

Onur Gökmen

Recent Works

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1- The Connected

“The Connected” deals with a feeling. This feeling is associated with the late modernisation of Ottoman identity in the 1850s which later resurfaced as vulnerabilities in the younger generations of the 1980s.

Following an unpleasant day, three friends (an actor, a painter, and a writer) decide to get drunk in a field in the outskirts of Istanbul. In their drunken stupor they remember, reenact and are possessed by ghosts from the past. We constructed a narrative around these fragile encounters, confronting ourselves with this feeling shared by the characters.

We conceived “The Connected” as a feature-length film, and an installation based on the film. The installation will be exhibited in SALT (Istanbul), and screened in Sharjah Art Foundation (Sharjah), Reina Sofía (Madrid), Muzeum Sztuki Nowoczesnej w Warszawie (Warsaw), and M HKA (Antwerp).

(excerpt, password: alakadar)

<https://vimeo.com/449774146>



Production still from the film



Sketch for the exhibition

2- Asri Mezarlık (1295-2019)

Modern Cemetery (1295-2019)

I lost my grandmother Gülten in November 2019. Her will was to be buried in her grandmother's tomb. The burial revealed a story about our family history, which runs parallel with the timeline of the Ottoman Empire's disintegration and the foundation of the Turkish republic.

Her unassuming tombstone has a spelling error, which seemed very strange to me. Her name is "Emine Mayko", but it is written, "Emine Manyak" (Emine Maniac). When we accessed the archives, we realized this was a deliberate error by a family member. What does the tombstone attest to?

I will visit the cemetery with my father, and we will remove the tombstone together. A film crew will document this journey, which will turn into a short film. I will interview my father and uncle, use the family archives, and also look into those spaces that hold memories: the cemetery, my grandmother's house, and Ankara itself.



