

The Long Ride of OK, a picture book in stories
[OK'un Uzun Yolları, öykülü resim kitabı]

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Berke BAŞ :
Ekmel ERTAN :
Bülent SOMAY :

Tezin Onaylandığı Tarih :

Toplam Sayfa Sayısı:

Anahtar Kelimeler (Türkçe)

- 1) Türk
- 2) Anlatım ve kimlik
- 3) Öyküsellik
- 4) Sinemasal görüntü & beden
- 5) Etkileşimli video yerleştirmesi

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TÜRKÇE ÖZET

Türk olmak?

Çoğu yabancı bir dilde sürüp giden 20 yıllık eğitim yaşamımda, Kamerun'a has bir babun türü olan Vishantu'ların çiftleşme törenlerinden Amerika'nın Orta-Batı eyaletlerindeki çiftçi-soylu alt sınıfın televizyon izleme biçimlerine dek pek çok konuda derinlemesine bilgilendirildim.

Ancak bu eğitim süreci boyunca kendi yurduma, bugünkü ve dünkü yaşama biçimlerimize ilişkin edinebildiğim bilgiler, bırakın en yukarıdaki yarım soruyu yanıtlamama, aklımı netleştirerek tam ve besleyici bir soru cümlesi haline getirmeme bile yardımcı olacak nitelikte değildi.

Benliğimi kurarken dayandığım kültür kökenimi fark etmememe, yoktan var olduğumu, en küçüğünden en büyüğüne tüm özellik ve alışkanlıklarımın bana has olduğunu, ardımın, öncülümün, basbayağı evimin olmadığını zannetmememe yol açan bu durum, hem kimlik hem de zaman ve devamlılık algımda boşuklar yarattı. Ve yurdumuzun bugününü belirleyen soru ve sorunlarla ilgilenmememe, yıllar içinde önüme serilmiş olan "resmi" ve "resmi gayri-resmi" hazır sonuç ve tespitleri olduğu gibi kanıksamama, bu anı ve burayı sahiplenmememe neden oldu.

İçinde bulunduğumuz hakim kültürel atmosfer, Türk olduğum gerçeğini - bu kadar basit bir şekilde dile getirmemi bile yasaklar nitelikte.

Bu şartlar altında; "sayısal çoğunluk - kültürel azınlık" olarak geçirdiğim, kökenimi tanımama uzanan bütün yolların, neredeyse sistematik olarak "aptallık, barbarlık, çağdışılık, faşistlik"le suçlanmak gibi korku ve utanç unsurlarıyla çevrildiği uzun yıllardan sonra; bir sabah uyandım. Ve, pek çok hafifleyerek, ben Türk'üm dedim.

OK'un Uzun Yolları - öykülü resim kitabı, uyanışım, ardından gelen iz sürme maceram, ve köken duygusunun kendisini biçimlendiren anlatı olgusuyla ilgilenen; katılımcıların bedenlerini görüntülerle birleşmeye davet eden etkileşimli bir video yerleşimesi.

Ne dersiniz, belki de Türk olmakta "Kılıcını kuşağına bağlayıp namaz kılan Alparslan"dan başka birşeyler vardır? Ve belki de, elma yemek için elimi uzattığımda neden sessizce ağaca teşekkür ettiğimi bulabiliriz..

ENGLISH SUMMARY

My MA Thesis Project, **The Long Ride of OK, a picture book in stories**, is an interactive video installation project that takes on the concepts of heritage, and roots.

This subject matter, very personally (and passionately) linked to my newfound interest in my cultural heritage, and the quest of identity it has nudged me to take- along with the more or less obscured shades of the Turkish heritage that I had not been exposed to previously- unraveled itself into this experiment in narration, and the concept of narrativity.

A most important characteristic of this experiment, and the way it is embodied, is the inevitable degree of physicality the material somewhat demanded me to come up with; which is the primary reason to why this work is a physical installation to be experienced corporeally and individually, and not a film to be sat and watched through collectively. Details to my discourse can be found in the following pages.

INTRODUCTION

The following piece of writing contains the conceptual framework for my MA Thesis Project, **The Long Ride of OK, a picture book in stories / OK'un Uzun Yolları, öykülü resim kitabı**; realized under the kind and illuminating guidance of Berke Baş.

The paper also includes technical and personal information and viewpoints that have been crucial in the process of conceiving the project, along with an explanation of my chosen methods, and an account of the months that I have spent in production.

As will be further described in the main text that follows this introduction, The Long Ride of OK is an interactive video installation that takes on the concepts of heritage and roots, with a special focus on the "fragile geometry", and the current threshold of, the elusive and beautiful phenomenon of narrativity.

This installation is made up of :

- 1) A video hive – a total of 20 hours of video, out of 12 which have been specifically composed and shot for the project.
- 2) A hand made, leather bound book onto which the video feed is projected. The participants who are admitted to experience the installation are free to interact with this video-book, to touch it and to roam about the pages as they please.
- 3) A projection unit that is attached to a computer that controls the video feed, with the help of a motion detection unit hung above the book, which captures and transmits the details of the participants' physical interaction with the book to be translated into commands that control the video flow. This results into an interactive experience that looks similar to reading a book, where a reader chooses the pages s/he will read, and goes back and forth as s/he pleases.
- 4) A physical setup that is specifically designed for the project, and installed on a suitable venue. The setup - which is to be placed in a long, dark and narrow room that is made up of concrete - includes the elements above, and a wooden stool that the video-book is set on top of.

