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TACTICS OF INVISIBILITY

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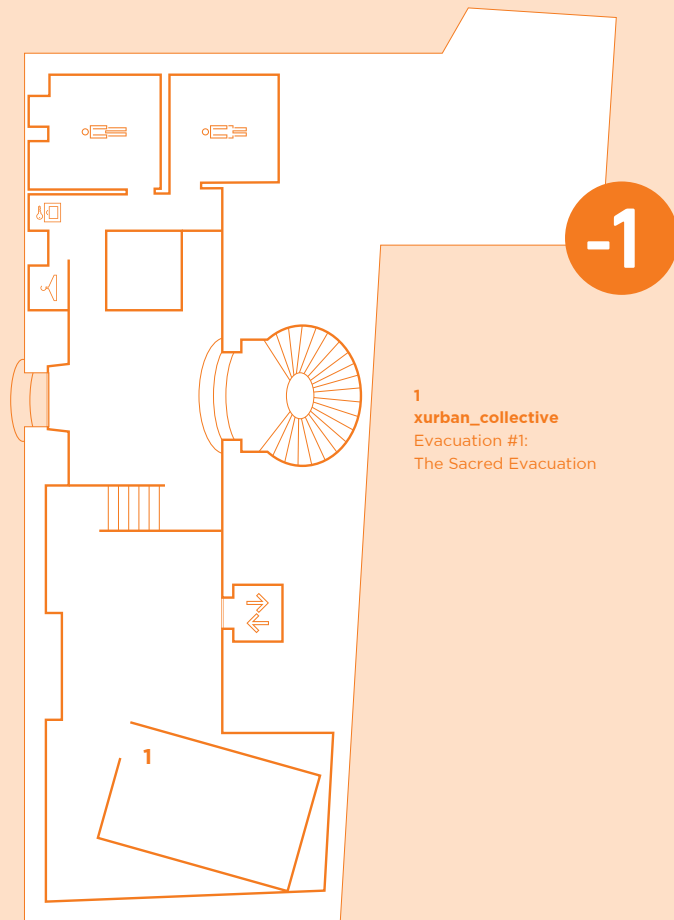
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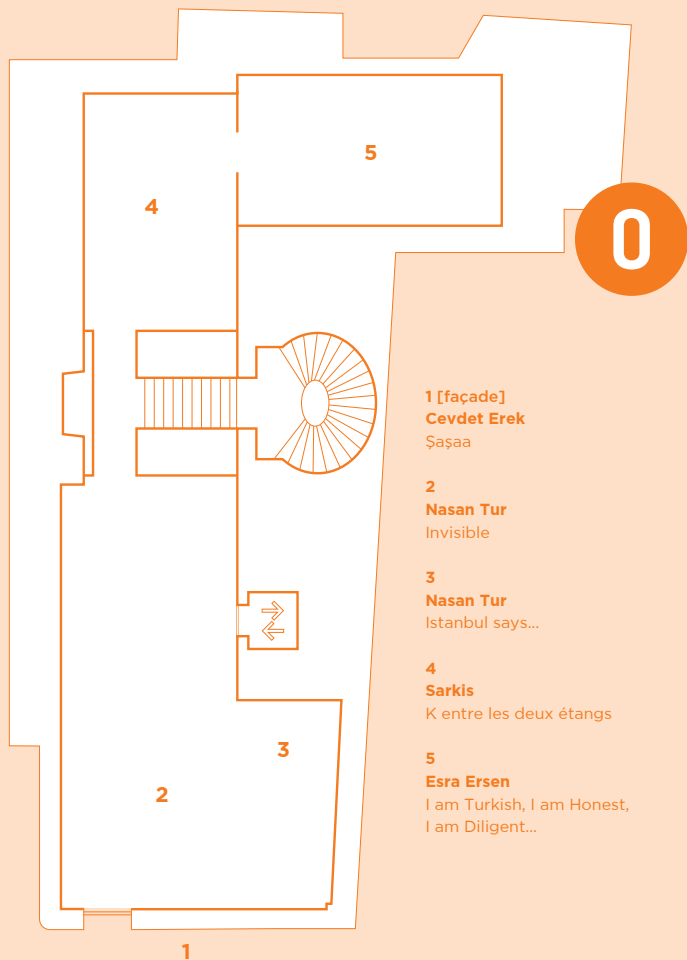
“Tactics of Invisibility”, a co-production by the **Vehbi Koç Foundation** and **Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary**, has been conceptualised as an exhibition in three parts. The project, launched in 2008 with preparatory research, was first realised in T-B A21 in Vienna in April 2010 and adapted to Tanas, Berlin in September of the same year. As planned, the project's journey concludes with the final stage of the exhibition held in ARTER, Istanbul.

