?

G.G.: Yes, the material naturally gains a third dimension with the person carrying it. Since the performers carry them on their back, you see a person from the front, but at the back there is a different form. People thought the objects were guns or shields because they were metal. But with movement they sometimes disappeared, and sometimes shone amazingly and this created an unexpected visual impression.

A.S.: There is too much tension about the relation between tradition and art, especially there is an irritation of Turkish Academic modernist painting. But post-modern art has a different tendency toward tradition, especially miniatures...

G.G.: There is always an indecisive relationship with tradition...

A.S.: Then, the contemporary artists in the 1980's were looking at the tradition like the moderns in 1970s but they were looking for a more playful relationship. But your approach is quite different...

G.G.: Yes, it is different. I believe an artist living and producing in Turkey must study miniatures. Writer Orhan Pamuk or filmmaker Derviş Zaim, we are all looking for a needle in the same haystack. I work more with visual images; hence, I tried a different approach towards the miniature books.

A.S.: This is important. Of course, you too have a different way of approaching orientalism. One should take note of the orientalist references in your exhibition at Karşı Sanat. And there is another thing... Do you ever feel the threat of creating a new orientalism during your studies?

G.G.: Miniatures were another field that I could not stay away from... There are some areas of the local culture which at first I chose to stay away from, but then after I realized that there was no escaping from these influences, I decided to confront them. For instance, in popular culture Orientalism is absolutely related to kitsch. But, then again I am an artist who works with popular culture and kitsch.

A.S.: We should not forget that, for a part of us, this is good news, especially during the 80s the effect of Pamuk's *White Castle* and the republishing of Metin And's works. With İhsan Ok-

tay Anar and other new age writers a different way of looking at Ottoman history came to the surface and this has affected many young people or artists. Why get away from this?

G.G.: Yes. I think Ihsan Oktay Anar is a very interesting example. But I do not make historical re-enactment stories like them. I did not try to make fiction and I do not try to tell stories directly. Anyway, our location, Duisburg is also a place where Turkish people were densely clustered. We were carrying out a project with people who live and work there and the wedding was the common ground. Therefore, while turning this thing entirely into a wedding; we used popular culture as well. The references in the eclectic construction here have protected the ship from wreckage.

A.S.: Do you think of carrying out Surname in Turkey?

G.G.: Absolutely! But this time I would definitely like to carry it out in Istanbul...

A.S.: Are these sculptures going to be animated as well?

G.G.: Yes. In the original book, in one scene, a glass furnace passes through and in another wheeled summer garden. **I think mobile sculptures resemble the street vendors of today's Eminönü bazaar.** I would love to realise Surname again at the historical original location the Hippodrome in Sultanahmet, but, unfortunately, today it is invaded by touristic buses. We are considering the outer garden of the Topkapı Palace but these kinds of thoughts need substantial financing, and unfortunately, Turkey does not provide adequate support when it comes to art. When compared to the budget for art in the Ottoman Empire we are quite behind the history.



Surname, 2008. Interactive audio visual performance with metal sculptures. Photograph of a performance at König-Heinrich-Platz in the context of 32. Duisburg Accente Festival. (left) The metallic bird is flying with a helium balloon. (above) Projection of Animation on the Opera House.









Lions Inn, 2010. Swordfish-men in Istanbul series. Framed C-print. 100cm * 70 cm. Collection of Dikmen Gürün at IKSÜ.
(below) **Pool Bar**, 2010. Fish-men series. Digital photo. (previous pages) **Octopus Man at Home**, 2011. Photograph of a performance at the amphitheater of Knidos. Photographer Deniz Ünlü.



Fırat Arapoğlu

This Time Through a Shamanist Identity:

Fish-Man in Istanbul

Artist Magazine, 2009.

Genco Gülan is one of the most reputable names of contemporary art in Turkey. One of the reasons for this is his use of a great variety of media together or separately in his works. Through this kind of methodology, the artist has an origin tracing back the neo avant-garde, which is crystallized by the works of artists such as Joseph Beuys, Nam June Paik, George Maciunas, Yoko Ono and Allan Kaprow.

Gülan's works are represented by their delineated characteristics within different contexts in national and international arenas that are corresponded by positive reactions. By not limiting himself to a single form of expression, by not binding himself to a single discipline – which has been the perceived norm of the practice of art since the Renaissance – Gülan is in a state of unending seeking.

Ascertaining of different media is an important point because the artist is working in a great variety of areas, such as surface tasks reminiscent of conventional painting, performance, video, video-sculpture, video installation, network and photography. And recently he has been dealing with neon lights.

Seeking endlessly is a kind of approach that can be traced through the artists of modernist and post-modernist era. In 1880 and 1882 respectively, Vincent Van Gogh said, in his famous letters to Theo “I perish whence I give up seeking”; “I’m seeking endlessly, cannot reach the absolute. I know that it was just reverse of ‘I have found it’.” One of the Fluxus artists, Ken Friedman put forward the term ‘research art’ into the art trends and practices of the 1960s.

During the 11th International Istanbul Biennial and a variety of exhibitions taking their places in parallel or counter to the biennial, are dazzling today’s panorama. Genco Gülan, took his place in a group show in Gallery Artist with three photographs chosen for the exhibition from his photo-performance series titled as *Sword-Man is in Istanbul*. He made performance photos in a suit and a swordfish mask in different locations of Istanbul. The locations he preferred in Istanbul were not historical peninsula or some that could be called traditional such as Beyoglu but contrarily regions that are considered to be the new Istanbul.

The endeavor of perceiving the world through fish eyes, like in many of Gülan’s works, has been a different and instantaneous influence while it also contains an evolution process. His experiences with a fish mask started upon finding an object (found object - objet trouvé) during his voyage to Caribbean Sea in 2005: The skin of a fish. He carried on this series called *Fish-Man* later in Korea (Seoul) with a stingray head called Gaori in native language.

Further pursuing this concept, Gülan took part in photographer Alexander Berg’s project called ‘One Shot Istanbul’. The portrait of Gülan is made holding a turbot fish to cover his face. This indicates

Gülen within the community and also his unmanageable origin. Now we should pass to the fourth step of this series, witnessed as *Sword-Man*.

Sword-Man series has some general characteristics. First of all it questions a process that has been made invisible while the modern (even post-modern in some cases) city life of Istanbul is being constructed. The ecological processes found within the seas, is a process of bringing in and taking out. Coming from a coastal city (Izmir) and having a close relationship with sea and water, the artist is trying to experience this modernization process through animal sense and particularly in his last work deeply out of fish sense. The increasingly polluted Istanbul coast, where it was once possible to bathe, is now too dirty.

Gülen develops his question in different parts of the city. The three locations having place in the exhibition are: Rumeli Hisar, having the bridge as background, having a conspicuous symmetry with Sword-Man the mosque by its minaret in Kucuk Armutlu and Ucaksavar, (on the E6 highway) taking place among the vehicles on the bridge. These locations have been constructed and merged to the city after internal migrations mostly towards Istanbul since 1950s. Sword-Man is the being that takes his search into these areas.

In these Fish-man in istanbul photos, the artist takes his place in a black suit. This representation is of importance and has different reasons: First of all, the artist carries a serious attitude to the perpetrated theme. In other words, while he is using natural free space of performance, he is also not allowing the message to disappear among the many transmissions. It is worth keeping in mind that the danger of works consisting of several images is the potential for one image to dominate over the rest. Another contributing factor to the 'seriousness' is the black color of the suit. The suit represents modern times and has a great deal of importance in transformation of the city and city life through its leading role in business and social schema. (Though within post-modern times this representation comes to lose its strength, the severity of wearing suit is impressed upon young men as the dominant appearance.) Finally, the suit has a reference to the past as a post-modern reading of the neo-avant garde. Some Fluxus artists wore suits in their performances and concerts. While the outstanding figure of Fluxus, George Maciunas was questioned this irony by complementing his suit with a bowler (and sometimes also wearing a monocle) in 1960s, Maciunas was also referring to Tristan Tzara, the impresario of Dada. Gülen does reflect the projection of this process in contemporary times.

The usage of mask (fish head) observed in the series indicates a protection and also a kind of internalization. While masks can be determined as objects to be used for hiding one's identity (fancy balls, Halloween, etc.) they can also be used in performances and drama containing ritualistic characters. (Shamanistic celebrations, Greek, Roman and Japanese dramatic presentations.) Gülen's usage in this series seems more likely a shamanistic ritual.

In the photograph the artist taking place with a mosque and its minaret in the back, *Sword-Man* and Minaret rise to the sky together. Their heavenly postures have a mythological/ divine reference: Everything originates from water. –According to Thales from Miletos School (Ionia) the fundamental element of the universe is water; everything originates from water and reverts to the water. Fish and minaret, have divine references according to empyreal religions: in the Bible, Christ says in his response to Nikodimos "I should state severely that man will not accede the sovereignty of God unless he is born of water and the Soul." (John 1-21:5) in the Koran takes place this verse: (Verse of Human Being, A.2) "Undoubtedly we created man out of an intricate single tear of water." Of course, the rising of skyscrapers to the sky can be stated in the background but these constructions represent a different kind of social classification through rising to the sky in a limited space instead of horizontal expansion. (A point to be reminded: Gülen is an artist sustaining horizontal expansions instead of vertical positioning.)





In his work on the bridge, *Swordfish-Man* takes his place among the vehicles on the bridge connecting two continents of Istanbul. *Swordfish-Man* and people in their cars heading to reach somewhere are on the bridge. Here *Sword-Man* points vertical direction contrarily to the cars' horizontal extent on the level. Just for a moment, he invites people travelling for business purposes or some other, to stare at the sky who are represented as convicts of production/ consumption affairs by the transport truck.

One of the most devastating prospects of the series is the representation of *Swordfish-Man*'s horizontal recline to the bridge. Here *Swordfish-Man* and the modern city interpenetrate. While his outlook transmits *Swordfish-Man*'s adherence to the water, he also disrupts the view of the bridge with his taper mouth. *Swordfish-Man* stands on the concrete block (approximately 30 % percent of the whole composition); willing to go into the water and at the same moment his outlook intersects with another concrete bridge and constructions under the grass. While his horizontal representation elicits this illusion in actual fact, *Swordfish-Man* still heads to the sky. This representation, the symbol of modern life (concrete surface, buildings, etc.) in contrast with water, sky and green fields lie together. Among all these, *Swordfish-Man* tries to survive in the city and draw attention to the enviromental threat.

In Gülan's works photography takes an important and indispensable place. The artist frequently specifies that in his interviews and articles. In some of his exhibitions and series, photography is the main method of recording. For example, in this series photography takes its place as a hybrid form called photo-performance. But as I stated in the first paragraph, Gülan uses photography in necessitated terms through a holistic art viewpoint. This work can also be read as a record of shamanistic performance process, a media transmitting the information of a process edited within hybrid forms by distinguishing itself from romantic photography. (Apparition/ romantic photography production). All these characteristics denote the reason/s of his insistence on using multimedia and also his search of "new" all along whatever his material is.

Crow, 2010. (left) *Swordfish-man in Istanbul* series. C-print. 100cm * 70 cm (previous page) **Minaret**, 2010. *Swordfish-man in Istanbul* series. C-print face mounted to plexiglass. 160cm * 80cm. Özil Collection. (below) **Phantom of the Academy**, 2011. Photograph of a performance at the State Finearts Academy of Azerbaijan. Digital photo. Photographer Ekrem Kahraman









Nemesis With Two Heads (Future Archeology Series), 2010. (above detail) Boron, marble and polymer cast. 185cm * 70cm * 55cm. (below) Full scale installation. The floor is covered with soil. As installed at Bilkent Center. (previous pages) **Siamese Zeus (Future Archeology Series), 2010.** Boron, marble, polymer cast and DNA of the artist. 85cm * 35cm * 45cm. Emir Berki Baran collection.



Zeynep Yasa Yaman

An Imaginary Museum

As 'Remembrance' and 'Consciousness';

Genco Gülan's I Am a Museum and

Future Archeology series

Artist Magazine, 2010.

The biggest difference between the past and the future is 'remembrance'. While we can move in every direction in the virtual world (such as forward, backwards, to the north, west, east and south etc.) we plan the future while remembering the past. This remembrance and the consciousness result in accepting that there is a variety of cultures in the world and becoming aware that you are one among many others. **Humanity's entire cultural heritage transforms into an imaginary museum.**

Genco Gülan has been working on the themes of copy/cloning and the problems of bio-genetics, since the beginning of 2000. For his previous exhibition, *Copy* (Kopya), Gülan has worked on the relationships between the distinction of the individual/hereditary, the transfer of hereditary codes and the genetics as well as exploring how these relate to the notions of migration, elimination, evolution and cloning with respect to the concepts of the individual, the sociological, the biological and the spiritual.

This time, he confronts a similar question with his new exhibition *Je suis une musée* (I am a museum), which consists of his new boron structures. He re-arranges historical antiques that are taken out of their historical and geographical contexts by moving them into the three most important institutions of post-modernity: Gallery, museum and hypermarket. In the name of Future Archeology, he engages in a game with the many important characters, such as Zeus, Apollo, Hermes, Alexander the Great, Tiberius, Livia, Nemesis, Athena and Aphrodite, which are staked out a claim by the Western cultural history, yet they belong to the Turkish archeological museums of Aphrodisias, Antalya, Selçuk/Ephesus, Bursa and Istanbul. Does Gülan reclaim these antique sculptures by copying them in a manner reminiscent of Cevat Şakir Kabaağaçlı's stance on the uniqueness of the Anatolian culture? He transforms the portraits, which glided into the museums from deep within the history, by the method of reproduction. He creates complexity while on one hand he cuts the objects; on the other hand, he pastes the missing parts, which were smuggled out of the country.

Some of these materials, which are created with a patented vacuum technique and supported by a metal frame, by using 40% borax penta hydrate, 30% marble powder, 30% polyester, are signed with Gülan's own genetic code. Gülan chose the hard, white, heat proof and stone-like boron that



Sleeping Emperor (Future Archeology Series), 2010. (above close up) Boron, marble, polymer cast. Hair of the artist on the eye lids. Also metallic reading lamp and life vest. 45cm * 70cm * 55cm. (below) Full scale. As installed at Gallery Artist Ankara.



gives the opportunity for fine molding, on purpose. Boron is in the same group with aluminum, but it carries the physical and chemical properties of non-metal elements as well as some properties of carbon and silicon. It belongs to the half metal elements' group and it is conductive. Material's history can be traced back to the 8th century. It was used for producing ceramics and solid pots during the early ages. Today, it is used for industry and to produce magnets, magnetic trains, transportation technologies, jet and rocket fuel, sandpaper and sand stone as well as the halogen lights. Boron plays an important role for producing high technology, in recycling papers, in producing the toner of laser writing machine, in photography and camera making, in restoring the old buildings, in creating nuclear energy, in treating cancer for the medicine industry, in producing perfume. It is also used in microscopes, telescopes, in producing composite fiberglass etc. and, of course, in the works of Genco Gülan. **The unpredicted effect of boron in our daily lives is a decisive element for the concept of the *Future Archeology Series*' created by Genco Gülan.**

Protection, re-assembling, collecting and creating along with the ratios of the existential mechanisms, transformations and confronting their tools are among Gülan's concerns. In his exhibition, *I am a Museum*, he breaks down the goddesses and the rulers of the ancient art before re-arranging those parts and assigning different meaning to the portraits which are torn away from their bodies, Gülan actually does not damage the originality of the details'. Instead, he converts the destiny of the Anatolian culture, which is fetishized by the global and the imperialist powers and the bearers of the Western perspective, (which is considered as both local and foreign to us), by transforming the Anatolian culture and its remnants into the creative sensation of the splitting, disruption and diversion, with the very same context and visuality.

In recent years, the coalition powers that are under control of the United States, revealed themselves as accomplices of crime by not doing anything to fight against the destruction of the cultural and the historical heritage as a result of the bombings of Baghdad in 2003. They chose to be a part of this depredation by closing their eyes to all of the media. They did not take any action against the destruction of the Iraqi National Museum and they could not prevent the trade of these pieces in the international market. Maybe, as Gülan announces and calls himself a museum, he tries to direct attention to the greatest museum looting in the modern history, by committing a "museum" looting in his way, to call for a reconsideration of the destruction of Bagdad in relation to the violence of the Mongolians, who are still considered as barbarians, which destroyed and looted the same city of Baghdad for a whole week?

Gülan creates the political and the strategical dialectic of depiction from within the remains of the archival discourse's consciousness. He reminds us the greatest pioneers of the artistic tradition, lightens them and creates a subtext by bringing them into another context. In order to activate the mind, he moves them around the contemporary world's debates on the concept and the critiques of the museology. Gülan, visualizes the relationship and the chaos among the archival systematic of the three different historical orders: the art practice, the art museum and the art history. He focuses on the depiction value of the "museum as a design and exhibition practice," which is utilized by the fairs and the big malls surrounding the modern art's "product" and "commodity" as well as "exhibit" and "change." He needs a museum and he wants to become a brand.

On the other hand, Gülan values the communication between the place of exhibition and the sculptures. By covering the sterile white cube walls of the gallery with pages of 'Cumhuriyet' Newspaper and by changing the color of the floor to black, he creates both an anxious motive while also preserves the original. He questions the universally accepted definitions of the term Republicanism with the help of the busts. These eerie busts, which have been moved into public space in order to shed light upon the society, to spread the ideals, to contribute to the development of stagnant societies, to remind the time, to not to forget with the help of the superiority feelings created by royals, religious men, and the leaders of the government, heroes, soldiers, inventors, artists, and gods/goddesses who have supposedly been effective in the creation of the history of the Western civilization. This is the method Gülan wants to use.

He writes with red neon lamp *Je suis un musée* (I am a museum) (1) that both lights up and also warms the gallery by taking the background idea from Rene Magritte's *Ceci n'est pas une Pipe* (1928-29, This is not a pipe). This is a chaotic museum that has been distorted. He did not touch the market and the museum places since he prefers the fake atmosphere that became "real" despite being created by those spaces themselves.

With this, he brings forth three new things to the museum; boron minerals displayed on a gilded console, Joseph Kosuth's asphalt coated chair that stands as inverted on a white stand and the abstract, expressionist asphalt pictures reminiscent of ink stains of Hermann Rorschach depicting *A Muse is a Muse*, *Genco* and *Müzelik* (meaning; old, left out for the museum) written on the three walls surrounding the exhibition space. The texts and materials that he hides into the works as installations generate games of meaning which are positive- negative, critical- neutral, and serious- entertaining. The existence of the works in each space finds its expression in another language talking to the viewers. His exhibition looks like a ghost cemetery with the dead heads/fragmented bodies. The attractive body of *Aphrodite with Planes* is honeycombed and despite her protecting shield, she has been raped by numerous plane models of Boeing 737 as they sway in the sky at different heights and directions like knives.

