

SELECTED REVIEWS RELATED TO  
AKSEL'S WORK

## Halstuchattacke auf die Minarettspitze

**Ausstellung** Das Künstlerhaus Stuttgart zeigt Erdag Aksel, dem nichts heilig ist. *Von Georg Leisten*

Spielzeug landet in der Bratpfanne, Christusfiguren werden die Arme lang gezogen und Moscheekuppeln von verhexten Hubschrauberteilen attackiert. Erdag Aksel hat viele Ideen und vor nichts Respekt. Nun entdeckt das Künstlerhaus in einer seiner kurzweiligsten Ausstellungen der letzten Zeit die Objekte, Zeichnungen und Videofilme des türkischen Allrounders.

Trotz internationaler Auftritte in London, Venedig und Paris sowie Lehrtätigkeiten in den USA und Frankreich hat es der 60-Jährige bisher nicht ins ganz helle Rampenlicht der Kunstszene geschafft. Umso überraschungsreicher fällt sein erster Soloauftritt in Deutschland aus. Aksel verbindet den derbkomischen Konzeptualismus eines Dieter Roth mit der surrealen Verwandlungspoetik einer Meret Oppenheim zu einem teils politischen, teils philosophischen Schabernack, alles unter dem Motto „Life of Objects“, denn in Aksels komischem Kosmos führen Gegenstände ein bizarres Eigenleben. Was auf den ersten Blick banal erscheint, erweist sich auf den zweiten als verweisungsstarke Parallelwirklichkeit. Erinnert die filmische Animation einer Armee von Spielzeugsoldaten, die sich anschießt, Kühlschrank und Herd einer Durchschnittsküche zu erobern, nicht daran, dass es bei Kriegen genau darum geht: Nahrungsressourcen und Energie?

Trumpft Aksel hier lärmend karnevalistisch und mit viel Gegenwartsbezug auf, zieht er anderswo die stillräumerische Karte der zeitlos-existenziellen Metaphorik. So etwa in „Reflection of Craft“, das Spiegel und Krücke zu einem sinnfälligen Denkmal über die Nähe von Schönheit und Verletzbarkeit vereint. Oder mit der Wandinstallation „This Exhibit“: eine Reihe von Abreißkalendern, welche von einem Bewässerungssystem aus Infusionsschläuchen durchfeuchtet wird. Der vermeintlich unumstößlichen Dauer der bücherdicken Kalender begegnet die Allegoriemaschine mit der weichen Gegenkraft des steten Tropfens, das Tage und Jahre peu à peu in Pappmaché transformiert.

Überhaupt ist das Aufweichen und Einschmelzen ein zentrales Prinzip von Aksels plastischen Metamorphosen. Auch das Blatt eines Hubschrauberrotors wird plötzlich geschmeidig wie ein Halstuch, um sich um eine Minarettspitze zu winden. Ob als Schutz oder als Würgeschlinge bleibt bewusst offen, so dass insbesondere diese monumentale Skulptur das höchst ambivalente Verhältnis vieler Türken zu Staat und Religion offenbart. Der Künstlerhaus-Chef Adnan Yildiz setzt mit all dem seine Strategie fort, sich behutsam von der Ausrichtung auf avantgardistische Theoriepositionen wegzubewegen und vermehrt publikumstaugliche Kunst zu präsentieren.

**Bis 1. Juni**, Reuchlinstraße 4b, Mi-Fr 15-19, Sa, So 13-17 Uhr.



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twenty-two



forty-t



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# Erdağ Aksel and the Phantoms of Memory

TEXT / DEBORAH ROOT

Hieroglyphs float on the gallery wall. Made from carpenter's rulers, these forms resemble mathematical symbols, or perhaps a strange alphabet with letters unrecognizable as any language. The letters are twisted and deformed into odd shapes. Some are partially detached from their framing grid. We feel that we should recognize these sculptures as a kind of language, but no matter how long we gaze at the hard forms of the rulers their meaning remains unintelligible.

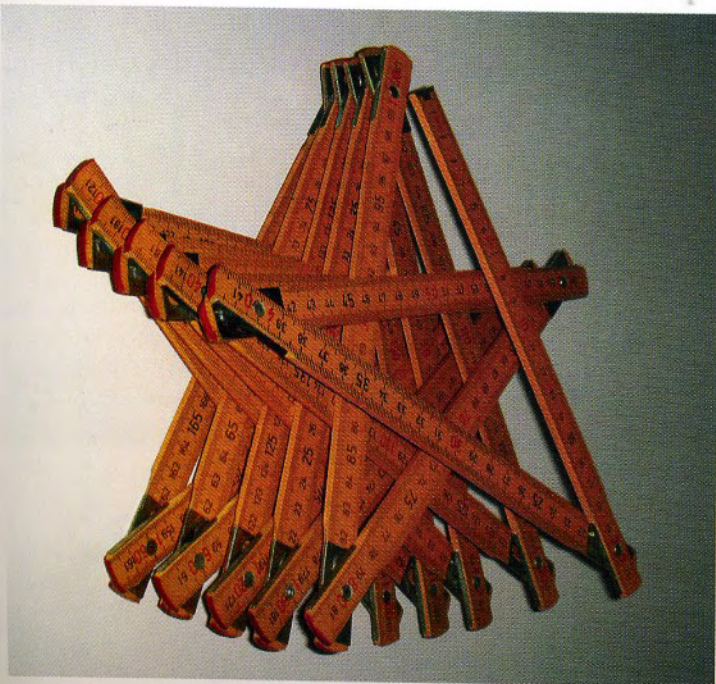
In *Series I-II*, 1999-2002, Istanbul artist Erdağ Aksel invites us to imagine a pivotal moment in the founding of the Turkish Republic. When Kemal Atatürk decreed that Turkish script change from Arabic to Roman in 1928 there was, in Aksel's words, a calculated loss of memory, which means that he can read *The New York Times* from a hundred years ago but not the Istanbul newspapers. Think about it: overnight the script in which you read and write your language becomes unrecognizable. Suddenly you live in a nation of illiterates. You are illiterate. You can't read the newspapers. You can't read your government's proclamations. Seventy years later, you still can't read contemporary accounts of what actually happened during the construction of the Turkish state,

the deals that were made, the promises kept or not kept. In an instant, Turkey's collective memory disappeared.