Production still from the film

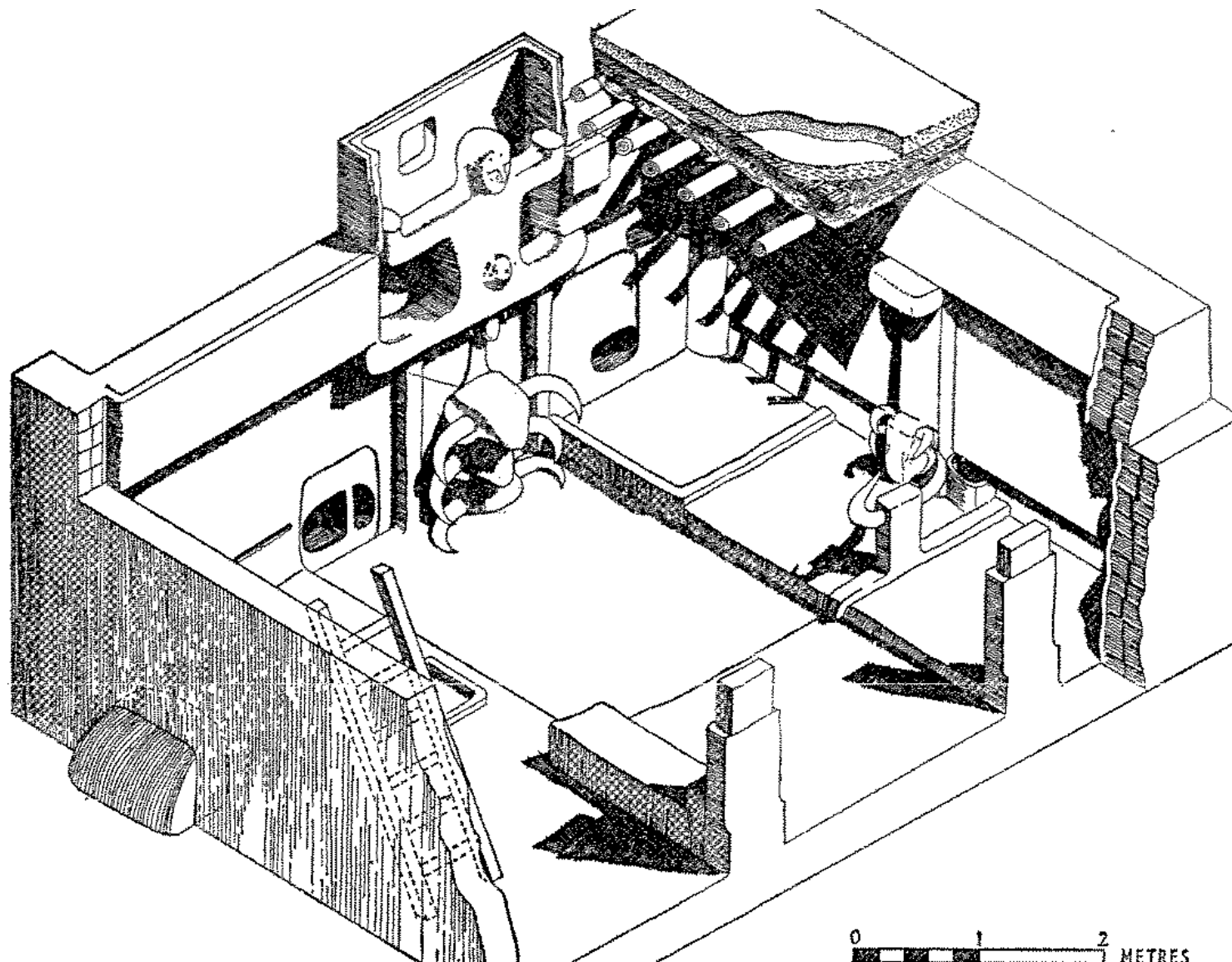


Production still from the film

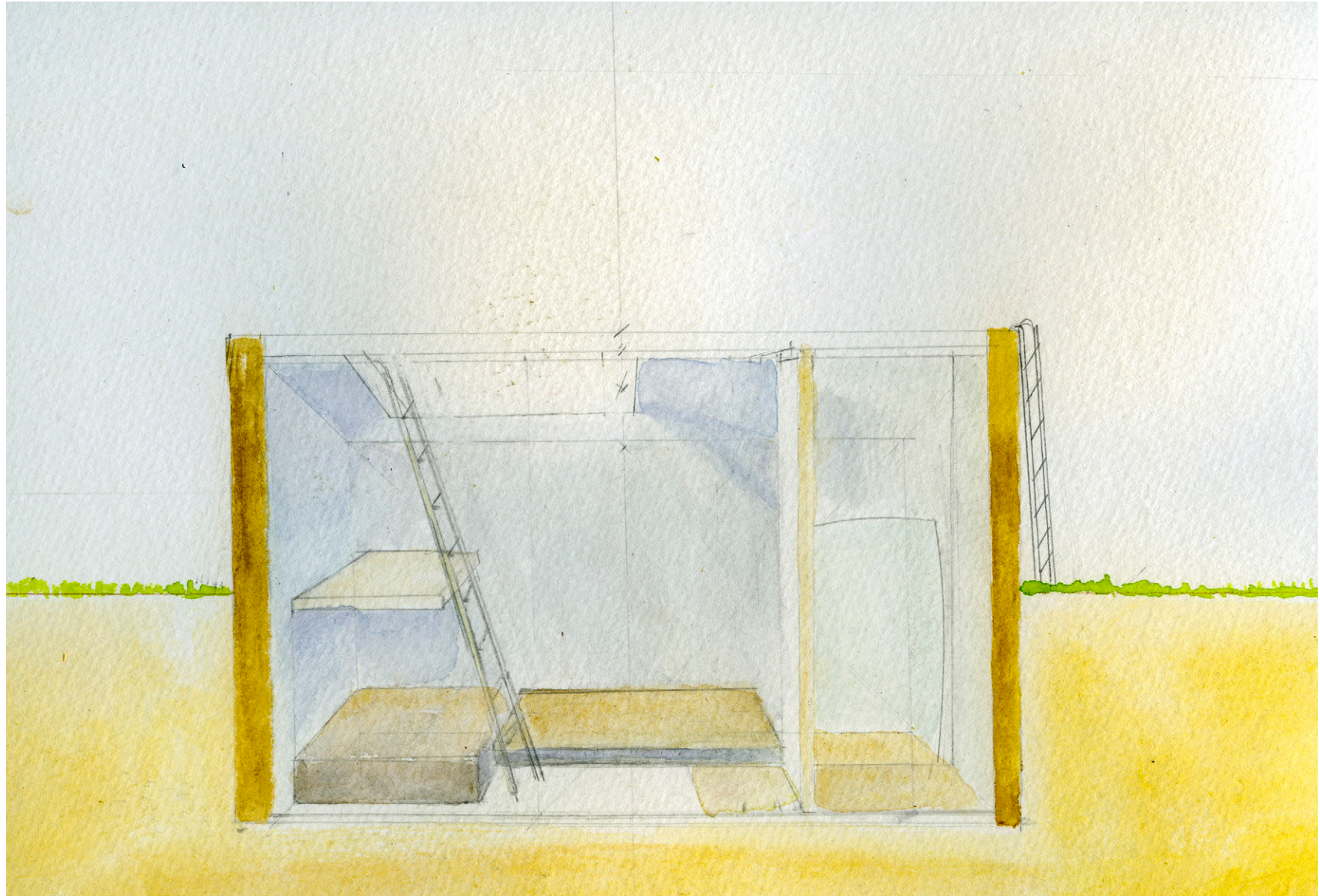
3- FIRST (2021)

