

VOLKAN ASLAN

Homebase: ISTANBUL // Residency: LINZ

was born 1982, he is living and working in Ankara.

Volkan Aslan is a young artist who works with a range of materials and media in an interdisciplinary and inter-medial way. Certainly the strength of his poetic yet political works comes from a balance between aesthetics and concept. In other of his work he reviews strategies used in the context of art or investigates the relationship between personal and social history.

Early in his career, he ironically yet critically investigated structures within the art system in Turkey. For example, in a laudation/manifesto, he praised the curator and claimed that he, the artist, is a servant ready to perform his art-related duties. With this action, Aslan questioned the amount of freedom possessed by young artists entering the art scene. His early photograph works from 2004 to 2006 that depicted him attached by tape to the living room floor can also be seen as a reaction to the difficult situation of young artists in Turkey.

In these photographs, the artist is lying on the floor next to people, who are watching television or chatting while seated at a dinner table. The works criticize the invisibility of the speechless and motionless artist who is punished by neglect and disinterest. Aslan's artistic strategy is both conceptual and socially critical. An early example of his conceptual approach is clearly shown in the 2004 ready made based work where he announced the whole Aksanat building to be a work of art and labelled certain details such as the elevator, the entrance, and architectural elements in the stairway. In other works like "A question of Staging" from 2009, the artist questioned certain mechanisms and languages of art that can be used to change a space into a gallery. For this

piece, he created an absurd situation by simply reproducing and placing into an empty white cube the words used in Turkish municipality buildings to designate that a specific room is an exhibition space even though the room may not possess the necessary architectural features needed for an exhibition.

The ready-made plays a fundamental role in Aslan's work. In the video work, "Those who wear the same T-shirt", he used common T-shirts showing the Turkish flag to discuss issues related to nationality, uniformity and nationalism. In the series "Concern", he worked with felt figures found in a local flea market. To allow figures separated from their original religious or historical context to interact as if in a play based both on reality and imagination, Aslan created supports from canvas board or stage-like surfaces painted directly on the wall of the exhibition space.

He created fragmental puzzles of reality. The combination of heterogeneous parts allowed strange and non-linear connections between the felt figures and objects to occur. The painted monochrome background contrasted with the thick felt figures, but the thin acrylic paint of the paintings also created a beautiful harmony. The works move back and forth from the concrete/stable to the infinite/fragile. "Concern" looks like a page from a strange fairy tale in which the spectator gets enough visual information to begin a story, but without all the details can never figure out the conclusion. There is never a definite ending. In the "Concern" series Aslan constructed his individual version of reality where fragile reminiscences from the past made everything possible.

This work marks the beginning of a second thematic base later continued in "Reciprocal Visit", "Once Upon a Time" and "Four". In these installations, he used found images of incidents and people to create visual pools. From a collection of found images, the spectators were asked to draw their own conclusions regarding

the stories and histories behind the pictures. In "Reciprocal Visit", Aslan presented eight photographs showing stills with subtitles taken from Russian films that were given to him by a photographer who worked for a communist newspaper in Yerevan. In this installation, Volkan Aslan arranged the photographs in a manner that allowed a dialogue to take place between the subtitles. To re-enforce the connections between the images, he added sentences directly onto the exhibition walls underneath the images that functioned as subtitles for the whole installation.

In "Reciprocal Visit", the artist played with various images and re-edited them according to his own idea in order to create a new path of meaning.

Also in "Four", he worked with found images. The idea for this installation came from numerous popular television programs and talk shows that expose the private life of ordinary people. In the centre of the "Four" installation is a table constructed from four different tables from four different periods and styles. Four found photographs were given to Seza Gunes who wrote four different fictional stories. In the exhibition space, Aslan arranged photographs, drawings and objects on the walls around the table. Together with the four texts, the spectator found himself inside an archive where he was being bombarded by an overwhelming amount of visual and textual information from which he was expected to create his own interpretation about the reality of the various parts presented in the installation. Different from the situation of passively receiving information from a television program, he was asking the spectator to actively connect the elements of the story presented by using his own imagination.