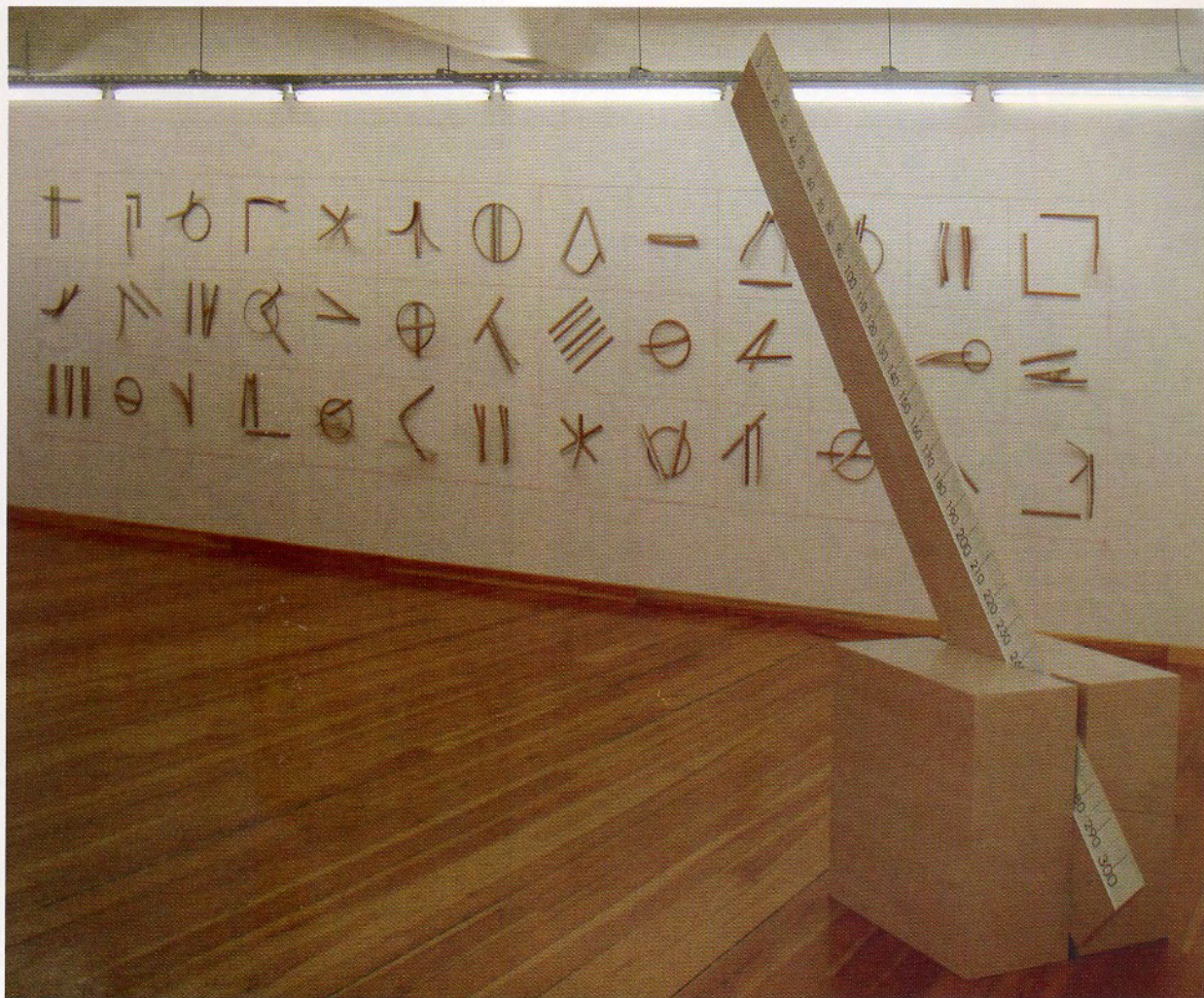
Memory and its erasure are central themes in Aksel's work. The imaginary alphabet in *Series I-II* serves as a trace of something that was lost, and a reminder of the larger questions of nationalism, the role of the army, and the history of military coups in Turkey. Michael Taussig describes how the repressive state does not try to destroy memory but rather undertakes what he calls the "relocation and refunctioning of collective memory" to the individual mind; in his example, the dirty war in 1980s Colombia becomes a war of silencing.<sup>1</sup> The collective trauma of events such as military coups comes to be experienced in isolation, and open discussion of historical reality is forbidden. In Turkey, the ubiquitous images of Atatürk, military monuments, and the nation's flag—which have all been usurped by ultra-nationalists—can be seen to stand for this relocated memory, this constructed collectivity.