Located in central Anatolia, Çatalhöyük existed as a settlement for nearly two millennia prior to 5700 BCE. It is a 21 meter high mound, and has a volume of 750000 cubic meters. The settlement had a peculiar organization: it had no streets, all of the dwellings were pressed up against each other into a single formation. People moved around the settlement on rooftop, entering into their homes through a hole in the ceiling.

I see Çatalhöyük as a case from the distant past which sheds light on contemporary technological entanglements, and the existential threats posed to our way of life caused by our dependence on technology. Although we associate current environmental problems with the industrial era, deforestation, burning, erosion, and grazing happened on a large scale in Çatalhöyük, which perhaps lead to the collapse of the settlement.



Archeological sketch of a house from Çatalhöyük
(Mellart, J, 1967 Catal Hüyük: A Neolithic Town In
Anatolia)



Prepatory drawing





4- Symbolic economies (2020)

This project addresses the material language of public symbols of Frankfurt am Main. How does the material language of public symbols are translated by memory and how can we speak back?



Masonite
85x45x45cm



Clay, ceramics
190x12.5x12.5 cm

5- Main, Bosphorized (2019)

In the 1970s and 80s, due to storage problems, Istanbul based artist Füsün Onur tossed her sculptures into Bosphorus from her studio. On the 11th of June 2019, influenced by Füsün Onur's act, I arrived at the bank of the Main river in Frankfurt to throw away five sculptures I had made with five different collaborators that year. I was fined by Ordnungsamt for littering Main. I exhibited the photos of the sculptures, with the ticket.

On 11.06.2019 I went to the Main to throw away 5 sculptures I made with 5 different collaborators. In the 70s - 80s, Fusun Onur (Istanbul*, 1938) tossed her sculptures into Bosphorus* from her studio after making them due to storage problems.

I couldn't be sure if her act was gestural. Yet I couldn't find a better word for it. In the past I argued with one of my collaborators on the meaning of *gesture*. I want to be clear on this now.

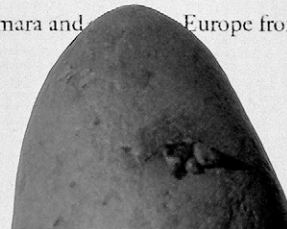
The first meaning of *gesture* would be dumbed down when thinking of a work: a movement of a part of the body, especially the hand or the head, to express an idea: *David made a gesture of frustration* | sometimes a work is frustratingly didactic.

Gesture. "an action performed to convey one's feelings or intentions: *Abmet was touched by the kind gesture.*" I am not sure if Onur's disposals comply with this. Or, I am not sure If she was gesturing "fuck you" when tossing her sculptures, I wonder if this gesture is related to transference. Did she embed her feelings in the sculptures and exorcize them by sinking them from sight in the Bosphorus?

Gesture. "an action performed for show in the knowledge that it will have no effect: *I hope the work will not be just a gesture.*" This one I understand. By throwing the work of others, I prove nothing to Onur or myself. We have an inherent storage problem. She was doing her sculptures, yet there was no interest, so her sister would take photos of them, and off the side they went.

I started throwing the sculptures into the Main with those motivations. The first was swallowed by the river, then the next one. Just as I threw the last sculpture, a man approached me, as red as a beet. "Ordnungsamt!" he shouted, and he ordered a fine for littering of the Main. I felt bad about this, as I have paid for storage in the Main. However, thinking about it more, now I have some proof that I threw those sculptures.

*a strait that connects the Black Sea with the Sea of Marmara and separates Europe from the Anatolian peninsula of western Asia.



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Datum:

14.06.2018

Aktenzeichen:

Geboren am

Bußgeldbescheid

Sehr geehrter Herr Goekmen !



