

yellow

NILHAN
SESALAN



Scott 2008

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yellow

Nilhan Sesalan

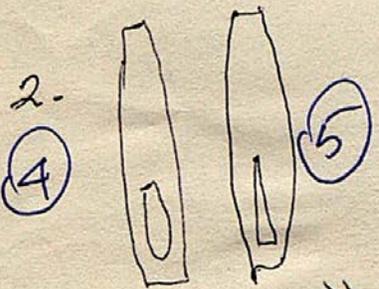
A Journey
From
The North,
To The
Traditional
Castle Of
Far East

2.6-12.6.1976

Oulu FINLAND

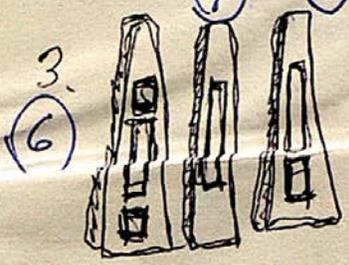
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1. "öpr" "öpr" "öpr"
"öpr" Bolt Bolt Bolt
"Ardışık olan birlikteliği"



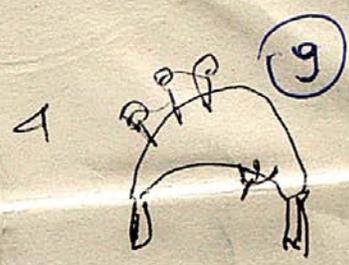
"1998"

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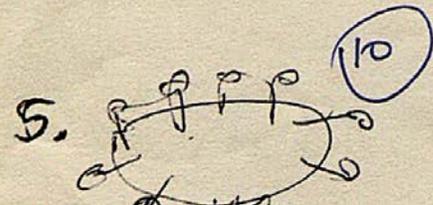
"1990"

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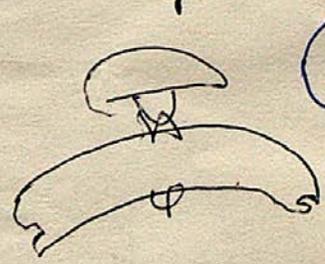


"1998"

"f"



6.



"1998"

I was in my studio, with my wood materials, chisels, papers, paints and sculptures, getting ready for our exhibition with Karoliina in Finland.

During my intense working schedule, my mind was busy with a lot of technical problems; how the sculptures would be transported, which points I should be careful about while planning my schedule etc...

It was a rainy day in blues and twilight in Kuzguncuk.

I sat on my old chair. A tango was playing on the radio, I opened the curtains as wide as I could, I poured myself a glass of cherry liquor and started watching outside the window... While I was trying to guess the feelings of the people on the street, my phone rang.

It was Hiroko Murata. My studio's atmosphere changed into the compassionate voice of my friend with whom I met six years ago in the wood sculpture symposium in Değirmentepe, İzmit.

3.7.1998, In Japan: 1998073

As landing to Narita Airport, Tokyo, my head full of information I had read about Japan, our pilot made an announcement: "It

is 27 degrees celcius at the airport we are landing..." Fine, I said, cooler than Istanbul, warmer than Finland.

After the "**cool**" atmosphere of the aeroplane smelling coffee, I stepped on Japanese soil and I met the wet, hot air, special to Far East, which is brought from Pasific Ocean by Muson winds and I had never met before. This period which is called "The rain season" by Japanese people was similar to a sauna or a hammam. The legendary Japan which I had built in my mind was saying to me "**I am different**" at the very first step.

Fourty six days... I had fourty six days in Japan, at least until another journey. My reason to come here was an applied plastic art symposium. Although the venue was near Tokyo, it was away from the city rush, it was at Fujino, a green town with flowers and sculptures by the mountain roads. I said "***This is my heaven,***" when I first saw it. How would my projects be effected from the period I was going to spend here?

4.7.1998

I was in Kichijoji, Tokyo. According to the schedule, I was going to stay ten days here, twenty one days in the symposium venue

and then another fifteen days here. The houses around are almost identical: Small houses with two floors, less furniture, sliding doors and tatamis. "Is having too many furniture were enslavement?"

7.7.1998

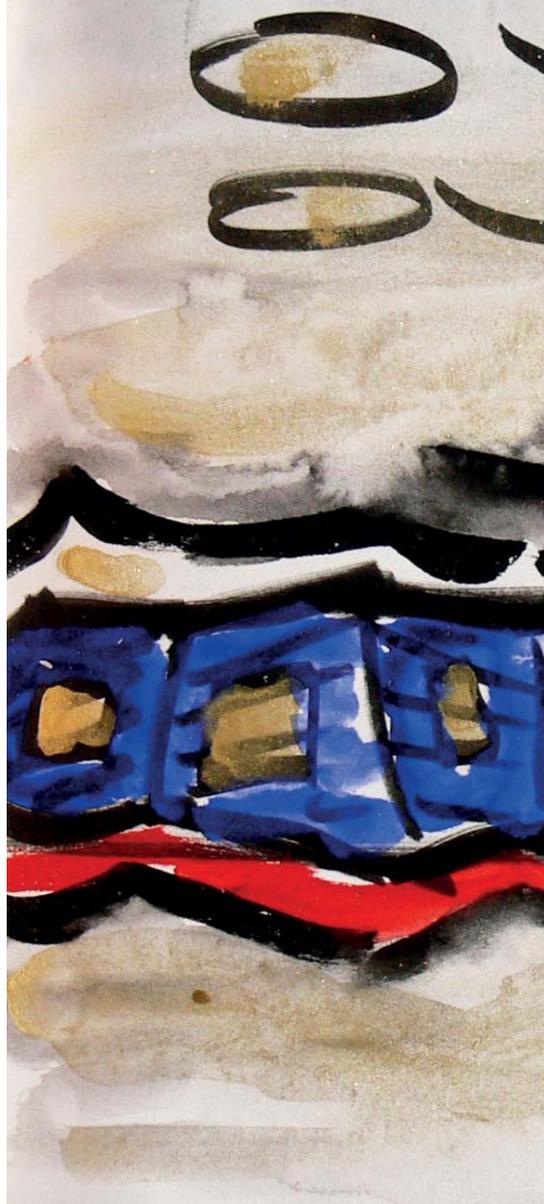
My priority was streets and people. Museums, galleries and libraries... after the symposium.

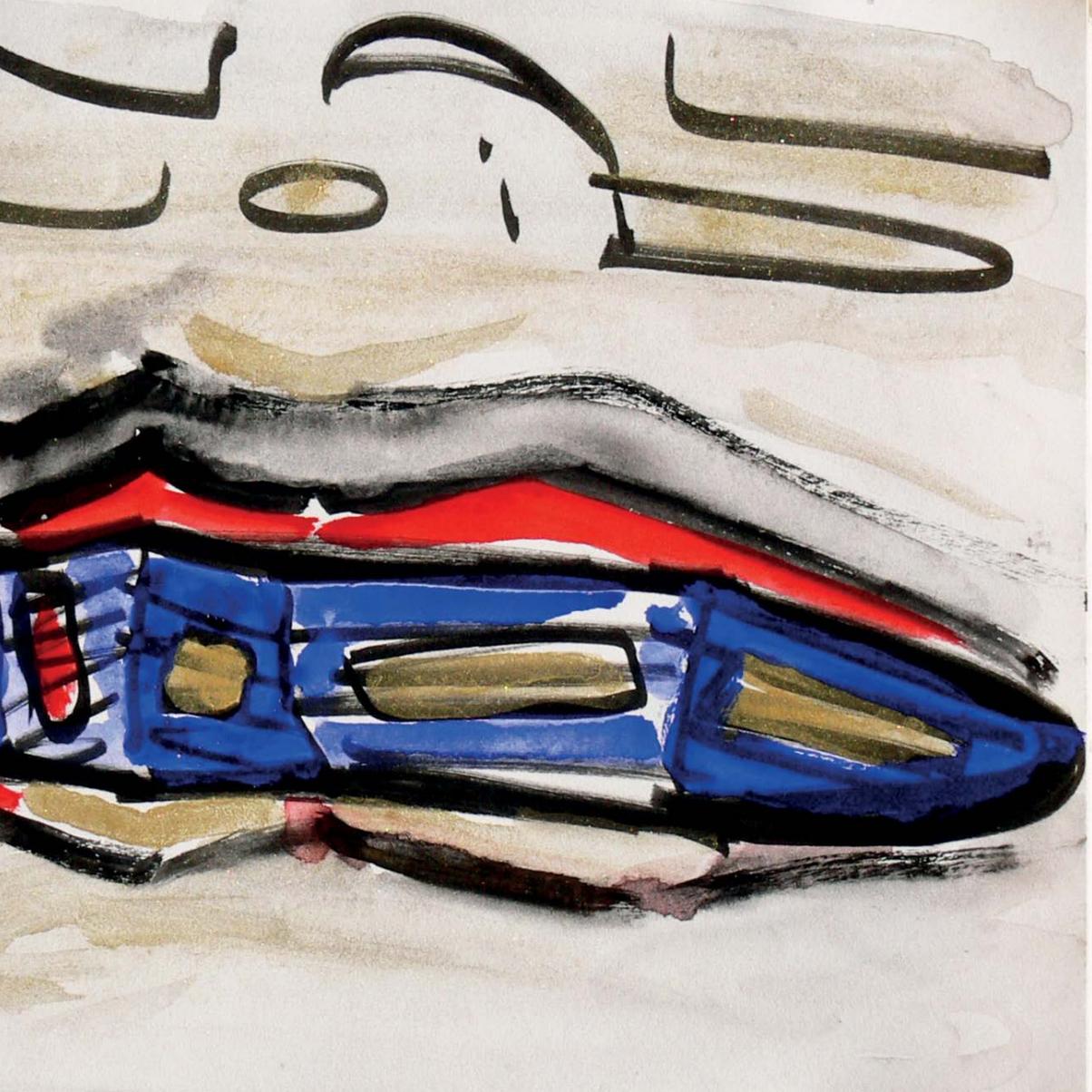
Crowded. As far as I understood, people like living on the street; walking around, shopping, and sitting at the parks... I remembered a quote from an Asian architect:

"Any European city is like an open air museum with its architecture. But in an Asian city, people are everything. If you take them out, nothing is left."

8.7.1998

I love Japanese women. I had never met another example that body is so beautified by the attitude, mimics and apparel. Young generation seems to prefer "lolita" image with thin, colourful, short dresses, slit shorts and very high heel shoes, while middle age and older women show they belong to another generation with their minimal style. But it is possible to see members of both groups with traditional clothes. I mean, do not be surprised, if you see a couple of women with yukatas in an elevator in Tokyo Tower, one of the most modern buildings in Tokyo!





- Tatatakusua = Haar yer bakke
 - Gaifin = Takam
 - VAN DYKE BROWN



東京芸術大学教授
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合記



I was wandering in the streets, with these thoughts in my mind, I remembered the installation I prepared with Pia and Karoliina for Baltic Countries Symposium and we teasingly painted into pink, and named it “**Reality of Pink**”, ten-fifteen days ago, just after my exhibition in Finland. On the one hand, I thought about long and bulky Finnish women who could work at heavy industry plants in a masculine way, and on the other hand, Japanese women who closed their eyes and tried to sleep out of shyness as soon as they got on the subway... The “Reality of Pink” which I left in Finland was maybe cut out for Japan.

9.7.1998

So hot.

I learned to say Sumimasen (Sorry) and arigato gozaimasa (thank you). Actually I had to learn them and I used these words more than any time I had in my life. Meaning of these words started to shift. In streets, subway, train stations, everything is in Japan, information in English is so few. Japanese people are very shy. When you want to ask something, they shy and flee. They avert their eye, I mean they avoid eye contact as far as possible. Maybe that's why when foreigners meet at the street here, they feel as if they meet a relative.

I prepared myself a set of instructions. How to ask an address to a Japanese?

1. Approach as humbly as possible.
2. When you have two steps to reach her or him, make an intro by saying “**sumimasen**”.
3. Never forget smiling.
4. She or he will probably doesn't speak English and doesn't understand what you are asking, and will look around in a shy and puz-

zled expression. At that moment, repeat the name of the place you will go a couple of times, for example Asakusa, and by gestures ask her or him to show you directions.

5. If you are lucky, you can get a reply. But if you can't, bow your head slightly saying arigato gozaimasu and think "disappearing" is not actually something bad.

10.7.1998

Countdown for Fujino has just started. It was fun until now but the urge to start working is poking me: "You will not be able to finish it on time!"

