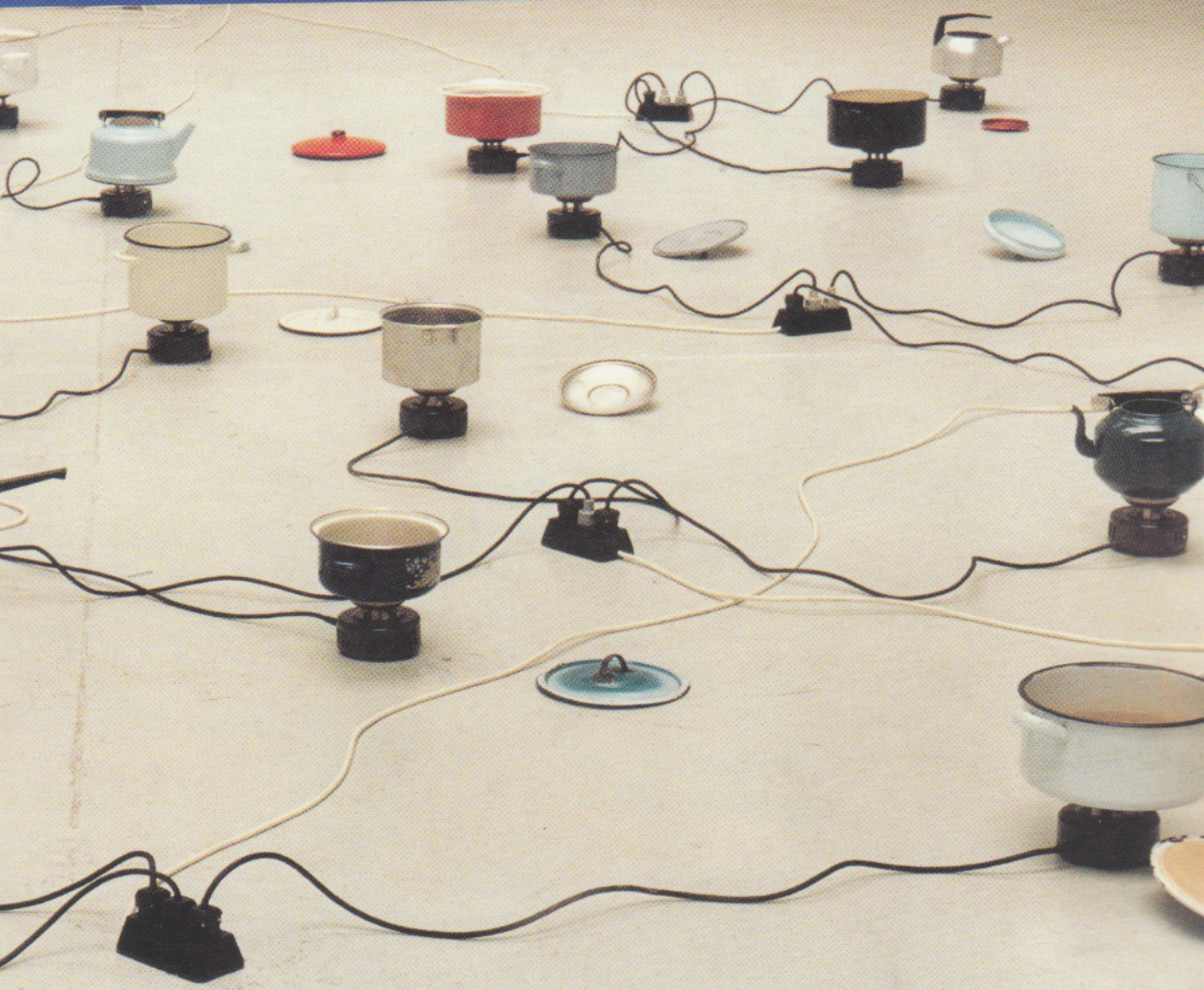


Contemporary Art in the Balkans

INVENTING A PEOPLE



1 Bulgaria
Greece
Roumania
Turkey



INVENTER UN PEUPLE

Art contemporain dans les Balkans

Hüseyin ALPTEKİN



Hüseyin Bahri Alptekin, *Capa City*, 1998. 160 x 345 cm. Light tubes and digital prints.

Alptekin works on the borders of regulated economies where ever morphing, drifting image-systems roam about. The "suitcase economies" that infected/invented the new spaces of transaction after the exit of "bureau communism" are a metaphor for his works. The suitcase is a drifting object, so are its contents. It is a derivation from regulated economies. It circulates between the fake and the reinvented, and is derived, pirated, and miraculously transformed. *Desert in the Bath*, a huge plastic bag, is morphed from a Camel Cigarette pack. The Camel cigarette that has Turkish tobacco and an anonymous scene of pyramids and camels on the pack is itself based on an early-twentieth century illusion of an orient never traveled. *Capa-City* is a project with photographs of hotel signs with names of towns from around the world that are hardly "central" to one's idea of what constitutes a place to visit; the photos are largely shot at the infamous Laleli district in Istanbul. Laleli is the main commercial address for "suitcase travel", and a bizarre microcosm of the Balkans.