The plucked twin head of the *Siamese Zeus* is on the floor. The heads of "Hermes with Wings" became *Walker Hermes* and are also surprising like their lies; they are inserted on top of a knee that is parted from a Roman body and they are walking straight ahead. The love god Apollo who is the symbol of trust, who did not know how to lie, who is the guardian of justice, art, music, cities, science and fine arts and who is born in Anatolia is now: *Wunderbar!* (Wonderful!). Zeus's daughter from Metis, whom Zeus had swallowed with his offspring after he impregnated with his magic love words, is Athena. Athena with grayish blue eyes and brave heart, is the founder of Athens, the guard of Athens and she can easily change into different identities (lying on a seccade). She is the divinity of power, intelligence, justice, ability and talent. Her bust fell on the ground with her helmet in humility. The wife of the emperor of Rome Augustus—Livia – rests her triple heads in a green sun chair. The son of Livia from Nero, *Twin Soldiers (Gambler)*, Tiberius, who is the greatest general of Antique Rome, who gets married to the oldest daughter of Augustus, Julia, (his stepsister) and then becomes the emperor after his step-father dies, and turns his gloomy heads to the left on a structure that is built out of a deck of cards. The fragmented body of Aphrodite—divinity of love and beauty—is put on a shopping chart. Gülan insert his face mask onto the portrait of Alexander the Great. **He seems to sleep in comfort in the life vest, while he returns from a conquest.**

The only goddess who stands up is Nemesis. A sphinx, which has the head of "Old Fisherman" (2) stands next to its twin, Nemesis, the dark unseen side of the sun. Does Nemesis, who happens to be the guard of justice, yet causes fear on touts, who happens to be the girl of the night distinguishing the just from the unjust, who happens to be the twin headed beautiful goddess of revenge, punish history by collecting all heads around her? Or does Gülan try to understand where he is by looking at the past with a feeling of revenge and ridicule that is similar to the decapitated head of Franco Toselli in the movie of Bring me the Head Of or like the erected penis that is installed instead of the growing nose of Pinocchio of Chapman brothers? (3) He tries to internalize his problem by following the routes and the experiences of other artists and also by reversing the nice passive experience between the art object of Jake and Dinos as well as its audience.

After being exhibited in Ankara, Gallery Artist and the Painting and Sculpture Museum of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, his works of art are planned to be shown in Metro group which is one of the biggest retail companies that aims to carry the best service to the different points of the world, while continuing to grow bigger. He also carries his artworks into Real markets, which challenges the understanding of Turkish retail sector. Gülan carries his pieces there with price tags on, into the 6 meters width corridors and 8 meters height ceilings along with the 50000 kinds of products. (4)

This situation makes one think about the declaration of Charles Jencks in his book, What is post-modernism?: The post-modernist generally loses his way in getting into trouble but sometimes sails



3, 2010. (*Future Archeology Series*) Boron, marble and polymer cast. 70cm * 70cm * 20cm. As installed at Gallery Artist Ankara. (below) **Hermes Walker**, 2010. (*Future Archeology Series*) Boron, marble and polymer cast. 25cm * 80cm * 55cm. As installed at Gallery Artist Ankara. This series had been exhibited both at Ankara and İzmir State Painting and Sculpture Museums.





to wonder in between a creative combination which fulfills the big promise of a multi culture with all its many freedoms and a confused parody. Post-modernism is basically an eclectic blend of a certain tradition with the recent past; it is both the continuation and the overcoming of modernism. The best works of post-modernism has double meanings and are ironic; our pluralism stems out best from a wide range of choices in between the traditions created through double coding and irony as a result of grasping of this heterogeneity. (5)

The sculptures of Gülan reach out to the reality of the Siamese twins who have been excommunicated because of the rage of god, have become feminized in the course of history and have been communally turned into freaks; appearing in performances in circuses, stuck in the organs of the head and the body, who use some organs together and who are although legally two separate persons, are convicted to be one. Despite staying close to the Mediterranean aesthetics that keep the eye and the light on the surface, despite not giving up idealizing and perfecting the natural, he creates new oddities, disrupts the one that is mended. Gülan tries to voice his concerns by the structuring techniques that we equate with the definition of art, which was universalized, glorified, carried into the museums before being destroyed through the teachings of the Enlightenment that reached to modernity while creating handicap for the others. On the other hand, he tries to express himself via deconstructive methodology with an anti-enlightenment stance... **He is both Stoic and not.**

He is interested in how the Western Europe diffuses into a feudal and un-capitalistic eastern geography, and how the societies in these geographies that are skeptical about the Enlightenment and secularism are directed into the foundation and institutionalization of a "national culture" for which they are not ready. As if he tries to unravel an experiment continuing on the extremes, he tries to depict the other creators struggle to internalize the tensions between the dominant and the passive; the center and the periphery; the prototype and the copy, and how these others accept an alternative modernity by creating despite imitating and resisting while, at the same time, following. As a subtitle, he focuses on why and how a society considers itself modern and Western. (6) On one side, he fights against the order while on the other, he comes into grips with the values of this system. As he becomes free, he deals with the effect of the common memory on the identity making and how he himself relates to that. He attempts to internalize the archeology of future.

Footnotes:

1) *I am a Museum* was exhibited at Ankara Gallery Artist (9 December 2009 - 4 January 2010), at Ankara Painting and Sculpture Museum (12-22 December 2009), and at Ankara Bilkent Center.

2) The Head of the "The Old Fisherman" from Aphrodisias belongs to the body that has been sold to the Berlin's Pergamon Museum.

3) *Bring Me the Head of (Franco Toselli)* 1995, is a video for which two porn stars from Soho act along with the realistic bust taken from Daddy Chapman's torso accompanied with the combination of Franco Toselli's facial characteristics, a Mona Lisa simile, a dildo nose as well as a synthetic kinky wig (25 copies of busts were created). The male hero (head fuck), whom the women perceive as the sex object of their fantasies and play many times with an insatiable appetite while having orgasms, retains his smile and erection despite being used. With his provocative fakeness, he helps depicting the male sexual fantasies of the male ego that desires to say: "Look how I made you happy and I am still in shape." The fastidious art gallerist from Milano, Franco Toselli, had purchased Mummy and Daddy Chapman 1993, which incorporated the penis and the vagina blossoming on the torsos of Jake and Dino's parents along with the muscle debris. Later Toselli gave up on the idea of including the piece in the exhibit. The film went beyond the Chapman Brothers' desire to mock and avenge by referring Franco Toselli and became the subject of many critiques, articles, explanations and interviews because of the possibilities it offered for historical, religious, sexual and contemporary connotations as well as interpretations for the psychoanalytic, philosophical, sociological, semiotics and art history perspectives. The bust was exhibited at the opening of Riding house Editions in London, in 1995, along with the film.

4) Real Hypermarket Chain operates in Germany, Poland, Romania, Ukraine and Turkey.

http://www.real.com.tr/021_stores.html

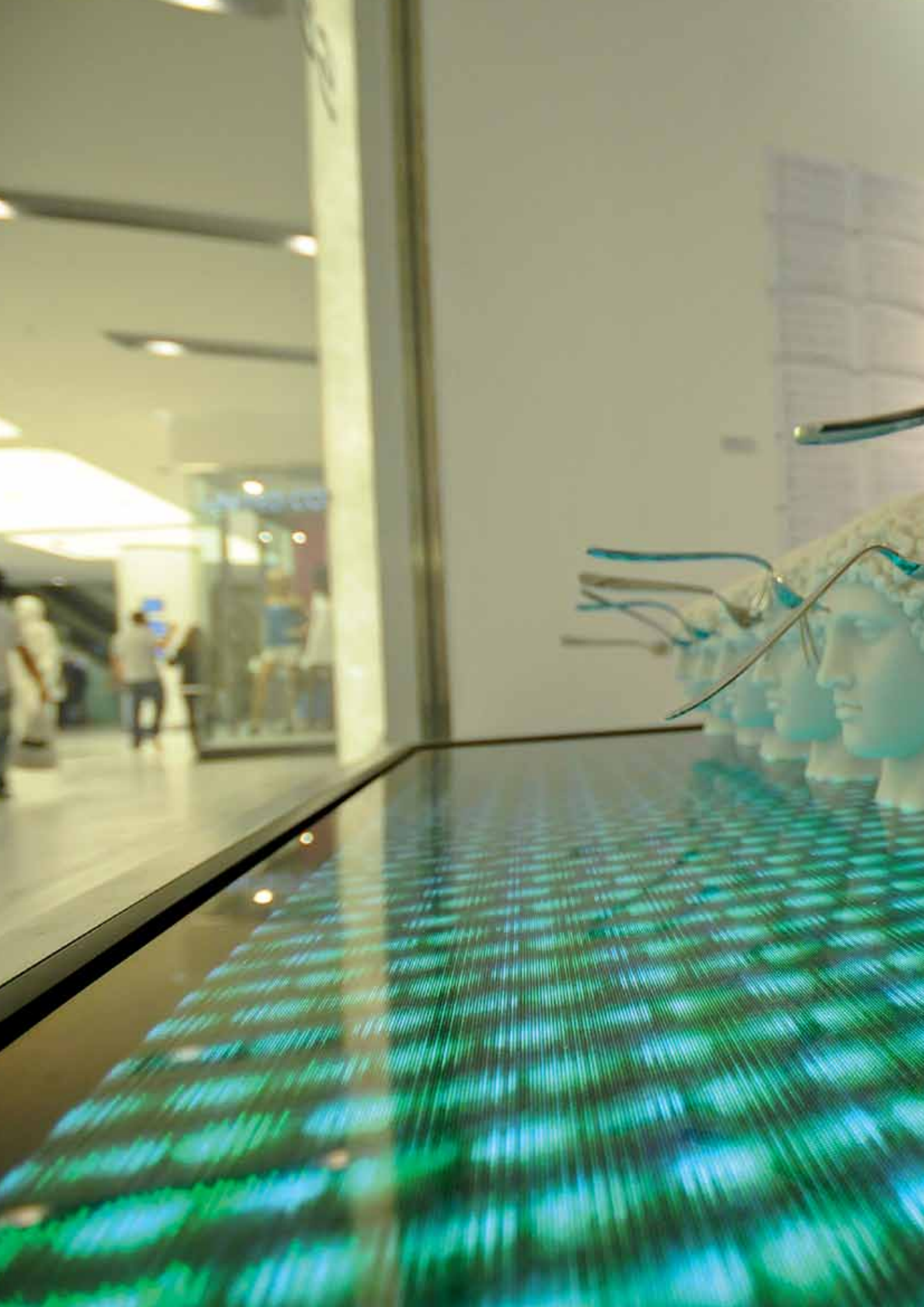
http://www.real.com.tr/Real_Ankara_Bilkent.html

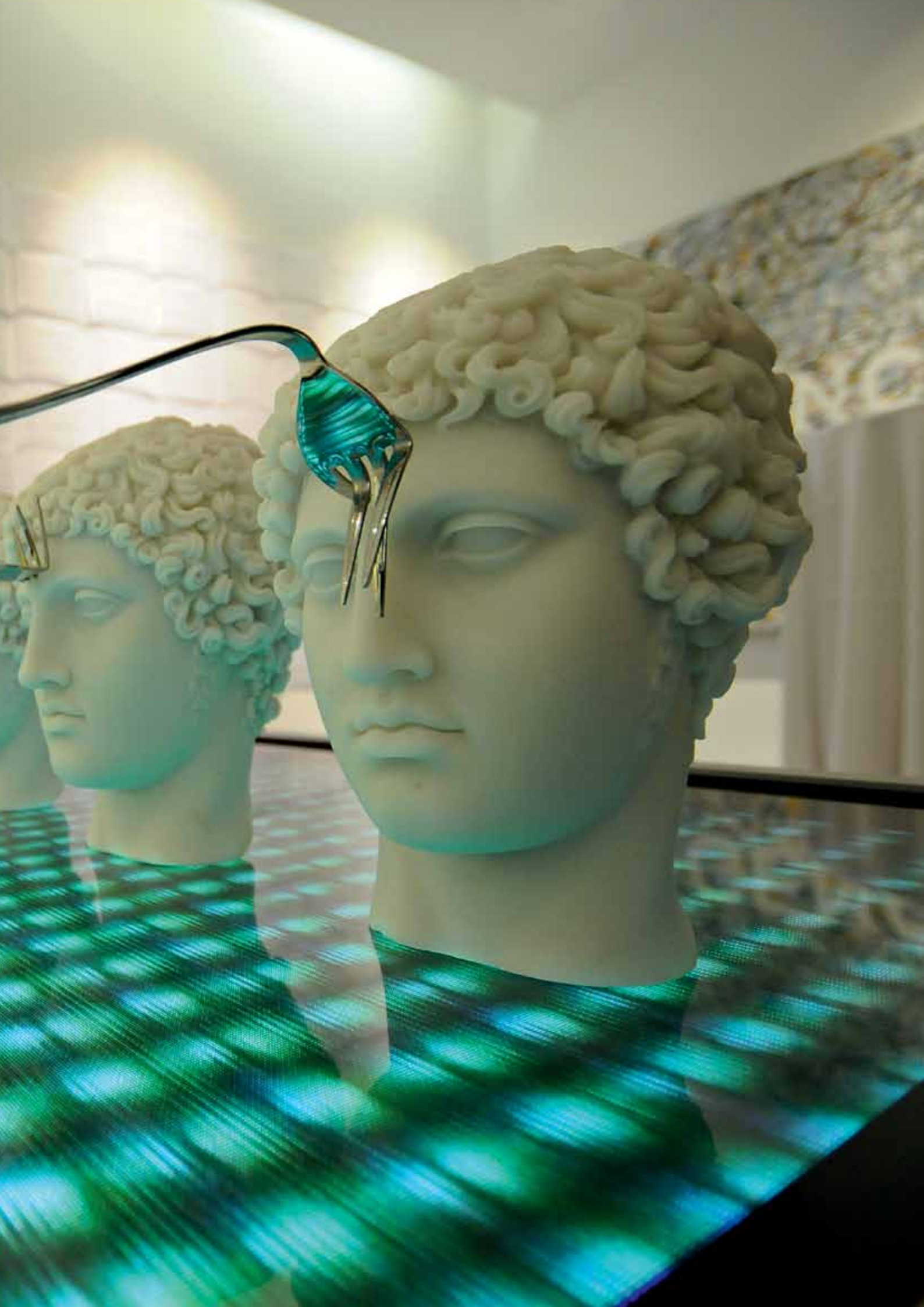
5) Charles Jenks, *What is Post-Modernism?* London, Academy Edition, 1989, p.7 and Krishan Kumar, *Post-Industrial to Post-Modern Society New Theories of the Contemporary World*, 1995, Blackwell Publishers.

6) For further information: Gregory Jusdanis, *Belated Modernity and Aesthetic Culture-Inventing National Literature*, 1991, The Regents of the University of Minnesota.

* For this paper, I also resorted the content of Hal Foster's *Design and Crime (and other diatribes)* mainly the second chapter, 2002.

Torso Cut (Future Archeology Series), 2010. Boron, marble and polymer cast. Metal shopping chart and painting inside the sculpture (Self Portrait, 1996. Oil on canvas. 50 cm* 70 cm). 70cm * 70cm * 20cm. As installed at Gallery Artist Ankara.







Socrates in my Mind (Future Archeology Series), 2010. Boron, marble, polymer cast and metal balls. 200cm * 80cm * 40cm. As installed at Akmerkez. (previous pages) ***Hermes With Forks (Future Archeology Series)***, 2010. Boron, marble and polymer cast. Metal forks and LCD, DVD player. 12cm * 8cm * 4cm * 7 pieces. As installed at Akmerkez, Istanbul.

Levent Çalıkoğlu

An Artist Who Creates a *Hybrid World*
Milliyet Sanat Magazine, 2010.

The Most Expensive Paintings of the World consists of a series of paintings which reflect an approach to the world of art economy by the artist Genco Gülan who builds limitless possibilities in between concepts and visual images. The idea is based on the re-production of artworks which develop into tools that operate beyond the rules of investment and the re-placement of these into a new visual, art historical, cultural perspective. **The paintings of Gülan resonate in the viewers' memory**, develop both the way he makes them visible by a unique way of painting and also proposes a new approach to make the viewer remember the character.

The Question of Originality

Within the circular forms of different dimensions the artist at times divides the original painting in small slices and sometimes writes his name in capital letters on the painting which he copies exactly from the original. The circles are in reference to Damien Hirst, capital letters refer to Ed Ruscha. Perhaps Genco desires that the viewer wander around drunken in between these different expressions and styles.

On the other hand at the second level of the exhibition, *Future Archeology*, the artist somewhat works with similar ideas at another site of art history. Gülan who creates sculptures out of boron metal which has lately been the remedy for various areas like photography to cable making, toners to perfume production, moves into the relationship of this geography to classical archeology, presenting signs to the possible problems in the future and present. With a new and fantastic approach to antique mythology which has either been imprisoned to museums as archeological findings or been looted, he creates a hybrid world.

Gülan presents a new and critical approach by master examples like the two headed *Nemesis*, the *Siamese Zeus* which is created by sticking the two identical busts together in the same sculpture. These works scan an endless area which needs to be discussed; Antique myth and its domination on the esthetical language, evolution of an area which not only belongs to the Western roots of thought and its relation with other cultures, sculptures that are imprisoned in museums and their spaces of representation...

With its works spread into the corridors of the mall, the exhibition at Akmerkez, with the title of *Art in Akmerkez*, makes an odd affinity to the viscosity of today's consumption culture.







Zehra İpşiroğlu

Cadaques: A Striking Project in between Life and Death

mimesis-dergi.org/, 2010.

Cadaques (Project by Genco Gülan), which was performed for the 17th Istanbul International Theatre Festival, depicts the stories of those who came face to face with death, managed to escape death, happened to struggle with it and those who remember it one by one- via a holistic theatrical understanding, composed of narratives of video, dance and music.

Death that constantly transforms into different shapes and personalities appears under the identities of terror, disease, accidents, assaults and suicide. Despite the multi-layered aspect of the performance that is integrated with several effects, the priority is still on the moments of fear. We watch how the moment between life and nothingness, that horror and that emptiness, can be expressed with words via minimal acting: Narrator-Actors, who stand in front of multi-channeled video, are shockingly very natural as they hear the recorded voices and perform the images. Having difficulty while searching for a unique appearance for the characters they portray and while looking for the right words is natural: Hesitations, choking, trying not to cry... The attempt to remember, to understand and to explain beyond the words... Although we can recognize the vague faces on the monitors that appear in the background, the focus remains on the narrator-actors and their stories. The stories and the manner of depiction are stunning...

Chorus, pantomime and dance scenes develop in accordance with the narration. Therefore, a contrast appears between the narration and abstract performance scenes. Does this play which with the effect of the music, evolves as a lamentation chant, as a requiem, invite the audience to face the lives, visions, fears and nightmares pushed into the subconscious? During the process of reception, the secret moments, lives and visions that belong to the spectator, and that were probably pushed into the realms of the subconscious, start to condense. Therefore, the stories narrated on stage get mixed up with the stories of the spectators and end up accumulating or multiplying.

The most creative aspect of the play, which not only addresses the conscious but also touches it, is its openness. Therefore, it appears that the performance can take many shapes based on the identities of the people and the diversity of the themes. In that way, the play can be approached as an experimental project that capable of developing can in many ways rather than a complete piece...

However, the problematic or the incomplete aspect of the play which we can also call compilation on death is the lack of incoherence between stories and dance as well as pantomime and chorus. Extra-



Cadaques, 2010. Video performance. Above photograph of the performance as presented at the 17th International Istanbul Theater festival at Salon IKS. (also page 174-179) **Hamlet in the Sea**, 2011. Photo of the performance at Marmara Sea prepared for Visibility Project 7. Collection of the artist. (below)



narrative elements remain formal as nice effects. Sometimes, they are just utilized to underline what is told such as when the transformation of the chorus into the hospital team while the nurse tries to save the patient, or when the dancers juggle by the stage balcony during the story of the man who jumps from the bridge.