Today I met Hiroko and we went to the Faculty of Fine Arts in Ueno. We delivered the gift box he prepared for his "master", as we say in our jargon, and visited wood, stone and metal studios in the Department of Sculpture. I did envy the huge wood studio. It was almost ten times larger than the wood studio in our school in Findikli which I had graduated from.

As I was walking at the Ueno Park which hosts the Faculty, a museum and Tokyo Metropolitan Festival Hall, I noticed buildings with a different architectural style. At one corner of the park, there were six or seven hundred shelters, not taller than a man, made

by homeless people, mostly men. When I got close, I saw a group of people giving them food accompanied by a marching music. It was impressive... I wanted to take photos but as soon as some of them sacrificed their places at the queue and started coming to me with a fierce look on their face, I understood it was a bad idea. It was the first cue for me that Japanese people cannot stand something being documented or even seen by a foreigner if they think it looks negative for them.

12.7.1998

I am in Fujino.

Morning.

I am sitting at the porch of a quite big house, built in 1850s in conventional style, used by a silkworm producer family. The house has been rented by the Austrian Cultural Attache for a long time. Every six months two Austrian artists come and stay here. Now it is called Austria Workshop.

I will stay at this house during the symposium. With tatamis, fusumas, my bed on the floor, drawing table...

...and two Austrian artists.



19.7.1998

For one week I have been wandering all around Fujino to find the spots for my projects. I also prepared the materials for two projects. My friend Hiroko Murata finds a solution to all my problems while he is curating this challenging organisation hosting thirty five artists, with Koji Nakase. I am slightly spoilt. Everything I ask is indulged with patience and devotion. I am fascinated by the generosity of these people for an art organisation regarding they sustain their lives the most economic way and ask themselves **“Do we need this?”** many times before consuming something.

20.7.1998

We have just started to meet with the artists coming from Germany, Austria, Korea and China.

Since we work outside, they pitch tents so that rain wouldn't prevent us from working. While we are working, we are accompanied by giant brown moths, insects and snakes passing at a distance.

It is told that monkeys live in the forest behind us. And the joke of the day is the installation Japanese sculptor Abe San made using

bananas will have the title of **“The Fastest Consumed Work of Art”**.

21.7.1998

I still cannot get used to be called with the suffix San after my name.

Nor to the frequent greetings by bowing heads. Actually I remember I used to like repeating the name of the protagonist of the TV series I used to watch when was a child: Anjin San. But Anjin is a surname. Literally, San suffix...

Because it is very hard for Japanese to pronounce foreign surnames, they use San suffix with forenames. I think they are right. Especially after I found out that they didn't have the letter L in their sophisticated alphabet.

24.7.1998

Now I remember, a couple of days ago, German Willi Wainer, whom I hadn't known yet, then said “What a weird place.” with a surrealist emphasis on the expression while passing by. However in this Pacific Ocean island, thousands of kilometers away from the place I was born, in the land of Japanese who are loyal to their geographic conditions and their cultures and consider themselves as one



of the purest races, I can only say to myself:
“How weird I am!”

26.7.1998

Sculptor Kawaşima San, who amazed me with his mastery of using bamboos had a surprise for us today. He boiled water on a barbecue, he set up near us, in this water he cooked soba made of rice and looked like very thin spaghetti, after adding some soy sauce and bamboo, they were served to us with bamboo sticks he made for us. It was a feast.

29.7.1998

Sculpting is beautiful...

Do I know the number of chips I have carved out of wood for almost ten years? While I am materializing my favourite project, where do the chips I take out of the body stand in the context of my selectivity? While creating the world of my body and of my dream, can the pieces I subtract from myself be a metafor for these chips?

What kind of a selection will I see when the unselected ones are organized? With these questions about the two projects I was working on in my mind, I couldn't resist thinking the place I stand was not Turkey, Finland or Japan but it consisted of my own borders.

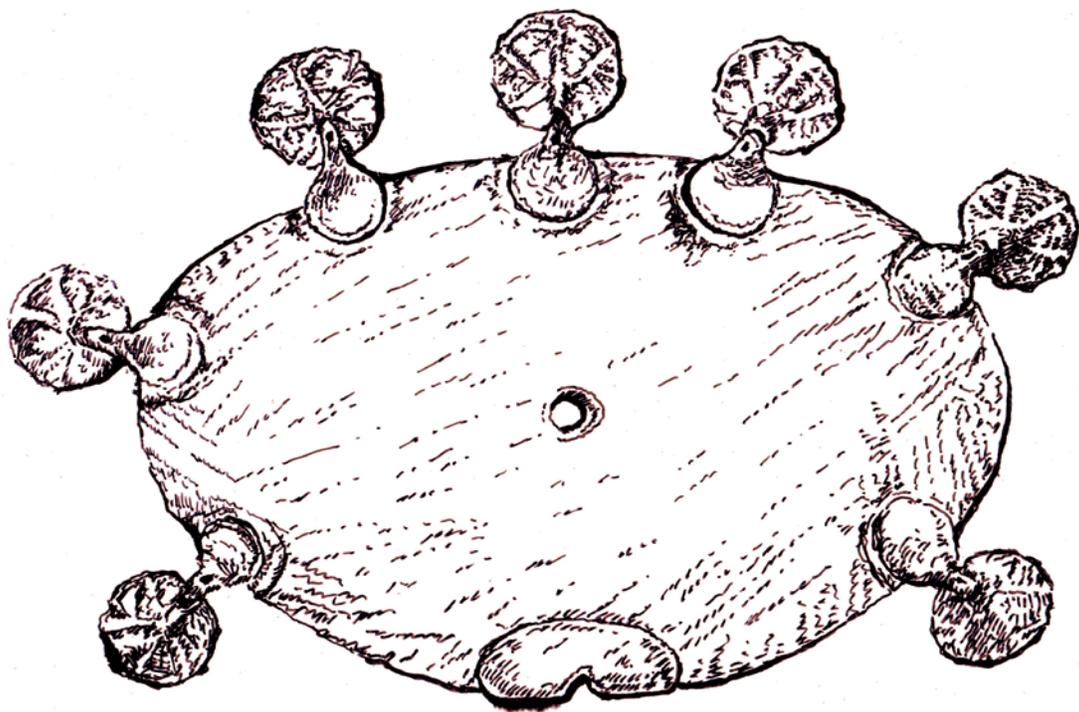
Meanwhile, the group of three sculptures in my first project is about to finish...

1.8.1998

The house of Mori and Yumiko San is by the Lake Sagamiko. Sagamiko is one of the centres of firework shows -hanabis in Japan-made once in a year traditionally. At the terrace of the building, sake cups, nuts and seafood tapas are placed on a cloth spreaded on the floor. Most of the women are wearing yukatas in the crowded group of people around 25-30 years old. Here I learned that traditional yukata is not in bright clours with roses and branches and gold and silver decorations like the ones I saw in the shops, but very plain and only in one colour - blue. I think I will never forget how Miçi San watched fireworks, for one and a half hour, without moving like a candle, crying. When I asked the reason why, “I have been to Alaska for northern lights; this is my passion,” she said.

2.8.1998

While the production period of symposium was coming to an end, Fujino had already started to treat all works as they were his old friends. We shared our understandings with Hanolore, Joseph, Mung, Asada San and others and said kampany raising our sake cups in traditional Japanese bars during the sym-



posium which we thought passed very fast.

Today, during the opening cocktail, after long thank you speeches, we danced and songs were sang, and we ate delicious picturesque foods on the tables. When it was time to say goodbye, business cards and promises were exchanged: *“See you as soon as possible...”*

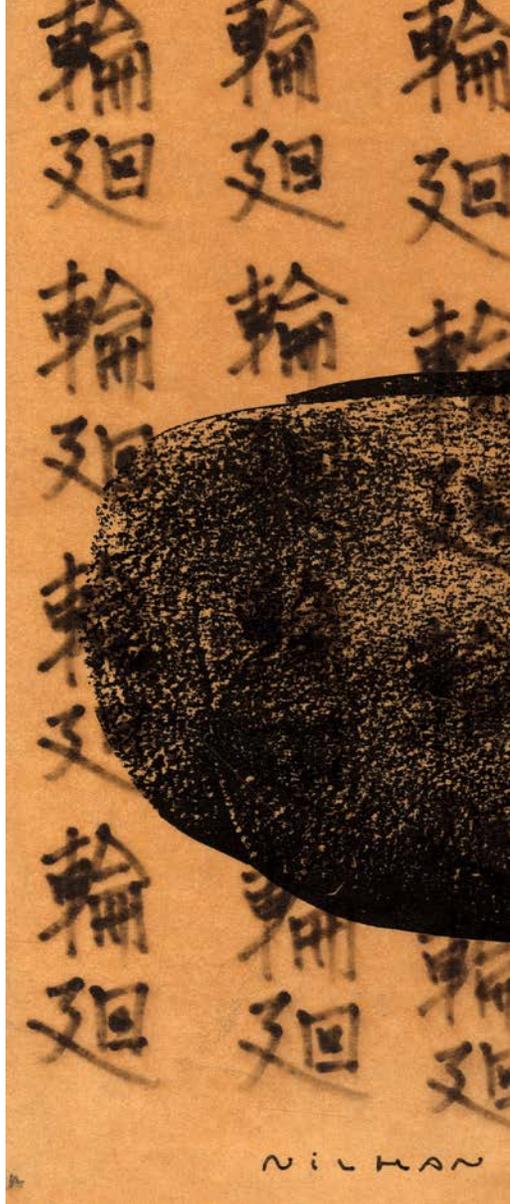
17.8.1998

I am packing my suitcase.

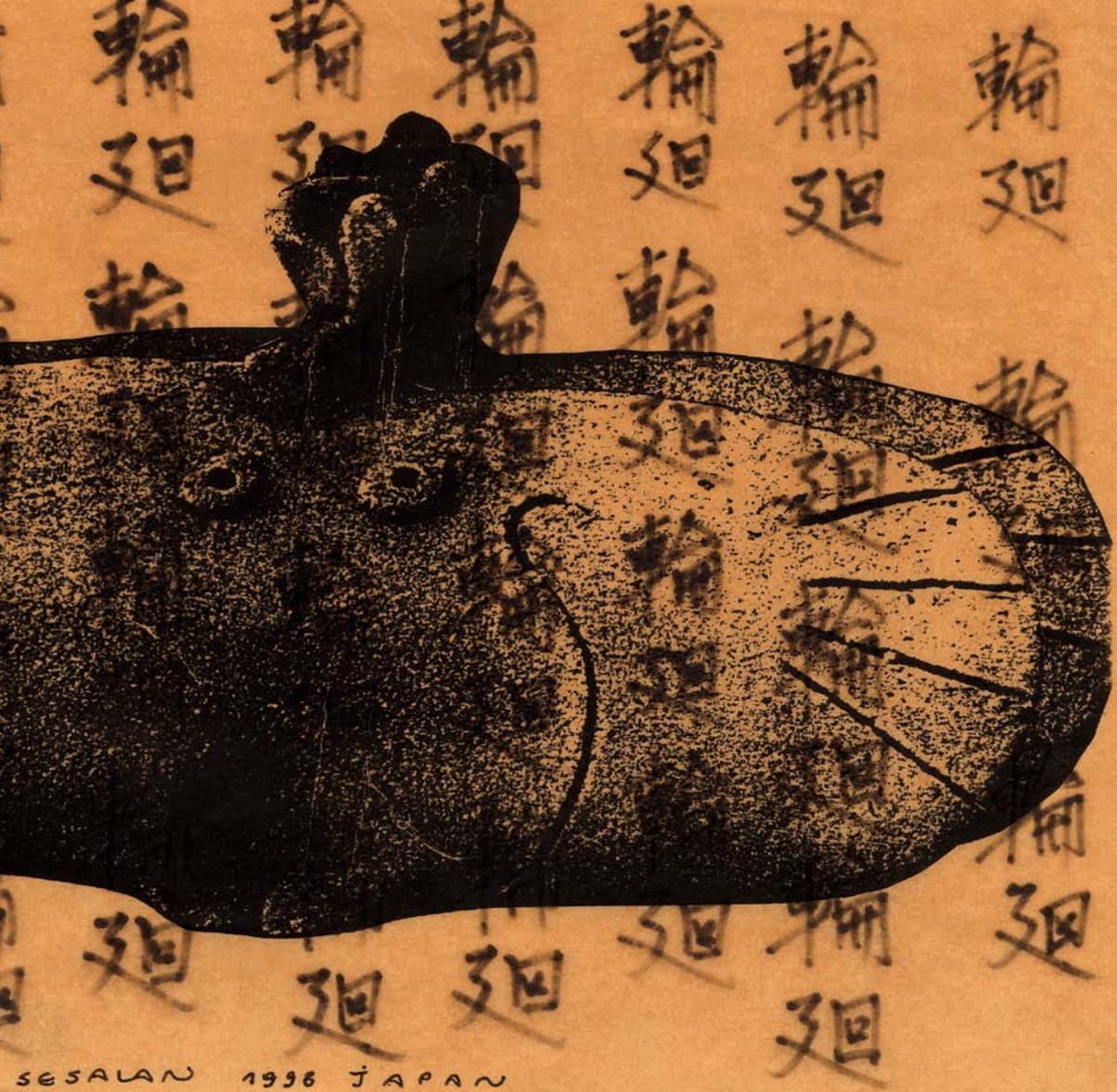
The old capital Kyoto where I stayed for three days after the symposium satisfied me very much with its monumental Zen Buddhist temples full of sculptures.

