

IFEELIAMEATINGMEMORIES

by
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IFEELIAMEATINGMEMORIES

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ABSTRACT

IFEELIAMEATINGMEMORIES

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Keywords: Boundary, trace, meaning, ephemerality, body, language, memory

The purpose of this thesis is to suggest a reading of my works, which I produced in two years, around the concepts of meaning, language and memory. In this study, the role of boundary is examined in terms of language, body and their interrelation on the basis of meaning. While articulating the problematics of these conceptions, I considered the borderline between the self and the Other as my focal point. Related with this statement, I am concerned on the issues of re-presentation as a trace of absence and impossibility to recall through writing and speaking.

In the exhibition, IFEELIAMEATINGMEMORIES, the projects I produced assume a critique of body of knowledge in relation to physical body of oneself. By implication of the terms, ephemerality and abject, they possibly argue the state of being in between, neither being outside nor being inside.

Chapter 1 examines the theoretical substructure that I evaluate my art practice; Chapter 2, the artists with similar affinities who inspired me; Chapter 3, analyses my works in terms of the theoretical and artistic framework as set out in Chapter 1 and Chapter 2.

ÖZET

SANKİANILARIYİYORUM

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Görsel Sanatlar ve Görsel İletişim Tasarımı, MA Tezi, 2011

Tez Danışmanı: Selim Birsal

Anahtar Kelimeler: Sınır, iz, anlam, geçicilik, vücut, dil, hafıza

Bu tez anlam, dil ve hafıza kavramları etrafında şekillenen, son iki yılda ürettiğim işlerin bir okumasını amaçlamaktadır. Bu çalışmada sınırın rolü, anlam bağlamında dil ve beden açısından incelenmiştir. Bu kavramların problematiği ifade edilirken, ‘ben’ ve ‘diğeri’ arasındaki sınırı odak nokta olarak ele aldım. Bu ifadeye göre, temsili olanın yokluğun bir izi olması ve yazma, konuşma, eylemleri üzerinden anımsamanın imkansızlığı değerlendirilmiştir.

Bu sergideki çalışmalarım, bilginin bedenleşmesini kişinin fiziksel bedeniyle bağlantı olarak bir eleştiri önermektedir. Geçicilik ve “abjekt” terimleriyle, arada olmanın yani ne içeride ne dışarıda olamama durumunu tartışmaktadır.

Metnin ilk bölümünde, teorik altyapı incelenmektedir. İkinci olarak benzer eğilimlere sahip ve ilham kaynağı olan sanatçılar tartışılmaktadır. Son olarak ise, ilk ve ikinci bölümde incelenen kavramsal ve sanatsal çerçeve etrafında çalışmalarım incelenmektedir.

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for a possible future...

we know it all happens, do we need to be forgotten-
forgotten is nothing-
nothing that contains everything-
everything that anomalies me-
me is a container of your garbage-
garbage of your neighborhood-
neighborhood, why am I in front of your house-
why am I inside of your house-
did it please you to know you really do something-
something about your secondary causes-
causes that are forbidden for the apple-
apple brought you here-
here is an exaggeration-
exaggeration is your reason-
reason does mean nothing, we come across every time-
every time I am alpha and omega-
omega means circle-
circle brings world to me-
me is what you really lie about-
about them, I really don't care-
care is mother-
mother is my son-
son comes to mirror-
mirror goes beyond-
beyond is Alice-
Alice is here-
here comes along-
along the river-
river flows-
flows through the earth-
flows through
earth

-

I FEEL I AM EATING MEMORIES¹

CHAPTER 1

i) The Boundary between...

Echo, cursed by the jealous gods, was never allowed to speak for herself, and was only allowed to repeat the ends of other's phrases. But Echo, in her loving and infinite cleverness, arranges it so that in repeating the last syllables of the words of Narcissus, she speaks in such a way that her words become her own. In a certain way, she appropriates his language. In repeating the language of another, she signs her own love. In repeating she responds to him. In repeating, she communicates with him. She speaks in her own name by just repeating his words. And as always with speech, one is blind. To speak is to not see. So all speech to some extent is blind. I am blind to myself so I am not able to see myself.²

The boundary line represents a division between inside and outside which also proposes a definition for 'difference'. It may start from the difference between 'I' and 'you'. The starting point is very essential to pose a question: what is a difference between 'I' and 'you'? How is it possible to define oneself according to the 'other'? The act of identification of representative of a threat contains in itself visible or invisible violence in the act of exclusion of what is not like 'you' or what is not like 'I'.