“Tactics of Invisibility” aims to generate a discussion on different angles of the central concept it tackles. While encompassing multilayered strategies to understand or cross the threshold between the visible and invisible the works in the exhibition draw attention to the repressed or the silenced; they express the implications of exclusion from the regime of visibility, concealment as a means of reflection, and the uncanny state between presence and absence; and reveal what is beneath the surface, in addition to rendering the invisible visible. The exhibition proposes a differentiated viewing shaped around these strategies, and incites the participation of the audience along the same line.

While bringing together the works of artists from different generations, “Tactics of Invisibility” investigates the potential of the interaction of productions dating to different eras, as opposed to offering an art historical inventory or adopting a chronological approach. In line with the vision of both institutional organising partners, the project was also conceived in a manner to facilitate the production of new works. The works of Nevin Aladağ, Cevdet Erek, Ayşe Erkmen, Hafriyat and xurban_collective featured in the exhibition were thus commissioned for “Tactics of Invisibility” and realised with the support of the two organisers to premier at the exhibition. The exhibition, which began its journey in T-B A21, was restructured according to its new contexts taking into account spatial specificities as it travelled to Tanas and ARTER.

“Tactics of Invisibility” is the first joint initiative in ARTER’s exhibition program. We would like to thank all our friends who have contributed to the conception, exhibitions and publications of this joint project.





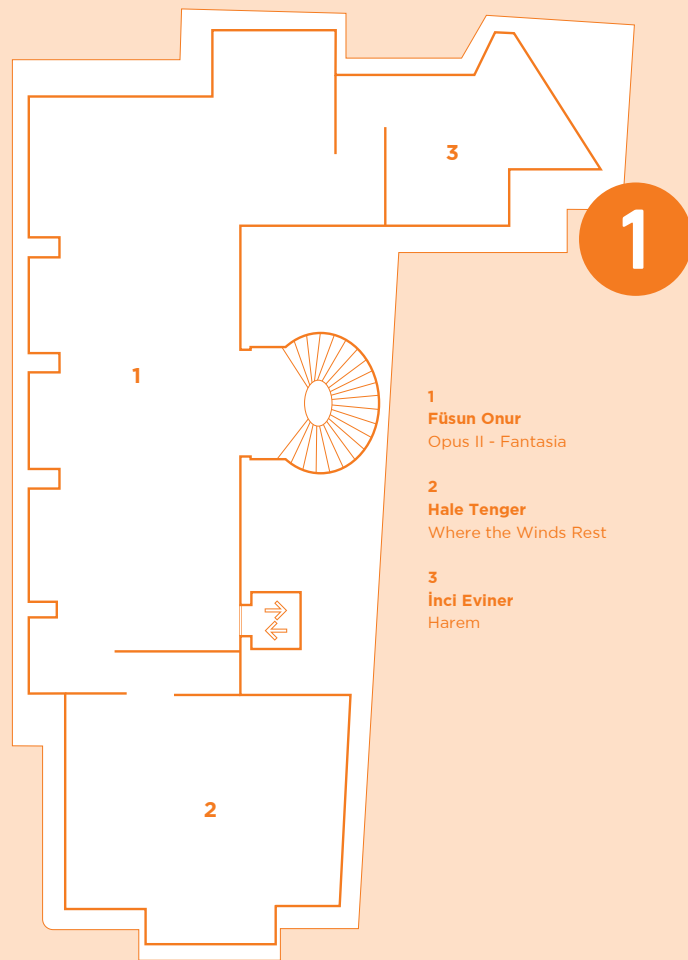
1 [façade]
Cevdet Ereğ
 Şaşaa

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Nasan Tur
 Invisible

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 İstanbul says...