Turk/Truk, a huge antiquarian toy-looking truck filled to the brim with cheap plastic balls, turns out to be Russian made, and the balls are exactly like those heading for Black Sea ports from the Bosphorus.

But, Alptekin is neither a man of materials, nor an "arrangeur". His works have a layered and chaotic visuality that enhance the unselfconscious appropriations and myth-makings of everyday life. His approach is characterized by the linkages, juxtapositions and relations of appropriation between things and images. Nothing is fixed, authored, or copyrighted. The fuzzy hierarchies between high and the low, serious and kitsch, local and global, fame and fake, and art and thing-making are dismissed altogether. **Vasif Kortun.**

Alptekin travaille aux frontières des économies dirigées, où se déplacent des systèmes d'images en perpétuelle formation.

Les économies-valises qui investissent et inventent de nouveaux espaces de transaction après la chute du communisme bureaucratique deviennent la métaphore de ses travaux. La valise est inséparable des économies dirigées. Son contenu l'est aussi. Elle circule entre le faux et le réinventé, elle est piratée et transformée miraculeusement.

Le désert dans le bain, un immense sac en plastique, est formé à partir d'un paquet de cigarettes Camel. Que ces cigarettes contiennent du tabac turc, et qu'une scène anonyme des pyramides et des chameaux figure sur le paquet, repose sur le mythe d'un Orient inconnu.

Le projet *Capa-City* se compose de photographies d'enseignes d'hôtels dont le nom reprend celui d'une ville du monde. Elles ont été prises à Laleli, le quartier "réputé" d'Istanbul, qui est l'adresse commerciale pour le «voyage-valise», un microcosme bizarre des Balkans.

Dans *Turk Truk*, un immense camion russe, qui ressemble à un jouet, est rempli à ras bord de ballons en plastique, exactement comme les balles qui vont du Bosphore aux ports de la Mer Noire.

Alptekin n'est ni un homme de matière, ni un «arrangeur». Ses travaux ont un caractère visuel à la fois segmenté et chaotique qui accroît les appropriations inconscientes et la fabrication des mythes dans le quotidien. Son approche est caractérisée par des liens, des juxtapositions et des relations d'appropriation entre des choses et des images. Rien n'a d'auteur ou de copyright. Sont écartées les hiérarchies floues entre le haut et le bas, le sérieux et le kitsch, le local et le global, le renommé et le faux de l'art.

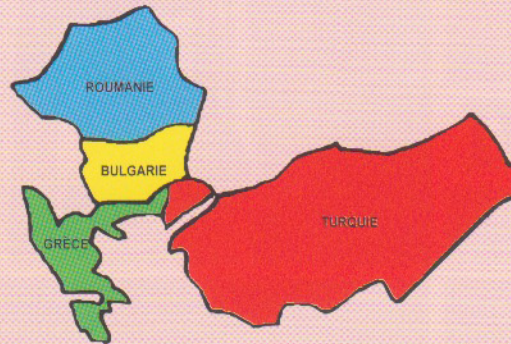


Hüseyin Bahri Alptekin (b. 1957), is a writer, educator and artist. He studied aesthetics and philosophy of art at the Sorbonne (Paris 1), and institutional sociology at the Mimar Sinan University, Istanbul. He has worked as a press photographer, and as an art, media and design critic. Alptekin has conducted workshops and seminars on contemporary design and art in Turkey and abroad. He was the

coordinator of exhibitions and cultural activities of Habitat II NGO-City Summit, Istanbul. Alptekin worked as a professor at the Bilkent University, Ankara between 1990 and 1994. Among the exhibitions he has participated in are the 4. International Istanbul Biennial (1995), the 24. Sao Paulo Biennial, "Iskorpit: Aktuelle Kunst aus Istanbul" at the Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Berlin, Germany (1998)

Hüseyin Bahri Alptekin, *Turk/Truk*, 1995. Digital color print on vinyl.

TURKEY



Vasif Kortun

At the beginning of the Twentieth Century, a number of small states were erected on the remains of the Russian and Ottoman empires. Some of them were on the eastern fringes of a continent called, rather indiscriminately, "Europe". The fringes were the Balkans.

The Balkans are often thought of as a gateway and a fluid frontier, between the Occident which stops after Vienna and the Orient which begins after Istanbul. The Balkan mind often considers his place as a zone between oppositional zones. No matter if s/he is from Zagreb, Sofia or Istanbul, the location is always in between the Occident and the Orient, the Black Sea and the Mediterranean, able to belong to neither one, nor the other.

So they unite by proxy, privation and difference.

In the second half of the century, the Balkans was subjected to "Symbolically efficient/economically deficient structures" and governed by the comparable models of state capitalism and state socialism. Centuries of mutual tradition and collective memory were repressed, and replaced by the formation mythology of each isolated state. Not excluding Turkey, all past experience came to be viewed by each country as decadent, oriental and despotic. Although they all shared exceptionally concrete memories, replaced later by borders, the models of their governments were vertically organized, hindering all communication according to the dictates of the bi-polar axis of the old order.