In fact the subject could have been approached more thoroughly with the help of these effects. For example, people who are desensitized in the culture of entertainment and media, live their second-hand lives. They are far away from existentialist moments and lives that shatter the on-going flow. While a disaster sends the victim away from the flow, the others do not see or hear, yet witness this. This de-sensitization, in other words the repression of fear or the tendency to ignore, could have been depicted in contrast with the moments of disaster that are conveyed via dance, pantomime and chorus scenes. Nevertheless, this requires a dramaturgy centered on a theoretical theme. The contemporary post-modern understanding of theatre opposes this ideological approach with the aim of preventing the conditioning of the audience. In this respect, my critique might be stemming from the difference of perspectives between me and the director.

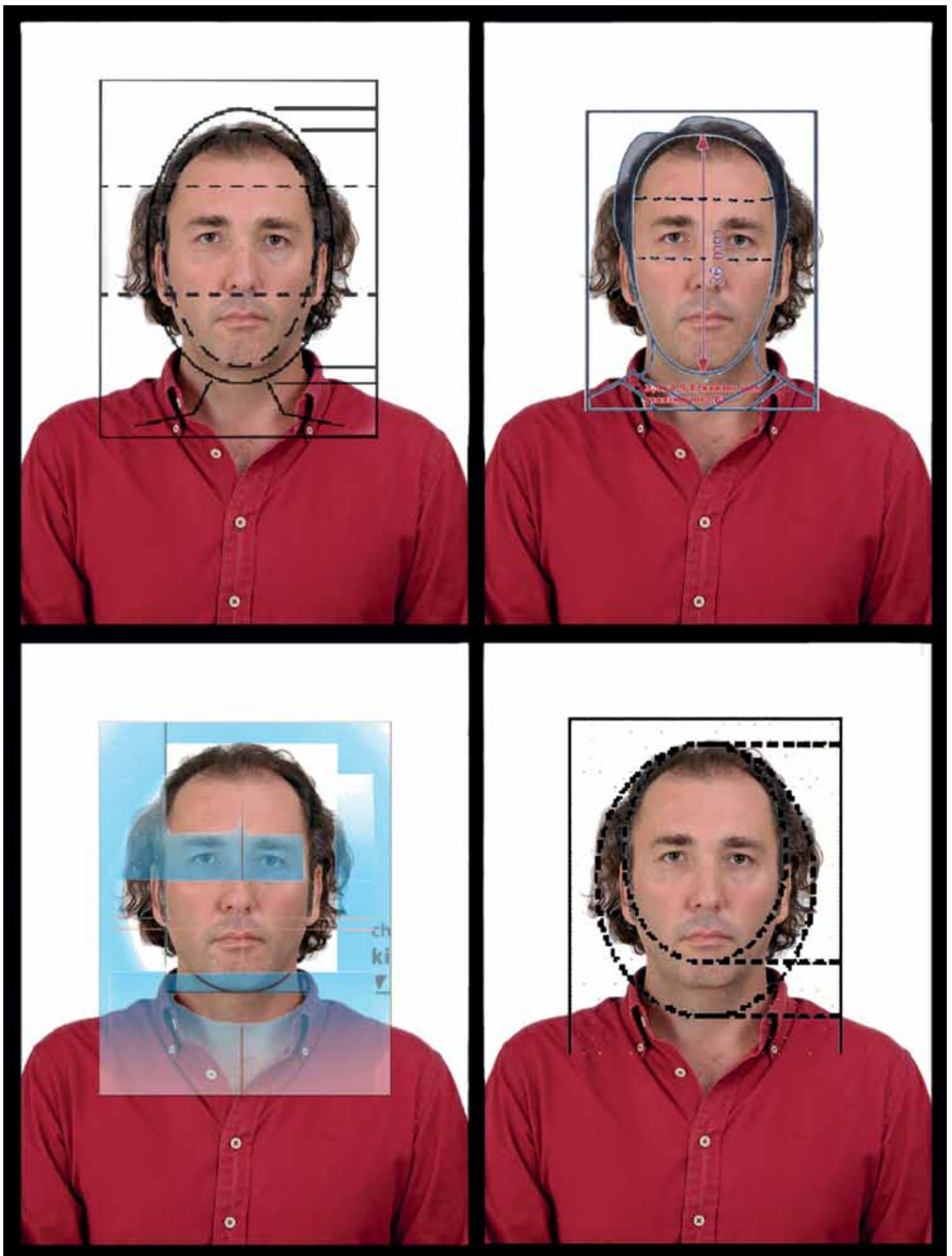
Besides, my stance must be affected by the fact that I am coming from literature and theatre. Within this scope, the text, in other words the stories told, become more important. I expect each and every effect to work for the stories and the thoughts behind those stories. Spectators lacking this expectation might enjoy the play more. For example, my mother, who is an art historian and a musician, was impressed by the holistic approach of the show that incorporates many disciplines together.

No matter how different the views and the expectations are, "Cadeques" (the strange name of the play, which I couldn't get myself to be acquainted with, which might also be an extension of the post modern approach) is an **experimental work, which is striking and thought-provoking...** My hope is that the project continues with the inclusion of new stories and new people.

Cadaques, 2010. Video performance. Below photograph of the performance as presented at the 17th International Istanbul Theater festival at Salon IKSİV. *Baby* on pages 174-175, *Nilüfer* on page 176, *Nurse* on page 178 and *University* video stills below.







Biometric Artist, 2009. Biometric photos for visa application. 4.5cm x 3.5cm multiple pieces. Above; Canada, Germany, Holland, Spain. The piece was exhibited on a digital screen with Daire Sanat at Contemporary Istanbul got a review at Israels Globes Newspaper by Hagit Peleg Rotem



Lale Babaoğlu

A Reverse Renaissance

Sanat Dünyamız, 2010.

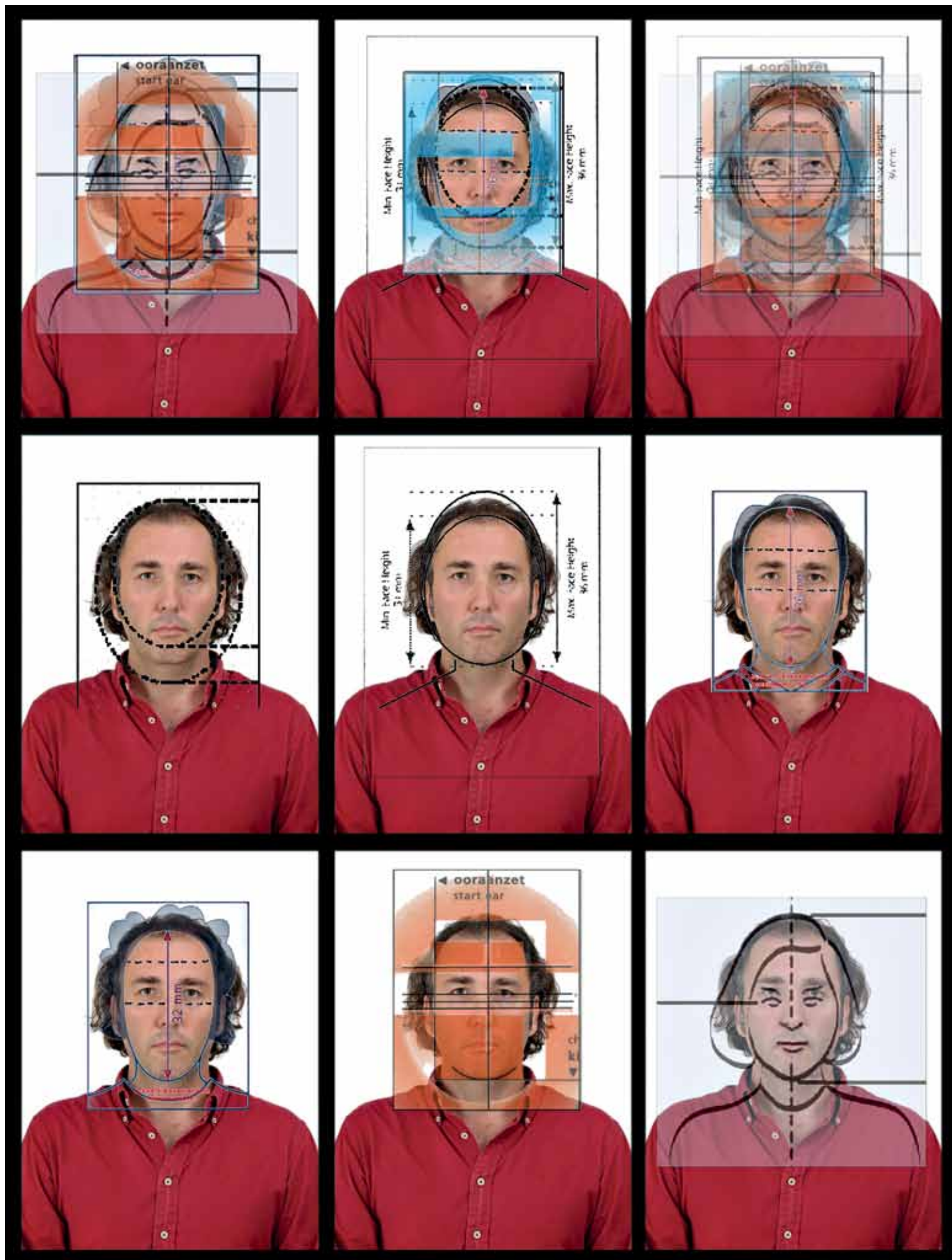
Genco Gülan produced his biometric portraits to be displayed in the international Küf-Mold Exhibition between September 26 and October 24 in 2009 at Rotterdam. He could not take part in the exhibition personally but did send his work.

The artist rejected to go to Rotterdam because as a Turk in order to be able to enter Holland he had to have the Schengen visa. Although he was invited as an artist to take part in an exhibition displayed in Holland, the customs required a visa regardless of whom he was and why he was planning to go there. As a Turkish citizen he had to fulfill the necessary conditions like any other Turk in order to get the visa. **Tired of providing the same documents each time he prepared to go for an artistic organization in a country in Europe, this time, Gülan refused to do so.** But his protest was only oriented to this inhuman governmental condition and did not cover the art issues. Thus, the artist refused to go but his work landed safely for the exhibition to be contemplated by the European audience.

Gülan explains that the roots of his biometric art lie in his interest in biotechnology: “It tells us that we are unique; our personal features characterize us and define us as individuals. It is also used to recognize the individual based on his/ her finger prints or retinal scanning, i.e. features which are ‘unique’.”

The visa photos attached to the visa inquiry forms, however, according to the new visa regulations have to be taken based on certain rules. The photo, though produced in a mechanical way, is a representation of the individual whom it presents. To add some principles aside the technical ones to the process of its production, such as the prohibition of the smile or the introduction of a metric standard becomes a method of de-humanizing the individual whose photo is taken. For the outcome, the image of the person becomes impersonal, mechanical, formal and stiff. Approached from the artistic perspective this dehumanizing action is valued as a tool of an inhuman operation. Gülan, the artist, calls this ‘passport racism’.

The problem according to Gülan is that; the ‘West’ which was known for advocating the concepts such as ‘fraternity’, ‘equality’ and ‘liberty’, applies to the immigrants an electronic fascism, justifying the process as a self -defense against terrorism. With this excuse of security, Turks’ individualistic features are fixed into or within metric tables. Thus this so-called biometric method becomes a version of Hitler’s racism converted and adapted to contemporary facts, for the personal biological features of the Turks add up to a formal statistical scheme based on the proportional relations between the elements of a face such as the eyes, the nose, the mouth, the chin. This collected data saved in the computer memory provides a data base for the future actions to evaluate the individuals according to their (Turkish) identities. Thus by applying for a visa to be able to -or better to say to be ‘allowed’ to- enter a European country, Turkish citizens’ freedom of mobility is put under control. In other words, this electronic, biometric, passport fascism, in other words, becomes the proclamation of the contemporary Turk as replacing the Jew in Europe or the Negro in the States of the past.



Biometric Artist, 2009. Biometric photos for visa application. 4.5cm x 3.5cm multiple pieces. Above; first three from the top; multiple layers. Than from the left, Spain, Britain, Germany, Germany, Holland, USA.

The whole transaction then becomes de facto a means of treating the Turk not even as a potential criminal but his/her existence as a crime in itself.

Genco Gülan protests this actual factual reality which has an impact on his life and on the lives of many other Turks in his own artistic way. He expresses his anger and sorrow through his art which he labels as the Biometric Self-Portraits. He notes, however, that with these biometric portraits he does not represent the truth but he presents the very truth itself.

The artistic language with which he expresses himself signals for me as a Turkish art historian, however, a deeper anxiety than the elimination of the Turk from the European scene; it predicts the annihilation of humanism just revived during the Italian Renaissance from the 21st century's world of the modern man.

The Quattro Centro Renaissance among other things is best known for its introduction of the portrait painting. Humanism defined as one of the main ideals of this rebirth of a civilized order rests on the idea of man sitting at the centre of everything. Answering the necessities of the altering political and economic conditions of Mediaeval Europe a new approach to man and his relations rises. Man is no longer solely defined on his relation to God, and to the world to come but on his existence and on his encounters in this world. As a rational individual being created by God, man is declared capable of reasonable action. During the Renaissance it is not only the status of the artist which rises on a redefinition but also his subject in his portrait paintings, that is, the individual. Hence the portrait painting reflecting the individual physical features rendered through a depiction based on observation becomes a new way of representation. Accordingly a new stylistic era inaugurates. The symbolic and stylized art of Medieval Christianity produced on formal rules loses its meaning and significance. The new illusionistic means of paintings replace the metric device of Medieval European art, which had been rooted in the static Egyptian images.

Gülan's biometric self-portraits thus reveal an allegory of the western history of the various stylistic devices of representation based on the different approaches to man, his relations and his actions. Gülan by presenting his self-portraits makes a reference to the Renaissance artist and the Renaissance man as an individual being. His simultaneous reference to biometric technology aims to stress the uniqueness of each individual. However, in his photographic portraits by displaying the metric frame Gülan exhibits a humoristic contradiction to the nature of portrait painting. His characteristic facial features defining him as Genco Gülan are formalized and de-individualized in these framed photos.

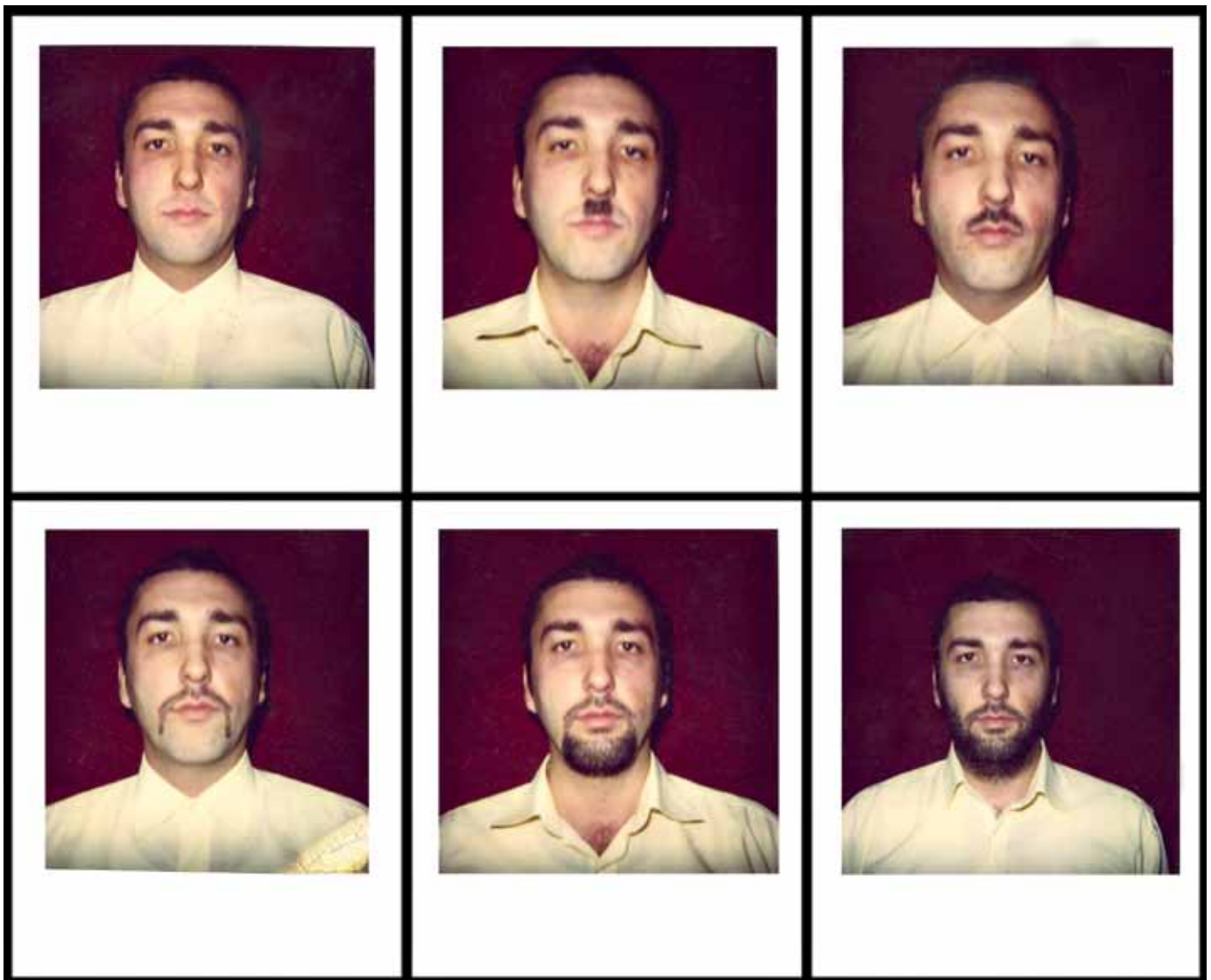
Gülan ridicules himself in these self-portraits. In fact, it is not Gülan himself who is exposed in this derogatory manner but his Turkish identity. My interest moves at this point from the artist and his art to his European audience. What did they see, what did they know, how did they react? Gülan's biometric self-portraits were displayed at a public space, a grocery store. I find it meaningful that these works met the viewer at a space other than the art gallery. For the images, although they were produced in the synthetic cubic style as photomontages, juxtaposing bits of real material with the artistic creation, these images, since they were photos, were rather approached as ready mates; i.e. it was not the object itself which was meaningful but the idea behind the artist's choice.