Knowing that Japan, that I saw works of Picasso, Henry Moore, Yves Klein and many others in Hakone Open Air Museum at the foot of Fuji Yama, swam at Kamakura Beach, visited Great Budha sculpture and been to the huge Fish Market in Tokyo, China Town in Yokohoma and gone frequently to Harajuku; Japan, I am sure, will say to me tomorrow when I get on the plane:

“It has not finished yet...”



NILKAN



The Detail
and
The Image
and
The Hint
and...

Holiday... with friends... in Olympos!
Sometimes a former habit seems to be a letter
from the past... I felt that way!

I have been working for years, and I was al-
ways invited to some places to make sculp-
ture.

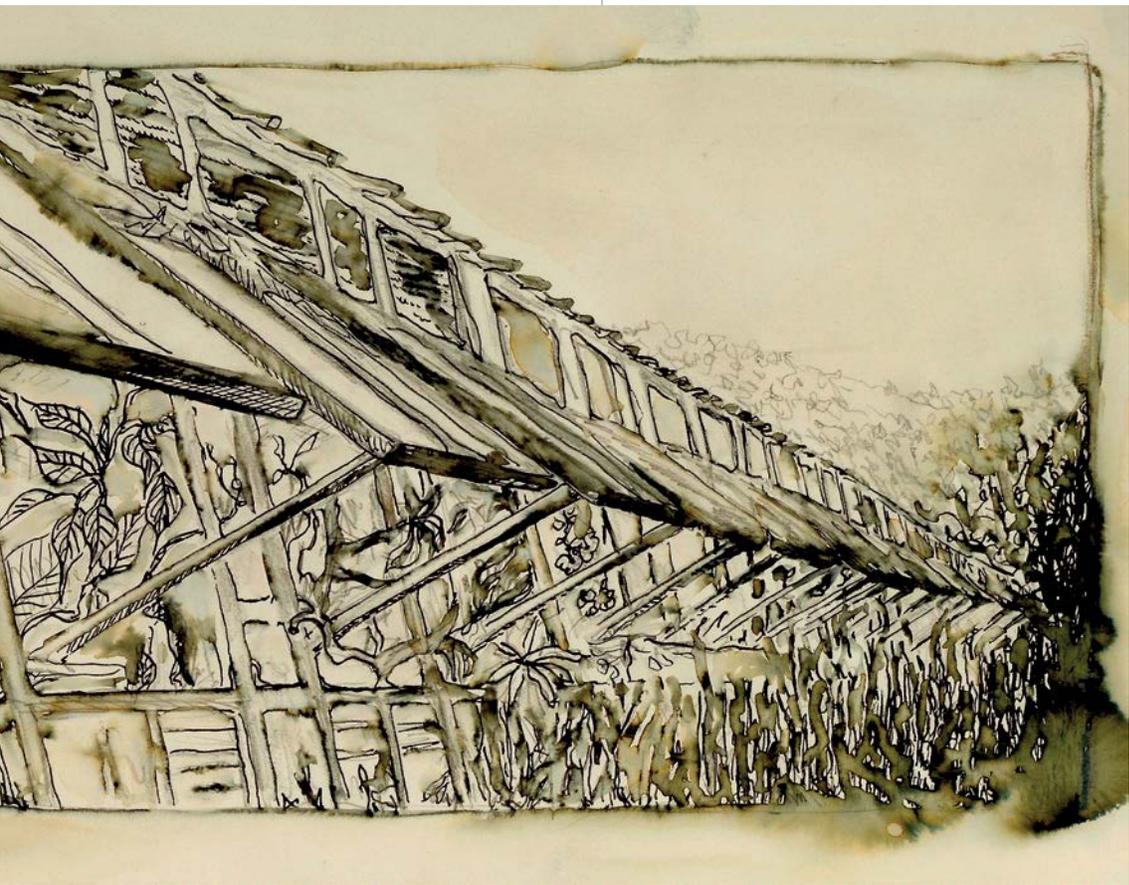
This time, somehow, some people came out
with the idea to be cicadas on Olympos shore,
and I wanted to open and read the letter.

Then, I thought I might not be able to play
the cicada role, but, no worries, I would find
someone who would accept me in their gar-
den and want me to make a sculpture in the
middle of it.

No one proposed that. Nevertheless, I want-
ed to make it, and I felt as if I already did it
and placed it in Olympos in my heart.

I also made some sketches. When you put
them side by side, they look like a bouncing
frog's route on a lake with reeds, rather than
a panoramic view.





Calabash

The guesthouse we stayed in looked like the house of the Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs.

The walls were painted in yellow and blue, and ornamented with spots of darker yellow and blue on them. There were small dolls and dollhouses on window borders. Despite all these remarkable kitsch details, in the backyard where beautiful dinner tables were prepared for us, there hanged a calabash, and it seemed as if it chose its own place. It claimed that it was the very formal equivalent of life, if there existed any.

Curve

Curve makes me think of ridgeways, in the first place.

Then, I imagine the closures of a curving body into itself, half awake and half asleep, under a linen cover.

On the road around Antalya, having taken the turn to Çıralı or climbing down the ridgeway towards Arykanda, I found myself embraced by a green and pale brown body curving into itself under an enormous blue linen cover. Let me define it here and now, where I am writing: In a painting with an odour of thyme...

The Guard of Arykanda

Ramazan Demir is the present security guard of Arykanda, an Anatolian city which has been inhabited since 2000 B.C. I would like to define him as a sort of antidote, but he does not have enough equipment! "I just watch it over," he claims.

"Recently, a fire broke out here. Only few tourists come here, one of them must have thrown a burning cigarette. Thanks god, it died down by itself. It takes so much time for me to ride my bike down to the centre, inform the military police, and wait for them to put it out. It would all burn down in that time. I would only climb down to the centre to inform them in the case of a disturbance, fight or theft here; because I do not have a phone or a transmitter here! I just stay and watch all over here on my own.

Three Structure Friends

They all were made of iron, and they all had a shape of a cage. Therefore, I thought they could be friends.

Let me describe them:

The Creel:

Its goal is to catch the big fish, rather than the small ones. It fancies being carried by old men, and placed in the sea. Its bait is bread. White grouper, the most delicious fish of the Mediterranean, is its favourite hunt.

The Egg Crate:

It protects the eggs of the turtles. I saw only one on duty. The others were at rest in the garden of the Society for the Protection of Nature.

The Greenhouse:

Visually, the greenhouse is my favourite. It has a rhythm by the repetition of identical elements, it has an effect of depth in space, it has a semi-transparency; and, it loves vegetables, as I do.

The Measure

A sort of measure it is: It measures the movements of the turtles, and their eggs. I do not know if it has a specific name, I never asked. Its shape attracts me more. A rectangular prism stuck into the sand, its shadow, the elliptic structure of the pebbles, their juxtaposition, their number, the colour red; they all became the symbol of the definition of a state or of a realm, similar to time and space.

An Ayhan Kavas in Vietnam

Olympos is another Vietnam in my view. We poked around each and every corner here, including the internet access cabin. As the notices hung on the walls claim, you can find virtually anything here! Ayhan will eventually attempt to sell t-shirts to us, as if we are in a bazaar. Though not always, you should sometimes have an actor friend with you on

your holidays. And, those cute hammocks are also essential.

Caretta Caretta and Footprints

The early bird catches the worm, or footprints of caretta caretta.

This time, I did with less in terms of findings. It is quite something to see the caretta caretta. Many returned empty handed, including documentary makers and researchers who waited till morning for weeks here in this beach... Rumours of the long-time residents had a tone I liked: "Our girl does not show up for everyone."

I woke up at six in the morning, and it might be too late. Even if they had come to put their eggs in the ground, the traces of caretta caretta might have already been erased by the wind, or worse, by cars driving around on the beach.

Then, I saw a young girl who was marking the sand, drawing circles around where eggs might be. I looked towards the sea and saw the recent traces on the sand.

They had been here.

Some Like It Yellow

Some like it yellow, and being volatile.

We had the cicada in mind, but the frog became the hero of the Olympos.

If “three apples fall from the sky” as the fairy tales say, I like to give one of the apples to the frog.

As I read the book *“Shakespeare Never Did This.”*

Kuzguncuk, September 2000





S. C. 2. 8

Ikki
Miyake's
Sculpture

As I was turning my head towards the way I was going, the speed of the car, the crowd flowing by pushing each other, dust and my being used to Istanbul's surprises couldn't prevent that question: "What was that?" What I had seen was a sculpture that forgot time and lives together with but free from everything. I was on the way connecting Üsküdar to Altunizade.

I said "hello" to the waiter of the obviously new restaurant. "What is this sculpture?"

"Why are you asking?"

"I am a sculptor and I think who made this sculpture is my friend."

"This sculpture is ours, we found it in the sea, what you find in the sea is yours!"

"Ok, it is yours but I just got curious, there might be his signature at the back of it. Can I look?"

"Look if you want, but it is ours, we will not give it to anyone."

The guy did not move, I walked around him. The sculpture made out of chestnut tree was painted into blue and white by the finders and it was almost impossible to see the wood. However, sculptor İkki Miyake's signature was deep and readable.

In 1993, I attended to my first international sculptor symposium in Değirmendere. For 9 years we met with sculptors from all around the world there in every July.

The attitude of the founders of the symposium,

i.e. the mayor of the period Ertuğrul Akalın, and his wife Nur, and that of all the municipality personnel motivated us. They founded an open air sculpture museum, unique in Turkey.

Touching dreams on a long way walked by little steps!

The wooden state of life.

Indian Balbir, Finnish Kauko, Israeli Michael, Turkish Seçkin... almost a hundred sculptors. And children... always around us, painting the residual wood pieces, making wind bells out of them and hanging them on the branches.

Two months after the earthquake, when I was working at the tent city, my eyes kept looking for them: "Where are you?" I wished they were alive, I wished that so much!

This summer when I was carving stone, a gorgeous girl with long hair and short fringe came by me and asked: "Do you remember me? Nalan from Değirmendere". Of course, I did. Is it possible for me to forget her, her sister and friends? "I graduated from the Sculpture Department of Marmara University. I have a studio in Maltepe. I passed by your sculpture everyday..." Her voice sounded like coming from far away or the past was sitting next to me.

The angel state of life.



“What is its story?” I asked to the waiter. “How did it happen? This sculpture was made in Değirmendere by Japanese sculpture Ikki Miyake. The region was collapsed with the earthquake and disappeared under the water of the bay!”

“Our restaurant used to be at the seaside in Kandilli until six months ago. Ten or fifteen days after the earthquake, we found this sculpture and take it out of the sea in front of the restaurant. We dried and painted it and put it before the entrance. Probably it came with the flow, so it kind of found us. Then one day municipality pulled down our restaurant. We left cutlery and kitchen utensils under the wreckage, saved only this sculpture and settled down here. We took care of it for years. We won't give it to anybody.” I called Değirmendere Municipality, Ikki Miyake and Ferit Özsen. Everbody agreed on the principle “What you find in the sea is yours.”

For almost six months, I saluted the sculpture

everytime I passed by it and checked if it was still there.

One day, morning time, I saw that red and white painted Cumhuriyet Tribe Soup Restaurant had replaced İstinye Fish Restaurant. I looked for the sculpture but it was not there! I told “There was a sculpture here,” to the guy with a big belly who could hardly walk. “There is a woodshed there. I called gypsies, they were going to pick it from there,” he said.

After that moment, time started to pass in slow motion until I found the sculpture amongst the woods, called Cengiz and carried it to our studio together.

Since that day, Ikki Miyake's sculpture has been in our studio, smiling quietly.

The finding state of life.

For Değirmendere, friendship, kindness and everything good...

