

BİLSART

TALKING WITH THE NOT-EXISTENT

October 7 - October 28, 2020

Curator: Ahmet Ergenç

Artists: Hera Büyüktaşçıyan & Mehmet Ali Boran

Art Talks: Hera Büyüktaşçıyan & Mehmet Ali Boran & Ahmet Ergenç
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Bilsart is hosting Hera Büyüktaşçıyan and Mehmet Ali Boran's exhibition entitled "Talking with the Not-Existent" curated by Ahmet Ergenç between October 7 - October 28, 2020

These videos of Mehmet Ali Boran and Hera Büyüktaşçıyan, in which two birds stand in the center, and even birds are narrators, share a similar narrative form as well as a common problem: to save the past, to make the "ghosts" of the past talk and reread the present with those rescued ghosts. Considering that the policy of forgetting, falsifying or turning the past into ghosts is one of the main ideological moves, these two videos are both intervening against the dominant ideological narrative. And these interventions open another pathway that could pave the way for what Foucault called 'counter-history' and 'counter-memory'.

Derrida's (now well-known and widely discussed) concept of *hauntology* can be used for both videos. Derrida's method was to look at the "ghosts" of history or narratives and deconstruct the official landscape or narrative. Not ontology, but hauntology. Looking at nonexistent, not existent. Or as Sevim Burak said: "Speaking with nonexistent." Here, both Boran and Büyüktaşçıyan make the ghostly stories of the past speak: a conversation with the ones who are considered "nonexistent".

In her video work entitled "Neither on the Ground nor in the Sky", Büyüktaşçıyan embarks on a journey through a bird figure within times, she is making a move of saving the past by overlapping the present with the past. The "main-character" in this move is a bird inspired by a "parrot mosaic" from 160-150 B.C., which was found in Bergama. This bird's travels back and forth between Pergamon of ancient times and today's Bergama connects two time periods: critical issues such as history, loss, and historical narrative are told through the testimony of this bird. This testimony makes one feel that the past has not passed yet; those ghosts vibrate in stones, structures and geography. A ghost roams Anatolia, a ghost waiting to be revealed by a hauntological excavation.

Boran, in his video entitled "The Magic House", repairs a "beheaded" dove in the Kespo mansion belonging to an Armenian family in Mardin by wearing a "prosthetic" head and gives credit to this ideologically and physically violent symbol. There is severe destruction here: the decapitation of a small statue, an expression of how violently the Armenian heritage was destroyed, and something to do with necro and biopolitics.

Both Boran and Büyüktaşçıyan intervene today with "nonexistent-thing", which can be described as the ghost of history. Two critical interventions to see the present through the lens of the history of the other, not through the official history.

Ahmet Ergenç

HERA BÜYÜKTAŞCIYAN

NEITHER ON THE GROUND, NOR IN THE SKY

October 7 - October 19, 2020

Neither on the Ground, Nor in the Sky by Hera Büyüktaşçıyan, inspired by a floor mosaic in Berlin's Pergamon Museum known as the Alexandrine Parakeet Mosaic (160–150 BC) that was taken from the Zeus Altar of Pergamon. While the piece weaves connections between the notion of unearthing architectural memory and retracing invisibility through contested histories– Büyüktaşçıyan broadens these notions and takes us on a journey that traverses time and landscapes by reflecting upon the sense of representation through the paradoxical relationship between erasure, reconstruction and the cyclic status of being in between.

The title alludes to the neighborhood adjacent to the ancient city of Pergamon, where some of the houses are built on a bridge, thus appearing to be suspended between the earth and sky, as if hung in the void. The figure of the Alexandrine parakeet depicted as a bird perched on a piece of brick, resonates with the state of this neighborhood, as well as reflecting upon a state of being in between geographies, timelines and histories. In the video, this bird acts as a guide and flits between modern-day Bergama and the ruins of bygone Pergamon. The parakeet performs an ambiguous role in connecting the terrestrial and imaginary memory through its elevated and grounded vision, moving like an invisible entity or a timeless ghost throughout the film. Originating from Pakistan, the bird was brought as a gift to Pergamon during the time of Alexander the Great, he has set his roots to a city that would constantly go through the inescapable fact of loss and himself would become totally petrified as a part of an unknown terrain. However, the artist has set this bird free to roam the plains of the excavation site and the modern Anatolian city. It bears witness to change and the way in which this once powerful and glorious city has now been transformed into a populous urban centre, which still retains traces of its past not only from the ancient world but also the remains of the Asia Minor Catastrophe. In this respect, the bird occupies a time and space in-between, a liminal space, neither on the ground, nor in the sky, neither in the past nor in the present.