Installation view, Städel Museum

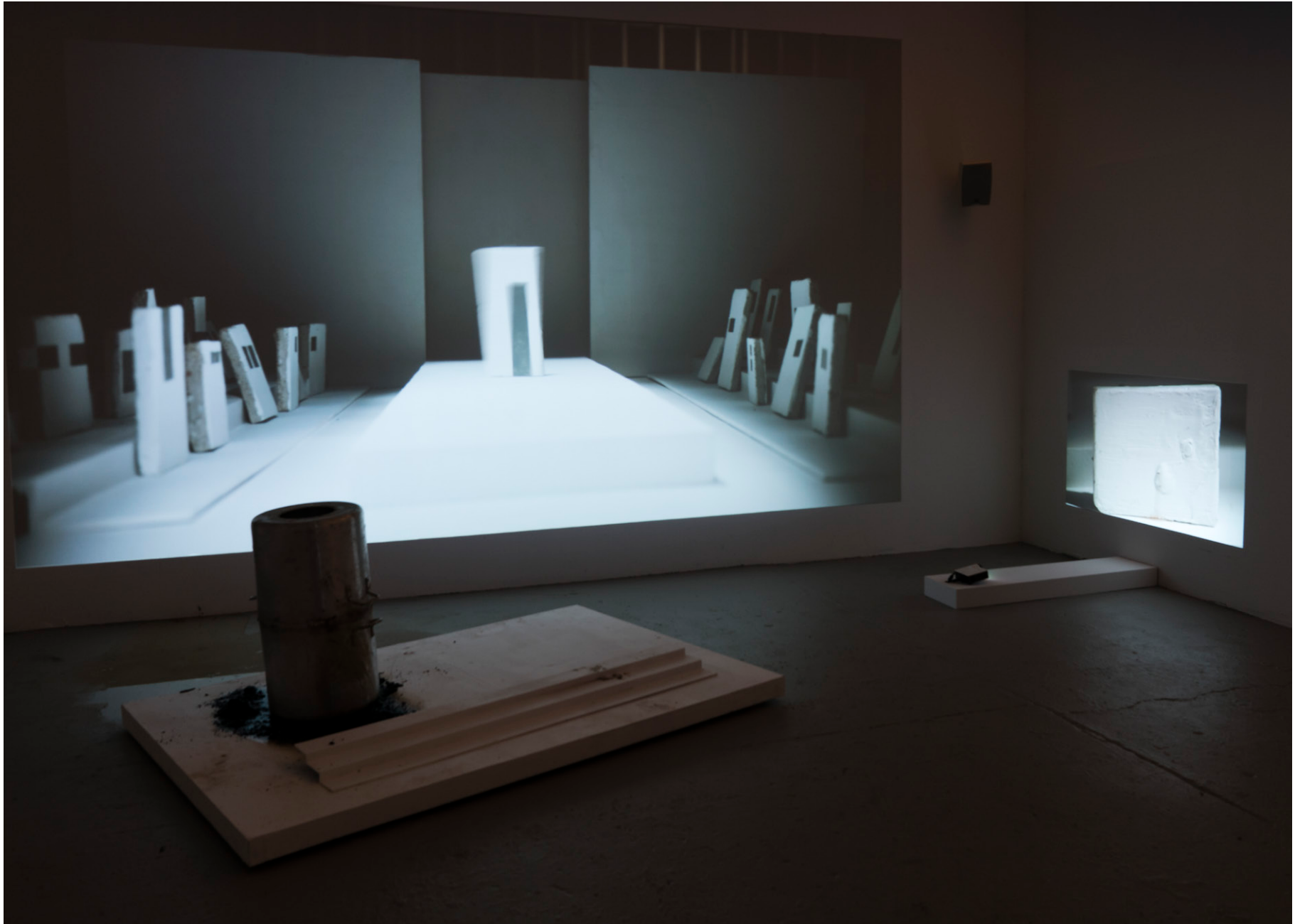


6- Pebbles were necessary to Burnish (2018)

The installation consists of two identically welded pots on a platform, and a two-channel video referring to a fashion show. Instead of models, buildings walk on the catwalk.

Sweat and diarrhea v 2.0

<https://vimeo.com/359484854/fe432db418>



Installation view



Still from the video

**7- All the rivers run into the sea,
yet the sea is ever full (2017)**

“Meaningless! Meaningless!” says the Teacher.
“Utterly meaningless! Everything is meaningless.”
What do people gain from all their labors at which
they toil under the sun?
Generations come and generations go, but the
earth remains forever.
The sun rises and the sun sets, and hurries back
to where it rises.
The wind blows to the south and turns to the
north;
round and round it goes, ever returning on its
course.