Kuzguncuk,
2007



Dear
Zühtü,
Sweet
Şadi

...

I just realized...

I never was a fanatic of anyone, and anything. Had I ever needed it? What was this “getting something to be fanatic of” all about now? Maybe, this was what they called Millennium Syndrome. Then, I just realized: I have my own volunteer and tender heroes too, with whom I occasionally have a talk in the agonic spaces of my dreams.

Recently...

It was twelve years ago. We were in a flat. I remember the orange light of the afternoon, and a very thin man in his eighties, carving a piece of wood on his lap. I could not stop thinking that it was history in front of my eyes. He lived three times longer than me in this world, and thus, I thought he would understand me even if I did not talk at all. I was just watching him, and his environment. One of us asked him why he did not use a wooden hammer, and whether his hands hurt or not.

“When I use a wooden hammer, it makes so much noise. I have to be quiet, or my neighbours downstairs are disturbed. They have the reason to be disturbed,” he said.

We, three or four of us, looked at each other allusively, silently asking what was strange about this reason to be disturbed. We had seen all these sculptures in exhibitions, in catalogues and in brochures. Now, they all

were in the place they were produced, just standing right beside their creator, or on the wooden table, or by the cabinet. His recent favourite piece was on his lap: The relief he was carving carefully, as if he was caressing something vulnerable.

When the tea-time came, we had already relaxed. We accompanied him to the kitchen, we served tea and cookies. Our visit had become an amusing communication. Then, incidentally I found my fingers lingering on the broken corner of a table, which was made of four metal legs, and a glass on top of them. He realized before I stopped lingering on it, and “Hadi and I made that table, but it was recently broken,” he said. Later, we grasped that it was fifteen years ago when the table was broken, and he called it “recently.” Our enormous fifteen years was just a recent time for him. It was getting late, and we decided to leave. “Oh, I forgot to offer you the Turkish delight a student of mine has brought recently,” he said. I do not remember the taste of that “recent” Turkish delight, but after twelve years, I still converse with the sculptor Zühtü Müridoğlu, or called as “Dear Zühtü” in the memories of the ones who knew him better.

On the Occasion of a Beautiful Day...

I have heard the following statements countless times: “I wish you knew Şadi...” One day, I was having my lunch break, eating

my sandwich in the garden. The man sitting next to me was skimming through the photographs in his hands. He must have got it from my work wear with the plaster all over it, “Do you study sculpture?”, he asked. I nodded.

He handed over one of the photographs, and “This is yours. This giant man standing on the right is Şadi Çalık,” he said.

I was a beginner in the department of sculpture in the faculty of fine arts. The gates between Zühtü Müridoğlu’s and Hadi Bara’s workshops were not closed yet. The experienced students and we, the disciples, were working together like sisters and brothers, in a transparent department. It was December. The rumours spread: They would not hold a memorial party for Şadi!” Şadi taught how to live with forms. That year, after seven years since his last goodbye, the tradition memorial party would not be organized, and the glasses would not be raised for him. He was someone we did not meet, but his presence was somehow transmitted to us as an affect. This was the mystery of the oral culture.

We put the long benches side by side; and set the table with bottles of wine, dry mulberries, roasted chick peas, peanuts, and so on. We shot our wad. The cobblers of the faculty made a *fait accompli* for that beautiful occasion. And, this suited him, we felt.

The Course of Memories

First, I learned something about them by coincidences. All the witnesses told beautiful things about them. Then, I could not content myself with coincidences. I was so curious about Zühtü, as I was about Şadi.

They were my imaginary heroes, anyway. Thus, I drew a course of memories. My aim was to access what was hidden in minds about them. The route was to trace the memories of people I know and who knew them. I was not going to ask anyone I did not know about them.

Sidekick

They had worked in two separate studios in the department of sculpture in the Academia during the same period. As he was practicing a very familiar gesture, Hüseyin Gezer sat me down on the armchair from 70s in front of his small table. He knew why I was there, and he was prepared. He even arranged the duration of our interview.

The didactic tone in his voice could not hide a sentimentality in the background. “I love Şadi so much, but this does not necessarily mean that I will put in a good word for him.” His elbows were fixed on the table, and his hands folded before his face:

“He and I were so different from each other. I always thought that he completed what was lacking in me, and I was doing the same for

him. After 1960, we worked in the same atelier outside the Academia. It was Hadi Bara's former atelier in Caddebostan. We sometimes worked on the same project, and due to our different attitudes, we always changed what each other made according to our own style. We always shared our income in half during the period we worked together in that atelier. (...)

We both thought that our students should find their own personalities, thus, rather than giving a one-sided education, we visited each other's workshops in the school. (...)

Physically, he had a rhythmic, flexible, waddling walk. He had calluses on the soles of his feet. He was a vagabond, a bohemian. He was so tall that he could be seen so easily.

The shape of his face was so special. His appearance was so gripping. (...)

He was my best friend. I learned that he was going to İzmir for the installation of a relief, I called him and wanted him not to go. He just had had a heart attack. I thought it would be dangerous. He went. It was my last talk with him. The next day, we heard that he was dead."

He was telling short anecdotes about him. He kept silent for a while.

"I felt so lonely after he was gone."

I knew what loneliness was, but when he expressed it in that way, it became so strong. In order to get out of this emotion, I asked the

first question that came to my mind:

"Did you ever get angry with each other?"

"I got cross with him once. I was commissioned for a project. I was working on it. Then I learned that Şadi was also working on something for the same project. I did not say anything to him. A few days later, he came by, and "I got it," he said. We did not talk more about it, at all."

"As you already know, Zühtü Müridoğlu and I are not of the same generation. When I was a student, he was Hadi's close friend. After Belling came to Turey in 1937, he used to tutor the studios by himself alone. The studio course had three levels then: The first year was reserved for bust, the second year *ronde bosse*, and the third year free composition and plastic studies. In 1950s, Hadi and Zühtü conducted a studio together. They had a lot of students. In 1953, Zühtü left that studio and started tutoring wood carving.

His family was religious and well-educated. His artistic sensitivity was so strong. His modelling was so soft and impressive at the same time. He had a solid geometry. He was one of the best sculptor of the world, in my opinion. He had a strange character: He was friendly, but he easily got angry. If I am not wrong, he knocked Edip Hakkı Kösoğlu out with one punch. He was a professor in the department of ornamental arts, a man three times larger than Zühtü.



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He was a sensitive man in his social relations. He was loved and respected. He always worked. He could not sell much. He kept his sculptures. When he could not find a place for them in his workshop, he used to give them to the museum. He had an interesting bass voice.

He and his wife were like childish friends. They used to sit on the table at nights and have their drinks together.”

He stopped. I waited for more, but he was done.

Mephistopheles

Who does not love the light?

In 1975, the first casting exhibition was held in Osman Hamdi Hall. Saim Bugay made a figurative sculpture just to spite his friends, since there was a rumour that he could not make figurative works.

“I pick Şadi Çalık,” he said.

“The hall was full of plaster Şadi Çaliks. We were there. It was so crowded. Everyone was looking at the top of the stairs. Şadi Çalık, with his black cloak on, was climbing down the stairs from the top floor where the department of painting used to be. He looked like Mephistopheles.

“He belonged to the Academia. Mehmet Aksoy, Koray, Bihreat, Işıl Küçük, Ernur Tüzün were all his students.

He came to Paris while I was living there. We used to stay in servants’ rooms, at top floors. He was so sincere. He would get angry, but he would invite me for a cup of coffee soon. “Zühtü and his wife Seniha also came to Paris. They stayed at my place. He must have felt indebted: One day he came with tickets for a Wagner opera. I never liked opera. “I will check my schedule,” I said to him. And the next day, “I have to go to Rome,” I improvised. Zühtü took Altan Adalı to opera, and I had to go to Rome, although I had not planned to do so.

“I met Zühtü in the Academia. One of my teachers at the high school, Faruk Morel, was a friend of his. Faruk sent me to him. He sat me down and wanted me to draw something, so I did. “You should take the exam,” he said. I used to be an accountant then. I had an office. I left the office for the Academia.

“I entered the Academia on my own will. The most virtuous and honest people were the artists, I thought. It was not degenerated as it is now.”

I stepped out of Saim Bugay’s workshop on Timsah Street. I saluted the Albanian owner of the patisserie on the corner. While I was climbing up the Kazancı Slope, which looked steeper than it always was, Goethe whispered his last words to my ear:

“More light!”

To Make a Sculpture of an Elephant
“Gentlemen, how do you make an elephant sculpture? First you take a rock as big as an elephant. You exclude the parts which doesn't look like an elephant. Now, this is not an elephant sculpture. If you roll this elephant down from a smooth hillside, it gets rid of its details. What is fallen down is an elephant sculpture.”

“He was like a god to me”, Bihrat Mavitan said. Şadi Çalık was his father Vedat Mavitan's closest friend. He knew him since he was a child. For two hours, he never sat down for a minute and continually told me about him. His words tasted like honey and spices. He lived what he told, he vaporized, he went up in smoke, he flied and landed on the black and white photo which always stood there in the corner. “I do not have my father's photo in my atelier, but I have his,” he said, and continued: “He used to hold his left arm firm, and to swing his right as he walked. I used to imitate his walk. I did not miss any of his behaviours. He knew a lot, but he did not show it. He never patronized his students. He replied their question with simple yes and nos. Then, he asked something that would teach you without noticing. He taught, definitely.

“He never forgot what he said, he remembered everything and used it in sentences. He used to rest his chin on his shoulder while evaluating his students' works. When a stu-

dent addressed him as “But, professor...”, his reply would be “I wish a stone of a professor's size would fall on your head!”

“But, that would kill me, professor!”

“OK, not a stone, but diamond!”

“That would also kill me!”

“Diamond dust!”

“OK, then.”

“Stuffed in a sack!”...

A Wonderful Reprise...

His first sentence as he entered the atelier always was “As Rumi says...”, and each student completed his sentence in their own way. This was his morning greeting. His sketches were wonderful. He used to draw constantly, on cigarette packages, on detail papers, on everything. We all have a sketch by Şadi. Without signature...

“He was so clever. But he did not look after himself so much. He seldom had a shower. He said he did not sweat at all, since he was one of the prophet's descendants. First thing he wanted the female students to do was to have their nails cut. He loved all his students. He used to organize competitions to improve their abilities.

One day, I wanted one of his tools as a memory. Aloş had given me his spatula, but Şadi gave me a piece of wood. I was disappointed. However, I did the same years later when a student of mine asked me to give him a tool

of mine as a memory.

“For him, every occasion was an opportunity to teach. He could teach something during a bus travel. “This profession is all about physical training, you should also train your fingers”, he claimed. He knew very well when to stop.

“He was charmingly vulgar. He used to bring a lipstick for my grandmother, who was 90 then, he wanted her to wear it, and had her kiss him on the cheek.

“He was on his way to İzmir for an installation.

Ekiz, Vedat, Hayri, Ferit and I came into a line while he was departing the Academia. We saw him off as we were bidding farewell to an emperor. We all hugged him. He knew everyone in the Academia. He was always there.

No, he was better than me.

“I met Zühtü in Ferit’s place for the first time. Then I helped him when he was installing his exhibition. We started to meet often.”

I was trying to take notes while dining with Professor Meriç Hızal in the restaurant of Mimar Sinan University. He was talking slowly, experienced in teaching for many years; and he also was checking if I was writing correctly! As an undertone, I do not know why, I wanted to hide what I was writing. It is a strange feeling, travelling through the course

of memories.

“Zühtü had an image of Hadi Bara on top of his mind. This image was in a golden frame. He always referred to him as a kid refers to his beloved elder brother. “Hadi would make it better. No, no, he was better than me,” or, “Hadi was an artist”, he always claimed. He had an expression of modesty on his face when he talked about their collaboration in monument projects, and he left the lion’s share of those projects to Hadi.

He liked the sort of people who minded their own business. He was so critical about artists who were so fond of money. He seemed to be fully ignorant about money. He relied upon others so that he left the job of pricing his sculptures to the gallery owners.

He regretted having learned the anatomy. “I want to forget it all, but I cannot, Meriç!” he used to complain. He was a true gentleman. We used to go to the opera together. He was always so elegant. He worked as if he was breathing. Except his friend Hadi Bara and his wife Seniha, all he was concerned about was his work.

He often said he wanted to go to Paris, especially in his last years. He could not. “What shall I do with money, if I cannot go to Paris?” he said.

