

Bir Meteliğin
Peşinde

Chasing
a Coin

14/02/2018
–27/04/2018

Hera Büyüktaşçıyan
Marco Di Giovanni
Ali Taptık

İşaretler, İzler ve Hikayeler

Yapı Kredi Sikke
Koleksiyonu
üzerine üç proje

Three
commissions
on Yapı Kredi
Coin Collection

Signs, Traces and Stories

 **YapıKredi**
Kültür Sanat Yayıncılık

YAPI
KREDİ
KÜLTÜR
SANAT

İstiklal Caddesi
No: 161 Beyoğlu

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In 2013, I was called to a meeting in Yapı Kredi Culture and Arts. At the meeting, I was asked to develop a project that focused on the Yapı Kredi art collections. However, I already knew that Yapı Kredi Bank had been creating one of the world's most important and comprehensive coin collections since 1954. Moreover, up until now, only a very limited part of this collection had been shown to the public through a few exhibitions. The vast majority of the collection was locked away in a special storage equipped with an exceptional protection system, accessible only by one or two authorized persons. In the later phases of this meeting, we decided to develop a project based on Yapı Kredi Coin Collection. This meeting was followed by many other meetings. Bige Örer, director of the Istanbul Biennial; Emre Baykal, curator and director of Arter Exhibitions; and Walter Guadagnini, head of UniCredit Art Scientific Commission, and director of Galleria Civica di Modena took part in the project as the Advisory Board. Again in 2013, three artists were selected together with the Advisory Board: Hera Büyüктаşçıyan, Ali Taptık, and Marco Di Giovanni. After extensive research, project development, and production process with the artists, the works were produced in 2014 and delivered to the Yapı Kredi Culture Center.

The main motive behind the decision to focus on the Coin Collection rather than the Art Collection was very personal: I had a modest collection of coins that I had collected since my childhood, completely incomparable with Yapı Kredi Coin Collection both in scale and value. My grandmother was a very colourful character who had shaped her whole life quite differently considering the social norms of her time; she had gained her economic freedom at a young age and raised a son on her own. When she retired at an early age, her son had already finished the academy and established his own life, therefore, she began to realize her dreams of exploring the world with her friends where she travelled all around the country and

overseas. She went on these journeys until the end of her life. In the 1970s, finding postcards from my grandmother in the mail box sent from different parts of the world, or a letter containing photographs, changed my world and added to my daydreams. Even more exciting were the objects and coins that came from other lands. These were kept in a tiny space that was originally designed as a small sitting room with small seats and a lampshade, then altered to a wardrobe in her house at Koşuyolu, Istanbul. Here, she kept her collection of coins from her world travels for her granddaughter. The financial value of these coins was the most insignificant aspect for me. Every coin meant a new journey and a new story. After I lost my grandmother, my father took over the task of collecting coins for me from faraway lands. Years later, working with three artists with similar memories and visions meant taking the same dream-filled journeys all over again.

During the artistic research process, several meetings took place with Yapı Kredi Culture and Arts. To see that all of these people were sharing a common passion changed the course of the works. Throughout the project, I worked with the artists not only on the research and development of the works, but we also discussed, documented, and planned all the details from design solutions to presentation modes of the works, as well as how they should be documented. Creating a publication on the process and the content was one of the main goals of the project. However, the project was put on hold for a number of reasons such as the renovation of the Yapı Kredi Culture and Arts building, and the change of the center's program over time. As is the habitual destiny of this geography, the project was delayed and transformed. However, the important thing for me is that the produced works can finally be shown, and this publication that you are reading right now with the candidly written texts on the process, intentions, and research, is finally printed.

Hera Büyüktaşçıyan

From One Hand to Another, From There to Yonder

On one of those days, when the snow and the glaciers started melting, one of the kids thrust a silver coin into my hand.

On one side of the coin, there was a backwards written sign, which I didn't know the meaning of... On the other side, there was a fish. I asked myself what a coin with a fish had to do here.

I asked the kid where he found the coin. He found it in the river bed.

"The water was flowing and the penny was shining there," he said.

Without a doubt, it was the result of a coincidence that the coin ended up in this nowhere, like I did.

I studied this coin for many nights. But I couldn't find any answers to my questions. I gave it back to its owner, before I left the village.