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Sarkis
 K entre les deux étangs

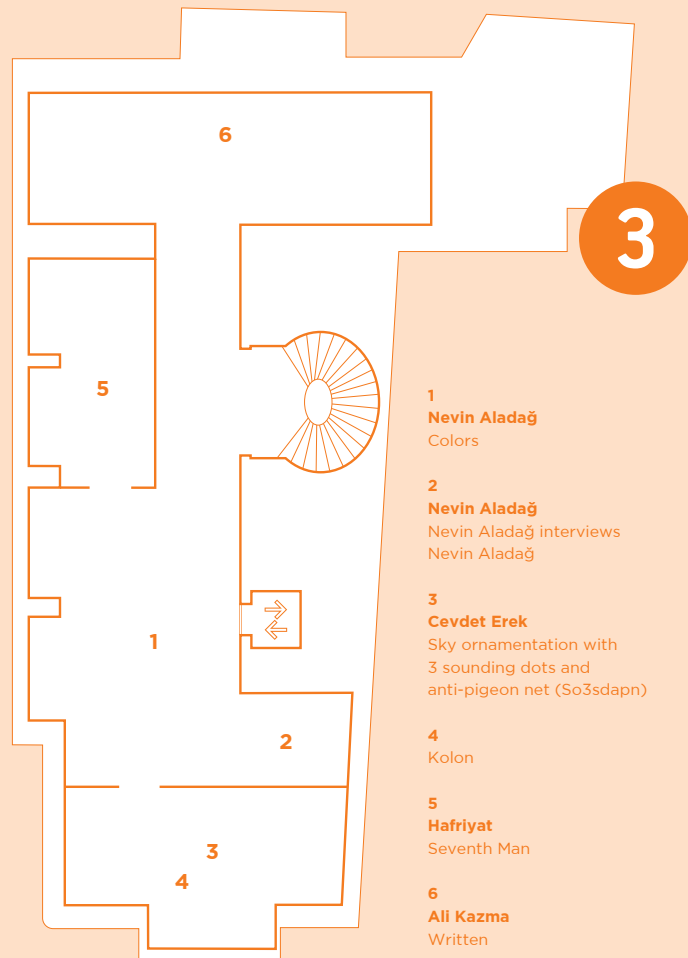
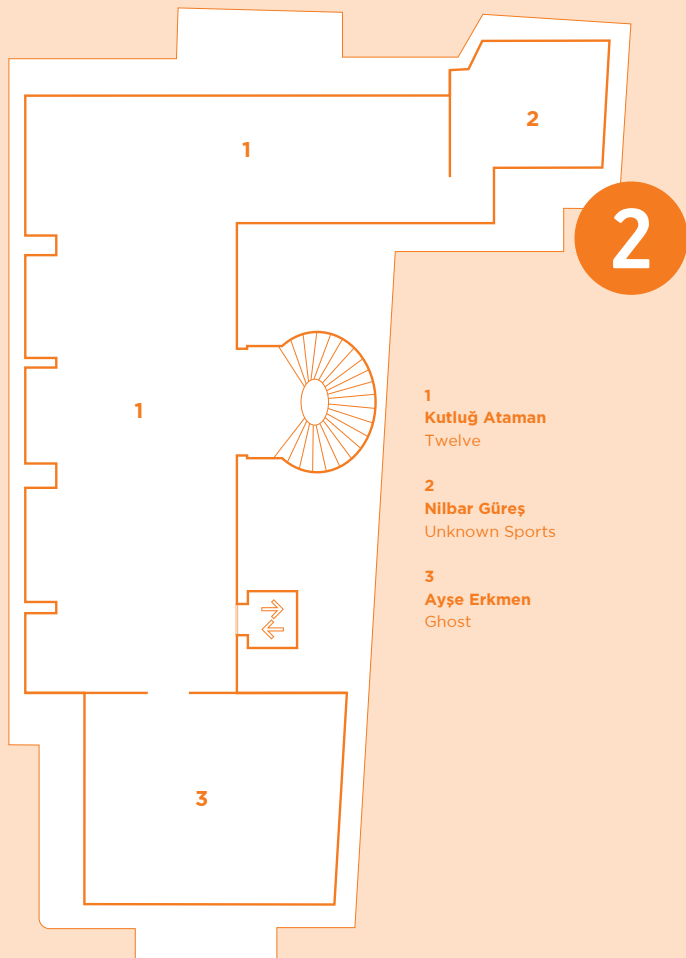
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Esra Ersen
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Nevin Aladağ