When I got in the Academia, Şadi Çalık was one of our professors. He was the reason why I applied at the first place, indeed. I always

loved the way he taught, I still do. What was his secret? He provided the students with the opportunity to present their individuality. He used to tell something, and then he used to warn me: "Listen to what I tell you, Meriç, but do not practice these. Or you would become another Şadi Çalık!" He had a faith in our personalities. He was truly a very modest humanist. He never had a passion to be more powerful, to get to a position, or to lead something. He was an art teacher who was so open to anything new, and who had interest in any alternatives. This was the essence of modern art. When someone took the easy way out, he used to be critical, but with a dry humour. And, he did not care about appearance at all."

Sculpting Is Not Just a Skill; It Cannot Be Made by Chance.

"Şadi Çalık used to claim that sculpting is not just a skill, and it cannot be made by chance," Ferit Özşen started his talk. "He used to try out many models and sketches. When he entered the metal workshop, he looked as if he wanted to overturn the whole atelier. He was mostly concerned about the main body and the main idea. He had every student make a wooden mallet for themselves to beat the clay. He was so emotional in daily life; however, his sculptures were rather intellectual.

He loved chess. The Aluminium Plant in Seydişehir organized a competition, and he won. He was commissioned to make a sculpture. Metin and I were doing the enlargement. It was the fiftieth anniversary of the republic, and there were many sculpture commissions that year. Someone came to the workshop and wanted to buy the mould of Atatürk's bust. It was almost unusable. He did not sell it, he said he would use it to reproduce a few more. We, the disciples, thought it over and decided to sell it to buy a present to our master. Metin's suggestion was to buy him a grave in Nakkaştepe as a present. Şadi Çalık was just behind him when he proposed it, and he heard it. Then he told it to everyone: "My assistant is going to buy me a grave!" "When I started in the Academia in 1964, Zühtü Müridoğlu was an emeritus professor; he still is irreplaceable, and needed. Şadi loved Zühtü's wife Seniha so much. I was in love with her too. She was the main reason why I visited their place. She had no caprice at all. Zühtü used to eat so little. Seniha used to kid around with him: "Ferit, watch Zühtü's meal, the cat may steal it." She was like an enormous monument. And she was so cute. Zühtü Müridoğlu's place was an always open door for many. Many times, I slept over in Şadi's place too. We used to escape our wives, and stay there. I was writing my thesis, and Şadi invited me

to stay and study at his place. “I will not be home at daytime, so you can study. But, if I need my place, you should go,” he said. We found many hairpins while we were moving his house.”

And, Aloş...

In 1987, on a Wednesday, Zühtü Müridoğlu visited the department of sculpture, as he always did once a week. We knew he would come, and we always waited for his visit. We used to watch him from a distance, but in that visit Aloş fetched him, and introduced us to him as “their grandchildren”. We liked that idea of a family in the Academia. It was nice to imagine oneself as a part of it.

“In 1943, the Barbaros Monument was inaugurated. I was a primary school student. I met Zühtü Müridoğlu’s work for the first time then. Later, in 1949-1950, Zühtü Müridoğlu was our studio tutor. Hadi Bara followed him a few years later. We were just kids then.

We were walking together, and he started to cough. “Do not get to your 44, Aloş, or you will be like me”, he said. I could not take that advice of his, unfortunately. I am 66 now.

He used to wear a beret. Soon, we all started to wear berets.

Zühtü Müridoğlu used to work in our studio from time to time. He used to use a few tools while working on clay. He had only one





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plaster cutter. Kuzgun was the most restless among us; he was the one who bought butcher knives to use in sculpture. After that we all started to use them. We all imitated his speech and gestures, I suppose.

Both Zühtü and Hadi Bara loved painting. Our work order was so free and loose. In time, we discovered the ways towards Bedri Rahmi's studio. They got on well with each other.

In metal workshop, İlhan Koman and Şadi Çalık used to develop some of Zühtü Müridoğlu's sketches, and in some cases they worked together.

İstanbul was so different than it is now, also in terms of the centres of the city. Maya Art Gallery was the one and only gallery in the city. It was a small two-room flat in a building. Our profession was not so popular, then. Form that day to this, communication changed a lot, maybe more than it should. We have access to everything we are or are not curious about now. Then, people were not this much loaded with news and information. They were concerned so much in the Second World War period, but still, you could see many smiling faces around. They used to discuss on political and sociological topics, but they also had fun.

I met Şadi Çalık in 1942 or 1943. He was a friend of my brother's. He used to visit our family home, and they had a talk every now

and then. I used to show my drawings to him. Soon afterwards, he brought some clay, and then some plaster... In 1949, when I started the Academia, our names were on the same notice board: Mine on the list of the accepted students, and his on the ones graduated... In 1965, I started my compulsory service, and I was his assistant in his studio. It was my first job."

If I Am Lucky...

I will get out soon. If I am lucky, I would come across with a friend, we would have talk over a cup of tea or coffee. If not, I would go to my atelier, play with my cat, and make a sculpture. Maybe, I would contemplate on what it is like to exist in the realm of the visible.

I would ask Dear Zühtü and Sweet Şadi what it is like. Or, I would look at the monuments they made: The 50th Year Monument in Galatasaray, Barbaros Monument in Beşiktaş, the ones in the squares, in parks, on the facades of many buildings in Ankara, İzmir, Şereflikoçhisar, Lisbon, Bodrum, Batman, Bitlis, America, Giresun, Niğde, Edremit, in Anıtkabir and so on...

Kuzguncuk, İstanbul
1999

Fetuş
and
Gilou

After a short visit to Green Park, she was reading a book at a table outside. This was what Fetuş usually did in sunny days. In her letter, she wrote she missed İstanbul and everybody and added: “While I was reading a book, a glass of champagne was sent to my table today, when I looked up, someone wearing a white shirt, with dark wavy hair and green eyes asked me if we could do something together in the evening. I said OK, while I was thinking he looked like Valentino.

Five or six months later, I met Gilles who worked as a degustator at a French bistro in Mayfair, and I told Fetuş that “he is a sweet guy, you have fun together but he is also an adventurous, a ladies’ man, he is full of action.” However Fetuş is just the opposite - She likes family, working hard, order and everything about art, she was very peculiar, she could suddenly leave someone who loves her very much just because he chews gum walking on the street. While I was looking at them I couldn’t see the horizon but I was impressed from the light on their figures in the close-up.

Two years later, Fetuş came back to İstanbul since her leave was over, and started to work as the director of an art show at Turkish Radio and Television. She was unhappy. She said to Gilles, “ I have to return İstanbul,” and Gilles

replied: “OK, Fetuş.” She frequently asked, “But shouldn’t he call me, Nilhan? And if he told me to stay, maybe I would.”

She didn’t hear from him for two months.

When she was showing me the postcard she was holding, the expression on her face was between happiness and surprise. In the snow covered scene, an owl perched on a branch and just over the owl, there was a hand-drawn cartoon balloon with only FETUŞ written in it with majiscule letters. A few weeks later, he made a surprise and came to İstanbul and took Fetuş with him to London.

We were constantly in contact with each other, speaking about how their wedding was, their new house, news from their homemates Stephan and Linda, how they earned money, where they worked, and making critics about life.

Now, this time, at the photo, before the crowded and foggy atmosphere of London they looked like two storks trying to stand on one leg on the same perch.

When baby season came, they flew to south... Migration wasn’t easy. On their summer holiday, in a small town in South France, Fetuş had pointed a place with her finger and said

she would have liked to live there. Gilles held her hand and found a house at the exact point she had showed. Leaving London they put their stuff in a van they bought, took the ferry to cross English Channel and stayed one night at their friend's motel. At night Gilles got sick because he was allergic to feathers in the pillows and they went to a hospital. Now they were in France and Fetuş had no one to talk to in English and for the first time she got worried about his health but love was a strange magic and had the power to protect them...

"We painted our house singing songs just like the movie *The Sound of Music*," she said.

Now it was time to go to France for me. Although my daughter Asya was only four months old, I had to go and see the place where my sister lived, their relationship, and standards of life. It was November. They picked me from Barcelona Airport and all the way back home they excitedly told me about their house and how happy they were. As we drove on the twisted roads and got closer to their house, they got even more cheerful and Gilles kept saying, "Isn't it great?" It was really great, it was where mountains were covered with vineyards, where wine was great but you got tipsy with the wind, where three rainbows could be seen together over the sea

and where sculptor Aristide Maillol was born and lived and worked in his studio which was turned into a museum now.

They had prepared a lovely room for me upstairs. Garage at the garden was turned into a studio. "From now on Fetuş will make only sculptures, I will provide her everything she needs." Gilles said. And he kept his promise for the next five years they lived together there. Gilles was preparing all the documents for them. Fetuş's project was accepted by the municipality and one of the fifteen studios established in the memory of Maillol would be Fetuş's new working place.

Their love, their dialog with life, their big excitement for small things, their wish to know and learn, I mean everything about them amazed me and I started to believe that if there was something as magic, it had touched them.

Laughing was the most obvious common characteristics of them. I have never laughed like I laughed with them. Food was an art event for them. Wine was a passion. Since Gillou was a degustator, we drank excellent champagnes and wines. He discovered wine caves which nobody knows and sent these wines to his friends in London. One of the champagnes he found was selected in the

world's first five in 2004. He introduced his discoveries to me in my every visit. In one of our journeys at the vineyards parallel to Mediterranean Sea we dropped by at a house built out of old yellow stone with antique female sculptures in its yard and met a family producing wine for centuries.

At this place looking over the endless sea, the wind told me I was in heaven. Everyday they made another plan. We swam at the best beaches, visited little chapels, all the museums and galleries from Céret to Barcelona and usually had a rest at the coffee shops in Collioure and Banyuls.

The expert of food was Fetuş, she decided on what and how we would eat and usually she liked to prepare in her very organised kitchen. For Gillou, everything she made was perfect, Fetuş was the best! When she was pregnant he couldn't take his eyes off her, and kept saying how beautiful she was.

He was very excited about being a father. He always took his pink and black electric guitar and said "I will play Beethoven for my son perfectly!" He was very different than Gilles I knew in London. I know in London. "We could never imagine Gilou could settle down, we owe this to Fetuş." his mom said.

I was in Istanbul, the voice on the phone told me "Nilhan, you are an aunt now, we named him Attila, Gillou wanted so. My daughter Asya was two years old, being an aunt was as fascinating as being a mom. First his photos came, then they came to Istanbul. Attila had blue eyes, blond hair, a smiling face like his mom and dad and arms holding us fondly. We embroidered him into our hearts.

It was June 2005, we went to Büyükada for the weekend. It was raining. Fetuş sounded anxious this time. She said "I took Gilou to the hospital, his asthma is forcing him, but he is better now, he asked some sandwiches from me, I brought them. But the doctors wouldn't let him eat. He said, 'This time I was afraid, Fetuş,' I shivered jokingly and said 'I was afraid too, Gilou.' Now I am going to get Attila from the nursery, tomorrow I'll take Gilou out of the hospital at eleven o'clock..."

Once a year, usually during the allergy season, Gilou had little crises of this sort, but this time the ambulance was late for hours because they were reconstructing the roads. During the first operation in the emergency room, oxygen support was maximized but then, he was infected with a kind of pneumonia virus only found in the hospitals and resistant to antibiotics and the virus had spread all over his body within two days of

the treatment. During the time that he was in coma, Fetuř never left him alone, as always; and when he was in fever, she wiped all his body with wet towels, brushed his hair and repeatedly said “Come on, hang on, we have overcome many things, we will overcome again.”

Was death this easy? When I asked this to myself, my answer was always no, but in fact, it is easy.... The same day I fled to France, they had told me that Fetuř was walking around and crying but hadn't returned home. I wanted to find her, hug her and say that everything would be OK even if I didn't think so.

All the ceremonies were made according to the wishes of Gilou's family. Fetuř farewelled her lover's sweet body with different ceremonies than she was accustomed. She had put on him the suit that he wore during the wedding and put a pink rose to his collar, she watched his face for hours.

Time was never this slow and heavy. An elephant had sat on my shoulders and was forcing me to walk.

A week passed. Attila was playing at the sea and we were watching him. Fetuř was saying, “I have to continue our daily life as much as

possible, Attila needs this, he has a very big loss in his life... at nights, we used to place cushions to the garden and watched the stars, we asked the Moon what these people couldn't share, why they were fighting, why they were dying and killing for this.” She said, “just watching the sky was a good reason to leave.” Then she looked at the sky and showed me the pink full moon which shone in the twilight and said, “Look, Gilou is sending us a letter, he painted the moon pink! Yes, only he could make this happen...” One day, if Asya and Attila ask me about love, if they ask “What is love?” I'll tell them that it's a strange magic and has the power to protect you.