When put together, the elements above maintain a special environment, and a different audio-visual experience with a strong corporeal accent, that invites the participant into a self-led activity that is neither watching nor reading, and which suggests a physical and alternative way of interacting with cinematic images and narrative threads.

The technical guidance that was necessary to design the electronic setup of the installation was generously provided by the creative force behind forumist.

As the technical (or economical) aspects of the installation could not be sorted out and realized over the time I had for production, I had to define a way of representing this proposed experience; while staying true to its essence.

After completing months of necessary shooting that constituted my principal video-base; I started out, to look for different ways of capturing the essence of the work.

There were two different approaches; one was to build a complete simulation of the book, using 3D graphics and an interactive interface, and the other was to make a film that would not summarize, but introduce and represent an arbitrary stroll within the video-book.

I took the second approach, as I believed that the physical aspect of the work was the most integral element of the vulnerable construction of narration I put together, and that a complete, almost sketchy simulation of the book would inevitably flatten and minimize the whole point I desired to make, while also betraying the new sense of narration-time I meant to experiment on.

So I took the lengthy, and somewhat arduous process of making an introductory film. As the footage I had in hand had a whole different sense of time to them - they were, after all, shot to be made a picture book out of them, and were more in the form of kinetic pictures - editing the material turned out to be a real challenge. I used lot's of repetitions and various cycles of narration that interacted among each other, that would represent various different threads of narratives that exist within the work, and the arbitrary process of going through/combining/excluding them. (at this point I should remind that the subtitle of the work is "a picture book in stories")

I also did not want to miss on representing the physical environment I saw fit for the installation, therefore with much appreciated help from Çırakoğlu architects, we put together a 3D model and a video. A page that contains images from the video can be found on the appendix, which should hopefully convey a feel of space.

As I have mentioned above, the primary questions and the conceptual framework regarding the project can be found in the following pages.

I would like to express a deep gratitude for all who have been essential in the forming, and the materialization of the project. A thorough list of my wonderful teachers, friends, family members and colleagues who have been present with me during this process can be found on the last pages of the text, along with my thanks.

Who has written the first of words?
Scribbles on sand.
Drawings on stone.
Etched, carved, painted with earth, blood.
It all sleeps, and all flows, under my skin.
Am I the earth?
Why do you stand still?
No wind passes to where we have been.
A craving,
A secret burning. Of names; of faces.
of rocks and trees and other things.

This is the writing.
This is the lore.
give out your hands and don't forget to spin.
Movement is the core of the tangible universe.
I am of the electron's love sick twist.
your parts and pieces; my hair and hands;
we should all end, to be exact.
harvest grass, harvest air, harvest your breath.
feed my fires and harvest time.

The two strangers encounter as you watch them and they watch you.
Their curious affair dissolves onto the landscape, which they seem to have sprung from, which
seems to be their extension. This is a question of belonging. Who and what is of whom and
what? What are they made of?
Of the elements? Of each other? Of nothing but air and dust?

As we are initiated to the idle rhythm of their encounters, we also notice the other swathe of
images and sounds that seem to mark and seal and contest the two's entanglement with each
other and the landscape. Images, and sounds of the city, words from books. Books of science,
books of magic. Faces. Personal journals. A most lathing countdown. Water, plants, the
growing grass. Horses, cowboys and Indians, the ripening thistle, honey and milk. Numbers.
(How do the numbers sound?) Equations. Maps and Drawings. Doors. Wood. Iron. Gold.
Ways to build a fire. Ways to build a fire.

I am of the guild, of my undying fathers.

a narrow and long room, a passage.
of the ultimate gray, the swarth skin of *your* town and mine, concrete.
Just before the center of it;
a book of light stands on top of soil that has been put on top of a wooden stand.
you are free to feel the soil, touch the wood and watch the book.
which is made up of paper and a sea of light [that makes up video images] alike.
your hands blend into the light and the pictures, and The Two, as you touch the paper.
we are no other.
and as you touch the paper, the pictures respond to you.
As if to celebrate a happy reunion,
the home for my pictures (just as my mind) is never still.

This is

THE LONG RIDE OF OK. a picture book in stories . öykülü resim kitabı OK'UN UZUN YOLLARI
burcu koray . 103617003 . ma thesis project . advisor . berke baş . istanbul bilgi üniversitesi . 2006

A single phenomenon makes films possible;

Combines the stills that make up the bulk, and the body of our works; and for the viewer, binds them into the flux that they are; a portion of my mind that is made up of light; from me, to you, all.

The most beautiful claim of Quantum Physicists is that we are all made up of light; Condensed.

And maybe what makes films this special, is the mere fact that they are the translations, the transformations, dilutions of us, of our flow of life, back to our native flow of light.

An innate tendency of the human mind, perhaps a gift from, and a door to this true nature of us, gives us the ability to perceive the still frames of a "motion picture" as sequences of movement.

The persistence of vision; to reminisce the old, beguiling and somewhat auto-mythological name this phenomenon had once been dubbed; is most selective.