Most Istanbul artists and intellectuals are deeply involved in the country's intensely political environment, and some have been prosecuted and murdered by ultra-nationalists. In August 2008, three hundred artists and intellectuals declared support for the government's Ergenekon investigation, which is probing the attempts of clandestine ultra-nationalist organizations to destabilize the Turkish state. Artists such as Aksel, Hale Tenger, and Tayfun Serttaş, whose recent work *I Love You*, 2009, speaks to the assassination of the Armenian journalist Hrant Dink by Turkish nationalists in January 2007, seek to create a space for collective memory in a country where memories have been controlled or erased by the state. Here, the role of the artist is an important one; he or she becomes the witness and the producer of images that go underneath language to a place where the cost of militarism can be seen, and where collective memory can exist. Images create movement when words are too dangerous, and conceptually-based work can connect objects to constellations of ideas. Yet, the position of artists and writers can be precarious, as seen in the arrest of Orhan Pamuk and others for "insulting Turkishness."

For twenty years, an enormous bayonet stood in the center of Taksim Square, in the heart of Istanbul, marking the 1960 military coup, the first of several in Turkey's modern history. Aksel created







two models of this monument that sit on wooden tables, like ornaments in a private home. In *Remembering/don't remember!*, 2007, a precise replica of the Taksim bayonet, a heating element causes the blade to glow hot. Here, memory burns as one draws near. *Forgetting/don't forget*, 2009, speaks to women in Turkey. Roses, nail polish, a high-heel shoe, kitchen items, and a pineapple are all painted military green and heaped at the base of a bayonet made from pink neon. The pink glow contrasts with the military color, creating an eerie light that points to the dilemma faced by many Turkish women.

The Ergenekon investigation has revealed that high-ranking military officers have consciously propagated a false image of Islam, which they have deliberately directed at women. For instance, petty criminals were hired to appear as bearded, black-robed Islamists on television and present their radical "plans" for the country. Such theatrics have given greater legitimacy to the view that the only solution to the looming Islamist coup is a stronger military. In addition, some nationalist women support the military in the name of secular modernity. *Forgetting/don't forget* depicts the paradox for

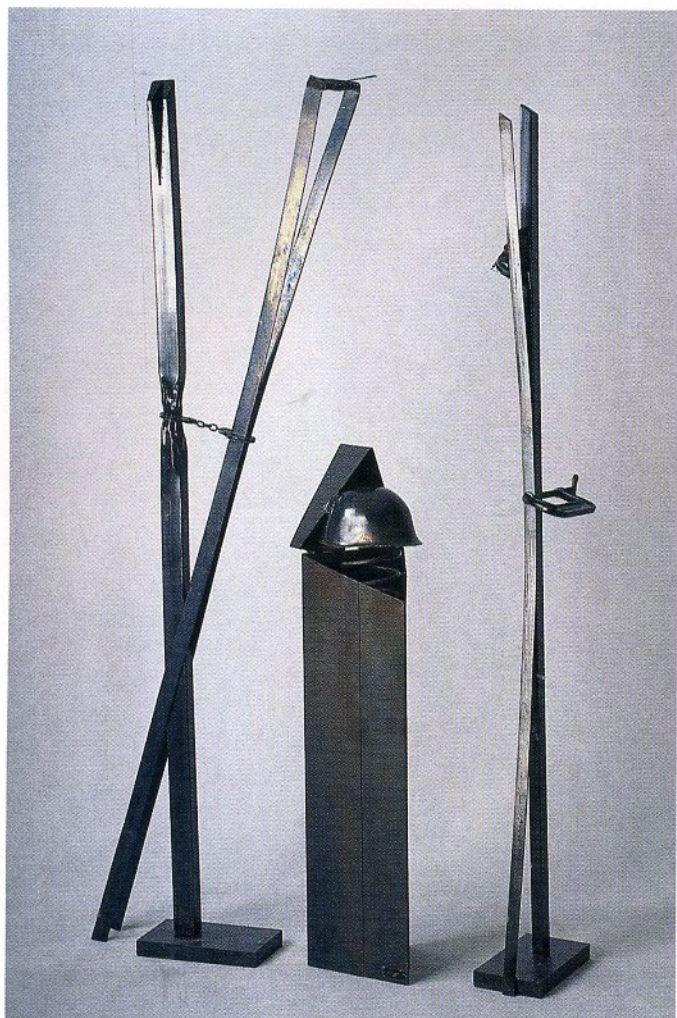
Turkish women who, in Aksel's words, have been deliberately squeezed between the barracks and the mosque. This constructed fear is a kind of terrorism, Aksel says, because fear erases rationality and indoctrinates people to the idea of a military solution.

In the West, Islamophobia can make it difficult to grasp the nuances of Turkish politics and the nature of its Islamic parties. Although an Islamic party has formed the government, the real power is held by the fiercely secularist army. Aksel says that if the Islamists had power, they wouldn't be as open as they are now. There may be some danger from a small minority, but in general Turkish Muslims are bourgeois, "soft" Muslims who enjoy the good life, and who want to be part of the European Union, fully knowing that with the EU comes rights for gays, women, and minorities. In the days of the sultans, Turkey technically operated under sharia law, but as a rule it was never applied harshly. For Aksel, as for many other artists and intellectuals, the threat to civil liberties comes from the army.

In a piece from Aksel's *Objects of Tension* series, 1987, a metal helmet springs from a box placed on a pedestal. The helmet refers to

INSIDE FRONT COVER: Erdağ Aksel, *Dhal, Buhal, Şuhal*, 1999-2000, mixed media, height: 200 cm / OPPOSITE: detail of *Under Yellow Sky*, 2008, mixed media, 250 x 150 cm / ABOVE: *A calculated loss of memory II*, 2009, wooden rulers, 307 x 70.8 inches (all images courtesy of the artist)





the fact that the military has come out of Pandora's box, and will not easily be put back. The first military coup in 1960 opened the possibility for other coups, and the army is now a permanent feature of the country's political landscape. The coup's leaders were neither tried nor jailed. In school, a mandatory class in national security tells students that an army that doesn't fight for twenty years can't be a good army. The army needs war. But what is the cost of a militarized society?