In ancient Greek, 'pharmakos' is a scapegoat who is expelled out of the walls of the city in order to purify it at times of illness. In 'Plato's Pharmacy' Jacques Derrida proposes writing, teaching, speaking or being in dialogue as forms of 'pharmakon'. However essentially, "'pharmakon' acts as both remedy and poison at the same time,

¹ Baudelaire, Charles. "A Hemisphere in Her Hair." Paris Spleen and, La Fanfarlo. Trans. Raymond N. Mackenzie. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2008. 32.

² Derrida, Jacques, perf. Derrida. Dir. Amy Ziering and Kirby Dick. 2004. Zeitgeist Films. DVD-ROM.

introduces itself into the body of the discourse with all its ambivalence.”³ (Derrida 1981: 70) Therefore it can be understood as if it is either the cure of illness or the cause of it. The essay is actually the interpretation of Plato’s ‘Phaedrus’ which is constituted of the dialogue between Socrates and Phaedrus. His interpretation presents ‘pharmakos’ also as a poisoner and a magician who comes to infect the inside (the body of city, the body of the citizen). For that reason, the ceremony of the pharmakos is a remedy for the suffering city in order to protect the inside from the threat of the representative of the outside:

In order to cure the latter of the ‘pharmakon’ and rid it of the parasite, it is thus necessary to put the outside back in its place. To keep the outside out. This is the inaugural gesture of “logic” itself, of good “sense” insofar as it accords with the self identity of that which is: being is what it is, the outside is outside and inside inside.⁴ (Derrida 1998: 128)

The character of the ‘pharmakos’ can be suggested as the ‘Other’ who is the external threat to subvert the order. The Other is what is different with respect to the majority of the society. The difference can be cured either through adaptation to fit into the structure of society or through expulsion of the parasite. In that sense, Socrates is also the Other who has the power of words, writes and thinks therefore he is both beneficent and maleficent. His existence was a cure and a poison at the same time, cure for the sake of self-awareness, a poison for the symbolic order that rules through protecting its authority inside the walls of the city. “The ceremony of the pharmakos is thus played out on the boundary line between inside and outside. The origin of difference and division, the pharmakos represents evil both introjected and projected.” (Derrida 1981, 133) Therefore the Other is always a potential virus that threatens the uniformity, which can demolish the immune system of the body; in this case it’s the body of society. The Other is mostly created through dichotomies. This general principle of binary opposition produces constructions based on the concepts of the sameness/otherness, past/future, inside/outside, power/subjection,

³ Derrida, Jacques. “Plato’s Pharmacy.” Dissemination. Trans. Barbara Johnson. Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1981.

⁴ Derrida, Jacques. Of Grammatology. Trans. Gayatri C. Spivak. Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1998

civilization/backwardness, progress/underdevelopment and vice versa. In this way, who gains the power to control the system of knowledge and dominates the body of discourse have means to generate the Other.

Orientation and Orientalism etymologically resemble each other since both derive from the action of 'orientate'. As Edward Said articulated, Orientalism is a Western construction of the East through the eyes of the West and projection is done on the behalf of the East, therefore the exercised career of East is written by the West. His argument is "geographical sectors as 'Orient' and 'Occident' are man-made."⁵ (Said, 5) Accordingly, the positional superiority becomes an essential point to create relations of power and hegemony to re-present; in this case the Orient is represented. As pointed out by Said, Orientalism produces a hegemonic discourse through generating a system of knowledge so that "the Orient was not (and is not) a free subject of thought or action." (Said, 3) Therefore two geographical entities are set as two opposite civilizations so that the positions of identity and authority derive from the parameters of this dichotomy. What is problematic about the Orientalist authority is the way it imposes limitations and judgments to shape the thought and action of the subordinates. So how far is it possible to talk about individuality? What is particular is silenced by generalizations which totalize individuals under the same rubric regardless of differences among them. Moreover, the mechanism of self-control blocks the way of expression to speak of oneself, to represent one's presence. In case of the Orient, the internalization of the authority of the West creates a second oppression which obstructs the subject to become free, in a way reproducing the relations of power immanent in the Orientalist discourse. Hence not only the authority of the West but also its internalized form is constructed.