The human mind perceives still pictures to be in motion only when the stimuli is situated in a certain context, within a certain threshold. There is a certain range that the visual stimuli must be in, or we do not perceive apparent motion at all. Back in the times when people thought "persistence of vision" was a physical (rather, mechanical) phenomenon, a shortcoming of the retina to transfer data; the astonishment and the stress was on the rate of the still frames, the threshold, how many frames per second it would take one to see them as a continuous flow of motion. It took mainstream science about 70 years to admit that this varied dramatically, in regard to time and place. That it was only the mind who decided whether and when to commit. Even though there are certain combinations of the organization of stimuli and the rate per second it is distributed that are pretty standard to be perceived accordingly; when it is the low and high thresholds that we are talking about; it completely depends on our culture and context bound individual systems of perception to discern.

So it is not the persistence of vision then, it is the persistence of meaning;

Or rather, the persistence, the perseverance of the mind to seek meaning that we are talking about.

This is my point of origin.

It takes our visual data a certain way of organization, and a certain rate of exposure to engage our viewers to take meaning in it.

But how about the context, the oh so merry content?

What are the limits of our individual/collective system(s) of perception in receiving pieces of content and subsequently perceiving/rendering these materials as (or melding/ molding them into) a coherent/non-coherent/counter-coherent whole?

What are the limits, the low thresholds of narrativity? (if, they ever exist) In life and on film? Why and when do we take the lead? Why do we follow? Why do we pursue? (türkçesi - izlemek) And, where does this immaculate, primal, and almost survivalistic desire and pleasure of chasing, and taking meaning spring from?

What is, (and what is this brilliant of), The Promise of Story?

THE LONG RIDE OF OK. a picture book in stories **is an interactive video installation piece that investigates a languid yet primal sense of origin.**

The work consists of a video flux that contains traces of a story, a hand made leather bound book that the images are projected on, and a hand built stand made up of wood and soil.

The stand that carries the book is located in the first quarter of a dark, concrete room.

The images of video are projected on the book. The space is surrounded by voices and noises.

The participants are free to touch and interact with the book.

Motion detectors that are hung above on projector level detect the participants' moves and a linked computer software commands the video flow accordingly, enabling the pictures on the book to "interact" to the participants' touch, changing the images as each page is touched or turned.

As the fate of the work, and its chances of being installed are still vague, I intend to introduce the reader to the various components of the work separately.

Let me travel back now, to the questions in hand.

The Promise of Story,
Letters from a work in progress

Let me retell a story that Adriana Cavarero has retold in her book *Relating Narrative*, which is actually a personal experience that has been passed on to Karen Blixen when she was a child, who re-narrates it in her book *Out of Africa*.

One night a man who lived by a pond was awakened by a racket. He hurried outside, and headed for the pond

“..but in the darkness, running up and down, back and forth, guided only by the noise, he stumbled and fell repeatedly. At last, he found a leak in the dike, from which water and fish were escaping. He set out to work plugging the leak and only when he had finished went back to bed. The next morning, looking out of the window, he saw with surprise that his footprints had traced the figure of a stork on the ground.”

What does it take, to recognize the stork?

It has taken us millennia to discuss whether the stork is there, and whether it is a stork, or say, an elephant. But our constant hunger and desire in looking for the stork is probably all the answer, and all the proof. It is the circuitry. And it is there. Nature is simple. And it makes no wastes of nothing.

What does it take, to recognize the stork?

Why, it takes one to make it first.

The man in the story responds to an outside stimulus, changes his status (of sleeping inside), discovers the nature of the incident, decides how to act upon it (in this example, he chooses to keep interacting with the situation, instead of defying or ignoring it) and invests work in this process, which results him to form the stork.

Yet it is almost always an alteration of angle (like the guy looking from behind the window, instead of from within the terrain) due to a change of position that makes one sense, see, combine and appreciate patterns. So he needs to change position, once again, to see the picture of his endeavor.

Each act of narration that we are introduced/invited/subjected to employs us in work that we do or do not agree to undertake. In the case of agreement and engagement, (regardless of the fact that the content agrees with us or not), the work is immersive, its very start involves an alteration of orientation, pace, and point of view.

Why we so hastily embark on taking over this workload is still most vague.

One can nail a lot of different nodes of gratification regarding the process of constituting / receiving or/and refurbishing narratives. But this is not enough to understand why a whole species chooses to organize the temporal, spatial and actorial courses of life in this particular manner. [We even dream of narratives. And we do not dream in narratives. We intertwine the stills that actually make up our dreams (that may actually last from say 5 a second, to 5 seconds to 5 minutes), and build somewhat ardent narrative sequences.]

A lot of questions prevail, and stay with us. Is narrativity a way the humans diverge from or converge with nature? Can it be a specie's attempt, an interface they instinctively build to be able to correlate, to try to interact with the so called circular (and still obscure) logic of nature? (Hail Cybernetics!)

These are not only the inherent questions I find in OK, but also the raw driving force of it. And there is more to it.

Narrativity, people's supposed tendency to design, sustain and distribute narrative perceptions of life, is a most fashionable topic at the moment. It is the tired inter disciplinary hype.

And from artificial intelligence to nano science, and from counter-structuralistic cyberneticians to theologians; almost every discipline and all schools have their take on the complex yet fragile existence, and circuitry of it.