19.04.2016
Kuzguncuk, Istanbul

“When You
Walk On
A Lonely
Road,
You Know,
You Feel
A Kind Of
Haste”

The wall around the garden was a short one, and I was so young. I heard my mother's voice, "Your sister and I are going to the doctor. Do not trouble Melahat," she told Fetuş, who was four years old then. I held the hand which reached out to where I was hidden, an off we were: I, my fanciest clothes, my mom, neighbour women, their platform shoes, mini skirts, slim fit shirts, coats and lacework sweaters, we all were going to somewhere I knew I did not now at all: We were going to Erol Evgin's show, a women-only session in a music hall...

"He would be on stage soon," "he was about to appear," and at last there he was. The applause was so strong that some soda bottles on the tables almost dropped. He was singing on the stage, with his thin and long body, and his large head on top of it. He was stretching his legs rhythmically, and swinging his arms towards us and back towards his body as if he was catching something in the air.

I was aware that what I saw was something totally different from all I had seen till then, however I was still so silent. My mother explained my silence with my quiet nature. And, this was obviously the reason why I was taken to the show. It was a reward!

A few years later, I began the primary school. The TV set was so new in our life, and the small radio in the kitchen had never been turned off. When I was in the third year, my favourite Turkish songs were sung by Ajda Pekkan, Tanju Okan, Nilüfer and Kamuran Akkor. I enjoyed listening to those songs since they made me imagine as if I was somewhere else. The first song I would sing aloud to an audience, however, was an Erol Evgin song: "İşte öyle bir şey! – That's how it is!" The line about the stars in the lyrics interested me most: "When the stars are blinking..." The audience liked my singing, and they wanted me to sing it once more. I sang it a few more times in the following few days, and then forgot about it.

Twenty-five years later, I was invited by an actor friend of mine to Maslak Show Centre for the anniversary of the establishment of Dormen Theatre. While we were watching the programme, a familiar name was announced: "... and Erol Evgin!"



There he was on the stage again! He looked similar as we had been seeing him on TV for many years, but the content was different. He told jokes and anecdotes perfectly appropriate to the occasion, and mentioned people such as Vasfi Rıza Zobu, Bediâ Muvahhit, Emel Sayın and Adile Naşit. His humour was brilliant, and gave clues on himself and his relation with life. He already knew everything I thought of him, and he made it happen in the amusing part of his life. He made us think, he made us laugh, he made us relax, and he made us feel happy.

For the first time, I realized that I would not forget him, and it was all about his visual and spiritual characteristics: He set my heart and soul free.

Yesterday night, three years after I saw him on stage again, he sang for the Heart Foundation together with more than fifty kids, including my six-year-old daughter Asya. He designed his programme very well, so that the lyrics of his songs referred to the recent agenda of our country. We all sang together with him: “Remember the stones of Ankara, and remember

my tears!”, “When you walk on a lonely road, you know, you feel a kind of haste.”

He stood on the stage just as he did thirty years ago. Still stretching his legs rhythmically, and swinging his arms towards us and back towards his body, the thing he was about to catch in the air now was something smaller. He fixed the handkerchief in his breast pocket as a fast illusionist might do, and he seemed to have the ability to guess how his stage looked from each and every seat. I thought he might be putting the maximum effort for the engineering of it. His aim was not to become something sublime on the stage, though. He just wanted to present what he could to his audience.

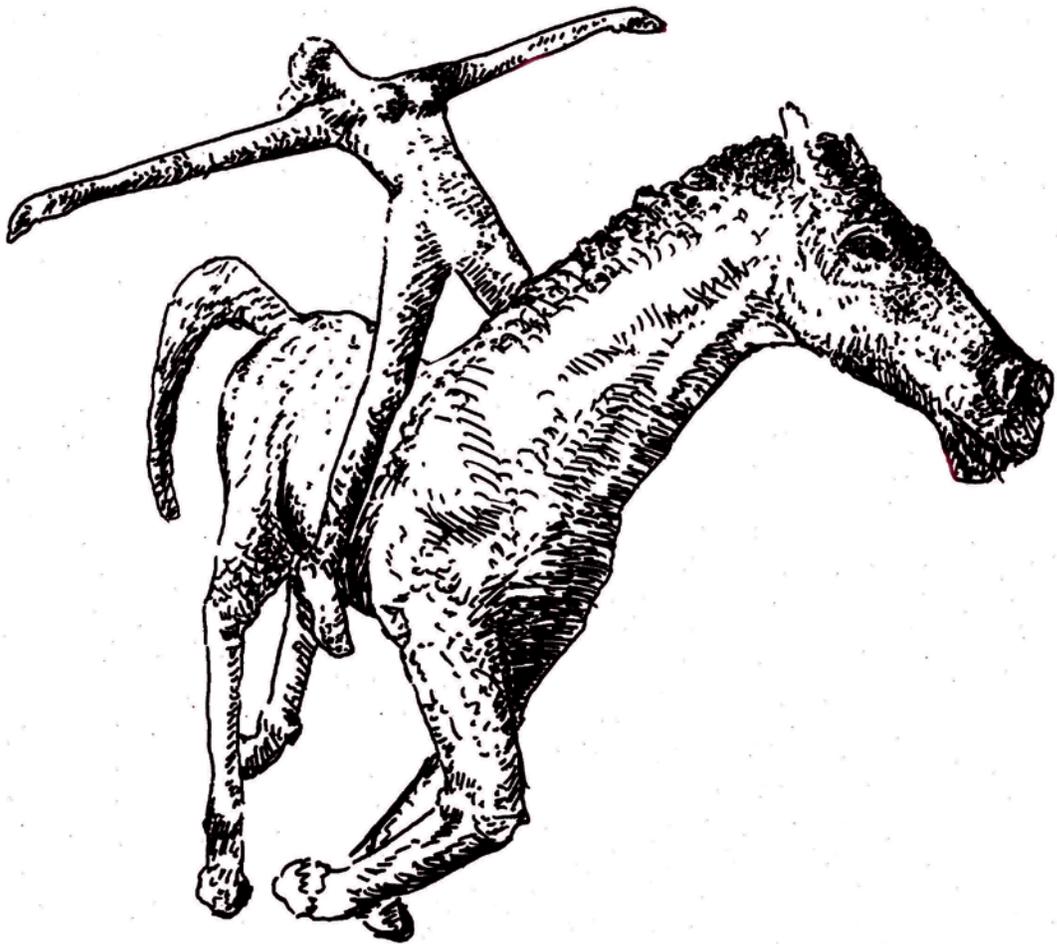
While I was taking my time to think all these, Erol Evgin, with his stance, has been busy with transferring the long breath he took many years ago to today. And, this extraordinary skill still surprises me.

Kuzguncuk, İstanbul
2007

Fifteen
Years

For fifteen years, every morning I have been waking up saying “***I will do whatever I want to do today,***” and then I find myself at my studio; I make sculptures, draw, write... Or I play with my cat, while playing, I look at the trees and think they are the universe, I become a leaf, sometimes I detach and fly with the wind, land on wood, stone, clay, I leave my mark, the mark stays, I get lost...

April 5, 2006
Kuzguncuk



Metin

Ekiz

How did we meet?

When I talk about Metin Ekiz, I talk about a friend, a senior in the academia; I talk about sculpture and learning. I talk about being human, and I talk about a measure... He is the measure of being at the same level with the tea vendor, the student, the model, and the dean at the same time: He looks down on none, and he feels inferior to none.

In the first years of the department of sculpture, we used to call anyone who started before us as seniors, and it meant that we considered them as our masters. The treatise was that of sculpture, and the subject of the treatise was form, rather than words. So, each and every piece of work was a phase of the education. This is the tradition I grew up in, and thus, I remember some images rather than words. His deep silence, too, might have contributed to this.

He had a room by the metal workshop. It had an order of its own, and it smelled so good. A window up high let the northern light to his table and chair. We always saw him in there, sitting with his coffee ready to be offered, in the thick smoke of his ever-burning cigarettes. He never closed the door, since he was always ready for our questions. If we did not ask, he would not say anything. I used to watch what he did: For instance, while Fetuş was working, he used to examine what she did from a distance that would not intrude her, and if he liked it he would perform a “well done” gesture with his right hand and his head while his left hand was fixed on his belt. If he did not like it, he used to revolve around her with his short and fast steps, then get away with faint symptoms of anger.

He stood there in the department of sculpture, organically merged with the spirit of that space, and he used to narrate the stories

and textures of the present and of the past as well.

We used to fish using trotlines, cook the ones we got on the grill he made, and drink Güzel Marmara wine. In the ovens we normally puddled iron, we also cooked potatoes. We used to gather together for intense and sincere artistic discussions.

The workshops were closed at 5 p.m. according to the rules, and we all used to complain about it. Art did not have such time limits. "I would break in from the window like a thief, if I were you," he used to advise us. He used to come to the department so early, earlier than anyone else... If he saw Fetuş and me already in the department before him, "You slept here tonight, right? You cannot fool me!" he would guess.

We Finished the School.

Afterwards, we met in Kuzguncuk.

I was so glad when he first visited my atelier. I had hanged a large photograph of his plaster sculpture called "*Free Girl*" on my wall. After he looked at it for a long time, "*Nice,*" he commented.

Metin is in Samsun now. I hear about him now and then, since there are many I know who love him.

I could not stop myself, and just have given him a call. "*I miss having a tea with you in Çınaraltı,*" I told him.

Kuzguncuk, İstanbul
2007

All
The Water
of
The Earth
Intertwine

Nevzat Atalay invited me to Hereke. “I am planning to make a sculpture, but it is so large for my atelier. So, I cannot tell you how happy I am that you called,” I told him on the phone.

In this project, I would attempt to stick to the inputs of the past, but in present time and space, as much as I could.

The outcome emerged as the contribution of

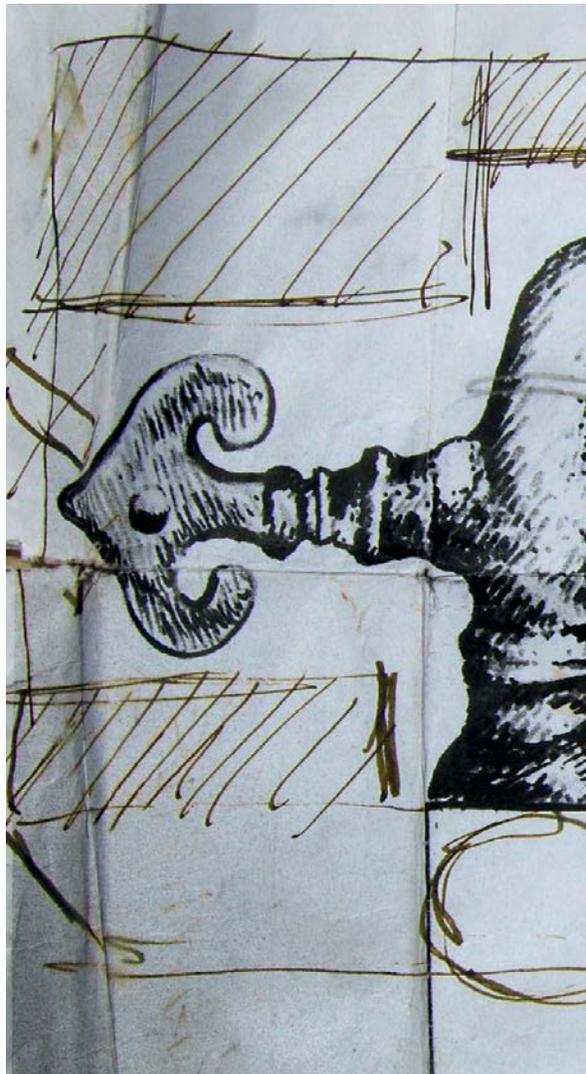
stone, time and space to the sketch on the paper.

