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2015



## Don't Step On My Vein!-Mines and Ores, Gallery Apel, İstanbul

While surfing the internet I found that every village, area or city is sharing pictures of their favorite places there. Most of the pictures consist of photographs of unspoiled nature. These photographs are an important part of the local people's collective psyche and are part of their

"home"s icons.

While I was making paintings of these places looking at the found photographs, I was wondered how much longer these beloved places would stay as they are.

Today everywhere is in danger. We find ourselves in a time where nothing is more important than what brings monetary profit in the short run. Decisions about the destination of places are made by others than the local people. This situation has created a sense of loss and "disownedness" in the collective psyche.

Our veins are trodden upon in a bad way.

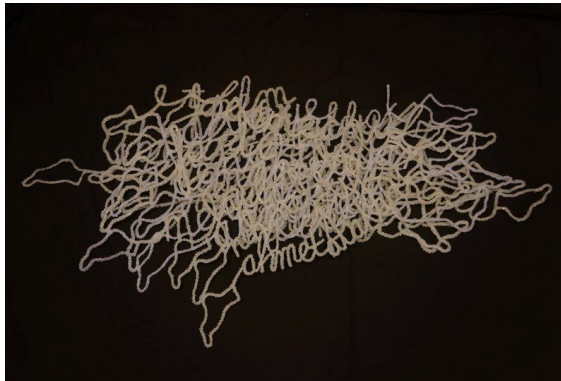
Depicted places:

- \* Artvin Şavşat
- \* Ağrı Yazılı Köyü
- \* Düzce Topuk Yaylası
- \* Fırtına Deresi Vadesi
- \* Ağrı Dağı
- \* Kuzuculu Amanos Dağları Mantos Yaylası
- \* Artvin Yaylası
- \* Kocaeli Pembe Kayalar
- \* Kocaeli Kerpe



## Around-Tekirdağ

Maria Sezer made a sculpture from tree trunks and branches which resembles a human face coming out of the earth and watching around.



## Perpetrator Unknown-Nevruz, Gallery Apel, İstanbul

Jumping over a fire and through smoke during Nevruz one gets cleansed and prepared for a new beginning, ready to throw off the old and embrace the new.

Thinkers, writers activists, and common people, known or unknown have lost their lives while symbolically jumping over the fire making their

ideas public. They were hoping to rid society of faltering systems, make changes and aiming to initiate new starts. Their killers are mostly unknown, but these people's spirits, inhabit the smoke and clouds. Their lost lives and aborted beginnings occupy a place in dark corners of Turkey's collective conscience.

For the same exhibition, Sezer made "Perpetrator Unknown, burned". This piece consists of a 3-D map of Turkey made up from burned wood. The work was placed at the top of the stairs of the art gallery, where everyone going to the second floor was forced to jump over the burned map. The map was trodden upon and moved place. A video film was made of this at the opening night.

2014



## Territory, Help Yourself-Abduction, Gallery Asphalt, İstanbul

### Territory, Help Yourself

This work is a continuation of Territory I that I made for the exhibition “Abduction” in Galeri Asphalt in 2013. The exhibition was about illegal human traffic and trade. I concentrated on the boat people fleeing their country for socio-economic or political reasons. Many of whom drown. Those immigrants that manage to

reach the affluent world often have to go into hiding and live in a self-inflicted prison. They work at underpaid illegal jobs. Ironically, while looking for socio-economical or political freedom they are imprisoning themselves.

I draw a parallel between illegal immigrants and bees. Bees are generally “kept” for the profit of man. Much of the wealth of affluent societies was made possible by ‘keeping’ people.

I worked on the idea that we have enslaved bees as well. The beekeeper catches bees and houses them in a hive, so they work for him. To keep invaders and foreign matter out, the bees remodel the entrance to the hive and kit every possible hole and crevice with propolis and wax. In defining their territory, they create a kind of prison for themselves. The traces on the wall hangings are made by bees and remind me of prison bars. The hangings consist of pieces of cloth that I use while beekeeping.

To promote an affluent lifestyle, or as advertisements like to put it, a safe and comfortable lifestyle, we get bombarded with advertisements at all hours of the day. Their continuity and repetition create a subconscious psychological belief. We tend to believe we deserve and have the right to have every object of our desire.

The series of trays called “Help Yourself” does not only stand for the serving of food and drink during the intervals for advertisement but also symbolize everything connected to a safe and comfortable lifestyle as promoted and promised by advertisements.

The serving trays are a metaphor for the affluence of certain groups of people. This affluence is paid for by others, often living in extreme poverty, terrible political climates and becoming displaced persons. The scenes on the trays are sinking boats.

While I was making the paintings under glass on these trays, William Turner's painting called "The Slave Ship, Slavers throwing overboard the dead and dying- typhoon coming (1840)", kept whirling around in my head. During the slave trade, some captains would throw overboard slaves illegally, dead or alive, in order to receive insurance money for their lost "wares". Indeed, dead slaves were more valuable than live slaves. This made news in the papers at its time, just as we read and see on tv about the "boat people" nowadays. Not much seems to have changed since the 1800s.

You may wonder why the drowning beehives symbolize those people that leave their homes and travel unsafely to look for a better life. In our day, we enslave bees, we make them work so hard and travel so far that they perish by the millions. I see a parallel here.