For the last twenty-five years Turkey has been at war against Kurdish nationalists in the eastern part of the country. As a result of the Ergenekon investigation, events of the past are being discussed for the first time, including the massacre of Kurdish Alawites in Dersim in 1937 on the probable orders of Atatürk. Until very recently, Atatürk was an untouchable figure and the cult of personality surrounding him continues to seem like a remnant of another time. Now, the collective silence is beginning to break open. Tellingly, the victims of Dersim did not speak out in Turkey; this history was erased and the province renamed.

These days many Turkish artists have formed an uneasy alliance with the Islamists against the military. It's an odd moment. The old

categories of left and right have practically disappeared, replaced by a split between nationalists and those who are uneasy with a militarist notion of the nation state. There are coalitions between leftist intellectuals, Kurds, women, gays, and Islamists, all of whom have been suppressed by the nationalist agenda. The Turkish army has taken as its task the protection of secular democracy and the country continues to live under the threat of a military coup d'état. In recent years, the existence of a "deep state," a clandestine alliance of military, security, and criminal forces, has become increasingly visible.

Like many other artists working in Istanbul, Aksel reads the newspapers and watches the news but does his best not to allow the political situation to dominate his artistic practice. Although his work of the last thirty years has been politically informed, he layers the political significance of his work with personal associations and memories. The carpenter's rulers that comprise *Series I-II* appear in other pieces, reflecting Aksel's boyhood experience with authority. In the Catholic school he attended in Izmir, both priests and nationalist teachers regularly struck him with wooden carpenter's rulers. Power is power, regardless of the mask it wears.

As well, rulers constitute a form of measurement and for Aksel

ABOVE, LEFT TO RIGHT: from series *Objects of Tension*, 1987, mixed media, dimensions variable; *Forgetting/don't forget!*, 2009, mixed media, 180 x 50 x 33 cm





underline the slipperiness of measurement when it comes to art: one makes work but doesn't know if it's good or bad. Perhaps it's half good and half bad, and the market has its own terms of measurement: it's difficult to talk about measurement in this field. And, for Aksel, Turkey is a bit like the art world: there is not a lot of measurement in the country. Turkey is not a measured place, in the sense of measured response. Of course, Aksel says, as an artist it is a paradox to defend rationalism and measured responses. He laughs, and adds that if he were working in the U.S., he would defend anarchism.

As a sculptor, Aksel is concerned with form and, in particular, the properties of metal. In the *Objects of Beauty* series, 2005-2006, he brings together industrial and found objects, which he layers through personal association. Bronze panels fold and become liquid. Curled metal shapes stand out from a wall, bearing branch-like objects. A faucet is attached to a pipe that changes shape, thins out and curves. Everyday objects mutate, still recognizable but demonstrating their ability to change form. In Aksel's other ruler pieces, such as *Suzan II*, 1999-2000, we see yellow rulers flying from a tripod, where they become the blonde hair of the actress who played

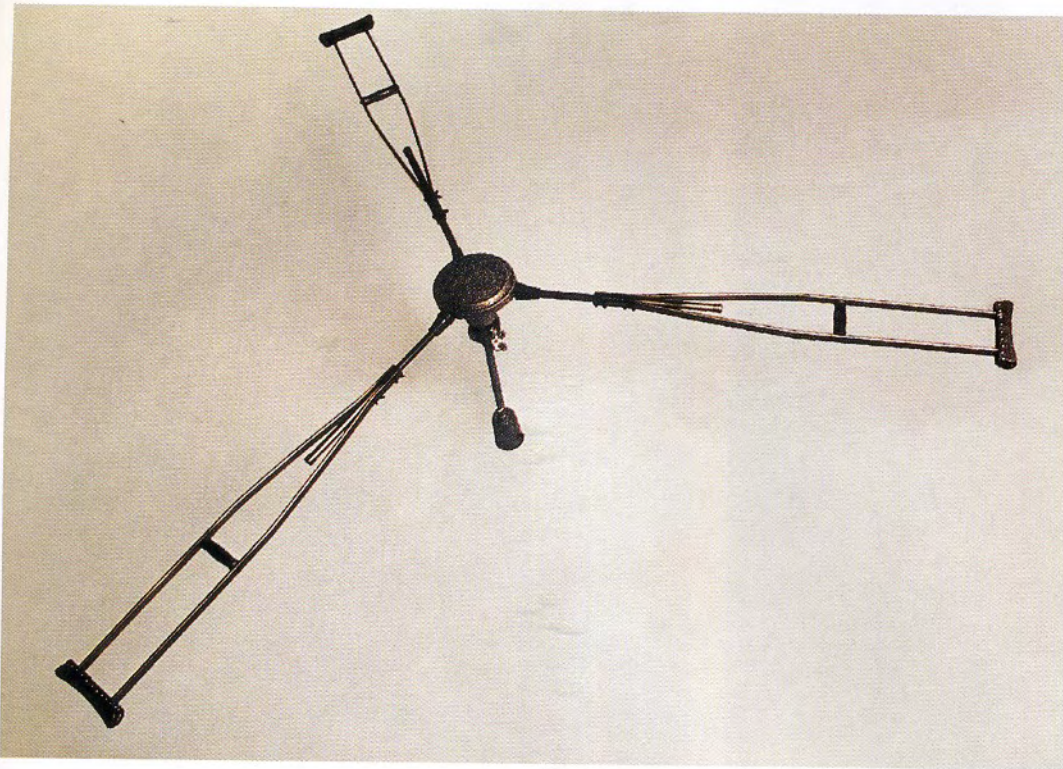
the villainess in many Turkish films. A flag and a Jesus figure are stretched out on rulers. Rulers also appear as pure sculptural forms that crash together, seemingly exploding into space.