In Neither on the Ground, nor in the Sky Büyüktaşçıyan offers a temporality that is non-linear, a place that neither reaches to the sky nor touches the ground, and travels through history that primarily turns us to our unruly present by reminding the unstable grounds we stand upon as well as the cyclic repetition of life and death.

About HERA BÜYÜKTAŞCIYAN:

Hera Büyüktaşçıyan (b.1984 Istanbul) Graduated from Marmara University, Faculty of Fine Arts, (2006). The artist uses the notion of absence and invisibility, in order to compose an imaginary connection between memory, space & time through unseen and forgotten aspects of history. She works as a storyteller, integrating metaphors from local myths, historic and iconographic elements of different geographies to open up new narrative scopes. Water is a recurring theme in her practice, referring to what the artist understands as the fluid, aquatic nature of memory. Her most recent works enquire into

the meaning of 'absence' within architectural memory through retracing fragments of time and space connected to ruptures of history. At this point the artist dives into the terrestrial imagination by unearthing patterns of selected narratives and timelines that unfold the material memory of unstable spaces.

MEHMET ALİ BORAN

THE MAGIC HOUSE

October 20 - October 28, 2020

Nonhuman things; an electric pole, a sculpture, an architectural structure, a carpet, a wall clock, streets, squares or technological products sometimes have something to tell us. Just like artworks conveying/telling any narrative that they deal with or treat alongside their structures based on primarily displaying themselves.

Apart from the artistic characteristics of architectural structures, their functional value is more prominent. The fact that it harbors the human, who has acquired the quality of being the subject of nature and life, attributes to architecture having the most narrative character among many art disciplines with regard to issues of memory of architectural structures.

The building bears the traces of the people living in it as well as its architect. The voices, smells and traces that penetrate the walls, ceiling and floor due to life, create an informal (an)archive. On the occasion of this (an)archive, apart from the historical narrative produced by the official ideology, we learn/ see many events, facts and truths which have been hidden, forgotten, ignored in history.

Beside the oral history conveyed since the deportation, there are dozens of stories in the memory of many architectural structures which still stand tall. One of them is the Armenian mansion called "CAS PO" in Mardin, which I showed in my video entitled "The Magic House". In this mansion, there are dove sculptures made of stone as in other Armenian mansions. In many of these mansions, the heads of stone sculpture doves were cut off by their new owners after the deportation. With the fear that they might testify, were they afraid of eyes of these doves whose wings, ribcage, tail, feet and whole body were engraved to the finest detail as they were on the first day? Or were they afraid of its brain, worrying that it will not forget some things?

Whatever it is that makes people beheading, could one of the main factors be due to the belief that things standing still in nature can have a soul? What kind of politics can relate to carrying a beheaded body to this day in a smooth and solid manner?

Throughout history, we have come across many equivalent examples which have been realized in the manner of spreading the message (of beheading) around or transferring it to later times. As one of the most recent examples of this, the destruction of a cultural heritage carried out by explosions in the ancient city of Palmyra is the closest example of our social memory.

In the video, the dove's head was reshaped as prosthesis and mounted on its body. After this prosthetic head was placed, the stone sculpture, which is described as inanimate, began to speak like a living being and began to (an)archive the issues it had witnessed in this building for over 100 years.

About MEHMET ALİ BORAN:

In his first-period works displaying narratives on the crowds, the artist presented the physical/psychological reflexes of masses across the government with an effective visual way as part of the issues like identity and belonging.

Later on his artistic production, Boran focused on the problems of militarism, immigration and memory. He began to explore the ecological narratives and he examined closely the positioning format of the new era security system in the place where he lived. In his works Mehmet Ali Boran criticized the discourse of security community created by the control and surveillance mechanisms of the government on territorial borders, city/country settlements and topographic areas.

He proposes the whole perusal of the existent instead of the human-oriented perusal of the place, history and memory. Also he develops a jeontological point of view to animal, watercourse, soil, rock, air, plants and cultural relics. Moreover Boran offers a different perspective against the people who bring themselves into existence taking inspiration from geographical sciences.

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