In “Nevin Aladağ interviews Nevin Aladağ” (2011), we see an actor (male) articulating questions and answers, but we hear a female voice speaking. Following the sequence of questions and answers for a while, we begin to understand that there is no single person answering but a variety of respondents. Rooted in a reflection on the fragility or fractured state of individual existence, the performance interweaves movable pieces from the narratives of different people the artist asked one question each during the development phase of her project. The artist frames these questions based on her own particular interest in the interviewees she selected, sometimes devising them with her partners in mind, sometimes basing interview questions on issues that currently occupy her personally. Aladağ describes her motivation as a matter of “curiosity, and of admitting other opinions as well. So I also put myself in their shoes. It is at bottom a process of exchange or a temporary symbiosis.” [Gudrun Ankele]

In Aladağ's piece “Colors” (2008–2011) we are confronted with a set of lamps whose luminosity and appearance was masked by coloured tights. Through the title alone, the artist embeds this work in a discourse around skin-colours and politics. Aladağ uses lamps that refer to Danish design icon Poul Henningsen's classics and makes them undergo a sculptural and gender loaded alteration. “Colors” brings therewith various readings of colouration together, on epistemological, sociological and aesthetic levels which let us question the (in) visibility of colour. [Nico Anklam]



Kutluğ Ataman

The investigation on the re-making of the identity attains a very unusual, metaphysical form in Ataman's “Twelve” (2004) in which he interviewed six people literally in their “second lives”. Believing that they had lived in the body of another person, died, and been born again, these subjects talk about their previous and present lives, and tell us about the moments of their death, which metaphorically stands as a gate from one life into another.

When two different realities of two different life stories are combined in one identity, the syntax fails to work and the structure of language becomes insufficient both to translate the meaning and to be translated into other languages. Ataman explains this impossibility by the fact that all languages are dependent on the logic of a single life. When this life is doubled or multiplies, the syntax and grammar become confusing and incapable of ensuring a communication.

Projected on six vertical double-sided screens that float in the exhibition space, “Twelve” takes a very distinct, mystical phenomenon as its starting point to explore how we change and multiply our identities, as also put into words by Ataman in an interview when he was shortlisted for the Turner Prize in 2004: “I framed them vertically –in the identity-photo mode– because I think this piece is also about identity, how we fabricate our identity in everyday life. You see that these people have double identities therefore you start thinking, that identity is something we fabricate, that we actually make.” [Emre Baykal]



Cevdet Ereğ

Cevdet Ereğ carries some elements of “So3sdapn” (T-B A21, 2010) and “Kolon” (Tanas, 2010), the site-specific works he realised for the exhibition’s previous editions, to ARTER, and adds “Şaşaa” to the series. For the project “Sky ornamentation with 3 sounding dots and anti-pigeon net” that he developed for T-B A21’s building, Palais Erdödy-Fürstenberg, Ereğ installed a locally used net aimed at protecting historical buildings from pigeon excrements on the courtyard’s opening to the sky and added three square shaped directional loudspeakers. The loudspeakers and the net, which were becoming visible or invisible depending on daylight, were framed by the building to form a horizontal façade, while the sonic ornament was creating different zones in the courtyard. One of these speakers and a piece of the sound are exhibited at ARTER, along with samples provided by the netting company. At Tanas, Ereğ placed a fake column among the concrete columns in the exhibition space –a former industrial building: “Structural elements in a gallery are ideally ‘invisible’”. However, the slit on the corner of “Kolon” renders visible the TV speakers that send signals to the attentive viewer. This idea is carried to Istanbul by producing a fake column among the existing ones that were subsequently added to ARTER in order to reinforce the building’s structure.

“Şaşaa” discusses today’s circumstances where architectural renovation and functional reorganisation efforts gained momentum on İstiklal Street and the ornamentations from Istanbul’s “triumphant” and “splendid” times are awkwardly adapted to popular architecture. The forms used for the gilded temporary façade ornament were re-adjusted from pieces of letters used in a specific type of digital screen that allows display on daylight. A single letter unit of this screen is exhibited inside and responds to the rhythmic structure applied on the façade, operating on the time axis.