Aksel began to play with the idea of crutches in *Ohal, Buhal, Şuhal*, 1999-2000. Three crutches form a tripod with metal crescents attached to their feet—a sly reference to the Turkish fascist party, whose symbol is three crescents. The images in *Street Works*, 2002, are elongated crutches in bright colors, arranged next to panels of flowers that resemble a traditional carpet. These works are painted directly onto the road to allow cars to drive over them. Crutches have multiple meanings. Turkey's war against Kurdish separatists in the eastern part of the country has killed and injured both combatants and civilians through the use of land mines. This work also plays with language, with the crutch operating as a visual pun. In Turkish, the word "crippled" has many uses in everyday speech, and the events in life that are not going well are spoken of as "crippled." One refers to bad weather as being "crippled" and crutches comprise the blades of a ceiling fan in *The Weather is Going Bad*, 1999-2000.

The specificity of place informs *Here and There and Then*, 1993, produced for the 45th Venice biennial. In past centuries, Istanbul

ABOVE, LEFT TO RIGHT: *The Flag*, 1999-2000, mixed media; *Suzan II*, 1999-2000, mixed media, height: variable, between 200 and 350 cm

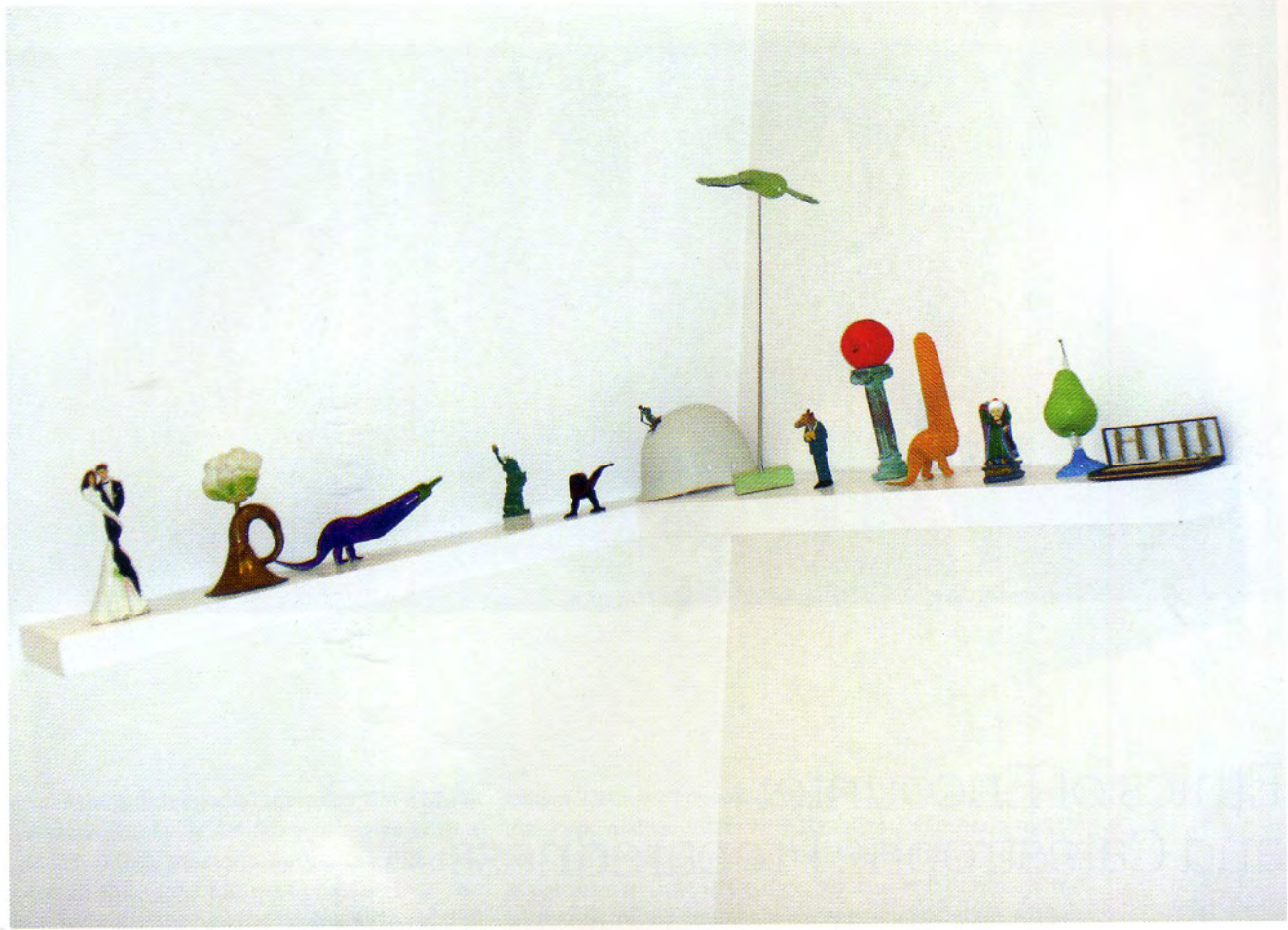




and Venice were connected through an intimate trading relationship, which was initially formed by Sultan Mehmet II in 1452. In this installation, four portraits of Mehmet II are encased in metal frames, including the famous image by Bellini. Calendars reflecting the different timekeeping systems used in Venice and Turkey appear below these portraits—the Islamic of 355 days and the Latin of 365. They are bisected by a panel containing a series of photographs of Aksel removing his underwear. When Aksel noticed that his made-in-America underwear were “Cambridge Classics,” he was struck by the way the brand name combined two very Western concepts. Underwear is not usually intended for show. After attending a seminar by Edward Said, Aksel became interested in what, like underwear, lies underneath or is hidden by the “oriental” identity, in particular the ways in which the easterner can be orientalist towards other easterners. In another panel, we see photographs of Mehmet II’s sword broken into parts and reattached, in a sense rendering its size, and hence its capacity, adjustable. *Here and There and Then* references Turkey’s position as bridge between East and West, and the ways in which this is understood at home and internationally.