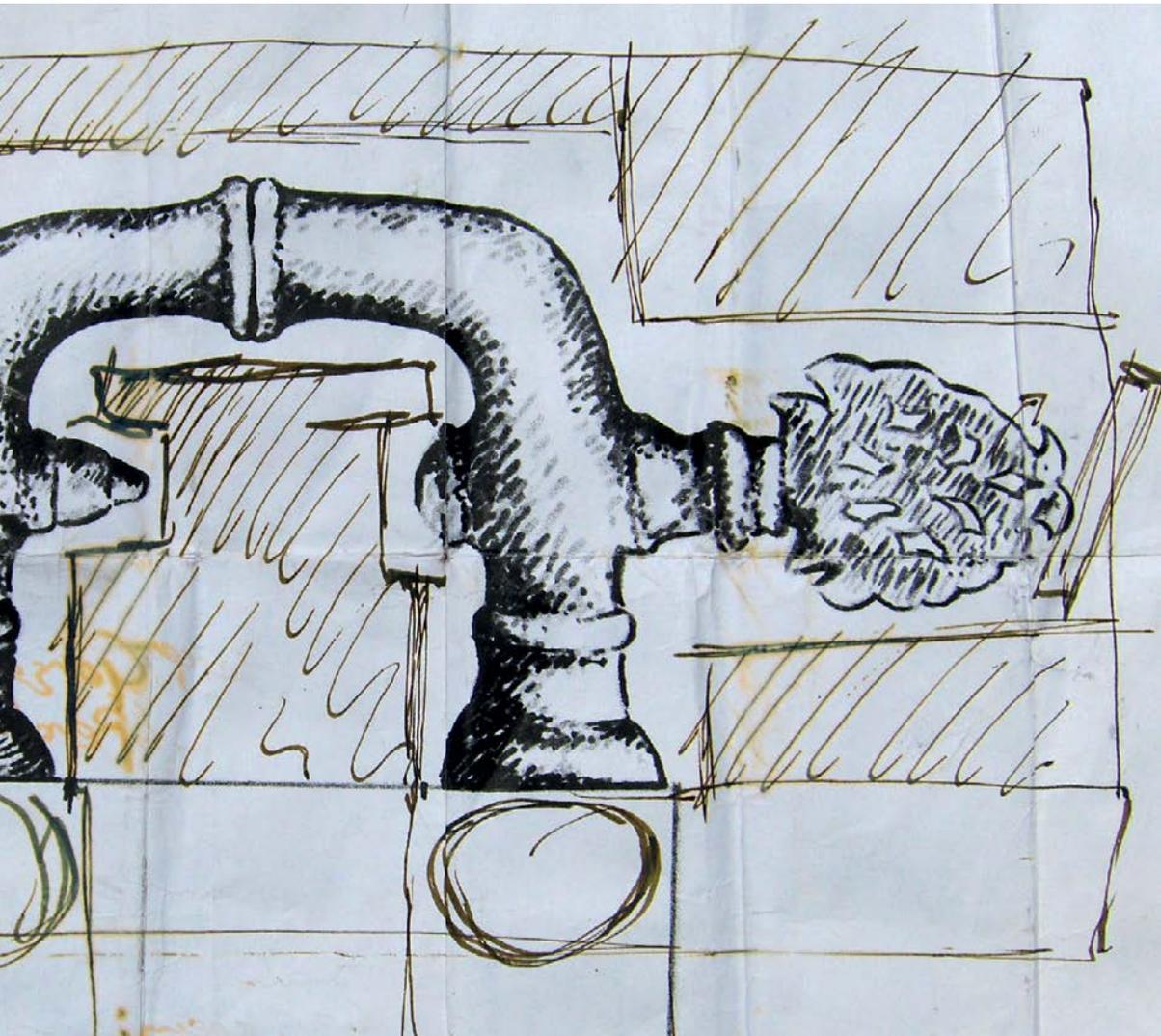
I must confess that I was anxious during the production process. I was about to faint during the installation. After it all finished, I wanted to keep away from my sculpture for a few hours. After that, I stole a glance of my sculpture, and saw that it seemed to be happy to exist. *“We did a good job,”* I whispered to it.



Around three years ago, when we were discussing on the integrity of “**piece**” and “being a part of a whole” I said “*Doesn't my sweat evaporate and fall on you?*” While everything goes on, I kept this sentence and today, in Hereke, using Muğla Stone, I made a sculpture out of it - **All The Water of The Earth Intertwine.**

2007, Hereke





I Love
Bridges

We were on the bus from Bucharest to Constanta. I was intrigued by all those bridges. A Romanian painter, Marianna showed them to me, and told me all the historical details about them. The main topic of the international organization I was participating then was “European Bridges”. I imagined that it was the participating artists who were metaphorical bridges. Over a constructivist bridge, there was a bus full of metaphorical bridges – the artists. I was among them, and I liked that “superposed” metaphor. It generated an affect and many questions inside me. I kept them for a week, and their formal embodiment became a sculpture by itself.

Kuzguncuk, İstanbul
January 20, 2007





Love bridges

50675226

Living in Istanbul

The Sun became a metaphor as a giant eye in the first chair I designed, “**The Gaze – Sunset in the Golden Horn.**” The idea was to imagine the city I was born and grown up as having an eye on the present, on the people on its streets, on its own history, on everything about itself. The gold-leafed wooden bluefish, getting through the gaze, symbolized the Golden Horn.

In “**Galata Tombé**”, I made a relief of the section of an ornament on Galata Bridge, and transferred it on a white pillow made of stone.

I needed a stone which had no patterns on it. I made many phone calls, waited for a month, and finally a friend of mine sent such a stone from Afyon. The word “**tombé**” is so common among French kids; and it means “**to fall**”. So, the pillow I sculpted was the pillow on which Galata Bridge fell and left its mark.

“**Duplex Chair with Bluefish**” refers to a sentence that always passes through my mind: “*Istanbul is so crowded, but there is place for every one of us there!*” Though its signification is minimalistic, the chair I designed is based on the idea of multitude, not on individuality. It becomes narrower as it raises from its square shaped base. Its essence is simplicity and rhythmic unity. It is designed to provide the user with the sense of robustness and security in terms of its appearance and its function. It is as inviting as Istanbul is: “*You are more than welcome,*” it expresses. The action of sitting becomes one on the top of the other, not side by side.

Istanbul
2005

63

17

25.6

63 x 6.3 x 17.5

7.5 x 3.2 x 58 cm 5 33

4 x 3.6 x 62

4.5 x 4.4 x 64
4.5 x 4 x 64

6.8 x 6.4 x 5
4.8 . 15

4.5 x 4.8 x 67.5 4

210

5 x 5.2 x 71 3

110

5.7 x 5.6 x 74.5

5.5 x 5.9 x 74.5 2

6.3 x 6.3 x 78

163 cm
+ 110

6.5 x 6.8 x 82 1

110

65.8 | 6.3

T

Sol

Le

Witt

The title of the 2nd Istanbul Biennial in 1989 was **“Contemporary Art in Traditional Spaces”**.

While we were sitting in the yard and thinking **“Süleymaniye Hospice is so beautiful as it is, there is no need to do anything...”** Beral Madra came and introduced us to three drafters of Sol Le Witt. They had the sketches of the ‘boss’. Three shapes – a pentagon, a heptagon and a nonagon – would be applied on three walls.

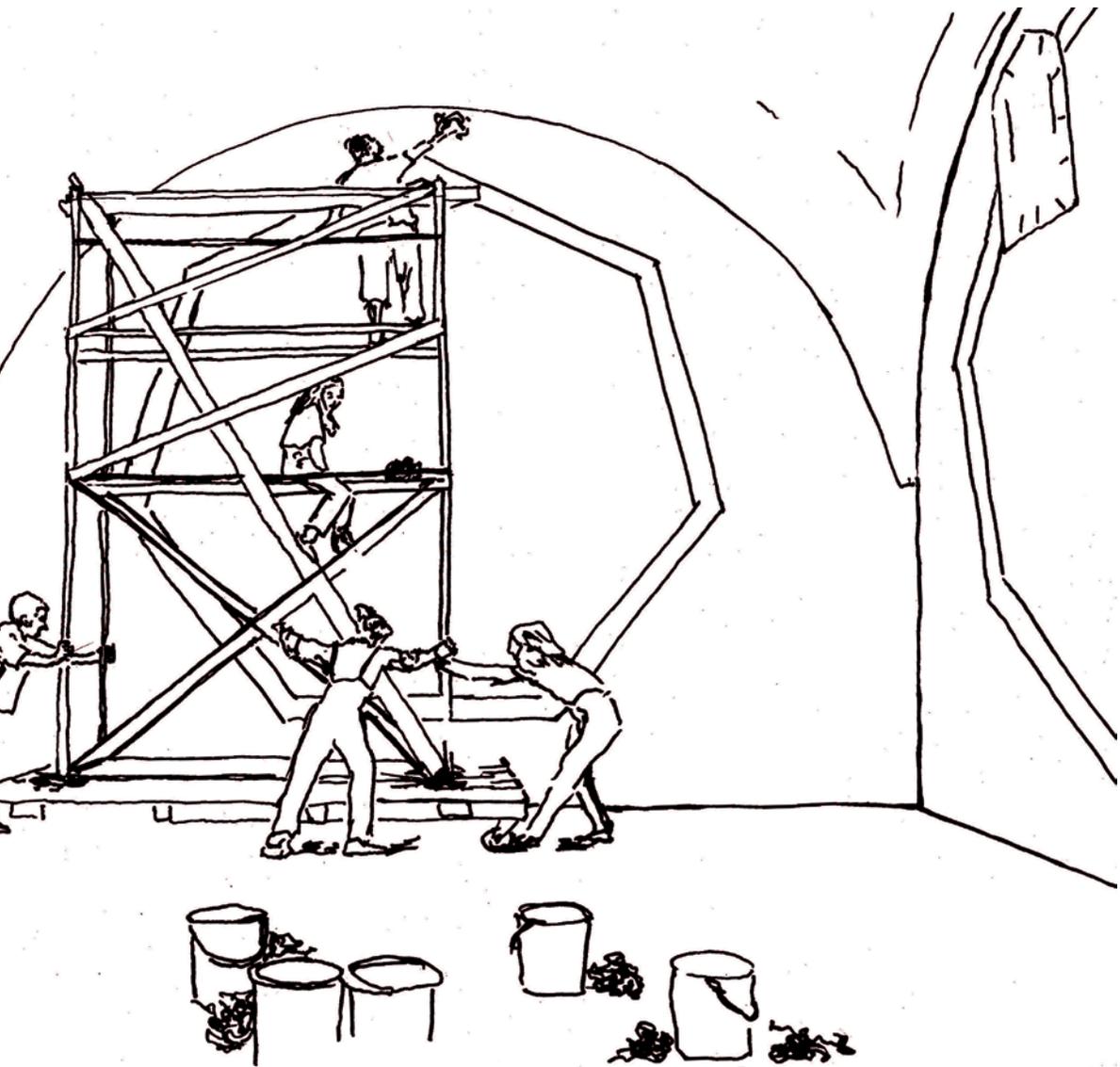
We climbed on huge scaffoldings and started to apply the work which was inspired from Seljukian art.

We prepared the paint according to the colours used in the sketch by mixing three colours of ink Anthony and David had brought to Istanbul with them. We cut white t-shirts and prepared pieces of fabric to dunk in the buckets of paint and squeeze – we were painting with the **“Michelangelo Technique”**.

There was one of the most popular cheap restaurants in an annex of the hospice then. We ate delicious bean stew, rice, hot pepper pickles, bean salad and grilled meatballs there.

On the last two days, Sol Le Witt accompanied us. He was cheerful and sincere. He kindly thanked us with a dinner and presented his sketches and photographs of his daughters to us.





Poems

'Lonely Stars In The Sky'

I looked for a white stone
Snowwhite
Then
They became two, three, four, five
When I sculpt
Frequently
'..getting lighter...'
came to my mind
'..getting lighter...'
Day... is heavy...
Night... is heavy...
Air... is heavy...
Dream... is heavy...
White... is heavy...
Black... is heavy...

Stone... is heavy...
My heart... is heavy..
'...getting lighter...'
Then I added
Star to the night
Cosmos to me
Black to white
Lightness to stone...
While adding
Mom became a voice
And crooned
"Lonely stars in the sky,
I am as lonely on earth as you are..."

27.12.2017, Istanbul

Empty Railway Cars

First I heard it
Dark
Yellow was its sound,
Copper?
Gold?
Bronze?
On the rails
Going twisting
Then its green...
Was everywhere.

In one of the
Empty railway cars
Elegant, fragmental, locked,
Not taller than knee height
There was only me
Inside of it
Laying down

My eyes closed
On me
A transparent dress
Not showing me
Without talking
Wise and calmly
They were leaving
Their beloved things
A button
A ring
A handkerchief
A flower

10.05.2006
Kuzguncuk, İstanbul

Three Snow Siblings

Once upon a time,
a great while ago
when the world was full of wonders;
a long time ago,
when I was rocking
my fathers cradle;
in a certain land
where it was always winter,
lived the Snow Siblings.
They sometimes
used to vapor up to the sky,
and some other times
snowed back on earth
and get in the form of
children again.