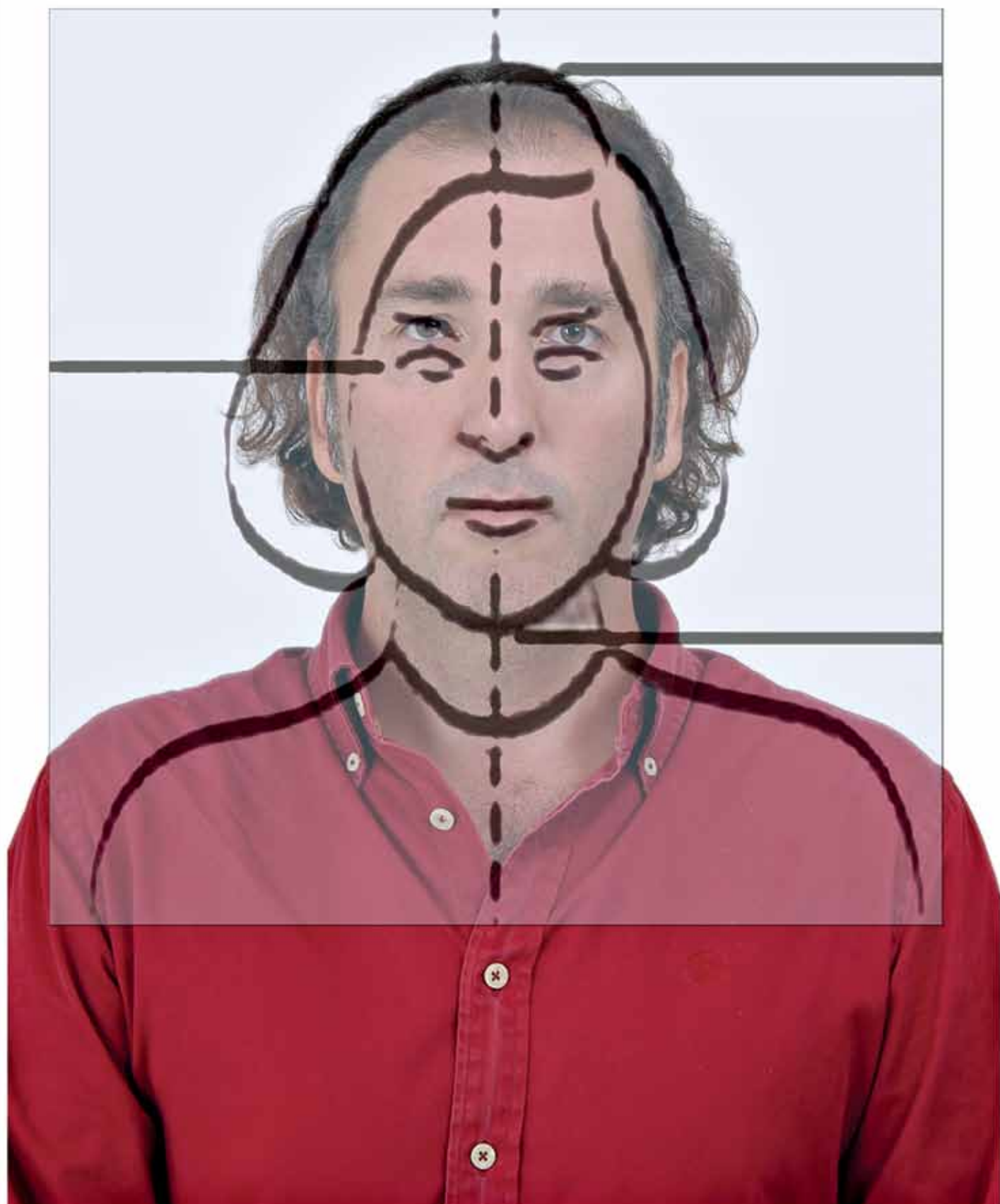
Gülan's ready-mades displayed as a work of art is appealing to me as a Turkish citizen. I share the same feeling of humiliation and discrimination as he does; but what about the 'others'? The fact, that these images were not displayed at a traditional space of the art world -a gallery- tells us that the target audience was not limited to the members of such an art congregation. The exhibit placed within an everyday environment attracts attention in a much more subtle formulation than an intellectual artistic critique. Although the confrontation is expressed in an artistic language its visual features render them very plain. They are embarrassing to contemplate. An individual has been displayed to the public with his facial features erased, or shadowed or measured. This, then, becomes a public humiliation not of a citizen of a specific nation, but this displays a humiliation of the civilized order.

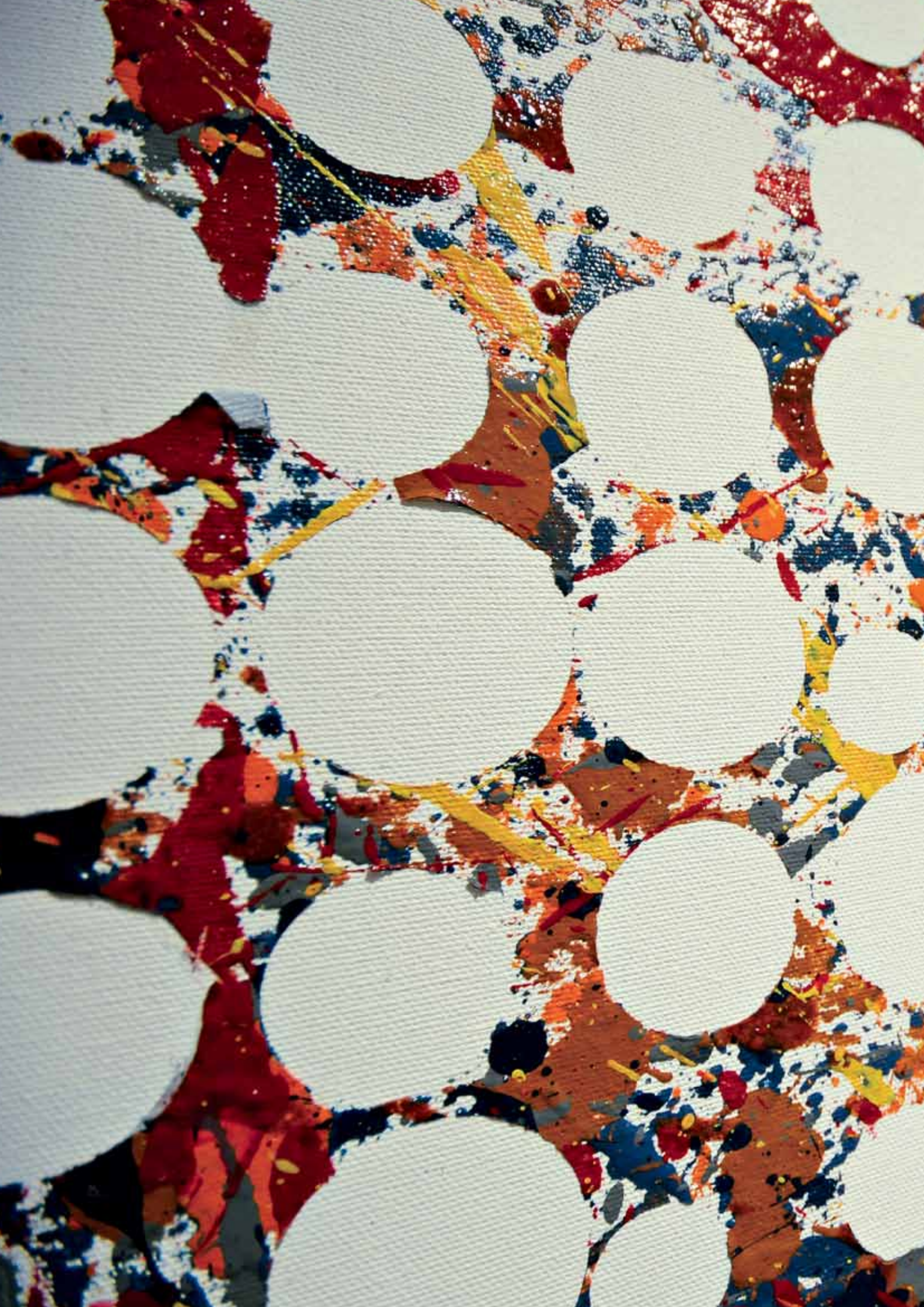
In Gülan's understanding, the European governmental restraints manipulating the Turkish citizen and thus the Turkish artist subordinate in an indirect way their own artists as well. In fact, it is not only the artists who are denounced but the members of the European society at large. For, the Western states have long become police states. "Public spaces, specifically, are under police control. Every performance necessitates an admission. Even graffiti is sanctified or to shoot a photo can at times be treated as an action disturbing the social order" says Gülan, remembering a personal experience with the British police on the streets of London.

The 'West' known for its struggle for freedom and its cherish of individual conduct, nowadays intimidates his members under a guise of a security mask. The fear of terror, the anxiety of existential security opens a new path in human history. Privacy, individuality and humanistic features start to loose their meanings as we have known them. No wonder those who are defined as the others are the first to be condemned and excommunicated.

Biometric Artist, 2009. Biometric photos for visa application. 4.5cm x 3.5cm * 15 pieces. On the right; *The United States*. (below). **Moustache Ideology**, 1997. Polaroid Photographs and Gif animation 385 k.. 7.9 cm x 7.9 cm. Six pieces. (180*181) **Road (After Yılmaz Güney) Fast Image Series**, 1999. 4:15 min. The series includes videos referring to to Beuys, Eisenstein, Güney, Jonturk, Kubrick, Paik and Schoedsack. Thanks to New York University Library.











Jasper Pinar, 2010. Al, human tears and acrylic on canvas. 137cm x 171cm. Gallery Artist. (below). **Malevich Gökçe**, 2010. Al, human tears and acrylic on canvas. 47cm x 70cm Gallery Artist. (previous pages) **Pollack with Holes**, 2010. Al and crylic on canvas, 122 cm * 244 cm. Gallery Artist.



Hülya Küpçüoğlu

The Most Expensive Paintings of the World

Haber Türk Newspaper, 2010.

The World's Most Expensive Paintings is a recent Genco Gülan exhibition at Daire Sanat, Cihangir. This time, the artist refers to art history as well his former works and the art market. The new technique employed by the artist for the exhibition which is open until April 3rd is a proof of his inquisitive character and inter-disciplinary work...

Hülya Küpçüoğlu: We can translate the theme of exhibition as the re-interpretation of a selection of the *World's Most Expensive Paintings*. How did you make that selection?

Genco Gülan: **There are certain criteria in arts and I try to reveal this best kept secret.** While working on a long list of artworks, I encountered a series of paintings listed as the "World's Most Expensive Paintings." Last year, I shortened that list from 30-40 paintings to 10. I picked mostly the artists that I liked and followed. I realized that some artists appeared in the list with more than one work, such as Picasso and Van Gogh. I preferred to include one single work of each artist. Finally, as a result of my methodology, some dropped from the list, for example Rothko.

HK: Could you please tell us about the method?

GG: While thinking about interpreting the world's most expensive paintings, I decided to paint them. I mean, it was important for me to respond to the paintings with paintings. You know, I mostly work with the computer generated images. In other words, new media is my specialty. I had made a series called *Paintings Robots cannot be Read* before. That series continued by being neutralized with the orientalist series. I used templates to interfere/play with the colors and the forms of the orientalist paintings. This enabled a deconstruction. This time, I worked on the images via the computer program called "Prosesing 10.1" and the software gave me new images.

HK: Are these images really computer generated?

GG: Yes. Computer is used for every aspect of life. Many people use it for paintings, too. However, these ones are processed images. They were subject to the computer's calculations; they were touched by the artificial intelligence. The most important thing was to allow the artificial intelligence to interfere with the image and that happened. This affected the application choices. For example, Rothko was dropped from the list.

HK: The paintings we see in the exhibition depict the circular forms and they appear very different from their references. They ended up as abstract paintings.

GG: That was the idea. I wanted to do this since the thing that I have done would not have been different from the works of the Pointillists otherwise. Our software takes the color means/medians/averages into consideration, plus the market values also affect the final image. In other words, the



The Most Expensive Paintings of the World, 2010. Exhibition general view together with the sculptures from the Future Archeology series, as installed at the Ak Merkez Art Gallery. The series had premiered in Daire Sanat at Cihangir. (below).
Rubens, 2010. AI, toy planes, acrylic and oil on canvas. 229cm x 203 cm. (below left) detail.

“Genco Gülan is an activist artist who, as his motto states, wishes to increase the processing speed of our minds. Technological and critical aspects of Gülan’s art, clearly shows his attitude that brings him closer to “relational aesthetics”. Gülan uses technology and criticism in a very definite manner again, this time in *Most Expensive Paintings of the World*. Gülan, corresponding to the works of the great and also expensive artists like Rubens, C. Monet, Renoir, Cézanne, Van Gogh, Picasso, Malevich, Andy Warhol, J. Pollock, J. Johns makes a duality a current issue: money and the tears that cannot be bought. While reproducing the most expensive artworks of great masters, artist adds his tears into the material used. Genco Gülan, aiming to alter the art scene -a microcosm in Bourdieu’s terms- this time realizes it by his micro strokes, with a micro material, tears...” (Burcu Pelvanoğlu, <http://www.cagdassanat.com/facebook/genco-gulan-du-nyanin-en-pahali-resimleri/> 2010)



date of creation for the each painting, the color and the aesthetic values as well as how long did it take for the pieces to be sold were included in the computation just like the considerations for calculations of the value of a share in the stock market. These affected the size and the deviations of the circular forms. Therefore, the viscosity was altered. We also employed random sampling, which is interrelated with the artificial intelligence. For example, the circles touching each other is related to this processing. This is the first time that something like this is realized in art.

HK: Is the software ready-made? Or was it created for this project?

GG: It was created specifically by using an already existing programming language. However we prepared a special software for the project with my programmer friend Kutsal Kaan Bilgin.

HK: You said that the software is affected by the market values. Considering the name you chose for the exhibition, there is an attribution to the capitalist system?

GG: I have been thinking about the value in arts and capitalism for years. Capitalism directly affects art, so there is a link. I mean, the relationship between the market and the art. How could I make this relationship more visible? How could I face with this as an artist? This project was a survey of all these. Of course the background dates back to earlier. I have been thinking about those concepts at least for 15-20 years.

HK: We talked about capitalism and the art market. For the press release, you wrote that you question art and market plus the absence of criteria in art creates problems. At what points, is there a lack of criteria in your opinion?

GG: I see "There is no criteria in art" as a big fake. We should approach people who say this hesitantly. The criteria of art is changing, but it exists. There are certain references, criteria about the market or the aesthetics. Here, I want to point out to those who cheat. Besides, I want to show that the existence of the criteria does not necessarily mean this criteria cannot be changed. Especially because of that I tried to clash the ones with criteria and ones without criteria. For this reason, I used tears.

HK: Tears are mostly associated with women...

GG: Indeed but when we look at the world's most expensive paintings, the list is dominated by male painters and collectors. I asked all my friends to collect their tears. Three of them managed and I used their tears by mixing it with the paints.

HK: Why are tears important for you?

GG: Yes. **People cry either when they are very happy or when they are very sad.** Therefore, tears do not have a positive or a negative meaning for me. For those who will purchase one of the *World's Most Expensive Paintings*, these paintings meant tears. This was important for me. I will probably cry if I buy a Picasso one day. I mean these people might have cried out of happiness. The opposite is also possible. We can approach tears as the sufferings of the artists. In our society, there are also crocodile tears shed for the artists. Since tears lack a criteria, they correspond to the conscience for me. The conscience can be an alternative for the brutal capitalism.

HK: Can we say that there is a connection between your earlier works, such as "Daily Mythologies", and your exhibition? Or can we say there is a link between the Internet art and your exhibition?

GG: I wanted to connect those with my earlier work since the monitor-based pieces within the realm of the new media reach some audience and some artists, but they cannot reach other people. There is a serious reaction against the monitor-based pieces. It is more of a resistance to this reaction, actually. I would like to break that with these works. Here, I would like to underline my inter-disciplinary approach and I think going down to a single discipline from a point of multi-disciplinarity is also trans-disciplinary. At the end, I succeed to mix the genetic material with the painting and the artificial intelligence.







Bloody Mary, 2010. Iron sculpture, hammer and red nail lacquer. 200cm * 95 cm * 45cm. Özil Collection (below left). **Painted Alem**, 1990. Copper Alem with a plastic red star. 145 cm x 35 cm. Private Collection. **Golden Destruction**, 2011. Yellow metal (type of brass having about 60 per cent copper and 40 per cent zinc) digger and sledgehammer as installed on the windows of Gallery Artist. 100cm * 150cm.



Hülya Küpçüoğlu

Artist Breaks Down the Walls of the Art Gallery.

Bosphorus Art Newspaper, 2011.

Conceptual artist Genco Gülan has opened an exhibition in Istanbul, with the title *Razrushenye*, meaning demolition in Russian, where he tore down the walls of the Gallery Artist. Gülan now exhibits these ruins of the art gallery walls, the tools and the process of the destruction as a video installation. With this show, artist questions the white cube and cultural damages/ destructions of the rapid economical transformations. Gülan answered our questions on the exhibition which will be open to visitors between February 18th and March 16th of 2011.

Hülya Küpçüoğlu: The title of the show is in Russian. What does it mean?

Genco Gülan: *Razrushenye*, means destruction in English. I, personally, use this word as the opposite of Perestroika which was popular in the Gorbachev period in the beginning of the transformation of the Soviet Union. I realized that today a new name is needed for the current situation in Russia and I came up with the current title of my show. I want this name to enter into our language too, because we experience similar situations all over the world.

HK: What did you offer us to destruct?

GG: I did not propose to destruct, I did destruct. I destroyed three walls in Gallery Artist. It was a little difficult, but it was worth the effort. The remains of the destruction and the records of the act of destruction are displayed in the exhibition now.

HK: Well, which concepts come into play?

GG: De-construction is in fact the main concept. A similar logic underlies the roots of sculpturing. You create by cutting a material, as well. I apply this method to the gallery itself. I try to make the gallery space itself a work of art.

HK: There is an old Mary statue with an axe on her head. Is there a reference in this work to the situation concerning the threat for destruction of sculpture “Humanity Monument” by Mehmet Aksoy, which has been the hot topic in Turkish media lately?

GG: No direct references. However, sculptor Mehmet Aksoy is a good colleague of mine. I do not think neither central nor the local government can destroy his sculpture that easily. My piece refers to a general threat on arts driven by wild capitalism.



Razrushenye, 2010. Photograph of a performance at. Gallert Artist Istanbul. Dimensions variable. (also on page 194-195)
De-Construction, 1995. Video still of a performance at AKM. The artist is cutting decoration pillars with a chain-saw at DAGS Performance Days Festival. (below)



HK: Did you use hammer and sickle when destructing the walls?

GG: I used this visual similarity on purpose. Just like the symbol of the Soviet's hammer and sickle, I used a digger and sledgehammer in the destruction. Special production tools shining like gold... The emphasis using yellow metallic digger and sledgehammer is to show their power today. Not only in Russia, but also in Turkey and all around the globe...

HK: What kind of parallelism in the contemporary art scene?

GG: Hans Haacke turned the floor of the German Pavilion into a work of art by completely breaking it in the at the Venice Biennial, 1993. My recent work is not only about politics but also about the relations of exhibition making. Who does actually build galleries, pavilions, biennials? The relationship of labor and idea in the production of art is a part of a lot more complicated...

HK: You mentioned relation of idea and labor; do you think ideas are valued in 3rd World?

GG: Certainly not. Especially in terms of values of ideas, we live in Wild east. Piracy rules here. It is time to discuss, protect and appreciate art; in fact that is the reason why I made the sledgehammer shiny...

HK: Do you make reference to “De-construction” performance you made in 1990s?

GG: In 1996, I made an exhibition in the Istanbul Opera gallery titled ‘Reconstruction’. And at the end of the show, I cut down the eight meters high Opera decoration columns with a chain saw. The main idea there was the transformation the society goes through with a painful revolution. Here, however, the issue is the discussion of the reflections of a counter-revolution.

HK: So then you make a statement about Turkey in political and economical terms?

