

Ahmet Ögüt

It can and has been

SEPTEMBER 1–OCTOBER 3, 2021

OPENING SEPTEMBER 1, 18:00



Ahmet Ögüt

Rec Date: July 1995 (No. 1)

print on paper, collage

2021, 21 x 29.7 cm

Dirimart is pleased to present Ahmet Ögüt's solo exhibition titled *It can and has been*. The artist's first major exhibition in Istanbul after five years, accompanied by implausible stories, brings together installations that invite the viewers to bring the stories in their individual memories related to recent history of Istanbul back.

Ögüt's practice is focused on the creation of sustainable ideas on life, rather than chasing a new idea each time. The essence of his works rests upon reinterpretation of daily life through art. A large variety of performances, drawings, video works, installations and spatial interventions take the struggles of the present and allows the spectator to discover the artist's authentic perspective regarding the period we live in: They are invited to re-evaluate today's problems with a new perspective. In the exhibition titled *It can and has been*, Ögüt once again goes beyond addressing and criticising the structural contradictions of our society. The artist sets a scene where the viewers become performers as their memories related to recent history that collectively experienced by people residing in Istanbul are triggered.

It can and has been offers an exhibition experience differentiating from the ones the viewers are accustomed to: upon their entrance, they are informed about the fact that they might undergo surprising circumstances. Thus, the viewers naturally become performers in the exhibition in case they give consent. An intercity bus, having once served as a vehicle for 24-hour long journeys across Turkey, welcomes the visitors at the main entrance of the gallery with an unexpected setting inside which offers a journey with no distance covered. The viewers are directed to leave the gallery space and re-enter it from the garden entrance, unlike the usual rotation they follow.

Sculptures from the *Living Being Squatting Institutions* series placed in the sculpture garden of the gallery bear the clues of ways of co-existence of living beings and cultural institutions, in spite of so many architectural buildings produced to intentionally exclude the other. Following the re-entrance to the space, two quotes appear:

Bu bayrağı renkli görmenin tek yolu yakmak (If you'd like to see this flag in colors, burn it) and *Resim yapardı aslında iyiydi de...* (he used to paint, in fact he was good at it...).

The former is a flag, which is created as a homage to Marinus Boezem, a pioneer of conceptual art in the Netherlands. With an idea inverted, the flag, normally identified according to its colors, is arranged to self-destruct in case any color appears.

The latter is a comment written about Ahmet Ögüt by a person with a nickname on the web. The work features an anecdote, associated with what is expected from artists, especially those who work in Turkey, in neon letters; a parable that can be easily anonymised.



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Subsequently, we step into a room bringing together four different series of the artist. *Fantasized Fantastic Corporeal World* is a series of drawings where the artist depicted ironic events, appearing to be unreal, that happen all around the world. The viewer witnesses the stories, whose plots are given with brief explanations below, that are about getting round the country border crossing procedures. Works from the series titled *Possibly Self-Made Mail Art Archive*, series made of postal materials, such as envelopes and stamps collected from Turkey, Malta and Malaysia by the artist. Those materials, transformed into tools to spread the national narratives beyond their borders, via various symbols, simultaneously refer to mail art works of artists such as Genesis Breyer P-Orridge, Lee Lozano, Mierle Laderman Ukeles, On Kawara, Anna Banana, Luc Fierens, Hans Ruedi Fricker, and Sol LeWitt's postcard to Eva Hesse. The video titled *Worker's Ordinary Day* documents the daily choreography of a helium balloon operator, resembling hot air balloon who works in a hangar that once served as a Zeppelin manufacturing facility built in 1938 near Berlin, converted into an amusement park with a tropical theme. The collage series titled *Rec Date July 95* is a juxtaposition of offline news of Reuters about events that took place in South Korea, France, Russia, Germany, and Japan in July 1995, and personal photography archive of the artist from his travels. All these micro-stories, interpreted and re-contextualised with different techniques are gathered in a Gravity Room, emphasising the idea that what is surreal is circumstances rather than actual events.

Later on, participants crossing the paved floor with a surprise, face the outer part of the bus that welcomed them at the entrance. Walking in this interfered space that connects the interior with the street two interventions are spotted: on one side images of the buildings picked by travel companies, on the other side, a reproduction of a hotel room decorated with nineteenth century aesthetics that still survives today which is at the service of the participant upon reservation. Another public space, which is constantly subjected to "modernization", the movie theater is another public sphere of Istanbul. The recent video works that the artist created as essay documentaries are screened consecutively in a space designed as a theater room which includes a vintage theater setting. *Artworks Made at Home*, featuring sections from canonic works by several contemporary artists, which are made at home or about the notion of home and *Artists Making Music* focusing on contemporary artists who also produce music besides their artistic career are brought together in a composition the artist created.

Ahmet Ögüt's practice seems hard to be unified within certain characteristics of our ages' contemporary art understanding. Yet, humor almost always assembles his works as an entity. This frequently used tool by the artist makes people face brutal facts that are generally being avoided during our daily lives. By doing so, triggering thoughts in audience's minds. Consequently, encountering his works becomes a sort of invitation for a social engagement. Initiating conversations, Ahmet Ögüt, makes us leave his exhibition with the following thought in our minds: All that is odd can happen and has always been.



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Ahmet Ögüt (b. 1981, Silvan, Diyarbakır). Following Diyarbakir Fine Art high school, he completed his BA from the Fine Arts Faculty at Hacettepe University, Ankara, MA from Art and Design Faculty at Yıldız Teknik University, Istanbul. He works across different media and has exhibited widely, more recently with solo presentations at Kunstverein Dresden, Kunsthal Charlottenborg, Chisenhale Gallery, and Van Abbemuseum. He has also participated in numerous group exhibitions, including *Asia Society Triennial: We Do Not Dream Alone* (2021); *In the Presence of Absence*, Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam (2020); *Zero Gravity* at Nam SeMA, Seoul Museum of Art (2019); *Echigo Tsumari Art Triennale* (2018); *the British Art Show 8* (2015–2017); *the 13th Biennale de Lyon* (2015); *Performa 13, the Fifth Biennial of Visual Art Performance*, New York (2013); *the 7th Liverpool Biennial* (2012); *the 12th Istanbul Biennial* (2011); *the New Museum Triennial*, New York (2009); and *the 5th Berlin Biennial for Contemporary Art* (2008). Ögüt has been a guest mentor, guest tutor, advisor and research teacher at several schools. Among the schools are Jan van Eyck Academie, Maastricht; Sandberg Institute Amsterdam; Finnish Academy of Fine Arts, Helsinki; TransArts - Transdisziplinäre Kunst, Institut für Bildende und Mediale Kunst Universität für angewandte Kunst Wien; and DAI (Dutch Art Institute) Arnhem. Ögüt was awarded the Visible Award for the *Silent University* (2013); the special prize of the Future Generation Art Prize, Pinchuk Art Centre, Ukraine (2012); the De Volkskrant Beeldende Kunst Prijs 2011, Netherlands; and the Kunstpreis Europas Zukunft, Museum of Contemporary Art, Germany (2010). He co-represented Turkey with Banu Cennetoğlu at the 53rd Venice Biennale (2009). Ögüt lives and works in Amsterdam and Istanbul.

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