In "Once Upon a Time", a collaborative installation with the visual artist Nancy Atakan, Aslan started again with found objects and images from past eras. In this work, the issues of memory and its construction play an obviously fundamental role. The installation

emphasizes that every object in the world has been made or owned by another human being with his own story and history. Volkan Aslan presents a good example of an artist who can merge humour, irony and sarcasm with political and social contents without becoming didactic. His contemporary approach to the artistic method of using ready-mades significantly connects his work to the history of art, a discipline whose practices he often questions to reveal its hidden power structures and mechanisms. Furthermore, he is able to deal with human stories without being kitsch or melodramatic. The high quality of his work results from his ability to engage in socio-political discussions about art's context and human (hi)stories.

EDUCATION

2005 Mersin University Faculty of Fine Arts
2005 Cukurova University, MA

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

2011 "Volkan", Macka Art Gallery, ISTANBUL
2011 "Unstable Repetition", Pi Artworks, ISTANBUL
2010 "Those Who Wear the Same T-Shirt", Pi Artworks, Istanbul
2009 "Four", Pi Artworks, ISTANBUL
2008 "Concern", Pi Artworks, ISTANBUL
2007 "Volkan Aslan in Istanbul", Under Construction, ISTANBUL

GROUP EXHIBITIONS

2012 "Pi @ Q", Q Contemporary, Beirut, LEBANON
2012 Art Dubai, Pi Artworks, Dubai, UAE
2012 Contemporary Istanbul'12, Pi Artworks, ISTANBUL
2011 Contemporary Istanbul'11, ISTANBUL
2011 Art Beat Istanbul, Pi Artworks, ISTANBUL

2011 Marrakech Art Fair, Pi Artworks, Marrakech, MOROCCO

2011 "Trade Routes", Pi Artworks, ISTANBUL

2011 "If The Nature is Heaven, The City is Hell", Cer Modern,
ANKARA

2010 "Second Exhibition", Arter, ISTANBUL

2010 Zoom Art Fair, Pi Artworks, Miami, USA

2010 "When Ideas Become Crime", Depo, ISTANBUL

2010 Contemporary Istanbul'10, Pi Artworks, ISTANBUL

2010 "Floating Volumes", 5533, İSTANBUL

2010 "Floating Volumes", Frise, HAMBURG

2010 "Stuff and Nonsense", Cer Modern, ANKARA

2009 St-art, 14th European Contemporary Art Fair, Strasbourg,
FRANCE

2009 "Reciprocal Visit", Depo, ISTANBUL

2009 "A Question of Staging", Manzara Perspectives, ISTANBUL

2009 "Temporary Harassment", Istanbul 2010 Portable Art
Project, ISTANBUL

2009 "Once Upon a Time", 5533, ISTANBUL

2008 "On Produceability", Cologne, GERMANY

2008 "Save As", Contemporary Artist's Exhibition, Triennial Bovisa
Museum, Milan, ITALY

2008 "Concern", Atelier Frankfurt, Frankfurt, GERMANY

2008 "Cultural Jam", Weimar, GERMANY

2008 "Accumulated: Put Side, Left Aside", 5533, ISTANBUL

2007 "Art and Money", Siemens Art Gallery, ISTANBUL

- 2007 "From the Owner with a View", ISTANBUL
- 2007 "The Most Curatorial Biennial of the Universe", Apex Art Center, New York, USA
- 2007 "-x", ANKARA
- 2007 "6th Korean-Turkish Exchange Exhibition", Pi Artworks, ISTANBUL
- 2007 "Unfinished", BM Suma Contemporary Art Center, ISTANBUL
- 2006 "Between Two Sides", ISTANBUL
- 2006 "So Far Away From Here", ANKARA, ISTANBUL
- 2005 "Cultural Heritage", Turkish-English Cultural Center, ANKARA
- 2005 "Free Zone-Neutral Area", Roxy, ISTANBUL
- 2005 "Obsession", International Audio Video Art Festival, Gallery X, ISTANBUL
- 2005 "24th Contemporary Artist's Exhibition", Akbank Art, ISTANBUL
- 2005 "1st Electronic Art Festival", Centro Cultural Telemar, Rio de Janeiro, BRAZIL
- 2004 "12th New Proposals-New Propositions", Borusan Culture and Arts, ISTANBUL
- 2003 "Choose A Dog For Yourself and Bark", ADANA
- 2003 "Choose A Dog For Yourself and Bark", MERSIN
- 2002 "3rd International Student Triannual Exhibition", Marmara University, ISTANBUL