Too much racket for such a silent practise.

And it is so silent, because it is so much there. So immense, so primal, so down - and of - the roots. Just like breathing, just like bleeding. It was here before words were; it will be after they are obsolete. (brand me and kill me semiologists, just shut up and kill me...)

Leading evolutionary cognitive scientists like Steven Pinker do try but cannot really explain our distracting striver for meaning-building, in terms of adaptation. Steadfast philosophers like Galen Strawson even write whole articles to condemn the idea of narrativity (*Against Narrativity, the Self?*, ed. G.Strawson, Blackwell Publishing, 2005), while musicologists like Eero Tarasti claim that narrativity is indeed the way man's Dasein detects and imitates the cosmic principles of nature. (*Signs of Music: A Guide to Musical Semiotics*, Eero Tarasti, Walter de Gruyter, 2002) The original Gestalt five would be happy to be around to see where this is going.

But it seems to me that, like what happens to most of the more interesting subjects that are being so hastily fondled by the academia, the works on this phenomenon are seldom as interesting as it is, and that the fresh contemporary appeal of it is barely being exploited to justify or appropriate some existing theory.

There is almost no literature on the structure, frequency and the outputs of it and its many manifestations. (in contrast to what it probably means within the context of this or that theory) Yet this is where my interest regarding OK lies.

Having only made pieces that I ultimately find to be narrative, and most others instantly dub to be non-so; it is no wonder why I'm intrigued by the issue. But what makes it interesting for me is not the alleged displacement of my work. I am in love with them people who embark on building completely independent constructions off what I do; I am literally amazed and touched by this. Yet there is always the odd one or two audience members, by whom I am dazzled, and even toppled; those who perceive the pieces in the exact manner of how I build them. Those who recognize the stories embedded in the dissipative structures* of narration I choose to provide.

Why is this?

Again, can this be simplified to a matter of gratification?

Bearing in mind the nature of my work, is this plain because some people are more prone to mixing and matching?

Is this simply an issue of language?

Can this be due to a basic assumption I have, that people tend to identify and counter act with narration, rather than content in this heyday of "every-auteur" nowadays?

Are there collective, contemporary limits in combining materials and building narrative constructions?

It is told that when Griffith first employed cross cuts, his immediate crowd was incredibly surprised, and no one believed that the masses “would have it in” to combine the occurrences that took place in separate contexts into a sequence of meaning. (A frequent remark of protest was “Do you think this is a book?!”) To their surprise, a whole lot of the masses prevailed with the stories. Some did not, but that would change, as cross cuts became the convention. (an important note is that Griffith wasn’t the first one to use cross cuts, yet he was probably the first one who made stories of his first usage of them)

Is the convention today reeling towards major changes?

With so many different possibilities, and even without the dated romanticism that is attached to those, change is just around the corner. My point is not that the technology is changing so drastically, and that this will result in major changes in narration. My point is that the technology is changing so drastically, and that it is making an auteur out of each and every one of us ; and that, a life so saturated with receiving and building audiovisual discourse, and making narrations is bound to change the way we make and perceive them alike.

OK contains traces of separate & interrelated narratives, and highlights these concerns with the very nature of its narration (a physical, interactive installation, a book out of pictures that are actually of stories, that have never been).

It is with a sense, a hint of true origin so inseparably linked to these questions that I set sail.

The Origins .

OK originated as a filmic survey of the theme of expiration. (with the working title of Cyan)

It has taken me a long way to start from Cyan to get to OK.

Before I introduce you to OK, please accompany me through the accounts of this journey.

As I have mentioned, this project, then named Cyan, started as a survey on the concept of expiration. Like any other work that I have taken on, the subject (or rather, theme) had a very strong, organic relation to my personal context in a few levels simultaneously.

When I was first hit by the images from the project, I had been 21, and about to complete my undergraduate studies at the film department of Bilgi University. I had just completed a very intense film, I was working on building an interactive video installation project that addressed the nature of narration, I was recuperating from a fatal injury, I was trying to break free from a very intense and demanding relationship that had started to feel to be infinite.

A single frame, the black and white image of a girl in a kaftan, holding a blade, still stays with me.

When I started on the graduate program at Bilgi, the image and the "spider-tingling" of a hint of context that corresponds to it thickened. The image, now accompanied by more, along with an abundance of different sounds and noises, pointed to a scary, yet specific direction; which, again, made all the sense when read along my personal paradigm.

I was now 23, anxious to move on, yet somehow stopped by an arduous internal brake, not able to break the cycle that governed the way that I live, the way that I work.

The first year I was back at Bilgi, I made a film while I had my mind set on "Cyan", and as it turned out, as I will mention in depth further on, it is indeed this filmmaking process that made what I was actually after in Cyan tangible to me.

I returned to thinking about Cyan a year later. I was now 24, and very much stuck at my point of origin, and basically living the film and tv full life of a standard couch potato, while desperately thinking about my film on expiration!

Here are some notes from back then:

“ CYAN is a film, and a personal investigation on seasons, constancies, states of matter, how things relate to their own durations; expiration dates. I know all about canned goods and cereal, but images, ideas, postures, knowledge; when does one grow stale? When and how do I end?