"Keep it" he said. "And show it to every stranger, passing by this place. Maybe it belongs to one of them."

Ferit Edgü / Sikke

Hands of copper ingots, one after another, seem to be in pursuit of creating an echo in the topography of time, by vigorously beating the ground with the metal circles they are holding tightly with the tips of their fingers. Those flat circles with two faces are the ones that leave the deepest scars. They leave scars on the buried time as well as on the present time, they are made to batter and injure. Each one has a surface full of figures, placed there to be remembered and to serve as a reminder, with the duty to leave a mark on the worldly oeuvre. The other surface is full of volatile numbers, determining the balances of the earth. One face is buried in the mixture of soil with the waters flowing, wandering in the depths of the invisible and stable. Whereas the other one witnesses the inert cycle of history, of which it is the reflection itself.

Both independent from each other and mutually functioning, they influence the course of time. These images, designating the fates of history, serve as a counterbalance of power and societies

simultaneously, and scratch the topography of memory with their sometimes ragged or disproportionate structures to draw new boundaries. These lines give new directions to physical geographies and political borders, as well as the place beyond the mundane.

“Charon’s obol” draws this boundary and leads our journey into the depths of the invisible. In ancient times, the obol (ὀβολός) was a silver penny with a lower ratio of fineness, equal to 1/6th of the Greek currency Drachma. According to the Greek mythology, Charon, the ferryman of the world of the dead, took money to convey souls across the river Acheron to the underworld, to Hades. This penny, called “Viaticum” in Latin, meaning “the provision for journey” is like a fare to yonder, to pass through to what is beyond. For this journey, a penny of one obol is placed in the mouth of the dead.

The use of mostly low quality pennies diminishes the division of the rich and poor through their passage from material disappearance to spiritual existence. At this point, we can say that it is a classic egalitarian example, where the economic hierarchy becomes dissolved and the penny plays the role of a mediator. Such is the price of life... The weight of nothingness...

Throughout history, mythological narratives in Ancient Greek texts used similar symbolism in the burial rituals of different cultures. Thus, before the burial, low quality pennies were placed into the mouth or on top of the eyes of the dead. Like in the story of Charon, the ferryman of the hell, these pennies can be regarded as a price for the transfer of the dead souls. At the same time, they can be noticed as omens of settling or the right to the place or can be perceived as a demand for a place of equal value, beyond economic and class divisions. This money, when placed on the eyes or inside the mouth of a corpse highlights the direct relation of body to the concept of belonging, in the context of economy and power balances. The relation of money, as it influences social history and political borders, to body is directly proportional with production dynamics.

Within this context, we shall rewind time, in order to study the relationship between body and economy... Like Menipus, who refused to pay

Charon the price for the fare to Hades, we shall direct the stream to another slot of time and from the world of the dead, we shall turn back to the earth, to another moment of history.

Throughout history, the appearance of coins and metal currencies heralded domestic and external commerce to thrive... From this point of view, it is expected that the value of money induces a strong consistency and security in terms of commercial affairs. In every era/period, financial value has been increasing and decreasing in line with historic and political advancement, resulting in economic fluctuations. Copper, silver, and gold ratios have changed, and different values, obtained through mixtures of different minerals, have been crucial in constructing the balance of the economic sphere. Imitation, which has become a mode of production parallel to the history of numismatics, emerged within these dynamics.

Alchemy, along with Aristotle’s theory of aesthetics, started within the framework of reproduction-oriented Hellenistic theory, with the long-awaited practice of producing the “artificial / artificiel”. It was hard to imitate the objects, crafted with gold, yet imitations of copper and silver were easier to create. Because of this it has become an important practice of production, one that we continue to use, from late antiquity to today.

Silver and copper processed minerals can be used to distinguish between original coins and imitations, by comparing their relationship to the body. With the imitation or the production, where low ratio material is used, oxidation occurs on the areas that directly come in contact with bodily fluids like sweat or grease. This chemical reaction changes the color of both the touched areas of the object and the skin itself. This mimetic transformation on one hand points out the dialectic relationship between real and fake, while on the other it effects the political and social economy directly.

Moving on with money and body, flowing back from the water of Charon, we reach the shores of Constantinople in the 17th century, the era of Mahmud II...

