

## WHERE ? / HERE ?

Is it possible to unfold a country into an exhibition considering its geo-political, historical, traditional, cultural, social, psychological context, its economy, art, life, energy, so on and so forth? Is it possible to define a place to such an extent? Every attempt falls short in the face of such an impossible task. For that reason, from the very preliminary stages to the last phases of the preparation of this exhibition, we searched for questions, rather than answers, to open up a platform for research and dialogue.

The title of the exhibition, "Where ? / Here ?", points out the dualities inherent in the specific position of this exhibition; a contemporary art exhibition from Turkey which is designed to take place in Japan. While it refers to the geo-political context, in which a place is located and simultaneously to the unique nature thereof, it also relates to the place of origin of the exhibition and the place where it happens. "Where ? / Here ?" is aimed at raising questions on these dualities at the same time..

Both Turkey and Japan constitute the 'other' from a Euro-centric, Judaeo-Christian viewpoint, yet; they are foreign to each other at the same time. The exhibition is intended to function as a leverage to understand each country in itself and in relation to each other. To this end, we singled out certain concepts and anchorage points that mark the major properties common to both countries. Furthermore, Tokyo and Istanbul, the cities where the exhibition originated and was realized, were taken as reference points. Through the works of the artists, the exhibition questions the relationship between the personal and the social while it investigates the tradition and modernity, family structure, social dogmas and disintegrations which are the common values and problematics of both countries.

10 artists from different generations came together for the exhibition. Besides the works of the first generation artists; Füsün Onur and Gülsün Karamustafa who fostered the very first ideas on the contemporary discourse and theory in Turkey, works of Hüseyin Alptekin as the second, Esra Ersen, Leyla Gediz and Ömer Ali Kazma as the third generation of artists take place in the exhibition. Furthermore, the exhibition includes projects by talented emerging artists like Cevdet Erek, Yetkin Başarır and Nasan Tur who can be considered as artists representing the future. The exhibition consists of different expressions created through diverse media like photography, video, video-installation, installation, painting and performance.

The visual and written narratives related to geography, its historical and contemporary connotations to globalization were elaborated in the works of Hüseyin Alptekin and Cevdet Erek. Following the route of the characters in the novel of Jules Verne, Alptekin's "Sea Elephant Travel Agency" (installation – performance in progress) proposes a Black Sea journey including the port cities of Varna, Constanta, Odessa and others to the people of arts, science and letters. The "Capacities" (photographic installation), on the other hand, relates Istanbul to the other cities from different countries referring to loss of place due to the mobility caused by the phenomenon of globalization. The "Tremor, Rumour, Hoover" (installation) points to instability, shaky grounds in terms of geological formation, economy and politics in Turkey. Erek's audio-visual commentary on one of the largest urban edifices in Istanbul, the "second bridge" over the Bosphorus points out the axis of movement

while bringing together the two sides of the Bosphorus, Asia and Europe in an aesthetic panoramic view. Erek composed the images and sounds of the bridge in a rhythmically arranged 'symphony' of Istanbul. Esra Ersen makes us come closer to what is shown from a macro level in Cevdet Erek's work. In her video work, Ersen captured a conversation of a couple in a car passing across the bridge over the Bosphorus. The work can be seen as a social commentary with a humoristic undertone. Yetkin Başarır's series of photographs deals with unexpected views of Istanbul; the underside of a car as seen from the ground and almost a bird's eye view of the backyard of an apartment building. In both cases, the view is of one from which the city did not prepare itself to be seen.

The works of Füsün Onur and Leyla Gediz reflect more their personal points of view of Istanbul. Füsün Onur's poetic contribution to the "Where ? / Here ?" relates to Istanbul rather indirectly. Having been born in a waterfront house on the Asian coast of the Bosphorus and still living there, Onur's work reflects, relates and embodies the mysterious, ever-changing poetic nature of the Bosphorus. In the "Note", she brings out the rhythms of her inner world and the world outside, the Bosphorus, through a silent music installation. Leyla Gediz's highly sophisticated paintings, while hinting at her inner world incorporated within the popular images like Doppelgaenger in the cult film entitled 'Interview with the Vampire' and the views from the window of her studio in the attic of an apartment building, elaborate a fairy narrative, an uncanny experience of the city.

The tension between the tradition and modernity is articulated in the works of Gülsün Karamustafa, Seçil Yersel and Nasan Tur in totally different manners and tonalities. Seçil Yersel's photographs of the still and lonely interior of her grandmother's flat bring out the striking conflict and co-existence of tradition and modernity, while emphasizing the ever-increasing pace of the city contrasting with the tranquility of the house of an old lady. "Burying the Sleep", an installation with the ancient Ottoman clocks of Gülsün Karamustafa, cultivates a similar sensitivity on what has already been lost forever. She shows the tension between the old and the newly emerging with the silence, lack of ticking sound of the clocks that we expect to hear in the sight of the clocks. The discomfort experienced through her installation, leaves its place to a pathos in her second work, a video installation "Men Crying". The installation consists of three short films featuring three old men, who were the most famous movie stars of the 60s and 70s in Turkey, as they are crying for the beloved ones they have lost. It can also be considered as an alternative commentary on the gender roles in a patriarchal society like Turkey. The disintegration of the social dogmas, specifically in the gender issues, is worked out also in Nasan Tur's photographic works. As a young male artist, Tur creates a contrasting view against such kind of stereotype gender role given to men, in his photograph "Don't Forget the Fragrance of Mint", where he himself was shot in an infantile pose leaning on his mother's breast. Likewise, in the "Puddle and the Blue Sky", his recorded performance in which he swims in repose in the middle of a car park under a beautiful blue sky, he furthered his psychological commentary on gender issues.

Ömer Ali Kazma's video and sound installation deals with a mass mania, which is deeply embedded in the popular culture, maybe as a result of the strong tradition of not giving oneself away in daily routines. One of the most popular icons of the Turkish society, the Galatasaray football team together with its fans were

documented to reveal the emergence of the suppressed hysteria of the Turkish society.