The demise of "bureau communism" and authoritative modernism in the Balkans was synchronous with the thawing of etatism and secularist progressivism in Turkey. The beginning of the 1990's was expectant.

The Balkans had reengaged in a reciprocal history, and the collective unconscious exploded. We remembered languages that we had not only forgotten, but which we

thought we never knew. We woke up from a long bad dream, only to find out that this dream would inform a new reality, first in Bosnia, and later in Kosova.

All the preconceived notions of geography and westward bound destiny of Capital were upset by the economics of urgency. Surrogate, underground economies of the quotidian kind immediately flourished. This network of wild and self-regulatory economies covered all areas of daily need, food, clothes, booze and prostitution.

The oriental bazaar became a transcendent signifier.

This transference was paralleled in the works of the artists as well. The works were intimate, rich, textured, and even sincere. The materials were not precious in accessibility or in value. They were certainly not materials of artistic privilege. They were often made from the "here and now". Finesse was not confused with the fetish of the finish. The economics of necessity doubled up with a need to accommodate the everyday life, where everyday creativity often involved an economics of reuse and recycling of materials, but also of ideas and images. The production often accepted the limitations of small technical skills of the workshop kind. Legibility, articulation and urgency were critically important for the artists. That meant that the work did not affiliate or align itself with the State or the emerging institution of power. The existing powers were not formalized as such. They merely represented common strategies, trying to come to grips with the new reality, not even to rearticulate it, but at best to keep apace with it.

As we diverge increasingly from the moment of 1989, despite the new economical conditions of interdependency in the Balkans, the visual fields have yet to coalesce, differ, negotiate and dialogue on an ongoing basis.

#16 European Post-Cards, 1992



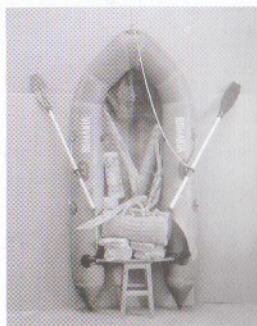
View of Europe between 40-45 degrees and 40-45 degrees

© 1992 0670

Лъчезар Бояджиев/
Luchezar Boyadjiev



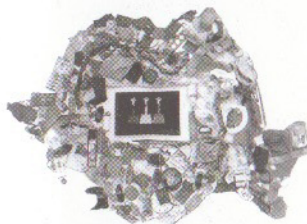
Фотини Кариотакис/Fotini Kariotaki



Теодор Граур/Teodor Graur



Хюсеин Алптекин/Hüseyin Bahri Alptekin



Козмин Паулеску/Cosmin Paulescu



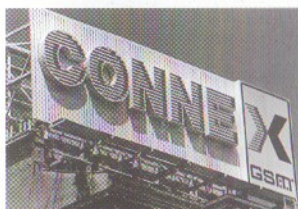
Халил Алтъндере/Halil Altindere



Дан Пержовски/Dan Perjovschi



Айдан Муртезаоглу/Aydan Murtezaoglu



SubREAL



Бюлент Шангар/Bülent Sangar

Galerie nationale d'art étranger

Sofia,
1, pl. Alexandre Nevski

vernissage
le 20 janvier 1999
à 17 h 30

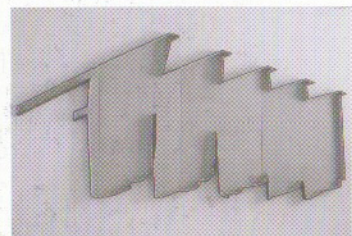
L'exposition est organisée
par l'agence
Media>Art>Photo, Paris

commissaire général
André Rouillé

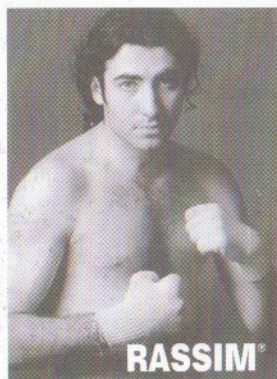
commissaires délégués
Kiril Prashkov, Bulgarie
Matoula Scaltsa, Grèce
Ruxandra Balaci, Roumanie
Vasif Kortun, Turquie

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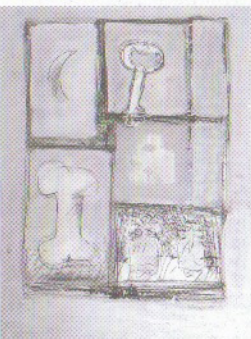
Правдолюб Иванов/Pravdoliub Ivanov



Расим Кръстев/Rassim Krastev



Димитрис Ксоноглу/
Dimitris Xonoglou



Ставрос Панайотакис/
Stavros Panayotakis



Ксенис Сахинис/Xenis Sachinis



Калин Серапионов/Kalin Serapionov