GG: Surely. Hiding behind a number of metaphors, I try to talk about the excited entrepreneurs who tear down ancient Roman palaces to build car parks and the so called conservatives who destroy old Ottoman baths to erect kitsch hotels. Even if it has not gone through a World War and bombarded, look at Istanbul! In exchange for the high economical growth that shows up in the statistics, there is a huge destruction in both culture and nature. We should understand that those growth numbers that prevail in an import oriented economy actually mean that we are spending out of your own pocket.

“I am attracted to people who require several slashes to describe themselves. There is a misperception that doing too many things at once spreads a creative person too thin. But for artist Genco Gülan, engaging in seemingly unrelated activities is no gimmick. It is simply the trans-disciplinary nature of New Media.

“Currently I’m working on a QR code poem, a locative poem, some drawings, etc.” This was Genco’s email response to my request to meet. I had not seen him in a while and I never know what sort of technically unintelligible project he is going to be involved in at any given moment. But mostly what I wanted to know this time was how, as a New Media artist, he fights back against Turkey’s disturbing habit of curtailing free speech. I was wondering if New Media art had any special advantage in this over traditional media. I never found out.

...

In trying to find ways to adapt to a situation, he uses New Media to create old media-looking artwork. He signs his work, with his own genetic information (bio-waste,) so that the new media part of the work is hidden, but he credits its inclusion to the appeal of the works. Or some of the work he makes is simply inspired by new technology for instance, his last performance ikiz (twins) and his two-headed sculptures are a direct investigation of cloning.

“I do test drives in public with fish or without fish”. Sorry I can’t help elucidate what he means by that. My interpretation is that as an artist it is his profession to keep surprising .” (Anne Weshinsky, With Fish or Without: New Media Artist Genco Gülan, 2010lab.tv, 2011)

“Genco Gülan has knocked down three walls of Gallery Artist on 17th February 2011. Gallery interior with its wrecked walls has started to be shown as an artwork on 18th of February. Gülan thought an artwork has to correspond to its society’s situation. So he preferred to add more elements to the piece rather than choosing a minimalist way of expression: Demolition tools, a golden mattock and a sledgehammer (reminding the symbols of former Soviet Republic), an axe brutally hitting Virgin Mary’s head, a piece of felt (reference to Beuys), video of the performance, medical documents of a small accident happened during destruction and a snorkel with a star which raises a childish hope with its pink and green lights in this rather depressive atmosphere.

When O’Doherty defines modern gallery space; he underlines that it has been constructed with rules as strict as the ones in a medieval church construction. Walls are white and ceiling is a kind of a light source. All the elements besides the white walls are omitted in order to remind eternity and void. Even a fire extinguisher gains a divine dignity in a place like this. This is how the artwork in the white cube achieves its aura. It becomes priceless because it looks timeless and absolute. This illusion ironically ascertains that the artwork is good enough to be a market investment.

Genco Gülan, in *Razrushenye*; plays with constructed reality (of the gallery) and stages a black comedy. The word *Razrushenye*, (Destruction in Russian) tears down with a sledgehammer, the constructed rules of gallery-church-market economy. Still keeping his existence in the gallery all through the process, underlines the impossibility of leaving the limits framed by capitalism behind, as if a tragicomedy. Genco’s deconstruction realized with (golden) instruments like hammer and sickle; even if it is a nostalgic reference to “revolution”, the word’s connotation created by actual context essentially reflects a socioeconomic transformation. The urban transformation and related issues come up after the assaults against art gallery in Tophane, the ongoing debates on Sulukule region, looting of the museum in Iraq and finally Allinaoi ancient city which is now under water are some of the examples from news media on the act of “construction via deconstruction”.

It has been thirty years since Gorbacov’s ‘Perestroyka’ reform program. Perestroyka that has promoted liberalism in economy, couldn’t unfortunately prevent the collapse of the Soviet Union. Razrushenye can be considered as the counterpart of Perestroyka, just like a negative image in photography. To destruct and reconstruct; two opposite acts that form together a never ending cycle are the essentials of a revolution. In Avant-garde theory of Modernism deconstruction is to reach the new. But in a post capitalist society deconstruction only aims to destroy. It repeats itself endlessly and meaninglessly in a messed up white cube just as we see in the video of the performance.

An act of pillage and destruction intends to get rid of the past and make up their accounts with history. But no destruction ever can erase our memories. When Hans Haacke knocked down German Pavilion in 1993 Venice Biennial, he created a monumental image that symbolizes the destruction that Nazism made in Germany’s collective memory. Gülan’s performance in Gallery Artist aims to present the memory of destruction while making references to artist in transformation, his society, the world, past and today.” (Deniz Güvensoy, Bir inşaa aracı olarak Yıkım, <http://denizguvensoy.blogspot.com/2011/04/razrusenye-genco-gulan.html/> 2011.)





Razrushenye, 2010. Site specific video installation. Dimensions variable. (below). ***No Right Turn on Red (or Keep the Environment Clean)***, 1991. Hand made, traditionally red wooden fish plates, photocopy, altered, metal traffic sign. R 55 CM. Five pieces. Bill Barker Collection.









Twin, 2011. Photograph of a site specific interactive performance at IKSŞ, Salon in this photo Yeliz and Deniz Çelebi. (previous pages) **Twin Planes**, 2002. Digital 3D model. Collection of the artist.

“The artist’s latest work *Twin*, in Galata Perform (and IKSŞ Salon), is an eight minute performance or rather a fiction play. Genco Gülan denotes that the work is based on the attack on “the Twin Towers”. He made plenty of art-works on twins. He constantly examines the issue. *Twin* is a result of these examinations, discussions. I think, this blind-eye eight minutes journey in space with real twins focuses on looking/ seeing/ blindness and perception. In a way, *Twin* is also a criticism of the system. Leaving one’s control to some others, with eyes wide shut, without knowing the path... It is also possible to perceive the actions of the twins as the choreography of the composition... Taking this as the original focus, life and clarification of person’s journey in life process state two different ways in perceiving life: Meeting and differentiation of thoughts and sights... Or interpreting or conforming life through the constructions of eye and brain functions.” (Dikmen Gürün, Zaman ve Mekan Algısı, Cumhuriyet, 2011)

Ayşegül Sönmez

Twin

There is Nothing like Playing a Game.
Radikal, 2011.

Artist Genco Gülan, in his recent project called *Twin*, made the audience tour around his exhibition blindfolded. The twins, who hold your both hands, take you through the artworks one by one and explain you the show by whispering: “A large figurative painting, dancers make a Mediterranean dance hand in hand...like us, let’s do it as well...”

Steve Wonder, in 1980’s, picked up a group of music writers from a bus stop in Manhattan. They toured the city for an hour blindfolded. They listened to the sounds that stir the city without seeing anything related to the source of the sound; cars, people, horns, skyscrapers, merchants, street musicians, homeless people, traffic lights... The blind singer Wonder, arranged such a trip, to make them understand his music better. To discover the subtleties of seeing without seeing a little more...

We nowadays hear about the restaurants resorting to discovering these subtleties. For instance, the Berlin restaurant Unsicht-bar, which is a pioneer in this issue and where you can only eat by a reservation made weeks earlier, you are blindfolded as soon as you enter the restaurant. In the restaurant where only blind people work, you are not only unable to see what you are eating, but also you can choose only from some colors that you are given.

In his recent project *Twin*, Genco Gülan, who likes to wander waters of surprise, takes the visitors who made a reservation beforehand, to such a dark exhibition tour. At the entrance of the Salon in IKSÜ, a set of twins welcome you. They take you in between and blindfold you with the warning “If you open your eyes, the game is over...” You go in to the room hand in hand with twins. Even if there is considerable darkness inside, the twins will tell you everything you need to know. It is an exhibition, you’ll go through the pieces one by one. The twins inform you about the artworks. The first one: “A painting with naked figures, dancing figures make a Mediterranean dance hand in hand...”

The second painting is an Osman Hamdi Bey piece with Genco Gülan’s interpretation. The twins tell you about the turtles and Iznik tiles they see in the painting, by taking turns. Then, it is time for the Blue painting. The painting is blue, only blue, like the sky. The twins offer you a drink in order for you to better understand what kind of a painting this abstract one is. “You don’t have to drink!” You walk forward sometimes stumbling on some obstacle on the ground, but you are always protected by the twins. You even climb up a few steps. When the twins get you closer to the painting that is



"I have experienced a very interesting performance. First my eyes were tied... Then the twins whom I hold their hands, took me to a tour of exhibition with eight paintings. As I listened to the twins with my eyes closed, the paintings, which actually I was familiar, took different forms in my imagination. During the performance, my face touched hot flames, I tasted the blue as the twins said and **I encounter the most different performance I have ever lived.**

...

Eda Solmaz: How do the participants in the performance respond when they are blindfolded?

Genco Gülan: I get the reaction I want not at that moment but after the performance. When the performance ends, people leave the room with a different look on their face. Your expression had also changed when you left the room. The entire mood of the participants changes as they leave. I want the art to be strong. Art should be strong. Art should change the entire metabolism, turn it upside down. This play has such effect... We call people to a play and the rules are set. If you leave the hands of the twins or if you open your eyes, the play ends. It's a little demanding. It's both menacing and cheerful... Apparently there were people who said "Enough!" after climbing up the stairs. But no one wanted to leave the play. They attempted to leave but they couldn't. "The darkness reveals your subconscious."

...

ES: Inside we get the feeling that we are looking at the paintings... How did you choose the paintings?

GG: Normally as artists we paint the canvas, retouch it, position it and adjust its light. Instead of all this work, what if we sit down and talk to the viewer, express ourselves to them directly; will that serve to a better comprehension of art? Can we discard all the materials and still communicate? Can you achieve perfection in art like this? This idea is doubled in the twins. Two people talk you about the painting.

ES: Do you think you created the staggering effect you desired to communicate?

GG: My goals for the play are clear. I want to put the minds of the viewer to work. I want her to be afraid during the performance, be happy and remember her childhood. I want the viewer to leave the performance with a different taste and remember this experience. People live in protected spaces in the modern world. Modernism prevents you from being afraid and surprised. Even the movie you watch doesn't soil you. We deliberately stain your clothes during the play, even that stirs the people." (Eda Solmaz, Bambaşka bir Tiyatro Deneyimi: İkiz, Gazete Vatan, 2011)

said to contain fire, you feel like you hold your face against a stove. Apparently, Genco Gülan put an UFO heater to make you feel the sun. Another piece, tells about a jammed crowd in a bus. As you not cannot see it, you realize that someone breathes behind you and shake your seat just as if you are in that bus.

We missed the darkness in *Twin*.

We go on touring the exhibition without seeing the works but getting information or feeling about them. Lastly, you go upstairs. You climb upstairs grippingly. Your eyes are opened. You face the sea view: Halic... As an end, the twins give you the information that Genco Gülan wants to reproduce the Bridge Leonardo (da Vinci) drew (in 1502) for the Golden Horn, twice. Game is over... Even if 'twin' reproduces familiar games and questions the sense of illusion with a common reflex, highlighting the tension between simulated and not simulated; there is nothing like playing a game.

In these days, in which bright gallery openings with framed or unframed paintings on the walls repeat one another, how much we have missed the darkness in *Twin*. A little change...

Genco Gülan's *Twin* reminded me of the games Taner Ceylan performed before 1990s were over. The more he did, for example, in Derimod Cultural Center, the more excited we were. What have happened to us? Why have we forgotten to play games that much? When did we grow up?

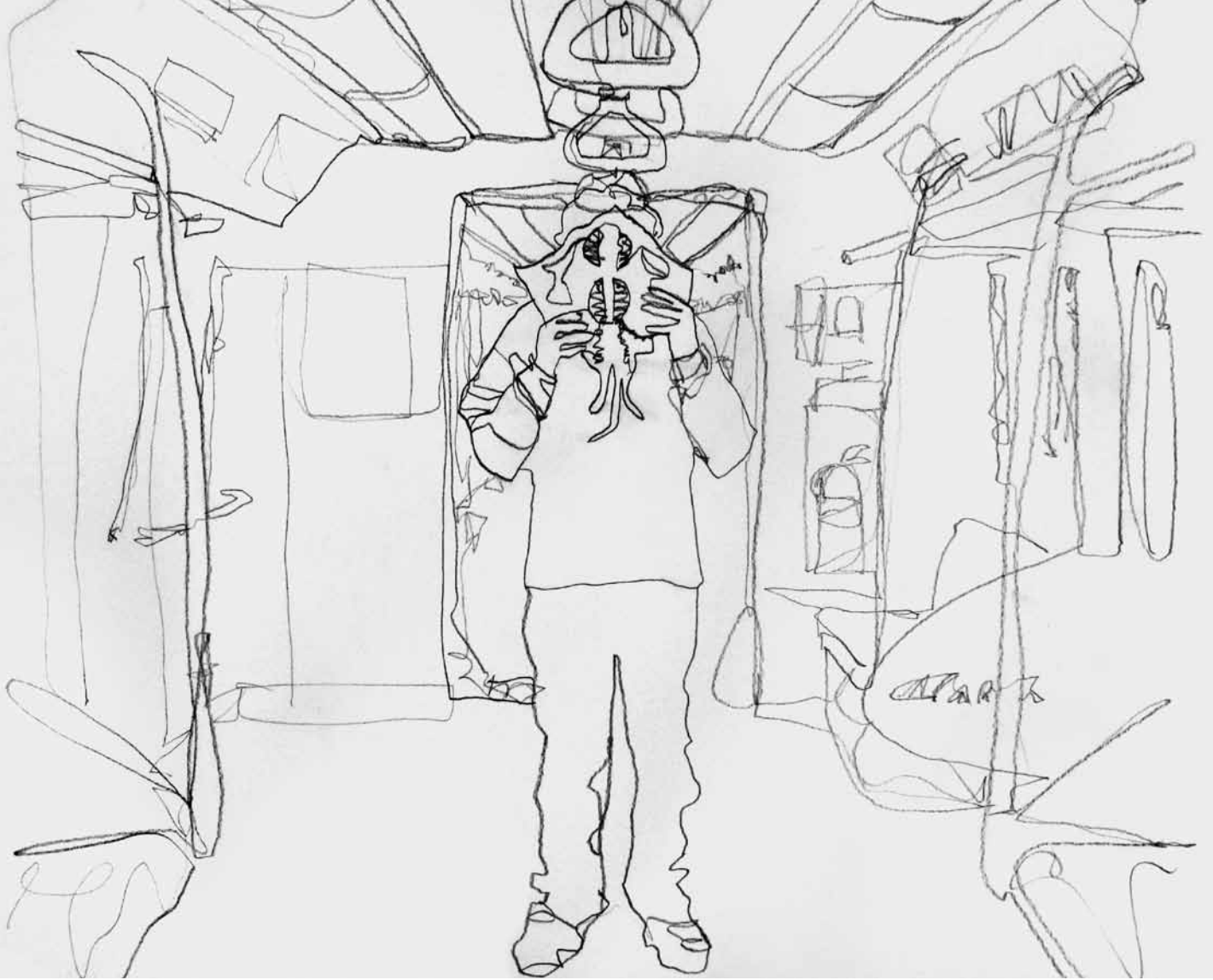


Twin, 2011. Photograph of a site specific interactive performance at IKSv, Salon. In this photo İrem and Gizem Halis sisters. (left) Detail from the performance.



GENCO G. SHAN





Gaori Man, 2011. (above) Drawing of a performance at Seoul Subway. Pencil on paper. 100cm * 70cm. Marcus Graf Collection (below left) **Gaori Man**, 2008. Photograph of a performance at Seoul Subway. Digital photo. 15cm * 20 cm. (below right) **Zeybek with a Camera**, 2004. Photograph of a performance in front of Pergamon Museum, Berlin Museum Insel. Digital photo. 15cm * 20 cm. **Zeybek with a Camera**, 2011. (previous pages) Drawing of a performance at in front of Pergamon Museum, Berlin Museum Insel. Pencil on paper. 100cm * 70cm.



Göknur Gürcan

A good artist can make art out of Garbage and Vice Versa.

Bodrum Kapak Magazine. 2011

Genco Gülan's exhibition, which opened in May 2011 in İdart Art Gallery, astonished the viewers. The exhibition was named 'Performance Drawings and Dirty Sculptures', which is hard to understand at first. The artist showed his performance drawings with ordinary pencil on paper and two sculptures made up of extraordinary materials. There was a bust of Alexander made of Adobe and a Griffon relief covered with organic extract. This interview with Genco Gülan about his exhibition will enable us to understand the exhibition and the artist better.

Göknur Gürcan: Performance and drawing – sounds astonishing. I read this both in regard to art history and from the place where Genco Gülan's performances stand. First, shall we talk about the exhibit's point of origin. Why "performance drawing"?

Genco Gülan: During performances, recordings are made; such as photos, videos but illustrations, such as court recordings, are not made. Live art is also being documented and all of them turn into digital material nowadays. I got tired of screen-based works and also wanted to break down the hierarchy and drew the performances myself, from the photographs, on paper with a pencil. It is no coincidence that I have done this in your gallery Göknur, because you are an art historian and you follow my performances. And before I forget, the person I need to give reference to is Esat Tekand. In 1990's, he made a great exhibition where he made oil paintings of important performance art scenes in art history.

Gürcan: Drawings on paper, different from painting, reminds us of sketches.

Gülan: In art history, there is a sharp distinction between sketch and the art-work. This is very well established by academics. First, you have to make a sketch or whatever you call it. Then, after the first drafts, the best option can be chosen and the work itself can be executed. I wanted to invert this process. I also tried to make the performance durable in this way. Of course, by turning performance into something else...

Gürcan: You have made many performances since the 1990's. However, you have included 12 performance drawings in your exhibition. How did you compile these works?

Gülan: Yes, I have been making performances for years. These have increased in number and variety. I planned for some of these performances and actions, but most of them appeared on the spot. Some turn into exhibitions and series, such as the *Underwater* and the *Barber-shop* but some

of them stand alone, like *Pissing at MoMA*... In this diversity it is hard to talk about coherence. In this particular case of Turkey, it is even harder... I wanted to combine different series while putting together the Bodrum show. I enriched the selection with different geographies and approaches. The similarity of taste in the drawing, being drawn from the same hand – all these brought back the coherence of style I seek. And of course, the hero in the comic book is always the same, making the reading easier.

Gürcan: I, as an art historian, follow your work very closely. I have always managed to grasp the coherence of style; I generally observe a critical approach and commitment to city life. Since I am familiar with your previous works, I might say that you used to make use of classic art very much. Now, I cannot see an exact reference. In my opinion, this reference business turned into criticism. I mean, while you attack the monopolist of art, you are also reacting to the modern person being transformed. I am especially using the word “attack.”

Gülen: There is no attack but a payoff. Payoff is our duty. You cannot produce art without questioning, you just make craft. This is the first time I produce works referencing my own work itself. This method is often used by master Sarkis. I say, my turn has come now... This is the way my works will evolve from now on: Referencing art, life but also themselves...

Gürcan: I am referring to your work named *Pis* and also, of course, *Razrushenye*...

Gülen: A good artist can make art out of garbage and vice versa.

Gürcan: I have to emphasize that your viewers want to understand the reason of violence in your work. This is because that situation can be observed in many of your works. When I evaluate your art life, there is a definition I make...

Gülen: What is that?