A great deal of Aksel’s work is playful even when the subject is serious. Odd mutant toys are exhibited on slanting shelves in *Daydreaming on Alice*, 2007, a corncob with legs, a magnifying glass carrying signs, an intact soldier crawling on the ground next to a melted and dismembered soldier. These whimsical yet creepy toys were not originally made for exhibition, but were rather a form of free play, as in Aksel’s video of a melting soldier on a Teflon pan. Here, the disintegrating toy





moves like melted cheese, and one cannot help but imagine the fate of real soldiers or the stories of the melted brides and grooms from wedding cakes.

In 2007, Aksel installed a light box in Taksim Square as part of an event designed to celebrate the anniversary of the liberal newspaper *Radikal*. The newspaper rented advertising panels throughout the city, allocating a number of them to artists. Because this was in effect a publicity campaign, Aksel focused on issues of publicity, tackling why anybody would want publicity and the accompanying celebrity status. In Turkey as elsewhere, one sees a fascination with celebrity and the desperate yearning of the average person to be known. Aksel put his image, resembling a game-show host and holding a large picture frame in his hand, in the lightbox. Around him, text read: "You can be a celebrity by having your picture displayed here in this frame. For a small fee you too can be famous and not just for fifteen minutes but for a whole four hours. Call!" Inside the frame, and against the backdrop of Taksim Square, was a man with a camera pointed at the viewer. Inevitably, people called.

For a North American, the level of engagement of artists like Aksel in their social and political milieu is refreshing, and speaks to the role of artist as witness. It raises the important question: what is at stake in image-making, both in Turkey and elsewhere? This is not simply a question of political art, but of artists' understanding

of their position in the society where they produce images. In Taussig's work on state terror, he notes that one role of the traditional healer is to impart images to the unwell, whose health improves upon seeing them.<sup>2</sup> In a country like Turkey this becomes the role of the artist, to create a collective space of memory and to begin to heal the country's collective amnesia. For me, this raises the question of what is at stake in the North American context, where art has increasingly been sidelined or reduced to a kind of entertainment. Ultimately, I think this has something to do with the unwillingness of many working here to recognize the social and political reality in which we live.

#### NOTES

1. Michael Taussig, *The Nervous System*, New York: Routledge, 1992, 48.
2. *Ibid.*, 8.

Deborah Root is a Toronto-based art critic and theorist who has published widely in *Canadian Art*, *Prefix Photo*, *Public*, and elsewhere. She is the author of *Cannibal Culture: Art, Appropriation and the Commodification of Difference*, Boulder, CO and Oxford, UK: Westview Press, 1996.

OPPOSITE, TOP TO BOTTOM: *The Weather is Going Bad*, 1999-2000, mixed media; *Ohal, Buhal, Şuhal*, 1999-2000 / ABOVE: *Corner Tuhafiye*, 2009, mixed media, site specific installation with figurines, 230 x 35 cm



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## DECODING IMAGES



**Lizzi Bougatsos, Good Hair, 2010**

Mixed Media. Courtesy (recently on view at) James Fuentes LLC, New York.

For her most recent show, artist and Gang Gang Dance singer Lizzi

### ALSO

**Meredyth Sparks, Untitled, 2010**

**Butt Johnson, Untitled Floral Pastiche II (Snapdragon), 2009**

## ERDAG AKSEL

1/15/10  
GALERI NEV  
by david ebony



ISTANBUL A longtime fixture on the Istanbul contemporary art scene, Erdag Aksel, 56, is an influential teacher as well as an artist known for provocative sculptures, installations and performances that frequently allude to Turkish history, and most often encompass a scathing critique of militarism. Among the 15 recent sculptures in this show, titled "Remembering/Forget! and Forgetting/Remember!," were several wall reliefs made of bunches of long, yellow, folding wood rulers. The most dramatic, *A Calculated Loss of Memory* (2008-09), covered one large wall. Bent and twisted rulers form geometric shapes in 39 different configurations that here were neatly aligned in three rows. The series assumes the aspect of an imaginative alphabet. According to a press statement by the Izmir-born artist, the illegible symbols reference Turkey's sudden conversion from Arabic to Roman characters in 1928, during the time of Atatürk's wide-ranging reforms. For many in Turkey today, the nation's written history prior to 1928 remains as impenetrable as Aksel's fanciful script.

The exhibition's two eponymous works, each a freestanding, approximately 6-foot-tall electrified sculpture displayed on a tall metal stand near the gallery entrance, were among the show's best. According to the artist, each is a maquette for a proposed monumental sculpture to be installed in a central Istanbul plaza where once stood a giant sword, erected in 1960 to commemorate the first military coup d'état in modern Turkey. Retained during subsequent periods of civilian rule, the sword was removed by the military junta following yet another coup d'état in 1980.