We live in a society where consumption is the highest good. This attitude started during the industrial revolution, it is now very outdated and must change. I presented a program every fortnight on Açık Radyo from 2014-15 where I talked about bees and related issues, which was part of my artwork, a type of performance. At the exhibition, I played a part of some of the programs (without advertisements!) about worker bees as well.

## 2013



### Sturdy Fence

Maria Sezer is a suburban. Since 15 years, she lives near Terkos Lake, one of the old water reservoirs of Istanbul. For these last 15 years, she has witnessed an evergrowing "building-fever" in this periphery of Istanbul where rural life intersects with urban developments that are changing the face of Istanbul and that uncover dominating and latent power dynamics. The landscapes at the peripheries, often regarded as wastelands and considered to be

sites for speculation, are overlooked in the process of city planning. Roads, compounds, houses, and a new airport are being planned and built. Land prices have soared and the once

open pastoral land is now cut into pieces and fenced in. The natural and agricultural landscape of old is disappearing. Politics of speculation are leaving their scars on the landscape.

The English painter Constable was deeply influenced by the social and economic impact of the industrial revolution. During his time, the great migration to the cities had begun and it is still going on in other parts of the world, which are now industrializing, over the last 50 years in an accelerating pace in Turkey as well. Istanbul is bursting out of its boundaries. Constable saw that the 'old' way of life was disappearing. His father possessed a mill and farm and Constable was supposed to manage it after his father. Instead, he chose to take possession of the land by painting it.

In a reaction to the disappearance of the pastoral landscape of the north-west periphery of Istanbul, Maria Sezer decided to draw the quickly disappearing narrow roads and the landscape around them. Many of the old roads are now being cut off by the highways that are being built and so cannot be used and the landscape around them seen anymore by locals or suburbanians traveling to and from Istanbul. The only way to take possession of these old roads and landscape seems to be painting them like Constable painted his disappearing surrounding ca. 200 years ago.

The parts of land that remain their old pastoral character are rendered with pastels whereas the new roads and the newly fenced-in pieces of land were documented with photographs. Their juxtaposition is meant to make the situation painfully clear.



## Territory I-Abduction, Gallery Asphalt, Istanbul

The beekeeper catches a swarm, houses the bees and looks after them. In order to keep their natural enemies out, the bees will cover all possible cracks and holes in their new house and minimize their entrance to the hive with propolis. Bees can live without human interference, for the human race though, life without bees will become more difficult.

"Territory I" was made for the exhibition called "Abduction", which focussed on all ideas around illegal human trafficking and trade. The material used for the work 'Territory I' are

pieces of cloth used for covering the frames of beehives. The pattern the bees make onto these clothes, resemble prison bars. The bees create a barrier between the outside world and their home. Like illegal immigrants will also hide from the outside world. When one has to hide from the outside world, one is not free anymore.





## There Is In No God There-1st Bodrum Biennial, Bodrum, Muğla

“The concept of the 1. Bodrum Biennial was taken from the book “Aganta Burina Burinata” written by Cevat Şakir Kabaağaçlı in 1946, the writer also known as the fisherman of Halicarnassus. The book is based on the ideas of longing, passion, belonging and the search for oneself. In this book,

the main character has a strong longing for the ‘open sea’. At the same time to set sail means to face one's fears and risk the things one cherishes most in life. When the fishermen set out to sail into the open sea for the first time, from the deck, the shout out towards the sea, sky and land: “Aganta, Burina Burinata”, greeting everything alive.”

Banu Grote, Curator of the I.Bodrum Biennial.

## 2012



## Big-Small-Büyükçekmece Lake, İstanbul

This exhibition was made for the Büyükçekmece Lake, a lagoon West of Istanbul. It contains 3 sculpture which stands in the lake and 25 photographs which are posted on the outside wall of the amphitheater situated next to the lake.

The sculptures were made inspired by and with microscopic plankton in mind. Maria Sezer blew up their shapes in order to state their importance for the ecological system. Organic materials mostly found in the wetland area like weeping willow, reeds, bamboo and so forth, were used to build the sculptures. The sculptures are exhibited in the water and move by the force of the wind. One of them is connected to the shore by means of a small pier. Like this, on-viewers can walk towards the sculpture and move the sculpture by hand as well.

As part of the food chain, plankton ends up in the human belly as well. To commemorate that Sezer painted, with red clay, shapes inspired by plankton on a big group of volunteers bellies. All volunteers live in the vicinity of the lake. Büyükçekmece has a big young population. The photographs of these were exhibited on the walls of the amphitheater next to Büyükçekmece Lake.



## I am a human too-Çankaya, Ankara

I am human too. Human relations in the public space.

Salto mortale

In the context of the celebrations of the 400th year of Turkish- Dutch relations taking place in 2012, speaking about human relations in public space

(both physical and metaphorically) can seem ironic from certain points of view.

Supposedly, in public space, human beings, regardless of ethnic or social background, color, gender, and cultural background can move around freely and express their ideas. This should form the basis for mutual respect and understanding between people.

As long as Turkish citizens have to overcome the severe degrading experience of doing backward “salto mortales” in order to obtain a visa to enter Holland, it is a delusion to expect any form of true contact between these people.

Therefore Maria Sezer has had herself photographed whilst at the doorstep of the Dutch consulate’s visa office, putting herself in the place of any Turkish citizen who wants to travel to Holland for whatever reason.