There is nothing mysterious or natural about authority. It is formed, irradiated, disseminated; it is instrumental, it is persuasive; it has status, it establishes canons of taste and value: it is virtually indistinguishable from certain ideas it dignifies as true and from traditions, perceptions, and judgments it forms, transmits, reproduces. (Said, 19-20)

The internalized Orientalism contains the potential of forming different variations of Orientalism. Internalized Orientalism presumably tends to identify with the position

⁵ Said, Edward. Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient. London: Penguin Books, 1995

of already ‘introjected’⁶ subordination. What is meant here, by introjection of the authority of the Occident is the struggle to reach the level of ‘their civilization’. In this way, a culture or society or group accepts, consciously or unconsciously, the position attributed by ‘the superior’. The most prominent reason for this can be put as the rhetoric of modernization. The idea of modernization becomes synonymous with the idea of ‘progress’ which goes hand in hand with rationalism and positivism. The idea of progress is somehow associated with rejecting the past as the site of ignorance and moving towards the brightest future. Therefore the content of tradition is already rejected because of its so-called relation with backwardness so that the notion of rationality becomes the main instrument of overcoming the ‘darkness’ of tradition. As Barbara Misztal argues that:

The appeal of the notion of rationality and progress meant that the past was viewed as the bastion of ignorance and irrational tradition: The first entry of the agenda of the Enlightenment was therefore to do away with traditionality as such. Seeing history as a kind of continuous progress of reason and knowledge gave tradition a bad name and resulted in a lack of interest in memories of the past. The belief that progress could be achieved through the development and application of scientific knowledge enhanced a fascination with the future and promoted a rejection of the traditional past.⁷ (Misztal, 38)

The idea of progress is practiced as the main catalyzator in the modernization project in order to destroy the authority of the past which holds the tradition as well as the memory. In order to build a new system or new nation, construction of new memory gains a vital importance. At this stage, the state of memory and history is opposed to each other because history is a linear and progressive system whereas memory is not continuous but always regressive.

⁶ Felluga, Dino. “Terms Used by Psychoanalysis.” Introductory Guide to Critical Theory. July 2002. 9.02.2012.
<http://www.cla.purdue.edu/english/theory/psychoanalysis/termsmainframe.html>

“The internalization of authority. According to Freud, when you introject the demand of your parents and, thus by extension, society, these demands become a part of your own psyche, which then becomes divided between social demands and your own repressed, socially unacceptable desires and needs.”

⁷ Misztal A. Barbara. “Metamorphosis Of Memory”. Theories of Social Remembering. Philadelphia: Open University Press, 2003

As the result of a top-down modernization project “the Turkish Republic was originally based on forgetting.”⁸ (Özyürek, 3) In 1923, recently established Turkish Republic enacted a modernist and positivist constitution in order to establish a secular, homogenous, nation-state. The significant point is that this approach is determined to erase all connections with the past which is the Ottoman one in this case. In order to build a new identity for the new nation, all the symbols and emblems of ignorance, backwardness should be demolished. Though, all these emblems are backward with respect to the symbols of the ‘modern’ and ‘civilized’ West. As Misztal points out, after the French revolution similar aspects are considered to mark the gap between the past and future:

The French state organized and articulated narratives enhancing its legitimization through the introduction of a new calendar (which aimed to create a distinctive rhythm of social life that unified a group through shared recollection), celebrations and commemorations, all seen as powerful means to mark the discontinuity between the past and present, between a former regime and a new one. The national celebration, anthem and flag became means to symbolize the uniqueness of the nation and were used in the service of national memory. (Misztal, 38)

To be closer to the West rather than the East, cutting all the ties with the past is an essential step; changing the alphabet, adapting time and calendar to the Western timing, the hat reform, transforming the habits of everyday life, the law of last names and so on. However the body of the citizen is the most concrete connection with the past therefore the first attempt is about altering the shell. As Hasan Bülent Kahraman claims:

The interesting aspect is that both the Ottoman Modernizers and Republicans did not realize that by setting this process in motion, they had created an auto-orientalization. It was a model that coincided with the bewilderment from the self with the alienation, with a self-colonization.⁹ (Kahraman, 2010)

In terms of alienation, silencing the past to control the future creates an open ended tomorrow and a lost memory. Losing memory can be thought as a form of death, the discontinuity creates the failure of self-awareness which has a profound effect on

⁸ Özyürek, Esra. The Politics of Public Memory in Turkey. New York: Syracuse University Press, 2007.