With tongue in cheek, Aksel, in *Remembering* (2007), underscores the sword as a phallic symbol by replacing it with the even more blatant penile shape of a tall narrow curving steel rod that juts vertically from an upended sword handle inserted into a pile of small rocks on the stand. Glowing a faint red-orange, the rod doubles as an electric heater, which could cause a serious burn if touched, and would hopefully, the artist says, remind one of the perils of a military takeover of a democratic government. This sculpture's similarly wacky counterpart, *Forgetting* (2009), features a thin, phallus-shaped tube of pink neon surmounting an assemblage of feminine accessories, such as lipstick tubes, nail polish bottles and jewelry, all covered with drab, military-green paint. On one level, this striking work appears as an erotic and slightly vulgar pop-art object, but Aksel has in mind a more acerbic and sobering purpose. He created the piece as a reflection on current fears of Islamic fundamentalism, which have gripped and divided Turkey, and prompted recent demonstrations by a number of women's groups favoring the preservation of a secular government by any means necessary, including another military coup.

Photo: Erdag Aksel: *Forgetting*, 2009, mixed mediums, 7034 by 1934 by 13 inches; at Galeri Nev.

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Kunstmagazin



## Interventionen

Kilian Rütthemann  
im Kunsthaus Glarus

## Hüttenzauber

Kunstgenuss  
in luftiger Höhe

## Malerei

Ein Porträt der Künstlerin  
Klodin Erb





Erdag Aksel,  
*Calculated Loss of  
 Memory III, 2009,*  
*Installation (Misch-*  
*technik).*  
 Im Besitz des  
 Künstlers.  
 © Künstler

## *Leichtfüssige Ironie oder bleierner Ernst?*

Von Luise Baumgartner

■ Die Gruppenausstellung «Seriously Ironic» im Bieler CentrePasquArt ist gut betitelt: Tatsächlich weiss die Besucherin auch nach mehrmaligem Rundgang durch die Ausstellung nicht so recht, ob hier so schwierige Themen wie Religiosität, Individualismus, Freiheit und Emanzipation in der heutigen Türkei mit humorvoller Ironie oder eher mit beissend-fatalistischem Sarkasmus gebrochen werden.

Ernst und gewichtig sind die ideologischen Diskussionspunkte, die in «Seriously Ironic» verhandelt werden, ironisierend die künstlerische Annäherung und Ausleuchtung derselben.

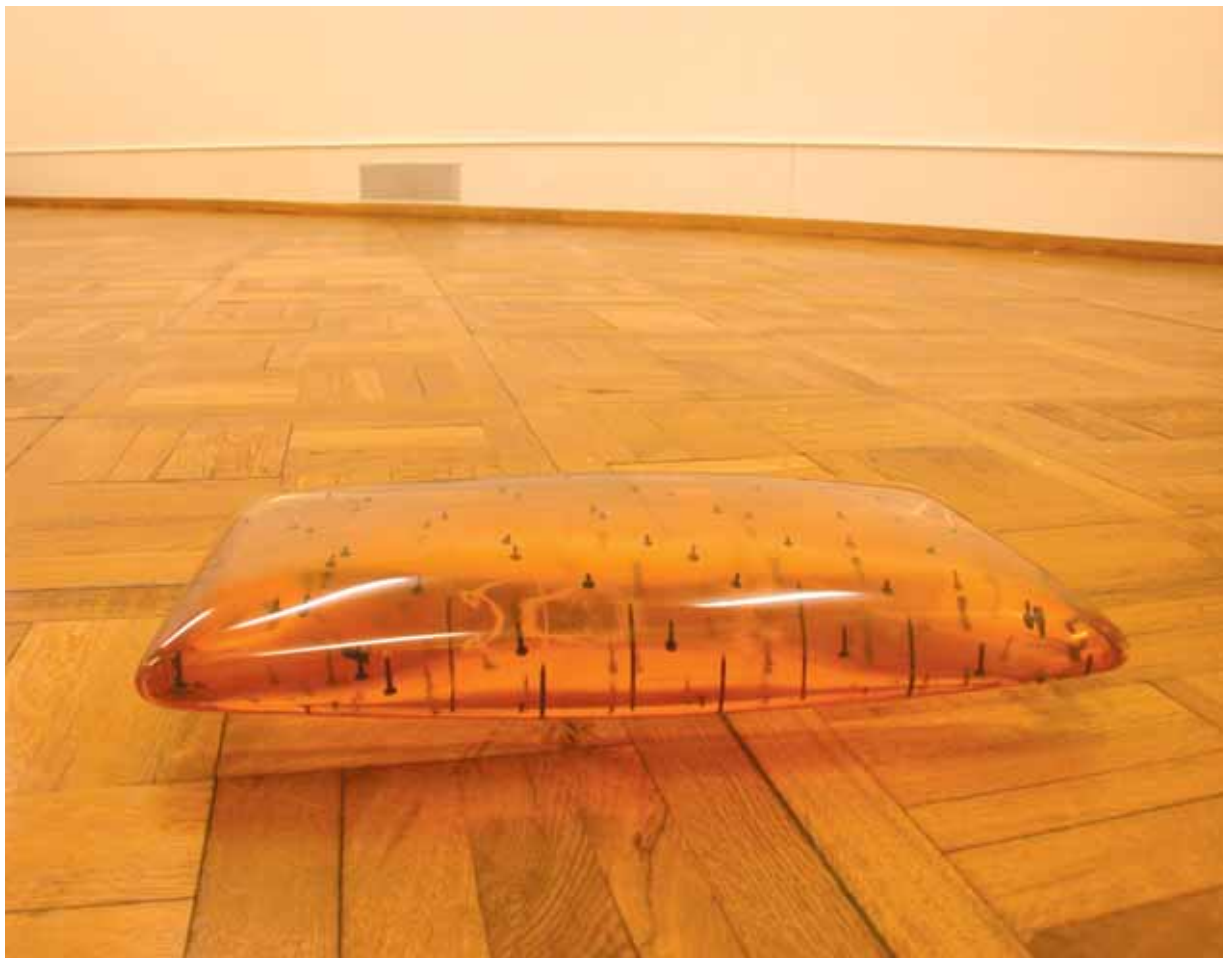
Aber auch die Art und Weise, wie die vertretenen Jungtalente und grossen Namen die moderne (?) Türkei und ihre Probleme vorstellen, ist zum Teil schon ambivalent: So nimmt man Selim Birsels (\*1963, Brüssel) Wand-