The work meddles its way through these theme(s) in the company of images, sounds and noises from the story of an extra-ordinary brother and sister. As their stories move toward their ends, the passive-aggressive yodelling the rhythm of their stories counter-part with the rest of the film takes a life of its own, and hopefully presents me with the answers I've been looking for. “

As is apparent, I was quite perplexed by my mode of living and my mode of making alike. Yet I was fed up, I got myself a job that I absolutely didn't like (that didn't agree with whatever mode of living I dubbed as “mine”) and I took a second look at my work, to seek what I found interesting in it, instead of what I find useless.

There was a thread. I did not yet have sentences on it. I had a very distinct attitude towards building narrations that only contained traces of (multiple) narrative(s) (that interacted with themselves and the narration itself), yet I was very far from articulating my concern.

Here are some other notes from this “new and improved” period. The underlined, are significant, looking from an auto-historical point of view:

“.... As I've previously stated, my thesis project - with the working title of CYAN - is a “...‘counter-narrative’ piece,...an experimentation on the notions of ‘story’, ‘story-telling’, ‘spectatorship’ and ‘interaction’, as much as it is an investigation on its main theme, expiration...”

Since the piece involves a non-narrative, almost thematic inclusion of a cluster of images resonating a background story, next to all the archive and non-fiction footage that are going to be used, my premiere notion in starting the work has been to form some sort of a treatment.

It has been (and is) difficult to try to harness this hybrid of images, and find a way of communicating it with other people (teachers, advisors, performers to be), because no matter how vague, even the slightest promise of a story is inevitably too dominating on paper. (and ok, in film)

The first part of my prep has been bullied by this problematic; the more detailed and descriptive I've tried to be on the tiny bit of the so called story, the more eagerly my most elusive actual material (a cinematic texture that I am after) seemed to flee me. I've been blocked by this for months, until I've realized why; what I'm after by this whole project is probably to choke my own way of filmmaking (which in a way, does fit the context of this piece damn too well); even though the number of my completed works have been way too limited compared to the number of the ones that keep invading my headspace, my life is pretty much governed by how I make films. "

I knew what I wanted to see, yet I didn't grasp why I was interested in seeing these within this narrational context.

After a year and more, now I know. I am still far from answers, yet I know of the exact nature of what I seek. This unforeseen advancement in my point of view has served me in many ways, and also swayed the main theme and interest from (a desire) for expiration, to a search for true origin. The Long Ride is truly, and only, a search for origin, roots, heritage, lineage. And a quest, for the true home.

THE TRUE HOME..

Why do I make stories out of life?

Just clean confessed I don't know.

There are other such things I do as silently.

Say, why do I thank the tree before I pick an apple?

Why do I always leave one on it?

Why do I talk to the water, say a couple of words, before I drink it?

[And why do I always think of you?

You know, I never disliked school,

and I always loved you.]

"...incelediğim topluluklar kuşkusuz, bugün çağdaşlarımız olan haleflerinden ...bozkır hayvanbiçimi sanatını incelediğimizde ikibin yıl uzaktadırlar. O dönemde yaşayan Türkler, en azından içlerinden bazıları, Fransızlar'dan daha uygardılar, hatta Fransızlar yokken Türkler vardı. Ama çoğunlukla evrimlerinin ilkel dönemlerindediler. Öte yandan bu topluluklarda yaşamın belli başlı sorunlarına karşı büyük bir duyarlılığa, son derece bilinçli ve derin bir varlık anlayışına rastladım.

Deneyimlerinden çıkarttıkları derslerin, her ne kadar yüzyılların ve kültürlerinin yok olduğu dönemlerin yıkıcı etkisiyle bozulsun ve özlerinden uzaklaşsa da, kalplerinin en derinlerinde bir yerde hala varlığını sürdürdüğüne ve genetik miraslarının bir parçası olduğuna inandım. Bu derslerin en azından düşüncelerini ve yaşamlarını biçimlendirmede büyük pay sahibi olduklarını söyleyebiliriz.

Belki de Anadolu köylüsünü dünyanın en sağlam toprak insanı yapan vatan toprağına bağlılık duygusu bu köklerden gelen bir duygudur. Belki de şehirlilerin köy yaşamına duydukları büyük sevgi buna bağlıdır; sayısız bahçesi ve ağaçların arasındaki evleriyle eski Türk şehirleri buna en iyi örnektir.

Çıkarılacak dersler çok fazladır ve birkaçı yaşamsal önemdedir. Bu toplulukların hayvan ve bitkilere yaklaşımları, yaşam ilkeleri ve bir bütün olarak gördükleri farklı yaşam biçimlerine verdikleri önemi göstermektedir.

Böyle bir yaklaşım ve bu kadar açık bir bilinç elbette en gelişmişinden en basitine tüm yaşam biçimlerine saygı duymayı getirecekti; ama bu saygı, yaşamın olmazsa olmaz koşulu ölümü ve öldürmeyi yasaklamıyordu, çünkü öldürülen şey besin kaynağıydı ve insan, hayvan ya da bitki fark etmiyordu, öldürmek hep aynıydı. Acaba hangi uygarlık, Altaylılar gibi, av çemberinde kalan hayvanların bir kaçının kaçmasına göz yumup türlerin yok olmamasını sağlamak istemiş, ya da meyve ağacında mutlaka birkaç meyve kalmasına dikkat etmiştir? Toroslu bir oduncunun birazdan keseceği ağacın özür dilemesini sağlayan nasıl bir duygudur? Ya da birazdan kurban edeceği horozun boynunu özenle, neredeyse şefkatle oksayan köylünün heyecanı nasıl bir heyecandır?