Gürcan: In Genco Gülen's works, **violence is not affirmed and triggered but it does pull you in by provoking. What I mean is that when you are provoked about violence, all of a sudden you might find yourself as the one doing it. To me, Genco only stands, observes and says “don't do this, if you do here is what happens.” He doesn't choose to ignore. He sees, knows and makes people question it. Instead of reflecting violence in his works and give it a place, he turns it into “a game”, which is why his criticism can be very staggering. Just like a smile turning into woe. This is not a game – this is life. We need to wake up. All right. So, how do you define your work?**

Gülen: Violence is an indispensable part of our lives. We both are exposed to it and we do use it. What I do is raise the veil over violence. In fact, I am only trying to demonstrate what is there. It cannot demolish, quote, unquote, Civilization, but can hide it. You eat a steak for dinner but you don't know who cut it, neither do you want to. In the case of canned foods, the situation gets worse; the dead body of a fish has become one of the perfect geometric forms of Euclid. Under the dominance of representation of after-modern, we are exposed to the image of violence a little bit more. Unmanned airplanes drop bombs in faraway lands, nobody's uniform gets dirty, but at least web-cams and cell phones remind us of the color of blood.

Gürcan: These are worries reflecting both present and future. However, you also relate perfectly to the similar situations in the past. For example, Alexander. You play with viewers' psychology. Because Alexander stinks. Even if it is wrapped, the stress comes with not only smell but also sight.

Gülen: There is not psychological repression, but a chemical harassment. There is no such thing that a work of art will not disturb. A good piece of work must stimulate. Television is a device to make you sleep, but contemporary art wants you to get up from your chair. It is up to you what you will do when you get up.

Gürcan: Of course, it might be Alexander's ego that led you to use this material.

Gülen: Adobe, combined with turd, has been used in Anatolia for thousands of years as a construction material, and is even being used today. Actually, my starting point was the smell coming from the village near the Academy. The smell invited me to make the piece. What I did is combine tra-



Lion King, 2011. (above) Drawing of a performance at UNESCO World Heritage Hattusas Lions Gate. Pencil on paper. 100cm * 70cm. (below left) **Lion King**, 2011. Photograph of a performance at UNESCO World Heritage Hattusas Lions Gate. Digital photo. 15cm * 20 cm. With support from Başkent University and Yenışehir Municipality.





Piss MoMA, 2011. (above) Drawing of a performance in front of MoMA, New York, NY. Pencil on paper. 100cm * 70cm.
 (below) **Piss MoMA**, 2000. Photograph of a performance in front of MoMA, New York, NY. 15cm * 20 cm.



ditional material with art – again. Of course, the statue being made in Asia Minor and being one of Alexander is not a coincidence. This land had been surrounded by Hittites' adobe walls a couple of thousands years ago. In a way, by making a replica out of dried turd, I took a revenge from Alexander, who untied the knot in Gordiyon and brought down Hittite Empire.

Gürçan: Then, we can say that you use smell as an element. Or referring to the disgust that people have in them? Did you use bad odor to break the desire of artists to be appreciated? Do you mean to say “do not like this”?

Gülen: Matters such as liking or not being liked are not what I have in mind while producing art; it is obvious that I do not produce pop music. In fact, when the manure is isolated by a jar or digitally, the statue seems very familiar. I do not think there is a problem in the aesthetic sense. Quite the contrary – when you capture the perfect proportions, we can even talk about a certain type of beauty.

Gürçan: But beauty has been shattered thoroughly in your works. The concepts of proportional beauty or ideal beauty, which prevail today, is in the centre of criticism in your work. The statues whose foundations you once damaged, now have gotten ugly. I am quoting the word “ugly.” Do you break down commonplace beauty with smell elements? This case of referring to the world is actually the truth of 21st century.

Gülen: The work of art should, in the first place, be striking. The Sh*tty Statues in the exhibition were strong and shaking. This is just the impact I want. The work I produce must be striking under any circumstance. Whatever it takes.

Gürçan: Maybe it will sound a bit irrelevant but, I remember Orlan when I see your work.

Gülen: I met Orlan recently in a FIAC party in Paris. She is one of the icons that Lady Gaga is stealing her image from. Gaga is copying art works as if a curator is making selections for a museum collection. She stole from many modern artists, if she did not steal from me, I would be very sad. At this point, we are similar with Orlan. Both of us make live art, both of us produce works related to the body – and Gaga steals from both of us. And today, **if Lady Gaga is stealing from us, that means we define the standards of beauty.**

Gürçan: Therefore, the experimental archeology which combines the Antiquity and the modern world prevails.

Gülen: Oh, yes. I go on with the archeological references. But I am also looking into ways in which we can read archeology differently.

Gürçan: Of course, it gets more and more different. In your work named *Bird-head*, you used Guano with plaster. With the material you used in Griffon, you invert reverence. Is it possible to talk about the deconstruction of reverence? Or is there some other allegory?

Gülen: In Giraffon, although the impact of the Hittites is obvious, it is in fact a very environmental-friendly work. What led me to set this piece up was not only Hittite's desire of flying, but also the pressure which the modern city lays on birds. While I was accommodated in a Hotel for the workshop in Ankara, for Başkent University, I saw that the pigeons were not taken into consideration while the ultra-modern architecture of the hotel was made. It was built with steel construction aesthetics and a net was stretched around the hotel to keep the birds away. This net, was filled with dead birds and the balconies with guano... I wanted to do something for the poor pigeons... In order to make Griffon relief fly, I tried using guano and feathers. At least, the statue has become a means to tell you that; wrong architecture may cause massacres, and we have to find a way to stop this!







Hair-cut (loop), 2000. Photographs of a performance at New York, NY. Photographer Cem Mirap. Presented as web animation. As presented in the book *Exploring Motion Graphics: The Art and Techniques of Creating Imagery for Film and New Media*, Rebecca Gallagher, Andrea Moore Paldy, 2006. (previous pages) **Bread Winner (Ekmek Aslan'ın Ağzındadır)**, 2011. Photographs of a performance at the Bosphorus. Thanks to Boğaziçi Sharks. (below) **İstikbal Göklerdedir**, 2000. Photograph of a performance at the ancient sunken city of Myndos.



Bariş Acar

The Adventures of

The Man with the Black Tie

www.t24.com.tr/, 2011

Since I've known *The Man with the Black Tie* personally, my life has been more exciting. I find myself wondering what he will do where, and what results there will be. I once came across with him in front of the Rustem Paşa Mosque; him dressed as Osman Hamdi Bey, who had been the founder of the museology in Turkey. He wore yellow worker overalls instead of the yellow cassock, and a helmet for the turban. A tape measure in his hand as rosary. He seemed to be looking for something to measure, a society to engineer. He was not *The Man with the Black Tie* by then, but he had already assembled all the tokens of *The Man with the Black Tie* in himself. The transforming artist: Genco Gülan

In spite of the fact that Genco Gülan has his name as a contemporary artist mentioned a lot in the art spheres by tons of exhibitions, performances, and activities; he is not well-known enough. The name Genco Gülan is widely known; however, when asked what it is that he does, what kind of art he is into, or which works of him you know; with a feeling of void, one cannot provide an answer for a while. This, above all, results from the difficulty of defining him. The answers to the questions lie in his notion of art and of course in *The Man with the Black Tie*. He has appeared before in many different guises. Nonetheless, I could tell that it was him in each case without mistake.

But first, art of Genco Gülan.

The artist does the *Nose and Star* in 1993, when performance art was not known and widespread in the country yet. In an event in front of the Yıldız Palace, Genco Gülan takes a rolling star made of metal pipes through a parade. This is a late action on the ban of the words “nose” and “yıldız” (star) in the years of Abdülhamid, whose reign was considered an era of despotism. In 1995, he builds a *Gecekondu* in TUYAP exhibition center, and after adding some soil and chickens around, places inside a television family consisting of 50 inch parents and 35 inch children. In 1997, on the grounds that there had not been a contemporary museum in the country until that day, having a huge signboard reading *Istanbul Contemporary Art Museum* (iS.CaM), and designing t-shirts and created bags, he shows around this longing of his street by street, exhibition by exhibition. In the year 1998, for the Artists of Today exhibition, he sends one of his performance artist friends before the jury with a canvas. The performance artist who introduces himself saying “I am Genco Gülan’s artwork” is asked what he is going to do in the exhibition. Upon his answer “I am an artwork like the bicycle



Workaholic, 2008. Photograph of a performance under the sea at Çeşme. Performer Güçlü Gülan. Digital Photo. (below) **Newist**, 2011. Photograph of a performance in the Metro Tunnel construction between Taksim and Şişhane. Performers Genco Erkal and Ulgar Manzakoğlu. They are reading the *Green Notebook*.



and chair standing over there”, the work is rejected from the exhibition. There are modelling, exhibitions, net art pieces that he has created since 2000s in the electronic environment that’s called “new media”, as well as mutated sculptures made of boron. To touch upon every one of them, this article needs to be as thick as a book.

In short, in all the works of Genco Gülan there is an innovative artist with an open perception toward the entire world; a smiling man, a canny critic. He has been working on the same theme even if he crinkles the exhibition poster prepared by the State Painting and Sculpture Museum, posits it on a pedestal and says to them “Here is my sculpture to you”; or combines the hair he collected from barbers with his DNA codes and scatters them around the exhibition hall. He produces the finest examples of the attitude of a contemporary artist which frees him from materials and does not stick to any medium, style, or movement; and wanders around the world easily.

The Man with the Black Tie is on the Go

After seeing the swordfish photos he exhibited in Gallery Artist in 2009, I decided to call all these as *The Man with the Black Tie*. While doing this, I had Turhan Selçuk’s Abdülcanbaz in mind. Very much like the way Abdülcanbaz signified the longings of the society in 60’s and 70’s, Genco Gülan’s *Man in Black* expresses the suppressed cravings of our day.

I take the formation period of The Man with a tie as far back as the *Artist* case. The artist’s attempt as an “artist” to sue the Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan in 2006 upon his remarks “Don’t act like an artist” to a farmer can even be a milestone. The artist, noting that he waited Plastic Artists Association for a while to make an issue, eventually takes his initiative to personally filing a legal action. Even if the case is remitted, it is enough to indicate the fact that bureaucratic tool, its mechanism and language has always been a point of departure in Genco Gülan’ works.

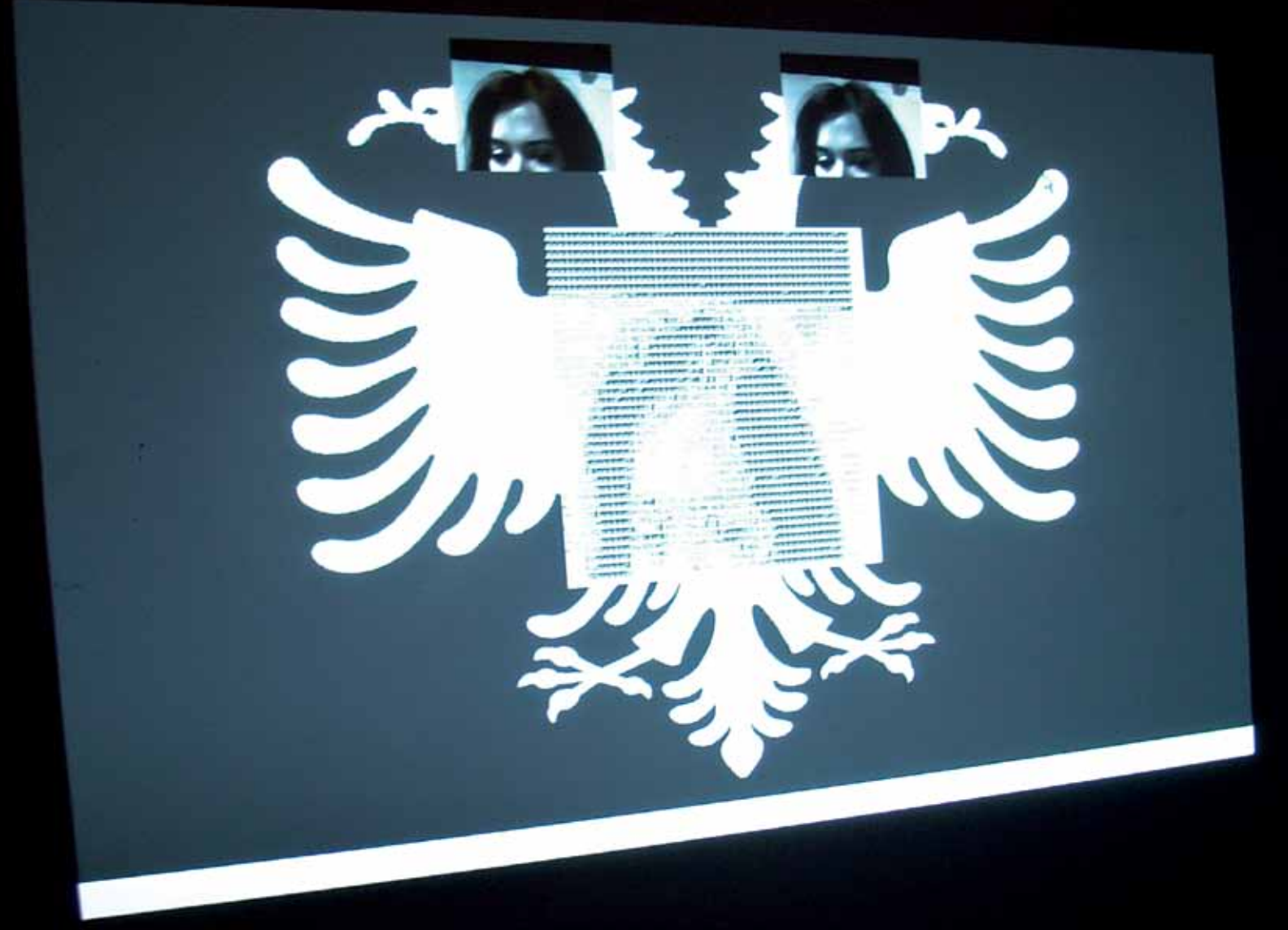
Then comes *Swordfish-Man*. The artist, now becoming *The Man with the Black Tie*, with a black suit and/or a matching black tie on a white shirt, identifies his performance with himself wandering among us with his acquired official identity. This official outfit is the way he chooses to point to, criticize and laugh at the social absurd? He poses in front of shanties, traffic jam, towers putting a huge swordfish on his head; tries to cut the Bosphorus Bridge with his sword just at the time of the third bridge discussions. The problems causing social traumas, and feed on historical unawareness are attacked by body of The Man with a tie which is disguised as a swordfish. Upon being asked for biometric photograph while getting visa to go to a festival he was invited, he opens an exhibition bringing together photos of himself shot according to different formats and manipulating them with the irony of *Biometric-artist*. He shows *The Man with the Black Tie*’s reaction against bio-control.

He gladly undertakes the mission of breaking down the temporary walls of the gallery he works with. His suit on, pickax in his hand, he starts a grueling battle against the walls. He does not avoid the deconstructive tone of this action knowing that it is also a parody of the avant-garde artist. What is broken down is not totally clear: is it the walls, the identity of the avant-garde artist, or a deconstruction ritual for the artist who attempted to experience the impossible, which points to the body of The Man with a tie that carries the weariness of the years. Abdülcanbaz’s famous ottoman slap is stuck in the suit of The Man with a tie. But still, it lets us know that it is there somewhere as a potential power.

I follow Genco Gülan not only because he is a good artist, but also an artist who is not afraid of falling into the traps of seeking. Don’t be surprised if one day *The Man with the Black Tie* stands in the middle of your living room and start singing in a language you do not know!







Double Headed Eagle, 2007. Interactive installation. Camera, computer, Action script, projection, book. As installed at Noyi Sad Contemporary Art Museum at Balkan Art Festival 2007, curated by Sava Stephanov. (below) General view. (previous pages) **Form**, 2004. Crumpled State Sculpture Competition Application form of Turkish Ministry of Culture and Tourism. Approximately 7cm * 8cm * 9cm. Photograph Yusuf Özyaydın.



Nancy Atakan

The Multi-Dimensional Artist

Postscript, 2010.

To describe himself, Genco Gülan uses a term he coined; information artist. In his opinion, this type of artist is a thinker who uses visual material to communicate. Not interested in art as demonstration or representation, he uses art historical references, addresses social situations, and questions current values. Without developing a particular style, he uses whatever material is needed to present his message. Sometimes he makes paintings; he often incorporates texts into his pieces; frequently he makes work that verges towards performance; and he works with new media to create some of his strongest art pieces. He also has a tendency to blur boundaries between disciplines. For example, he sees a stage, a gallery, a canvas, or Internet as equally important spaces to exhibit artwork and to support different types of installations. While always moving in an alternative direction, he follows the art tradition initiated by Marcel Duchamp by using ready-made objects, questioning the definition of art, and creating situations for his work to be rejected in order to expand the boundaries of art. At the same time, similar to Nam June Paik, he uses television monitors, but places the emphasis differently. His video sculptures cannot be separated from their exhibition space without changing their meaning and many of his monitor/ computer works are interactive or take place in real time.

In his other works, he changes his own appearance to resemble a historical character bringing to mind work by Cindy Sherman, but with an alternative aim. Often times, he attempts to re-enact a historical event, to understand thought processes of a Turkish master painter, or he may use content from art history to present a new concept just to force spectators to re-adjust their perception of known facts. He clarifies definitions of art terms as he works with new media. For example, he points out the distinctions between web art and net art by saying that net art is live and does not allow recording while web art can be recorded and saved.

Whether using oil extracted from a liposuction to make oil paints or analyzing a sample of his own DNA, his investigations often address seemingly bizarre issues, using totally serious -often scientific-methodology. For example in his 2010 solo exhibition, *The Most Expensive Paintings in the World*, he looks through pinhole spots at paintings of such masters as Rubens, Monet, Renoir, Cezanne, Pollock, Andy Warhol to reproduce the colors and textures of their paintings. Into the painting materials he inserts his own tears. While the art market values paintings, who can put a price on an artist's tears?

At the same time, he often explores the distinction between reality and fiction. For the exhibition *Future Archeology* he exhibited white three dimensional objects that both resembled antique sculptures and at the same time served as supports for video cameras, metal balls, or a fork. One of his aims was to shock.



***Mediterrane*, 2007.** Installation with 15 tons of bottled water. As installed at TUYAP Beylikdüzü Exhibition Center. The exhibition curated by Feyyaz Yaman. (below) ***Shopping Water*, 2006.** Single channel video, 00:07:00:00 Performer: Catharina Müller, Music: John Plenge. In association with Latife Tekin and Gümüşlük Academy. Proje 4L, Elgiz Contemporary Art Museum Collection.



For Gülan, the concept of time is important. He points out that live performance may be documented on film, but in essence it differs from actions performed with the purpose of making an art video. Gülan works with both of these techniques. Sometimes his performances are recorded and at other times he makes videos solely for the purpose of making videos work.

Gülan likes to explore the boundaries between two concepts. In his work, *Now You are Far Away*, 2009, he explored the sound of architecture. By using conic speakers to broadcast the lyrics of Zeki Müren's music to which he has added an echo and metallic resonance he points out the loss of identity in Istanbul.

In this book, *Conceptual Colors*, Marcus Graf has probed deeply into the thought processes behind Gülan's art to bring out intricate, yet totally meaningful details. The 'colors' they spread before the reader have many tones, many nuances, sometimes resplendent sometimes diluted, but always intriguing. Now one can only ponder as to how this conceptual rainbow will continue to expand and multiply.