Ayşe Erkmen

The project “Ghost” (2010) which Ayşe Erkmen developed for “Tactics of Invisibility”’s T-B A21 edition, refers to Ludwig van Beethoven, who spent a couple of months in 1806 at the Palais Erdödy-Fürstenberg, which is now home to T-B A21’s exhibition rooms, as well as to his close relationship with Countess Anna Maria Erdödy. Beethoven dedicated a number of works to Anna Maria Erdödy, among them the two piano trios opus 70, composed in 1808 (also known under the title “Ghost Trio”), and the canon “Glück, Glück zum neuen Jahr” (WoO 176), written in 1819. Besides a web of speculations about the relationship between Beethoven and the countess, Erkmen refers to the rumour that the ghost of a young girl lives at the palace, which led the artist to arrange the canon “Glück, Glück zum neuen Jahr” for a single voice, a soprano. This soprano can be heard as a ghostly voice in the exhibition room at ARTER, following T-B A21 and Tanas.

In more than one way, Erkmen’s work revolves around the question of immateriality, of the intangible. In this sense, she not only transforms the four-voices canon, reducing it to a single soprano voice, she also dislocates it from its original domain of meaning. Yet we may also read the title of her work as an indication of the intangibility of both the voice and the light installation staging the room itself, which will be dissolved and disappear once the exhibition is over. [Dieter Buchhart]



Esra Ersen

In Esra Ersen's "I am Turkish, I am Honest, I am Diligent..." (2005) the wearing of Turkish school uniforms by non-Turkish children (in Germany, Austria, and Korea) plays with processes of transference. The uniforms emphasise and indeed exhume, in their own ambiguity, a culture's ambivalence about itself and the other. This double ambiguity comes into effect in Ersen's workshop with schoolchildren, reenacted in several different contexts. As the title is derived from an oath taken at Turkish schools at regular intervals, the work expresses the artist's own conflicted feelings about a patriotic practice and indoctrination imposed on children in Turkey. Such dress codes seem antiquated and repressive in other contexts, posing an unsettling challenge to children (ages seven to ten) brought up with the right to determine their own personal dress and appearance. In order to document the "effects" on the participants, they were asked to keep a diary during that time. Their personal notes and statements, printed on the uniforms in the installation, reflect feelings of anxiety and bewilderment but also the steady process of acceptance and identification. Being in another's "skin" can lead to a differentiated examination of stereotypes and negotiations with a foreign habitus. [Daniela Zyman]



İnci Eviner

Voyage Pittoresque de Constantinople et des Rives du Bosphore is an album of engravings created by the painter, architect and voyager Antoine Ignace Melling (1763–1831). The Harem engraving in the album is the picture of a space in which weird figures of women roam. In contrast to the Orientalist tendencies of the period, there are no dramatic or seductive expressions. Women, illustrated with almost scientific precision, look as if they are thrown out of time. My interest in the Harem urges me to articulate these women beyond being objects of knowledge by giving them a voice and pushing them to reveal whatever they hide. I think that with some intervention, these women of the Harem, who have been imprisoned by the scientific talent of the artist, can reveal relationships of interest that are beneath the couple of reality and fantasy. I am trying to reach my unrecognizable face in my own culture, through rhetoric figures, representations and images constructed by the Western subject to represent and know the East. By oozing into the Harem, I want to put in motion the untamable and make these frozen images move to open up the possibility of resistance. [İnci Eviner]



Nilbar Güreş

A young woman is exercising on uneven parallel bars while having her legs waxed by another woman, dressed as a house cleaner. A woman is performing a gymnastic balancing act atop a pommel horse, dressed inappropriately as a housewife, with her head covered, while another woman attempts to go under her skirt with a hygienic pad. A young woman is standing on a balance beam wearing sport clothes, but her large breasts, covered by a bra, are located on her back. These scenes from Nilbar Güreş's photography series and video titled "Unknown Sports" (2008–2009) are set in a gym, but sports equipment is adorned with tablecloths, traditional carpets cover the floors, and small household objects clutter the space. The photographs show the processes of beautification and physical exercise in a public sports hall turned into a domestic space. Everyday enforcement of femininity and its demand for well-mannered adherence to a set of structured behavioral rules and beautification procedures are expressed with phantasmagoric vividness. Güreş has staged three performances in a gym, collaborating with women who re-create ideas from her drawings for photographic triptychs that subversively break down women's reality. Aesthetic fetishes and occupations such as body hair waxing or styling, understood as typical female practices, are depicted in an obsessive way. The processes of preparing the body for the absent, working husband evoke threatening and painful associations with sexual abuse and domestic violence. [Nataša Ilić]



Hafriyat

(In collaboration with New Cinematographers
and Ha Za Vu Zu)