Bitki ve hayvanlarla ilgili bu çalışmayı tamamladığımda henüz ekoloji kavramı ortalarda yoktu. Ama yıllar sonra tekrar okuduğumda bir ekoloji kitabı, daha doğrusu ekolojiye saygılı ve tutkulu bir toplumun kitabı olduğunun farkına varıyorum. Eski insanlar doğaya saygı gösteriyor ve mirasını koruyorlardı. Eğer bu kitabın hiç olmazsa tek bir yararı olacaksa o da bunu şimdiki kuşaklara hatırlatması olacaktır."

JEAN PAUL ROUX, Orta Asya'da Kutsal Bitki ve Hayvanlar.

How do you know where you have started?

How much of yourself that you address as “you” have you brought with you, and how much of it have you made yourself? I can tell of how I made or collected each and every trait I have that I can name. But it is those nameless ones who really decide what you are, and there is a lot of me, that has no name or makes no sounds. And those places are where my pictures travel me from.

I always thought the pictures came to me, from a nameless sea.

Now I think, that very sea is the blood that I have.

Recent experiences in life, language, history and death, makes me reconsider my sense of self. Being of a people whose early history has been so eloquently destroyed and manipulated, it is only now, after a lot of chance encounters with ancient history, etymology and mythology, followed by periods of intense, non-motivated study, that I wonder about the extend of my self. It is only now that I recognize the silent mass that I have built myself on top of. It is only now that I am becoming aware of the roots that I actually have. It is only now that I mean to look at what I have in hand and decide how much of it comes from times before times.

The imagery in OK that have summoned me comes from my very bottom.

With each line I read and each minute I spend thinking, taking a look at the regular humanly mass that I’ve accumulated over the years (lines that I’ve written, drawings that I’ve made, pictures that I’ve taken, doodles on the sides of notebooks, recipes for drinks,..) becomes reverse anthropology at its fullest.

Roots are never really lost. They get buried, yet they are there.

(Have you noticed that the only people other than the Turks that pour out water after the departed are the hardcore Ashkenazim?) And OK is a companion to my recent journey, to the roots that I apparently have.

The filmic body of the piece, just like any other work that I have ever attempted to, is overloaded with images (and sounds) of nature. It is without a dated opposition or clash of “nature vs. culture” that I conceive, and make use of the concept of nature.

The bodies and the landscape that dominate the imagery of OK seem to have grown from each other. The usage of (sounds and) images objects to a default conception of figure and ground, and suggests an alternative relationship. The organic unity of the alleged figure and ground

attracts attention to the physical, elemental, essential qualities of the subjects; bringing out, and obscuring, the question of material, texture, and origin.

“So here I stand before you preaching organic architecture: declaring organic architecture to be the modern ideal and the teaching so much needed if we are to see the whole of life, and to now serve the whole of life, holding no ‘traditions’ essential to the great TRADITION. Nor cherishing any preconceived form fixing upon us either past, present or future, but—instead—exalting the simple laws of common sense—or of super-sense if you prefer—determining form by way of the nature of materials...”

— Frank Lloyd Wright, *An Organic Architecture*, 1939

The Turkish word for settling is *yerleşmek*, “becoming a place”. With its intriguing respect and sensitivity to the landscape itself, the organization of space in Turkish vernacular architecture is the very embodiment of this concept embedded in the language; and is discussed to constitute one of the authentic examples of organic architecture. As Scott Redford discusses in *Landscape and the State in Medieval Anatolia Seljuk Gardens and Pavilions of Alanya, Turkey*, “...the architecture...was not monumental and relied strongly on a sense of place, and a sensitivity to the landscape.” This approach embraces the elements of the landscape and intertwines it with the life it organizes, in a seamless, most economical manner. A natural growth of trees or say, the spring waters that run under the ground immediately becomes a vital part of the structure. A great example is the ancient tradition of building schools, libraries and medreses (local community schools of the Islamic era) around and about water. A 450 year old example is Caferağa Medresesi in İstanbul; where it’s been specifically built to encompass a natural spring of water. The four corners of this building are marked with fountains that pour out and recycle the water that springs from the foundation; while also constituting a vivid symbol of the recycling of knowledge that takes place within the school. (An important note is that water signifies knowledge in ancient Turkish belief, and mythologies; in contrast to fire that signifies love, the ultimate cleanser.) (Another similar example is the ancient library of Kazan on the banks of Volga, where the antique records from all Turkish peoples were kept, until 1552 when it was burnt to the ground by Ivan the Terrible.) [The fact that the best and most glorious strands of land on the coastline along the Bosphorus have been spared for schools, probably displays a shadow, a late descendant of this practise. (e.g. Galatasaray, Kabataş School, Mimar Sinan Academy of Fine Arts, Kuleli Military School, the late Gazi Osman Paşa Middle School, Beşiktaş School for Girls, Maritime College, Robert College / Boğaziçi University etc..)]