"At the end of the 1990s, when researching and writing his book, *De-constructing the Digital Revolution*, Genco Gulan pinpointed issues that have only now become obvious and relevant. Early on, he realized that innovation in technology does not necessarily bring a significant change to society and he questioned whether or not new technology has presented a challenge to the modus operandi of the contemporary materialist society.

Having grown up in Turkey, he brings a non-western perspective and insight to his de-construction of the term "digital revolution": In 1980 he lived through the military coup in Turkey that overthrew the government and closed political parties. Later as he witnessed the new government prohibit the use of the word, devrim, meaning revolution, and substitute the older term, inkilap, having a slightly different connotation, he concretely understood the power of word usage in political agendas. In this book, he shows how the erosion of meaning of a term can contribute to the process of global capitalization.

As an artist writing about new technology, he looks at the situation from a cultural as well as an economical perspective. He emphasizes that the term "digital revolution", first used in the artistic realm was only later co-opted by the corporate world. His literature review shows that the corporate world took the term from avant-garde artists and used it in their public relations strategy aimed at attracting the attention of a new generation to motivate them to consume and invest in new technology. By the turn of the century, the use of the term "digital revolution" was ubiquitous in business magazines, popular media, and academic texts.

...

By chance in November of 2009, while in San Francisco, I passed in front of a conference center where Dreamforce Global Gathering 2009 was taking place. Over 16,000 people met to hear the latest news about salesforce.com, a company that promised de-materialization by eliminating the need to buy expensive hardware and software. By logging onto a server in a "cloud", companies can build their own applications, use Twitter for real-time conversations and integrate Google, Facebook, LinkedIn, etc. One of Salesforce.com's customers is the US government. I listened to a video on the Change.gov Web site. Valerie Jarret, co-chair of the Obama-Biden Transition Team, urged Americans to "log onto Change.gov and give us your idea. It can be about energy, health care, or reduction of our dependence on foreign oil. You decide what is important to you. Other citizens will then be able to read your ideas and make comments and suggestions. You may even hear from the transition team." The corporate world has found a way to turn de-materialization and two-way communication potential into a consumer good, a development that makes research such as Genco Gulan's even more important as a counter-balance, as an alternative way of thinking, as an awareness, as a stop sign in the midst of an avalanche of consumerism. Everyone including the academician, student, business person, consumer and artist will find this book accessible and thought-provoking." (Nancy Atakan, *De-constructing the Digital Revolution: Analysis of the Usage of the Term "Digital Revolution" in Relation with the New Technology & Social Change Right at the Turn of the Second Millennium*. Genco Gulan, Lambert Academic Publishing, 2009. *Second Nature: International journal of creative media*, Vol 2, No 1, 2010)





Glossary

A

Abdülcanbaz: Cartoon character, Ottoman/Turkish superhero (*kabadayı*), created by Turan Selçuk for Milliyet.
Abramovic, Marina: The performance artist. Her works explore the limits of the body as well as its politics.
Adobe: Natural material for construction, mixture of mud and organic materials which are shaped and dry in the sun.
Adorno, Theodor: Frankfurt school German philosopher.
Akay, Ali: Turkish sociologist, curator, art writer.
AKM: Cultural Center in Taksim, Istanbul.
Akın, Levent: Turkish robotics scientist.
Akmen, Üstün: Theater critic.
Akmerkez: Shopping mall in Istanbul.
Aksoy, Turan: Artist, academic.
Alevi: Liberal sect in Islam, practiced in central Anatolia.
Altuğ, Evrim: Istanbul based journalist, art writer.
Anar, İhsan Oktay: Novelist specializing in Ottoman history.
And, Metin: Turkish art historian, specializing in Ottoman performing Arts.
Arredamento: Art and architecture magazine published by Boyut group.
Asal, Selda: Turkish contemporary artist, video maker, founder of Apartment project.
Atagök, Tomur: Artist, professor, curator, founder of the first Museum Studies Graduate Program.
Ataman, Kutluğ: Video artist and filmmaker. Deals with the issues of identity and gender.
Atatürk, Mustafa Kemal: Revolutionist. Founder and the first president of the Turkish Republic.
Art: Brain food.
Automata: From Latin “Automaton” meaning acting of one’s will. A self operating machine. Sometimes used for robots.
Avant garde: innovative, unorthodox.
Aivazowski, Ivan: Russian marine painter.

B

Bal, Gülşen: Visual artist, theoretician, discusses the differential structures within an ethico-aesthetic paradigm conceived in a representational boundaries.
Baraz, Yahşi: Turkish gallerist, and collector.
Barber Shop Series: Hair cutting art.
Barney, Matthew: Cremaster Cyclist, “Mr. Bjork”.
Başaran, Ezgi: Young Turkish journalist, currently writing at Radikal and twitter.
Baudelaire: French poet, essayist, art critic, and pioneering translator of Edgar Allan Poe.
Baudrillard, Jean: Post-modernist, post-structuralist, sociologist, philosopher, cultural theorist and photographer.
Beelden: Dutch magazine.
Bergama: Pergamon. Antique city, district of İzmir TR.
Beuys, Joseph: German performance artist, installation artist and theorist. Former Nazi pilot.
Berteaux, Hippolyte: 19th Century French painter.

Bey, Hakim: Political writer, originator of the concept “Temporary Autonomous Zone” based on pirate utopias.
Beyoğlu: Vibrant Istanbul, the heart of the city.
Biennial: Art event taking place every other year.
Bio-tech: The use of living organisms and biological processes for technological purposes.
Birgün: Leftist Turkish newspaper.
Birtek, Faruk: Turkish sociologist, academic at B.U.
Bio art: Art created with or from living organisms.
Black Box: A device/system in planes, record the conversation of the pilots as well as route data.
Block, René: German curator.
Boğaziçi University: State University by the Bosphorus.
Boileau, Étienne: The pen name of Dutch art critic.
Boro, Sadun: Turkish sailor. Globe trotter.
Boron: Mineral loaded with futurism and politics.
Bozkurt, Muammer: Turkish media art writer.
Broodthaers, Marcel: Belgian poet, filmmaker and artist. Director of Musée d’Art Moderne, Département des Aigles.
Brook, Peter: British experimental theater director.
Braun, Adrienne: She works as an art critic for the Süddeutsche Zeitung, ART das Kunst and the Stuttgarter Zeitung.

C, Ç

Camera-men: Humanoid figure made up of real and/or virtual monitors.
Carpet: Wool craft. Must for nomadic home-decoration.
Cadaques: Town on the South coast of Spain. Salvador Dalí had a house.
Cellek, Tülay: Turkish painter, academician.
Centre Pompidou: Metallic Museum in Paris.
Ceylan, Taner: Istanbul based Turkish artist, writer and painter.
Chalayan, Hussein: British/Turkish Cypriot fashion designer and artist.
Cosmopolis: Balkan Biennial of Contemporary Art.
Cumhuriyet: Republican Turkish newspaper.
Cutler, Rachel: Student at Parsons School of Design.
Cyprus: Politically divided problem island in the Eastern Mediterranean Sea.
Çağdaş, Hami: Editor of Gösteri Magazine.
Çağlayan, Ufuk: Turkish scientist, academic, director of Netlab at B.U.
Çağlayan, Hande: Turkish scientist, academic specializing in human molecular genetics at B.U.
Çetin, Orhan Cem: Turkish artist, photographer.
Çeşme: Town on the West coast of Turkey.

D

Dada: Cultural movement that shook the art.
DAGS: Interdisciplinary Young Artists Association of 1990’s. Özdemir Altan named them “the second exciting thing after D Group” in Turkish art.
De Boer, Ryanne: Dutch student. Took part in “I live in a Museum” project, lived in the Museum for a year.
Debord, Guy: French Marxist theorist, filmmaker. His book Society of Spectacle is about how social life has become solely representation and appearances.

Delacroix: French Orientalist Painter
Demnievska, Evgenija: Mail-art, Net-art pioneer.
Digital: Made up of digits, numbers, code.
Disneyland: Mouse fiction/perception empire.
Diyarbakır: City in southeast Turkey.
Doğan, İsmet: Painter, artist.
Doğançay, Burhan: Painter, photographer.
DOS: Disk Operating System for computers; Was popular between 1981-1995.
Duchamp, Marcel: Artist who ready found the ready-found..
DNA: The macro molecule carrying genetic character .

E

Eco, Umberto: Italian philosopher, novelist, genius.
Eldem, Edhem: Turkish historian.
Erdemci, Fulya: Turkish contemporary art curator.
Erdok, Neşe: Turkish figurative painter.
Erkal, Genco: The Turkish actor.
Erkmen, Ayşe: Turkish artist, born in İstanbul. Currently academician in Münster Kunstakademie, lives in İstanbul and Berlin.
Evrensel: Turkish newspaper.
Ex Oriente Lux: (Latin) Sun rises from the East.

F

Fake: F cake.
Feshane: One of the first factories established in Eyüp which produced “fez”, a traditional hat.
Fluxus: (Latin) flowing.

G

Galata: Neighborhood near Galata Tower. Area between Beyoğlu, Karaköy and Tophane in İstanbul.
Gecekondu: (Turkish) Shanty house, slum. Meaning “built throughout the night”. One of the biggest problems of İstanbul.
Genco: Name of the artist, meaning “he who is young”.
Gerome: French orientalist.
Gibbons, Fiachra: He is a former Guardian arts correspondent and Turkey specialist.
Gilbert & George: British and Italian performance artist couple. Mr. Living sculptures.
Gobi Desert: Large desert in Asia, covers partially China and Mongolia.
Goldberg, Rosa Lee: American art historian specialized in performance art. Currently director of a festival.
Goya, Francisco: Spanish painter, considered as the last of the grand masters.
Göle, Nilüfer: Turkish sociologist, author of Modern Mahrem.
Gösteri Magazine: Turkish theater, art and literature magazine, part of the Hürriyet group.
Güvensoy, Deniz: Studied Painting at Mimar sinan Academy, currently freelance writing for Artist Magazine.
Gürses, Müslüm: Singer. Mostly sings Turkish folk and Otto-

man classical music, with an arabesque style. He is called Müslüm Baba.

Gürün, Dikmen: Director of the İstanbul Theater festival.
Güvensoy, Deniz: Studied Painting at Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University. Currently working at Okan University.
Gesamtkunstwerk: (German) Integrated art.

H

Hagia, Sophia: “Holy Wisdom”, former Orthodox basilica-turned-mosque-turned-museum.
Hacettepe University: State University in Ankara.
Haji Bektash Veli: Islamic mystic, philosopher.
Halay: Turkish folkdance with ancient roots.
Hamdi, Osman: Prominent Turkish Orientalist painter, academy and museum founder. Turtle trainer.
He is Now a Soldier: “O Şimdi Asker” in Turkish. Famous phrase used for men who are doing the military service.
Happening: Surprise art. A performance that can take place anywhere, can involve anyone, including the participation of the audience, eliminating the boundary between the artwork and its spectator.
Hirst, Damien: Shark trainer.
Hurriyet: Popular Turkish newspaper.

I

iconoclasm: Destruction of images.
Ingres, Jean August Dominique: French orientalist painter
internet art: Net-art.
İstibdat Period: The period was characterized by repressive political environment between 1877-1908 in Ottoman Empire.

K

Kabaağaçlı, Cevat Şakir: “Halıkarnas Balıkcısı” was a Turkish write, ethnographer and travelogue. He loved Bodrum and Bodrum loves him.
Kant, Immanuel: German philosopher, author of “Critique of Pure Reason”. He never travelled out of his town.
Karagöz, Hacivat: Shadow puppets.
Katircioğlu, Hüseyin: Pioneering Turkish performance artist. He died while trying to build his own art center.
Kaufman, Andy: American actor and performance artist. His performances don’t fit to traditional norms.
Kayar, Arhan: Turkish Designer. Curator of Seretonin and founder of ddf.
Keçi Tower: Largest tower in Diyarbakır’s City Walls.
Kemalist: Followers of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk’s ideology.
Kemal Kirişçi: Professor of Political Science at B.U. Winner of Sakıp Sabancı International Research Award in 2011.
Klein, Yves: Blue in French.
Koçan, Hüsamettin: Turkish artist, museum founder.
Komet: Turkish Dada.
Korgül, Rana: Turkish writer.
Kosova, Erden: Turkish art critic.
Koyuncuoğlu, Emre: Turkish actress, choreographer, and

theater director .

Kulig, Oleg: Russian performance artist, photographer and curator. Born in Kiev.

Kunsthalle: Public art space in German.

L

Landi, Ann: Studied at Princeton currently writer for Art News.

Last World: (2007) Theater play written and directed by Yeşim Özsoy Gülan, inspired by Genco Gülan's *Fall of the Super Hero's*.

Lacan, Jacques: French psychoanalyst and psychiatrist (1901-1981). Influenced post-structuralist philosophers. Focused on the unconscious, ego and the function of the language.

Limbo: An afterlife condition in Catholicism, is in between the Heaven and the Hell.

M

Madra, Beral: Art critic and curator, director of BM Contemporary Art Center. Mother of contemporary art in Turkey.

Masal: Fairy tale in Turkish.

Matthews, Owen: Studied Modern History at Oxford University. He is a correspondent for Newsweek magazine.

Mc Luhan, Marshall: Canadian philosopher, communication theorist. Survived through a brain surgery.

Mediazure: (Neologism) Artist using many different media.

Michelangelo: Grand master. Probably used swimming pools too.

Midnight Express: Bad PR.

Milliyet Sanat: Turkish art magazine.

Milliyet: Turkish newspaper.

Mimar Sinan: Chief architect for three Ottoman Sultans.

MoMA: Art museum in New York. The museum that host most American artists that were born in Europe.

Munch, Edward: Norwegian painter. His painting *The Scream* is considered to be one of the most important examples of Modern Art.

Müren, Zeki: Turkish classical music singer. His cross gender dressing, facilitative acceptance of homosexuality.

N

Net-art: Internet-art but not only art on the Internet.

New: Art

New media: New media art

New media art: Art making with emerging technologies.

Nauman, Bruce: American artist: Jump, jump, jump...

Nemesis: Mythological goddess of revenge.

Neoclassic: of or relating to neoclassicism.

Neo-oriental: Orientalism again.

Nguyen-Hatsushiba: Vietnamese artist, underwater video maker.

O, Ö

Oriental: From Orient. Dancer in Turkish.

Orientalux: Exhibition by İsmet Doğan and Genco Gülan

Orientalism: (Mis) Representation of the East

Öge, Sanem: Turkish editor, actress, art writer.

Orlan: Known for her art with plastic surgeries.

Özgür, Ferhat: Turkish artist, Academic

Özsoy Gülan, Yeşim: Turkish playwright, theater director, performer.

P

Paik, Nam June: Video art pioneer born in Korea.

Parla, Taha: Political scientist specialised in Turkish Republican History, Kemalist ideology and its relation with left.

Pasinli, Alpay: Turkish archaeologist, museum director.

Pelvanoğlu, Burcu: Academician at Mimar Sinan University, Department of Art History. Member of AICA.

Picasso, Pablo: Spanish cubist.

Play alla Turca: (2000) Theater play written and directed by Yeşim Özsoy Gülan, as a homage to Ottoman performing arts.

Plenge, John: American composer, rocker.

Polat, Raife: Turkish critic, art writer.

Portable installation: (Neologism) installation that moves.

Pergamon Museum: Museum in Berlin Museum Insel, housing monumental buildings parts of which were stolen from Turkey.

Post Modernism: It was a big mistake.

Post-post-modern: Era that which comes after the post-modern.

Postman, Neil: American author, media theorist and cultural critic. Mostly known for his book *Amusing Ourselves to Death*. That emphasizes the growing inability of mass media to mediate serious issues.

Prometheus: Delivered the fire to the humans stealing from the Gods and later was punished by them.

Q

QR Code: Digital coding system something like barcode.

QR Code poem: A poem that is written utilising QR code.

R

Rauschenberg, Robert: Combine painter.

Razrushenye: Destruction in Russian, with Latin letters.

Rh Sanat: Turkish art magazine.

Raley, Rita: Associate Professor of English at UCSB, with courtesy appointments in Film and Media Studies, Comparative Literature, and Global Studies.

Robot: Autonomous machine, not a slave.

Rorschach, Herrman: Psychiatrist and psychoanalyst, the inventor of the inkblot projective test.

Ruscha, Edward: American pop-artist.

S, Ş

Safa, Behçet: Malta based Turkish painter. Great cook.
Said, Edward: Palestinian-American literary theorist, originator of the “Orientalism” concept.
Sanat: Art in Turkish.
Sanat Dünyamız: Turkish art magazine published by Yapi Kredi Publishing.
Sansolo, Carlo: Brazilian media-art curator.
Sarai: (Turkish) Palace.
Sarkis: Turkish-born, Paris based Armenian conceptual artist. His rice is tastier than my mothers’.
Scheherezade: Persian queen, married to Persian King Shahryar said to be telling stories to the Shah in order to avoid being beheaded like the anterior thousand wives.
SCIgen: It is a program that generates random Computer Science research papers, including graphs, figures, and citations.
Sherman, Cindy: American photographer and filmmaker, famous for her role playing conceptual self portraits.
SCIgen: Program that generates random Computer Science research papers. Developed at M.I.T.
Seljuqs: Anatolian civilisation.
Semazen: Sufi whirling dervish. A form of physically active meditation. Originated by Sufis, still practiced by Mevlevis.
Siemens Sanat: Art gallery in Istanbul founded by M. Graf
Silk Road: The historical commercial route that connects China, with Europe.
Sinan, Mehmet: Virtual identity.
Soydan, Esra: Turkish genetics researcher.
Solmaz, Eda: Journalist for Gazete Vatan.
Sports: Movement without a reason.
Stribling, Jeremy: American programmer at MIT.
Suboya: (2007) Performance of Genco Gülan.
Stribling, Jeremy: Graduated from the doctorate program of the Computer Science and Artificial Intelligence Laboratory at MIT. He is one of the programmers of SCI Gen.
Şahmeran: Anthropomorphic figure with a female head on a snake body in Anatolian mythology.
Sureyya Pasha: A governor who lived in the late Ottoman era. Has established an opera house.
Surname-i Hümayun: Imperial Festival Books that depict and describe important events for the Ottoman Empire such as the circumcision of Shahzades and imperial wedding ceremonies.
Şehzadebaşı: An old district in Istanbul.

T

Tahtakale: Old market in Istanbul next to Golden Horn.
Tarlabası: Turkish Harlem next to Beyoğlu.
Tanır, Cem: Free-lance journalist.
Tekand, Esat: Turkish painter, stage designer for Stüdyo Oyuncuları.
Tele-rugby: Underwater game played with an old TV.
Theater: Game box.
Tuna, Vahit: Turkish artist, graphic designer.
Tuncay, Yeşim: Studied Journalism at Istanbul University. Than she studied Modern Dance at Yıldız Technical University with Geyvan Mcmillen.
Turani, Adnan: Turkish art historian.
TÜYAP: Exhibition Center in Istanbul.
Twin: Twin

U

Uçkan, Özgür: Turkish scholar, writer specialised in new media and performance art.
Utkun, Samim: Turkish graphic illustrator.
Upper West Side: An upscale neighborhood of Manhattan, New York.
Utopia: Modern fairy tale.

V

Van Gogh, Vincent: Ear cutter - impressionist artist.
Video: It is more than a tape.
Video art: Artworks created with and distributed as the medium.
Virilio, Paul: French cultural theorist and urbanist.
Voyeur: Secretly watching people, engaging in private activity.