Hafriyat's project "Seventh Man" refers to "Worker", a statue created by Muzaffer Ertoran (1922–2007) and located in Tophane. "The Worker" is one of four surviving sculptures from twenty projects in public space commissioned for the 50th anniversary of the Turkish Republic in 1973. The work has been subject to countless attacks since it was installed. Other works were mutilated by vandalism or environmental factors, they were stolen or disappeared with new cityscape plans. Other points of reference are the location of "Worker" at Tophane and John Berger's study of migrating workers titled *A Seventh Man* (1975). In the 1970s, when large numbers of workers migrated to Europe, Tophane was where masses of jobless workers gathered in front of the National Employment Agency. With their vague connotations in economic, social, and cultural memory, Tophane and "Worker" are weary witnesses of time. Hafriyat's project may be regarded as a multifaceted initiative aiming to raise awareness of collective memories. The project derives from the discreet removal of the statue and presents the recording of the act, documents gathering the responses from the public and state institutions, as well as all forms of related publications, news, documents and information. In this open-ended project, the "invisibility" of the statue is utilised to render the issues surrounding "Worker" visible in its various contexts. [Murat Akagündüz]



Ali Kazma

The multi-channel video installation “Written” that Ali Kazma created for “Tactics of Invisibility” at ARTER reflects upon oppositions such as existence and non-existence, memory and forgetting, and the state of co-existence these form through endless intertwinement, thus opening a space of contemplation for the viewer. Bringing the perception on visibility and invisibility on a level of insight, the quotations Ali Kazma noted during his personal readings accompanying his artistic production burn to disappearance on the one hand and through an intervention that reverses the process, burn to re-appear on the other. While the act of burning, which will eventually lead to destruction, ruins words, it also brings them to existence once again. The simultaneous manifestation of these opposing processes evokes the constant shift between chaos and order, existence and non-existence, life and death. The sentences that appear in the flames for a moment allude to the very process of destruction-recreation as well: “But language is the life that endures death and maintains itself in it.” / “As he starts to work, the artist has to believe that he is the first person ever to give form to a particular phenomenon. It is being done for the first time, and as only he feels it and understands it.” / “Who is speaking here, then? Is it ‘the author’?” (Emre Baykal)



Füsun Onur

Making the unseen visible without exposing it could be a description of her guiding theme, which she repeatedly varies in her covering or presenting of objects, in her work with everyday objects, and in her installations, on the borderline of invisibility. The principle of theme and variation is not only structurally important for many of Onur's works, it also proves to be an adequate model with respect to her entire oeuvre.

Since 1995 Onur has realised a whole sequence of musical artworks in which she does not work with music but rather parallel to the idea of music. The point of departure is the wish to render this synesthetic experience visible in “images,” that is, to evoke invisible music through inaudible spatial reference systems. (Margrit Brehm)

First exhibited at Staatliche Kunsthalle Baden-Baden in 2001, “Opus II - Fantasia” was Onur's most expansive and complex work to date. Engaging in a particular dialogue with the space, the work consists of knitting needles, wooden plinths, porcelaine figures and balls of gold braid installed in a rhythmic structure. Füsun Onur expresses that she “conceived the piece as the monologue of a single instrument, like an organ. It starts with knitting needles lying on the floor. At first, they lie in a single line, then move side by side and cross each other. Soon afterwards, the second element (gold braid) appears, accompanying or rather overlapping the broadening knitting needles. After an interval, the third element (pedestals) joins in ponderously. The knitting needles again interact, forming various positions with one another, and expanding. (...) The underlying structure is an ongoing impulse, occasionally going astray and falling silent...”



Sarkis

“K entre les deux étangs” (1986) consists of scripture in gold and blue on knives, plugged into a wooden tie, installed on a wheeled platform and magnetic tape, containing the recording of *Rheingold* by Wagner, conducted by Pierre Boulez. Sarkis created this work around the notion of “Kriegsschatz” (War Trophies). The concept refers to a number of works he has created since 1976. This word, either written out in full or reduced to its initial K appears recurrently throughout Sarkis’s oeuvre. Objects seized—often by using violence—are trophies of colonial looting, and marks of power. However, they subsist beyond wars and massacres and establish a specific diasporic memory between forgetting and the duty to remember. Here, forgetting inhabits memory as a silent voice. Searching for a restoration of the links between past and present, Sarkis uses tape-recordings or magnetic tape as a plastic object that stands for the thread of memory that, although visible, conceals itself because it stays mute: “In a sense, the ‘recorded memory’ and the ‘unrecordable memory’ have an ongoing conversation in my works. These conversations have changing voices, visual or audible. These thoughts may have something to do with things I witnessed in my childhood; it takes time to become aware of them. My concept of ‘Kriegsschatz’ is one that resists every effort at freezing, that knows no bounds and is open to continuity.”