Perhaps it is this sensitivity and sensibility of space, a similar rejoicing, economy and appreciation of the elements that renders the question of who/what contains whom/what obsolete in OK. Only the whole has any merit. The human bodies portrayed in OK articulate the body of the Earth, the landscape. And the landscape, the body of the Earth articulates the human bodies presented (to themselves and) to the human gaze. The landscape becomes the body, and the body becomes the landscape.

[intermission → This is threefold. The physical space and installation that I organize not only enables the bodies of the participants to enter and be a part, a building block of a different spatiality that is valid for, and that validates the special spatiality of the work; but also turns the filmseeing/making experience into a corporeal one that even enables the participants to physically blend with / merge into the flow of video, in the process of touching & interacting with the book.

It has long been a craving for me to look for ways of incorporating the body into the film seeing/making experience. This is not due to the sensitivities of a filmmaker or for the sake of novelty. This is a physical need I feel more and more everyday, as a most passionate consumer of films and all cinematic imagery. I think the ultimate improvement in film will be the introduction of a new degree of physicality. The newly rejoiced art-form-to-be of Vjing carries a casual yet basic quality that enables this. It is now on daily basis that people perform films. The practise is open to improvement; and more and more people are breaking into the world of live video performing with a broader sense of narration. → end of intermission]

Back to the presentation of body and the landscape; another aspect is the identity in question, of the bodies that are present. The two bodies that are in a preconceived yet not at all staged motion belong to me and mine. (The "artist's" body in actual, non-fiction (loco)motion. The "artist's" body as artifact, architecture and archetype.) The question of the gaze sweeps in. The non-characters on screen (one of whom is the filmmaker) do not hesitate to acknowledge, and even to challenge the seeing eye. Is this an act of exhibitionism, is this an act of disregard or disdain? Is this a way to look for a validation of the self, as the other? The dramatic physical contrast of the bodies and personas presented, renders the difference of gender irrelevant. There is no hesitance. This is an encounter of masses, with different equilibrium.

The special emphasis on bodies in relation with space might also be related to my personal history. A dense feel of contentment, that follows an intense period of the painful recovery of my body governs the way I relate my body to things, people and places. I cannot differ whether it is the

wasting and enwisening melancholy that seems to be attached to physical injury and the senses of illness and invalidness, or the fact that I have been personally subjected to an attack that took place and was aimed at the public sphere, or plainly, the return to my factory settings; but somehow my corporeal perception, coordination and relationship with/to space has changed drastically. An almost material sense of wholeness, directness and happiness rules my physical life of motion. Picturing my body as an element of nature, surrendering it to be a part of the landscape; also marks a new found sense of detachment, inverse control and fulfillment that I lacked, yet had to gain during my recovery. My physical body, something I have remade, is also a token of accomplishment for me; a certain degree of pride in my relentless hard work is tangible in my wish of picturing (looking at) myself.

My special interest in bodies, that relates to the linked concepts and entities of nature, landscape, the sense of self, personal history and heritage; also shapes how I look at other bodies. As I conceive my body to be a direct materialization of my self, and not a container, it is with intrigue that I look at other bodies. I am intrigued by the mechanics, and the meanings of forms. The other stranger in OK, and the way I picture his corporeal existence is an example. This instinctual point of view, as gender free as Turkish grammar, is spared of the tired charge of second hand eroticism or other bias. The focus is intrinsic, in the level of bare mechanic necessities and on the essential qualities, and the essence, of the non-character present.

These elements are brought together with a sense of timelessness. We are deprived of any coordinates in time. The potluck is bizarre, and the apparent timeless quality does not escape even at the urban shots. It is not only challenging to set an era for those we see, with numerous shots that take place in magic hour, it is mighty challenging to even decide on what time of day it is. This adds up to the subtle mythic quality of the piece, and encourages the viewer to reconsider her/his conception of time and history.

This is similar with the experience of installation. What time is it? What sort of time? Is it book time? Is it film time? The fact that the viewer defines the duration, and the pace of the piece creates a different temporality, and brings another level to the ambiguity, or the casualness of time.

a space for OK

my mind has been switched to making a book, a space, and a physical experience out of ok since the end of this summer.

The physical installation, both due to its organization of space, its presence, and the possibility of interactivity it sustains, is inseparable from the content at the moment.

it would take an expert of electronics, with an artistic side to design the interactivity of the installation, therefore I contacted Ekmel Ertan, an independent artist, engineer, and an old teacher of mine. We are still working on the interactivity design, that should employ a motion detector and a multimedia software that should integrate and control the video feed.

Right from the start, it has been my intention to install the work on the first floor of Bilsar gallery in Bilsar building, favoring the material of the building, and the narrow passage feel it has. (a plan of the space is attached) Even though they don't yet know of my plans, as soon as the technical problems of the work is resolved, I intend to stalk the owners.

I will also include high resolution "chapter break" photo prints from the book, that will be hung on the second floor of the place. I intend to include "unveiled" details in the photographs, which will also be works by own their own rights. I also wish to contact BAS, the artist's book project by Banu Cennetoğlu, to create small, stand alone books that will be distributed to the participants / visitors.

burcu and the
ART OF ACCIDENT

I have started the shooting on this work last March.