W

Wagner, Wilhelm Richard: German composer and essayist. Well known for his operas.
Warhol, Andy: American painter, print and filmmaker.
Water: Sacred liquid.
Web Biennial: The online Biennial that exhibit online art.
Web-art: Art on the World Wide Web.
Weibel, Peter: Austrian artist, curator, theoretician and ZKM director.
Weshinskey, Anne: Founder of Caravanserai.
Wolff, Greg: Painter, mentor.
Wallerstein, Immanuel: Sociologist, social scientist.
Wunderkammer: (German) Room of miracles.
WWW: World Wide Wild.

Y

Yaraş, Ali Can: Turkish writer, director, artist.
Year 2084: (2000) Performance of Yeşim Özsoy Gülan after 1984 of George Orwell.
Yeditepe University: Private University in Istanbul founded by former mayor Bedrettin Dalan.
Yeşil Defter: (Turkish) Green Notebook written in 2001.
Yıldız Palace: Last Ottoman palace.
Yıldız University: State University in Istanbul.

Z

Zaim, Dervis: Turkish filmmaker, director.
Zeitgeist: (German) General climate of the age.
Zen: Buddhist enlightenment through meditation.
Zenne: Male dancer.
Zeybek: Ancient Aegean folk dance.

Acknowledgements

Additional remarks by the artist:

My art is a result of teamwork. It would not have been possible without the essential and gracious support of many individuals. I will use this opportunity to mention some names:

I would especially like to thank my parents Tezer and Kaya Gülan for opening my eyes, giving me the vision and their continuous support for my productions.

Yeşim Özsoy Gülan is not only my wife but also my partner in most of my projects under or above the water.

My brothers Gökem and Güçlü and his wife Gözde Gülan helped me in many of my projects which are so much that I can't even list here.

I would like to thank my parents in law for attending all my openings.

Some of the names I want to mention here are not alive today: Saime İzmiroğlu, Aslan Ülkü, Nilgün Özyayten, Hüseyin Katircioğlu, Cüneyt Budak. Thank you very much.

I would like to thank Sevgi and Hayri Karay for opening me their workshop for the production of **Re-construction** exhibition. For **Artist with four Eyes** I have worked with painter Mansur Sadıkov and photographer Usami Arı. With Mansur we also worked at the **Orientalist** series.

For the marbling of **Yüz** and many others I worked with İpek Özsoy. She is my sister in law.

Hand & Eye installation is documented by photographer Ali Öz and Levent Öget. I have worked with Ali in many other projects.

Re-construction Installation is documented by photographer Levent Öget in 1996.

For **Re-construction** I have worked with: Vahit Tuna and Elif Çelebi.

Daily Mythologies Installation is documented by photographer Neslihan Kırmızıgül and Omid Keshtkar. The project is supported by HP Turkey.

Dream/ Fall Installation in Saint Tropez is documented by Berk Asal.

Dream/ Fall crystals and many other artworks of Gülan are documented photographer Ali Karatuna.

Black Box is Orange Installation is documented by Cham Yin Kwan Esther. Project is sponsored by Kuzu Airlines. Thanks to Özlem Akbayır.

R.F.W. is realized with the support from BÜ. A.I. Lab and Dr. Levent Akın. In the same project Kemal Kaplan developed a custom code.

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For **Newist** I have worked with photographer Deniz Seven inside the underground tunnels of Istanbul Subway.

At the same project I have worked with performers: Genco Erkal, Ulgar Manzakoglu, Cem Öğretir, Onur Orkut, Nükhet Akkaya, Özlem Saraç, Omca Otoman, Chris Plenge, Ayça Damgacı, Batur Belirdi, Müslüm Aybar, Ferdi İnce.

For **Tele-rugby** I have worked with under-water cinematographer Engin Aygün. Project is realized with support from Caddebostan Balıkadamlar Spor Kulübü and its underwater rugby team. Thank you Pırl Yıldıırım.

For **Artificial Evolution of the Cyprus Problem** I have worked with programmer Li.

For **Newist** I have worked with cinematographer: Mehmet Saruhan and many others.

For **Film Alaturka** I have worked with cinematographers: Mevlüt Akkaya and Bülent Baş.

For **Hear-cut** I have worked with cinematographers: Güçlü Gülan and Kaya Hacaloğlu. With them we edit many stuff.

For **Man with the Yellow Raincoat** I have worked with cinematographer: Güçlü Gülan. Hakan Kırıcı made the photos.

For **Narthex** Project I have worked with cinematographer: Nur Akalın. Also with Petek Mermerci and İdil Medin for documentation. BEKO had supported the Project.

For **Fish-Man** series I first worked with Aslıhan Özcan in a ship at the Caribbean Sea.

For **semaZen** animation I have worked with: Kerem Kurdoğlu and Özgün Zümrüt from Sinefekt.

Copy Installation is documented by photographer Orhan Cem Çetin.

For **Hair Cut Loop** photos I have worked in New York with photographer: Cem Mirap.

For **I love You** Series I have worked with photographers: Tunç Evcimen, Mete Okumuş, Joel Parsons, Neslihan Kırmızıgül.

For **Gaori-Man** I worked in Seoul with Suzan Batu.

For **Museum Shave** I worked in New York with John Plenge. He is a great composer and we keep on collaborating in all projects.

Military Photo taken at Çanakkale is by Cihat Tokgöz.

Pompidou jumping photo in Paris is made by Merve Pehlivan.

Halil Altindere took the photos of the **Museum Traffic Sign** during the first installation in Taksim.

Güneş Hüseyinkulu and Güler Aşık worked with me on the **Most Expensive Paintings of the World** series..

Başak Özdoğan Pirim and Turan Aksoy worked with me on the **Paintings Robots Can Not Read** series.

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Ryanne de Boer from Holland, Mercedes Gonzales de Garay from Spain, Cham Yin Kwan

Esther from Hon Kong, Catherina Mueller from Germany, Alper Akçay from Istanbul and Badi Badalov from Baku participated to the **I live in a Museum** Project.

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Museum T-shirt performance at Museum as Muse exhibition in MoMA is documented by Burcu Avşar.

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For **Suboya** I have worked with cinematographer: Serhat Koç.

Flowers installation is realized with support from Kamil Şenol, LG and Ufotek.

For **Turkish Sculpture Meets Rodin** I have worked at Brooklyn Museum with Tim Hailey

For **Shopping Water** I have worked with performer Katherian Müller. John Plenge wrote the original composition.

For **Cadaques** I worked with: Arek Nişanyan, Pınar Atansay and performers: Gökçe Akyıldız, Neşe Mengüloğlu, Pınar Öznal, Alper Akçay, Özgün Çoban, Mustafa Çolakoğlu, Fatih Sarı, Korhan Okay, Pelinsu Öznal, Harun Ateş. Pınar Atansay and Pırl Gündüz helped me for the video and the production.

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For **YEN!** I worked with production: Eti Behar, Can Kurban, BerkeSoyuer, Selim Benba; costume: Leyla Okan and Aslı Bor. Performers: Pelin Batu, Münibe Millet, Gökçe Akyıldız, Neşe Mengüloğlu, NeylanÖzgüle, Pelinsu Öznal, Anderske Kasperma, Necla Köse, Tamer Ertuna.

For **Surname** I worked with: Yeşim Özsoy Gülan as co-directors, Also with Arek Nişanyan, John Plenge, Alper Maral, Ecme Pehlivanoğlu for production. And many performers including: Gökçe Akyıldız, Neşe Mengüloğlu, Alper Akçay, Pelinsu Öznal, Münibe Millet, Neylan Özgüle, Özlem Kaya, Koray Bülent Tarhan, Batur Belirdi and Sinan Can Gülan.

Copy installation production is supported by Dr. Ersi Kalfaoglu and Hacettepe University, Department of Forensic Science Labs.

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For **Razrushenye** I have worked with: Ayça Bayrak, Ilgın Tufan, Sefer Kurtoğlu, İzlem Genç. Project is produced by Gallery Artist Istanbul. Thank you Janset Eymur.

For **Twin** I have worked with twins: Deniz and Yeliz Çelebi; İrem and Gizem Halis. Also with Ayça Bayrak, Ilgın Tufan, Sefer Kurtoğlu, Tanju Kaya, Duygu Efe and Cansu Özel.

Surname in Duisburg documented by Stephan Eickershoff, Daniel Grunwald, WAZ NewMedia GmbH & Co. KG.

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Also thanks to Çiğdem Topuz and Ufuk Şahin from Mas.

Probably I forget some names but special thanks to all.

(pages 228 - 229) **The Dream of the Satellite Dish**, 2010. Photograph of a performance under the sea at Datça. Thanks to Boğaziçi Diving Club. (pages 236 -237) **Double Alexander**, 2011. Boron, polymer, marble and genetical signature of the artist. 47cm * 32cm * 33cm. (pages 242 -243) **Yüz**, 2007. Water Color Series. Marbling and paper cut. 29,5 cm * 21 cm.





Biographies:

Agricola de COLOGNE: Founder and director of [NewMediaArtProjectNetwork]:ilcologne - www.nmart-project.net the experimental platform for art and new media operating from Cologne/Germany; the chief curator of JavaMuseum - Forum for Internet Technology in Contemporary Art - www.javamuseum.org, VideoChannel - video art in a global context - <http://videochannel.newmediafest.org>, and the founder & director of CologneOFF – Cologne International Videoart Festival - <http://coff.newmediafest.org>

Ahu ANTMEN: Graduated from Istanbul University Faculty of Communications and worked for Cumhuriyet Newspaper and Flash Art. Obtained an MA in 20th Century Art from Goldsmiths College, and completed her PhD on *New Approaches in Turkish Art* at Mimar Sinan University. Prof. Antmen is a faculty member at Marmara University Faculty of Fine Arts. Published numerous books and currently is writing for Radikal newspaper.

Ali ŞİMŞEK: Graduated from Marmara University in 1993. His book *New Middle Class* gained popularity and translated into many languages. His articles has been published at Cumhuriyet, BirGün, Varlık, RH+, Virgül, MediaCat, Istanbul, Evrensel magazines. Currently he is the art editor of the Birgün Daily.

Andrej TISMA: Graduated from Academy of Fine Arts in Prague, Czechoslovakia in 1976. From the early '70s Tisma was concerned with concrete poetry, mail-art, photography, Xerox, and since '80s with performance art and video. Since 1996 Tisma has been working in the field of digital graphics and web-art. He has been publishing art criticism and essays since 1976. Tisma lives in Novi Sad, Serbia.

Ayşegül SÖNMEZ: Studied Italian Language and Literature at the Istanbul University. Had masters degree at the Visual Arts Faculty of Marmara University. Began her PhD degree at the same faculty, her thesis is titled *The Light of the Kitchen; Public and Private in Turkish Painting in 20th Century*. She worked as columnist in different daily newspapers like Milliyet, Sabah, Birgün since 1997. She curated 10/2000 L'Art Dans Le Monde Paris/ Turkish section. She started doing live interviews on theatre stages since 2008 and still doing panel and lecture series at Akbank Center, Pera Museum and Garage Istanbul. Currently she is writing for Radikal newspaper.

Barış ACAR: Studied Art History at Hacettepe University Ankara. Got his master degree at Ankara University, Department of Art History. He lectured on Art History and the Theory of Art in Anadolu University, Faculty of Fine Arts. His articles have been published in Sanat Dünümüz, Cogito, Artist, Rh + Sanart, Antik & Dekor. Currently he is a researcher at the University of Vienna, Faculty of Art History.

Bill BARKER: Freelanced for Art in America and Arrademento Magazines. Lectured at Bogaziçi and Kadir Has Universities.

Fırat ARAPOĞLU: Lecturer, M.A. - Art History. He graduated from Department of Art History, İstanbul University in 2002. His master dissertation was about Fluxus entitled "Fluxus and Beyond with its Social Process". He gave lecture at Marmara University, Fine Arts Faculty between 2009 - 2010. He has been working in the Fine Arts and Design Faculty, İstanbul Kemerburgaz University. He has curated exhibitions such as "Body & Space" (with Ebru N. Sülün), "Memory", "IDs Please", "Re-De/Generation", "For the Public, In Spite of Public", "Other Bodies" (with Erkan Doğanay) and "Asphyxiating Culture (with reference to Jean Dubuffet)" and he has had a position in some art projects as an artistic consultant. He has written numerous articles in national art magazines such as Gençsanat, Art-İst Modern & Actual, ICE, ARTAM and Eleştirel Kültür. He has also written articles in a national newspaper called Birgün. He translated some important articles such as Michael Baxandall's "Patterns of Intention". He has given interviews for some TV Channels & Radios. He also wrote national and international symposium proceedings about art and art education.

Göknur GÜRCAN: Graduated from Hacettepe University, Master of Art History. Her thesis was on *Performance Art in Turkey*. Currently she is the director of Idart Gallery in Bodrum.

Hülya KÜPÇÜOĞLU: Studied painting at Mimar Sinan Academy. Currently making her Phd at Istanbul Technical University, Visual and Environmental Arts. She is teaching at ITU, Işık University and writing regularly for HaberTürk newspaper.

Lale Babaoğlu BALKIŞ: Studied Political Sciences in the University of Vienna between the years 1976-1980. BA and MA at the Bogazici University, in Sociology; PhD. On *The Turks in Austrian Art between the 16th and 18th Centuries*, 1995. Head of the Traugott Fuchs Archive. Opened an exhibition with the title “Bonds of Exile” (Sürgün Bağları) at Bogazici University, 2007. She has received the Academic Encouragement Award (Akademik Teşvik Ödülü) from Bogazici University Foundation (BUVAK) in 2010. Currently she is instructor at the History Department of Bogazici University.

Levent ÇALIKOĞLU: Has degrees of Art History and Museum Studies. He is a lecturer at the Yıldız Technical University (Istanbul) in the Art Management Department. He has various published articles and books on Modern and Contemporary Turkish Art. Since 1998 he is curating exhibitions in national and international scales for various institutions and museums. He is also art consultant for Dr. Nejat F. Eczacıbaşı Foundation and Akbank Culture and Art Centre. He is currently the Chief Curator at Istanbul Modern.

Nancy ATAKAN: Received her BA degree from Mary Washington College in 1968 before moving to Istanbul, Turkey, in 1969. Since then, she has lived and worked in Istanbul, where she received her PhD in Art History from Mimar Sinan University in 1994 and has taught at the Bogazici University and Robert College. She has published numerous articles and two books entitled, *Arayışlar*, Yapı Kredi publications, Istanbul, 1998, and *Sanatta Alternatif Arayışlar*, Karakalem publications, Izmir, 2008. In coordination with Volkan Aslan and Marcus Graf, she opened a non-profit off space in the Spring of 2008 in Istanbul: 5533.

Nilgün ÖZAYTEN: Contributed in raising the artistic and cultural milieu of Turkey. Graduated from Hacettepe University, the department of Art History in 1979. She obtained an MA from the same University in 1984 and completed her PhD on; *Art of Object/ Installation/ Conceptual Art* at Istanbul University. She wrote for different periodicals as Cumhuriyet Gazetesi, Arredemento, And Journal of art and Education, Gösteri Sanat ve Edebiyat Dergisi. She worked at Ministry of Culture at the Directorate of Fine Arts. She was the director of AKM between 1984 and 2000. After a long treatment of cancer, she passed away in 2004.

Özgün TANGLAY: Received her bachelor's degree in Industrial Design in 2001 and MA degree in History of Architecture, 2007, from Middle East Technical University, Faculty of Architecture. Tanglay's articles on diverse issues ranging from contemporary art, product design to feminism or graffiti have appeared in a number of publications including NY Arts, Mesa ve Yasam, Milliyet Sanat, Radikal İki, Radikal Genç and Planlama. Currently she runs the web portal World of Architecture.

Tim HAILEY: Graduated from University of New Orleans, MFA 1995. He was co-director of the HEREart gallery New York until 2004. He's a founding member of Detroit's Public Pool art space and has shown his work widely in the US and abroad. Currently writing at eatmyink.com

Zehra İPŞİROĞLU: Established “Theater Criticism and Dramaturgy” at Istanbul University. She has various awards including: 1987 Milliyet Art Literary Criticism and 1993, Ministry of Culture Theatre Research award. Has numerous books on theater. Currently she is a faculty of Duisburg/ Essen University, writes for Mimesis and Cumhuriyet.

Zeynep Yasa YAMAN: Has completed her PhD on *The Cultural Environment of Turkey in the Years Between 1930-1950 Group D*. Worked for the General Directorate of Fine Arts of the Ministry of Culture, was the director of the Programming and Exhibitions department. She worked for the establishment of Painting and Sculpture Museum in Ankara. She made exhibitions on local and global scale including Asia and Europa art Biennial. Published articles as well as books. Currently she teaches at Hacettepe University in the faculty of Art History.

Marcus Graf

Dr. Marcus Graf, PhD., after studying Cultural Sciences and Esthetical Communication in the Institute for Fine Arts, Aesthetics and Art History at the University of Hildesheim in Germany, has worked for several institutions of art and culture as a curator, instructor, writer, project manager or artist. He received his PhD in 2010 from the Institute of Contemporary Art History, Aesthetic and Art Theory at Stuttgart Art Academy in Germany. Since 2001, he lives and works in Istanbul

Since 2010, Marcus Graf is the resident curator of Plato Sanat. In 2010, he was invited to curate exhibitions for KaleidoscopeEurope in Evora, Portugal (Not a Lens but a Prism) as well as for the Gallery CDA Projects in Istanbul (Hans & Helga). In 2009, Graf was selected to curate the exhibition Temporary Harassment for Istanbul 2010 – European Capital of Culture. In 2007, he was chosen to be the co-curator of the 10th Istanbul Biennial project night-comers. Graf was the artistic director of Aviva Art Program (2006 - 2007). Between 2005 and 2007, he has worked as the artistic director and curator of the mobile art space Under Construction. Since 2004, he is consultant and freelance curator at the Istanbul Contemporary Art Museum. Graf also was the resident curator of the exhibition space Siemens Sanat (2003 – 2007). Since 2003, he is a lecturer at the Fine Arts Faculty of Yeditepe University.

His recent book publications are:

Graf, Marcus, *Istanbul Biennale – Geschichte, Position, Wirkung*, KV-Kadmos, Berlin, 2011.

Graf, Marcus, Löchte Jan, Zier Tobias, Jan Löchte – *Der neue Katalog ist da*, Staatliche Akademie der Bildenden Künste Stuttgart, 2010.

Graf, Marcus, *Fragmented Realities*, Boyut, Istanbul, 2009.

Graf, Marcus, *Genco Gülan: Kavramsal Renkler*, Galata Perform Yayınları: Sanat No. 1, Istanbul, 2008.

Graf, Marcus & Baur, Andreas & Hodjak, Franz, Rudolf Reiber. *Blast of Silence*, Staatliche Akademie der Bildenden Künste Stuttgart, 2007.

For more information see www.MEKAN34.net



The photo of Marcus Graf is taken by Aydın Gökay at Plato Sanat, Balat.



yüz



conceptual colors of GENCO GÜLAN

Marcus Graf

"In this book, *Conceptual Colors*, Marcus Graf has probed deeply into the thought processes behind Gülan's art to bring out intricate, yet totally meaningful details. The 'colors' they spread before the reader have many tones, many nuances, sometimes resplendent sometimes diluted, but always intriguing. Now one can only ponder as to how this conceptual rainbow will continue to expand and multiply." (Nancy Atakan, 2010.)

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