Hale Tenger

“Didn’t we pull the body out from underwater / We didn’t pull the body out from underwater” These are two lines taken from the poem “Where the Winds Rest” by Edip Cansever. The question and its answer written into space with light seem to be doomed to uncertainty and doubt. Both the question and the answer keep circling the space, continuously appearing on the walls and fans and then disappearing. Who is uttering these sentences? Is she or he talking to her or his inner self or speaking to someone, most probably to a friend or a partner in guilt or culprit? Is she or he the witness or, rather, are they the witnesses to an event that has been repressed and forgotten? “Where the Winds Rest” (2007) is an uncanny work that deals with a violence or terror that actively assimilates anything and anybody it is directed towards or encounters. In this work, the space defines the world of violence and terror; similarly, violence and terror define the space of its power. In this climate, the day is certainly not a day, the night is certainly not a night, and time is, no doubt, not time. The work manifests the “uncanny” of the eyes or sight, of space, of language, of sound and listening, mobilising a “trans-effect.” One is in the dark, but not “on his or her own.” We, the audiences, are plunged into the same water with the dead, with the unknown, with the “no longer,” with the “not yet.” [Nermin Saybaşılı]



Nasan Tur

The importance of language and the ties that bind it to culturally coded patterns of understanding as well as the active power of political conceptions are recurrent motifs in Nasan Tur's oeuvre. "Istanbul says..." (2011) is about the interrelation between language and the public space. The work is part of a series entitled "City says...", which the artist has been realising since 2007. The artist always begins by collecting hundreds of graffiti from the city he works in, focusing on messages, consisting of individual words or short sentences, that make significant statements: "I love you", "Soldiers are murderers", "Fight the power", etc. By transposing these graffiti into the context of art, Nasan Tur questions the boundaries separating inside from outside, high culture from subcultures, anonymity from visibility.

Nasan Tur's multi-part video work "Invisible" (2004) addresses the difficulties and resentments that hobble intercultural relations. It consists of shots showing ten mosques and Islamic cultural institutions in various German cities. We see inconspicuous entrances to ordinary residential buildings, rear courtyards, alleys, and basements—they are indistinguishable from other entrances and places in the city. These nondescript doors fit smoothly into the streetscape: there are neither signs nor visible lettering to indicate their real functions as centres of social life or houses of worship, and the details the artist has selected make these places appear oddly undefined, as "non-places" of sorts. The fact that the images were recorded with a concealed camera mounted in a fixed position recalls the surveillance techniques used by police and secret services; the work is accordingly presented on surveillance monitors. [Barbara Heinrich]



xurban_collective

xurban_collective's "Evacuation Series", begun in 2010, explores the idea of global social spaces as they relate to the question of distributed localisation. Each instance examines the particular typology of a specific built environment and specifically investigates office spaces, houses, martial arts and religious centers according to their common denominators across nationalised territories. Based on this research, the project involves designing, building, and furnishing particular social spaces. These spaces are incomplete and function as a form of "evacuation" of some of their culturally recognisable artifacts and objects, revealing the "bare space," its potential and limitations for democratic participation.

The first installment of this series is based on modern conceptions of mescits. The Turkish mescit—originally from the Arabic word masjid (mosque)—designates smaller prayer rooms that are usually installed in haphazard ways in "modern" buildings. They can be found in shopping malls, business centers, schools, hospitals, and apartments in almost every city around the world. Most of these spaces do not exist in the original architectural plans, but are carved out from garages, basements, warehouses, or empty apartments and storage spaces. Their spatial configurations differ from the architecture of the traditional mosque, which is conceived and designed as a monumental building.

In "The Sacred Evacuation", we use a politically charged religious space and transform it into a "pure social space" by covering most of its religious connotations, thus inviting viewers to peep into a bare space, a generic experience of the sort most art museums provide. [xurban_collective]



TACTICS OF INVISIBILITY

09/04/-05/06/2011

A Co-production of

Vehbi Koç Foundation and

Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary

Curators: Daniela Zyman & Emre Baykal

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