Back then I was still in the process of groping, and my work would be interrupted for another six months, until late August. After then I reformed my ideas and started shooting. Bound on the short weekends, it has taken me perilious months to get hold of the scenes; which were physically very hard to shoot anyway.

Without another cameraman (or crew), my mother Sibel Günel's talents as additional camera (dating from the last work I've finished) have come in very handy. Still, my lack of control while shooting the scenes that include me remains to bother me. Even though my mother has proven herself worthy as a camerawoman, yet again.

Her perils were not limited to camera, she has also helped with and organized various aspects of production and transportation, and concept developement.

Whatever scratch of crew I have also includes the other (non) performer in the film, Şafak Özden. He has also contributed in many aspects of the production, ranging from concept developement (why he was the muse), to pep-squading, to transportation, additional camera, set decoration or rigging.

The contents of the frames pretty much commanded the work. It was not possible for me to write a script for this kind of work. I knew the exact looks and meanings of the shots I had in mind. Yet the moment I made sketches, or talked about the scenes, they started to elude me. So I made long long lists. As dry as an accountant's book, the lists that were brittle inventories of the details regarding the shots, kept expanding and shrinking. As the success of the production was dependent of a lot of outside factors; the weather, the light outside, the performer's ever changing hair cut, the two of us' state of affairs, ..everything was as alive as possible, dragging me to amany psychotic excesses. I've had many misfortunes so far, involving all of the spins in the book, ranging from hard disk crashes to food poisoning. It is with love that I declare that I find the essence of filmmaking to be surrender and quick adaptation, instead of making a fool of one's self, forcing rigid control. This is always an act of hunting and gathering, a fishing trip, an art of accident.

As I had the pictures in head, I toured a while to find the suitable locations they took place at. But sometimes, and mostly on defining ocassions, it was chance, and pure accident that shaped my way.

The principal location was the Black Sea coast of Sarıyer. Divided by large dunes and ancient rocks, the area served as the perfect home.

I had other locations as well, those that contrasted and complimented the beaches, a weird building carved in the heart of the forest, a carpenter's workshop, a network control room, my own tiny garden, the highway at night..

A blend of intention and accident shaped other aspects of the production as well. The passers by I invited over, a naughty horse, a naughtier cat, a knife discovered on top of a close friend's coffee table, a classroom I've broken in, in a restricted building I let myself in by accident, etc. became principal parts of the work. I should also say that a lot of guerilla filmmaking was involved in the process. We have broken into one of the most restricted public spaces ever possible, shot on *jandarma* (military cop) premises without permission papers, and on our birthday suits...

I also found most of the costumes by accident, and well, the principal performer.

Not having seen my old pal Şafak in years, I (literally) stumbled into him months ago one day, on an odd part of town; which resulted in the weird, funny, intriguing, magnetic and violent entanglement partly portrayed in the film, giving me more questions than I could (and can) answer at a time.

Even though the fate of the piece is still vague at the moment, I can say it straight, that this has so far been the hardest and most meticulous work I have ever done yet. Since my material was so complex and elusive, I had to steady myself like I've never done before. I also had to open up the filmmaking experience to more number of people. I usually (and strictly) work on my own, never ask for opinions, never show dailies (well, never even the completed film, not so much) But this time I have included other people into the process I regard as sacred and am most inclined to not to share. I think this is partly due to a public recognition I desire for the topics that am handling, the very tough inclusion of Şafak in my life, and a general gentling over I also feel I partly owe to my advisor Berke Baş, who has been manhandling me with incredible compassion, mildness, patience and brilliance.

I have stopped more than once on the way, and the silent yet insisting and most empowering support of my friend Jane, the not so silent (mostly mocking) nudge by my friend and teacher Selim Eyüboğlu, the ever there support and sharpness I find in my friend Müge Turan, the one and only all weather presence of Şafak Özden (sometimes for the better and sometimes for the worse uhhh storm) and the consistent beauty of Sibel Günel has been integral in this regard.

I also owe a lot to many friends, colleagues and teachers who have lent their most precious insights, expertise and motivatory powers, cars, ice creams and pen refills, like: Emine Kabadayı- who is most full of grace and pleasantness, all the folks of A-34 - Serkan & Güneş in particular, Ekmel Ertan, Alişan Çırakoğlu, Nafiz Akşehirli, Ali Vahit Şahiner, Magda Craciun, Melis Behlil the non computable thesis compatriot, Pirate Chris, Tunç Şahin of BatSignals, Melih Herman who's brought it home more than a couple of times, Cem Özkaynak - the mighty patron of the arts, and, Can Candon.

I am forever indebted to Sibel Günel, Alptekin Günel, Suzan Günel, İnci Aksoy and my departed great grand parents. Neither this work nor my sanity could be maintained without my family. It is because of my family who has brought me up with the true power of narration and endless narratives, that I am into what I am into. (I might be the only child of age four, who was literally fed with narratives that ranged from Boğaçhan to Socrates and hemlocks, to how sperms raced the endless most adventurous race to the egg, to the underground empire we created together, or the kinetic powers of the water.)

This work has been materialized by Sibel Günel, Şafak Özden and Burcu Koray.
It is inspired by the life long endeavor of Kazım Mirşan.

And, like myself, is dedicated to my four fathers.

It is by their bidding that I work and live.

Günaydın.