The Ottoman state, from the beginning of the 17th century to the end of Mahmud II’s reign, applied a financial method called “tağşiş”, which included alteration of the existing coins, along with

many short and long-term economic measures to control internal and external debt. The period of Mahmud II is known as the reign with the highest number of reforms and also “tağşiş”. Reforms such as abolition of the Janissaries or taxes happened in parallel with theminting of forty-seven low and high-ratio silver coins, all in different standards and weights. It is also important to investigate the role of this method in the war economics, as well as the financial benefits that it provides to the state economy. In this context the devaluation and minting method, seen as the biggest and most successful tağşiş of the period, was applied during the Russo-Turkish War, between 1828-29. It is said that the strongest influence on that decision was Kazaz Artin Amira Bezciyan, who was from the guild of dealers and was assigned as the manager of the mint of the Ottoman treasury by the Sultan, until the 1840’s.

According to an old story, the Russian Empire asked for a compensation after the war and the Ottoman Empire had to accept this request. Yet the Russians, aware of the common financial measures of the Ottoman, stipulated that the payment had to be made in old coins. At this point Kazaz Artin asked for the Sultan’s seal and in exchange for Sultan-sealed bonds, assuring the refund with an interest, he collected the gold that the important bankers of the time were keeping. Mixing this gold with a high-quality copper, he produced low-ratio money as a kind of devaluation method and achieved a big financial gain for the state.

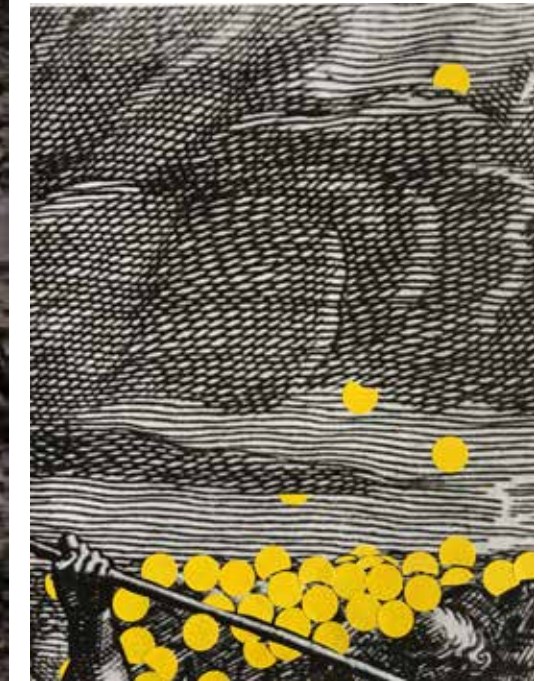
According to some narratives, to eliminate the shiny and new appearance of the coins, the Nizam-i Djedid soldiers were lined up on the shore of the Bosphorus, from Üsküdar to Beylerbeyi with their hands open. Following that, all the soldiers from the beginning to end held and passed the coins from one to another. When one coin arrived at Beylerbeyi, it already looked like the old coins, by virtue of oxidation. This set of actions assured the payment of the war compensation to the Russians. As a result of all his usefulness, Mahmud II rewarded Kazaz Artin with “Tasvir-i Hümayun Nişanı”, a medal of the Sultan’s portrait.

The fact that the coins, which passed from one hand to another along the coast and reached the end of the shore in a different color according

to the story of Kazaz Artin, directs us once again to several sub-topics in the equation of the contact of the money with the body and economy - social identity – space/geography. The money that is passed from one to another happens to be the materialized form of economy and it is linked directly to the power – production and in parallel to that, to property and right to place subject.

Each time we reach into our pocket, we roll the metallic money, located in the depth of the pocket, around with our fingers and hide them inside our hands. Although these are not conscious acts, it is a condition of ensuring ourselves of our material belonging and keeping it close and safe. We keep it against our palm, until it becomes a part of the body, until the symbol of authority on one side and the numeric value on the other transform their color. We continue this until we are buried under the earth with it. Just to be able to have it for the return trip with the boat, we produce with it in our hands and we produce for it. We follow the traces left by this double-faced circle, changing the course of history, from one hand to the other, to the earth.

Until... this double-faced circle, which sinks deep underwater from the hands of one... rises back above the surface in the hands of another.



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üzerine üç proje

14/02/2018 – 27/04/2018

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