Stuffed Mustafa:
“Hey Nilhan!
I can drink beer!

Men drink beer,
and women don't. But, I saw you did.

My mom wouldn't.

Aslı:
“Hey Nilhan!
Would you mind me
Caressing Ginger a bit?
My love! Come to me kitty!
I have fifteen minutes.
I will go to school,
As my brother comes back home.”

Esra:
*“Hey Nilhan!
I want to practice watercolor today.
Is Asya here?
Will she be here tomorrow?
Do you have a balloon?
Shall I go to the grocer's?”*

December, 2004
Kuzguncuk, İstanbul

Dream

Over
My left shoulder
Three-year-old
Asya was looking
I was feeling
Her hands on my shoulder
Her hair was flying in the wind
I stare
At her
For a long time

Slowly
My perspective was getting wider
In the dark
Cream
Emptiness
We had
Seamless clothes

The light
Was like velvet

I was sitting
Barefooted
My knees
Touching eachother
On my lap
With folds
of cloth
The big,
Living
Fish
Whose tail
I was holding loosely
In my right hand
Was looking at me
I was looking at me
Asya was looking at me.

2003, Aspat, Bodrum
Making Fancy Leaf Tree

Cloth and Comb

“Combs”

Can

Vary

But

“cloth”

Is interesting...

Will it shrink

If I wash it?

Will it give its colour?

How wide is it?

Can I make

A dress out of it?

April, 2005

Kuzguncuk, İstanbul

Notes
on
Sculpture

Fetuş and I used to work in a painter's gallery at weekends. A few days before he saw a Nazım Hikmet book with Fetuş and kicked us out, he had paid us a compliment: ***"You two must study art in the Academia!"***

Three thousand people applied for the examinations, and only a hundred and seventy of them would be accepted. We had to study so hard, but we did not have time left.

We saw Mimar Sinan Faculty of Fine Arts for the first time when we went to register for the exam in 1987. We had a tour of the departments, since we had to choose a department before we take its exam. We were so young, eighteen and nineteen, and so funny as we joked: ***"We already can draw like that, why should we study it here?"*** I suppose we thought we would not pass the exam.





The last department we visited was sculpture. We got out of ceramics department and walked towards the direction someone showed us. The narrow, dark corridor made us a bit anxious. I still remember today the sound of our steps, the closeness of the walls to my body, the odor of the moisture, and the insight I had that I would find something I never expected over there.

At the end of the corridor, we stepped in through a large, blue and green door. We were silent. The ceiling was high. The light was dim. It smelled unfamiliar. There was no one in, except the clay sculptures wrapped in nylon bags left to dry, and the clay in the pool was also dry. We looked for a wet piece of clay to shape a bit and found it. We felt as if we were holding a complete earth in our hands. *"I like it here,"* said Fetuş. *"Me, too,"* I replied.

The exam was on the next day. We were in the first line of chairs. We thought we would pass the exam next year, if we could not pass it that year. It was forbidden to use charcoal pencil, but we used it. We had three ours, but we finished it in twenty minutes.

We did not have any hope, but our names were there on the list of accepted students.

There were two studios, but they seemed to be a single space. We settled in the one with a better light. Tamer Başıoğlu, the head of department, was also the professor of the studio we chose. While the other students were speculating about the advantages of his studio, a man of his fifties came in and introduced himself: "Hi. I am Aloş." With is silent voice and perfect Turkish, he talked about sculpture and art, and asked a few questions to all of us to get to know us. We liked him, and decided to choose his studio.

The first bust: A copy of Apollo

The first nude model: Deniz

The first abstraction: A pregnant woman

The first wooden study: Akimbo

The first bottle of Güzel Marmara wine

It was the year of my firsts in sculpture.

The most significant action Fetuş, Hale,

Cengiz and I took was to set up our shared workshop in a seven hundred square meter attic of a factory in Esenler.

We used to go to school at 6.30 in the morning, and we got out of the studio in Fındıklı at 5 p.m. The tea vendor Halil was in charge to announce the compulsory closing time of the studio, blowing a whistle. We used to find ourselves in our workshop, in which we had

to use our bikes. We were not only studying on our sculptures there, but also we were producing touristic souvenirs, miniatures, metal lightings, large styrofoam models, busts, frescoes, patterns on silk, and coffee tables which were so popular then. Comparing to the department of sculpture which adopted the Beaux-arts methods, there in Esenler, we used to work with a wider variety of materials and methods, which we easily learned in the industrial facilities in the neighborhood.

Rahmi Aksungur was the assistant of the clay workshop. He had a clever and angry look, and advised us in a wise and dignified fashion considering his age and appearance: “Kids! The artist must learn how to be a good human being first!” I always felt that I was able to see the human being in him, and I remember him with this sentence of his. I also perfectly remember that he had the skill to complete a bust in twenty minutes, that he studied so hard to be an associate professor, that he was so strong especially under stressful conditions, that he sat by the clay pool like an accordion, that he had a habit of not eating the first and the last biscuit in a package, and that “You will forget everything, but remember this,” he used to say. Rahmi Aksungur was one of the two most competent persons in clay studio that students of my generation met at the elementary phase of our sculpture education.

Berika İpekbayrak introduced me one of her students from Mersin University in 2002, during the International Stone Sculpture Symposium. His amber eyes were as bright as water. “My name is Kasım Taş, but you can call me November Stone,” he giggled. He was thin, and that made me think that we would not be able to work hard together. I was wrong. He was fast, brave and cheerful young man of his early twenties, who had the ability for empathy. I was making the “Asia Tree of Leaf”. The stone they brought for the pedestal was not a good one. Kasım tried so hard to fix it, but there was a hidden crack inside it, so we had to stop. He was sorry that his efforts went down the drain, but he was hopeful and invincible: He found a similar stone and sculpted it. He finished it before the deadline, and he also helped some others. Three or four years later, I was invited to the symposium in Mersin University. Kasım told me that he would like to work with me again. This made me so happy.

In 2003, I started to sculpt the “**Ornamented Tree of Leaf**” in Bodrum Aspat Stone Sculpture Workshop. I was about to call Kasım to ask for his help, but I heard that he died.

In July 2004, I visited his village again, a village by a cliff in Silifke. It was a place that was at peace with the world, as Kasım was.



S E S ~ ~ ~ 2006

There he rested under the pistachio trees in the garden of the summer house his family used to live.

In my first visit, Kasım had picked a lot of pistachios for me, and had told me that his father had afforded his education by these pistachios. I tried to imagine the relief he planned to make on the red rock façade of the valley. I left the village with the odor of pistachios with me, fully aware that Kasım would never lose his smile.

My undergraduate education was going so well that everyone of my age might dream of. I was realizing that getting older did not necessarily make me give up **“the game”**, and that working hard was more important than skill, and friendship was more important than career.

We used to cook the fish we caught by trotline from the Bosphorus on the grill Metin Elkiz made in the metal workshop. I used to listen to his memories about Şadi Çalık, Kuzgun Acar, Zühtü müridoğlu and Hüseyin Gezer. ***“You missed the best times in the sculpture department,”*** he used to conclude. Many thought that same, but I was surprised: How would that place have been better than it was then?

We used to see all the exhibitions. We were a spontaneous group of exhibition openings: Students from textile, architecture, ceramics, painting and photography, who visited the exhibitions, talked about everything, liked or disliked the works exhibited, eat and drink what was served.

We were invited to the meetings of the late social democrats, and exposed to the propaganda of Adnan Hoca congregants - beautiful girls and handsome boys who were offering jobs in design shops in Nişantaşı, provided that we leave the sculpture department for industrial design. Because of them, we did not like the atmosphere in the canteen anymore. We decided to spend our lunch time in the library. It was the place where I felt that I could entrust my entire soul. I still visit the library at least once a month.

Semra Germaner used to lecture on the history of modern art, and Hilmi Yavuz on the history of civilization. These lectures were so important that made us feel we were in the university. They both were so special individuals. I still imagine myself asking some questions to them, and try to guess what their answers would be. Maybe I should call them and ask my questions to them in person. But, I cannot take the risk to lose my heroes and heroines. I like my heroes better in my imagination.

In 1990, we decided to apply the Kıbrıs Karaođlanođlu Martyrs Memorial Competition. We had to see the place before we applied. We were short of time and money. We calculated the money we had, and realized that we could afford the flights. Pelin and Fetuř would work on their individual projects while Cengiz, Murat and I would collaborate on one shared project. One member of each group, we went to Cyprus. We were going to stay at Hayrani and Necef's place. They were my parents' friends who lived in Cyprus.

For the memorial, we had to cover the history and geography of the period. It was a sad process. We drove all over Northern Cyprus. We used to get up before sunrise, have our lunch with halloumi cheese and crackers that we had in our bags, and dine at fish restaurants in Girne or Magusa.

The guide of the Othello Castle was our witness of our project, and our mascot with his favourite sentence: "It isn't worth the trouble!" We came back to İstanbul, and a week later flew to Cyprus again, this time with our projects. It was our first competition, and we did not know how to behave. We even did not know if our presentations were appropriate. We somehow knew that Rahmi Aksunur would win the prize, but it was a big sur-

prise that our project won the second prize, and Fetuř's won the third. We were so happy. One of the jury members, Muammer Onat, walked toward us, and congratulated us: "I loved your project. Congratulations. I wrote this note for you," he said, and handed over a piece of paper. "We had to reward your project with the second prize, because you are very young artists, and we thought you might not be able to realize the project. We wish you a continued success." This was the best award we could get. And they were right, we were too young to produce our project.

We spent what we won from the competition for an exhibition in Kassel, Germany: "A Section of Turkish Art", was the first international group exhibition we participated.

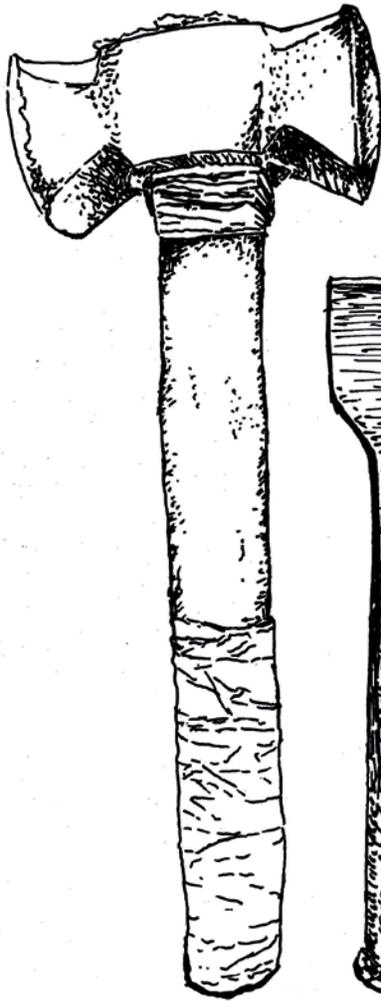
One night, I went to a Aksanat for a talk with the title "**Turkish Sculpture and the Figure**". One of the speakers was a German woman, who also was the organizer of the Barlach Exhibition in Tophane-i Amire. She and other speakers all seemed to agree that figure did not exist in Turkish sculpture, and Turkish sculptors were not even able to cut the stone, and the only way sculpture maintained in Turkey was by its material. It was impossible for me to understand what they were talking about.

True: It is difficult for the sculptors in Turkey to find financial support, an expert perspective, and a medium where they can share their enthusiasm. However, in terms of quality, there are some artists and organizations in Turkey as good as their international equivalents.

Only between the years 2000 and 2006, the number of the sculptures produced in national and international organizations in all the regions of Turkey adds up to more than three hundred.

This spontaneous flow, with its intrinsic sincerity and enthusiasm, is worth the attention.

1987-2007



My Studio

Pieces gathered in twentyone years,
The ones that resisted...
To watch
The chisel, a gift from the Finnish
hammersmith,
Sometimes just to touch
The stilet signed “Ear”, a bolster ,a lump
hummer,
The musical Japanese saw,
The spiral which coughs if you don't change
its coal,
Stone, wood, clay, wax, copper which want
to be touched,
Wood table out of cherry tree from Bursa,
The welding
Small sculpture shelves

Notebooks, pencils, brushes, paint, books, a
computer
The kettle, coffee,
Globe light
Creme curtain
With honeysuckle shadows,
Dust after sanding
A broom, the shower,
The white ceiling for dreams
For today
The smell of yesterday,
Pieces gathered in twentyone years,
The ones that resisted...

2008 Kuzguncuk

The vision slowly becomes **visible**,

like a dream,

long/short and very impressive.