Ecclesiastes, 1, 2-6

<https://vimeo.com/177918462/b3b8eb7383>



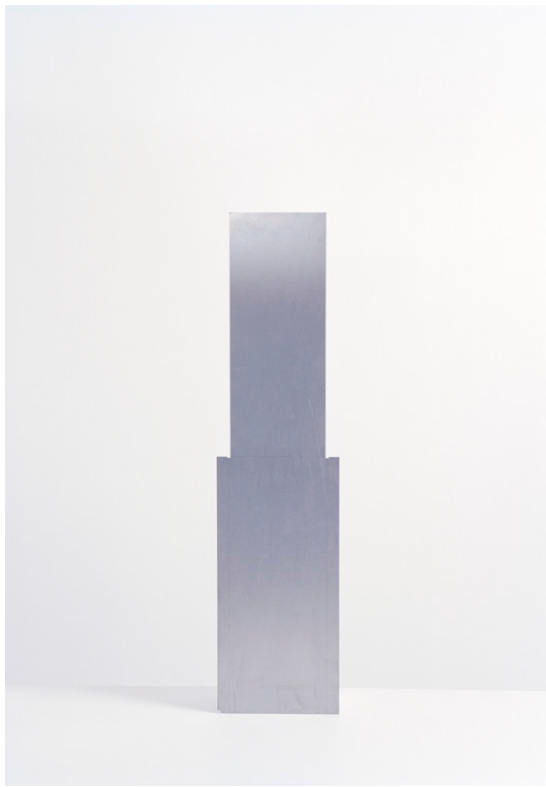
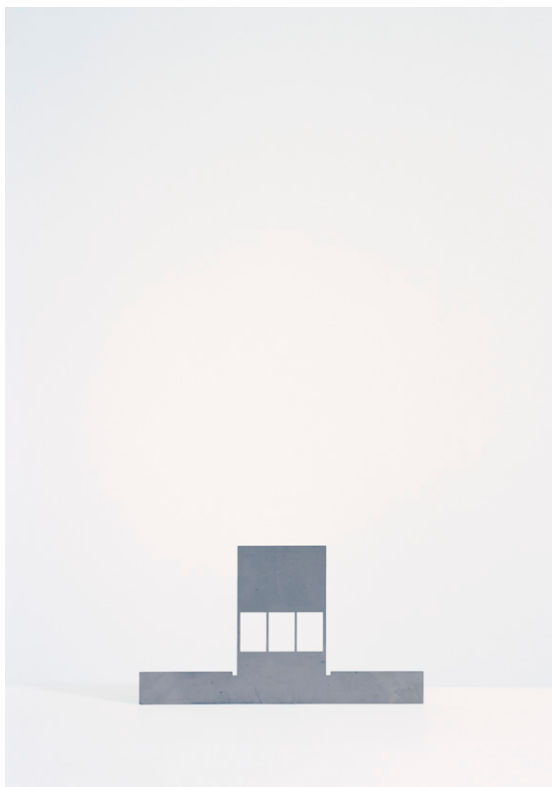
Still from the video



BAHAR, Sharjah Biennial 13
Abud Efendi Konağı, İstanbul

8- Logical Windows (2018)

The project of 'Catching up' with the west has had violent repercussions for Turkey. This violence is experienced not only bodily but culturally and psychologically, hardening into a background of anxiety. How does the materiality of available technologies modify the people handling them? This work performs both the anxiety and eagerness of Turkish modernity—it makes a poetics of 'catching up'.



From above #1-3,
inkjet print on Baryta paper (70x100) cm each)

9- Tales from the dairy Diaspora (2017)

Tales from the Dairy Diaspora is based on our research focusing on the Swiss cheesemakers who migrated to the Caucasus at the end of 19th century and the beginning of 20th century, the traditional local Gravyer cheese production facilities in Kars, and the industrial partnership between Switzerland and Turkey in the region. The film was realised in the form of an essay, deliberately avoiding the coverage of a complete story of the history and the production methods of the Gravyer cheese, hence the impressionistic account of production rituals, supported with bits of historical documents and information for the sake of contextualisation. The editing aims at overlaying different time periods relating to Gravyer cheese, with the tale-like prologue, and with the juxtaposition of the information introduced in the soundtrack with the images of contemporary situations. Tales from the Dairy Diaspora is in a way an impression on how a cultural entity survives and reappears through time.

DE, FR:

<https://vimeo.com/310230918/230c3eb0b2>

EN:

<https://vimeo.com/253497480/44b1ab4a3f>





Stills from the video



10- He leads the way, but all travel the same road (2017)

In this video, an acropolis model is poked by two sticks, eventually knocking down the structure. Then the structure is buried, only to be replaced by a similar-looking one.

<https://vimeo.com/224543465/a3c2377e30>





Stills from the video