bild «Testis-Ear-Tank-Field» (2009, Technik: Stempel auf Tapete) selbstverständlich als schönes, ornamentales Gewächs aus Pflanzengirlanden. Wer besser hinschaut, entdeckt, dass jedes einzelne Blatt aus einem richtigen kleinen Panzer besteht. Die Präzision dieser Kleinteiligkeit zeugt von einer obsessiven Beschäftigung mit dem Thema. Selda Asals (\*1960, Izmir) mit Nägeln gespicktes Polyesterkopfkissen in süsslichem Apricot («Sleep», 1998) sieht auf den ersten Blick nach witzigem Pop-Art-Kitsch aus. Erst zusammen mit dem Doku-Film «Restore Hope» (2008) über Selbstmord und Gewalt in türkischen Ehen, den Asal in Schweden gedreht hat, wirkt das Kissen dann doch nicht mehr so lustig. Ehrlich gesagt ist man darüber sogar leise enttäuscht: Die etwas derbe Frische, die Asal mit «Sleep» an den Tag legt, wird

durch die Schwere von «Restore Hope» buchstäblich erdrückt. Und die Besucherin fragt sich: Ist die Verbindung dieser beiden Werke, deren Entstehung immerhin zehn Jahre auseinanderliegt, nicht etwas gar willkürlich? Stellen wir uns vor, «Sleep» würde in einer Schau namens «Humorous female art from contemporary Turkey» gezeigt – dächte da jemand noch an häusliche Gewalt? Hier liegt ein Problem, mit dem die Ausstellung auch in anderen Teilen kämpft: Wird dem Diktat des Ausstellungskonzepts, möglichst viele Diskurse (politische, weltanschauliche, soziale, ökologische...) auf der Metaebene kritisch zu beleuchten, die Eigenständigkeit der verschiedenen Künstler geopfert? Hätte man die teils neuen, teils arrivierten türkischen Künstlerinnen und Künstler nicht besser unter einem etwas freieren Titel erstmalig in der

**Seriously Ironic**  
 - Positions in  
 Turkish  
 Contemporary  
 Art Scene  
 CentrePasquArt  
 Biel, Seedorstadt 71-  
 73, 2502 Biel. Ge-  
 öffnet Mittwoch bis  
 Freitag 14:00-18:00  
 h, Samstag und  
 Sonntag 11:00-18:00  
 h. Bis 30. August.  
 Mit Katalog.





Selda Asal, SLEEP,  
1998, Polyester resin  
and nails, 46 x 23  
x 6 cm, Courtesy of  
the artist. © Künstler,  
Installation, Courtesy  
of the artist

Schweiz versammelt? (Das ist nämlich «das» grosse Verdienst des CentrePasquArt: dass es so viele gute und hierzulande trotzdem noch recht unbekannte Künstler aufbieten konnte!) Man wäre so vielleicht weniger Gefahr gelaufen, sich selbst die Hände zu binden.

**Zu den Höhepunkten in «Seriously Ironic»: Erdag Aksels (\*1953, Izmir) gummiartig gebogene Massstäbe – ironische Verbiegung par excellence! – erfreuen, auch das Sammelsurium an schrägem Krimskrams (wie ein geschmolzenes Puppenpaar für die Hochzeitstorte) reizt zum Lachen und befremdet.**

Leyla Gediz, übrigens die einzige Malerin in dieser Gruppe, zeigt überaus reife, sachliche Gemälde. «Leaving Nisantasi» (2008, Öl auf Leinwand) erinnert Eingeweihte an die Romane von Orhan Pamuk, auch er ein türkischer

Glücksfall für Westeuropa. Man hofft, dass die junge Frau, die da auf dem Bild im Nebel verschwindet, nicht dieselbe ist, die in «Nosebleed» (2007, Öl auf Leinwand) so verstörend gut mit blutender Nase festgehalten ist.

Hande Varsat, 26 Jahre jung, zeigt mit ihren Spitzentüchern aus Plexiglas, Bronze und Eisen («Interval table», 2006, Plexiglas und Edelstahl draht, «Steal the handkerchief», 2008, Bronze, Angelhaken und Angelschnur und «The threshold inside», 2007, Eisen und Edelstahl draht) erstaunliches Geschick und eine bewundernswerte Eleganz. Leichtigkeit trifft auf Schwere – hier wird die Leitidee der Ausstellung wunderbar verwirklicht.

Verglichen damit wirkt beispielsweise Devrim Kadirbeyoglu (\*1978, Istanbul) mit «In case of loss, please return to:» (2009, Installation unter

anderem mit gefundenen Handschuhen und Recyclingmotor) tatsächlich etwas verloren, ja banal. Inwiefern sich die Künstlerin mit diesem an sich witzigen, aber ein bisschen deplatzierten Werk der jugendlich-spritzigen Frische oben genannter Künstlerin zugesellt, bleibt offen.

Alles in allem dürfen wir glücklich sein, gute Kunst aus der nah-fremden Türkei hier zu haben. In der Schwester ausstellung «Collage – Décollage. Burahn Dogançay – Jacques Villeglé» trifft der Osten dann auf den Westen – ein Topos, der trotz anhaltender Aktualität nichts an Mysteriosität eingebüsst hat.