⁹ Kahraman, Hasan B. "Notes on a Bewildered Modernization". "http://www.saatleriayarlamaenstitusu.com". Ed. Kutlug Ataman. N.p., Apr. 2010.

becoming one-self. Therefore, the main problem is to be stuck in the middle of nowhere so as to live in someone else's image which has substituted the real:

For Turks do not want to be Turks anymore but something else. That's why they instigated a code of proper attire, shaved their beards, and changed their language and alphabet. A shopkeeper, who knows how to speak influentially, explained that his customers do not buy clothes but dreams. What they really desire to buy is the dream of being like the others who wear those clothes.¹⁰ (Pamuk, 60)

ii) Trace as an Absence; loss of meaning

The main concepts I would like to elaborate on in this chapter is the relation between writing and memory in order to discuss the writing as traces of remembering. If it is possible to forget the traumas and experiences, what kind of a representation does the act of remembering propose? How can I as an individual re-present myself? How do I represent myself by means of words? Words can be accurate and inaccurate at the same time if I choose to use them in spoken or written form. " When we go beyond the language that is taught to us, in a place which language does not speak, what happens?"¹¹ (Birsnel, 91)

Language is a construction of different signs and symbols, that we call letters. They establish words, sentences, paragraphs, texts, speeches in order to communicate with the outside. Here, I prefer to choose the word 'outside' since words are thought and verbalized 'inside' the mind. What is problematic here is the moment when the word of inside is realized as the word of outside. All that journey of a word from the mind to the hand or to the mouth creates a certain gap.

¹⁰ Pamuk, Orhan. Kara Kitap. 25th ed. Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1997.

"Türkler artık Türk değil, başka birşey olmak istiyorlarmış çünkü. Bu yüzden kılık kıyafet devrimini icat etmişler, sakallarını traş etmişler, dillerini ve harflerini değiştirmişler. Daha veciz konuşmayı seven bir dükkan sahibi, müşterilerinin bir elbiseyi değil, aslında bir hayali satın aldıklarını açıklamış. O elbiseyi giyen ötekiler gibi olabilme hayalimiş asıl satın almak istedikleri." Translated by the author of this thesis.

¹¹ Birsnel, Selim. Arka Bahçe/Backyard. Yıldız, Adnan. Preface. Istanbul: Galeri Apel, 2009

The act of remembering and forgetting contains latent violence. “Remembering and forgetting is selective but not accidental-what is forgotten is not forgotten randomly.” (Misztal, 30) There is, however, a possibility of revealing traces of meanings from the palimpsest of memory, but they are not communicable mental experiences. The impossibility of speaking means that all the words fail to correspond to the intended meaning. In that sense, trace can be thought as an abstract entity that indicates the boundary between interior and exterior or body and language which contradict with each other endlessly. “speech, being natural or at least the natural expression of thought...writing is added to it, is adjoined, as an image or representation” (Derrida 1998, 144) If the reliability to words has been lost, is there any freedom within the boundaries of this contaminated language? Loss of meaning would be explained by a loss of the trust in words which are necessary but inaccurate at the same time. “Writing, sensible matter and artificial exteriority: “clothing”. It has sometimes been contested that speech clothed thought. [...] One already suspects that if writing is ‘image’ and exterior ‘figuration’, this representation is not innocent.” (Derrida 1998, 35) As I mentioned in the previous chapter, the discontinuity of memory does create a discontinuity in the system of knowledge. The gap between subject’s memories of the past and existence in the present created “an overwhelming sense of loss, anxiety and uncertainty.” (Misztal, 44) In that sense, trace as a mark or footprint can be a strong social metaphor. Besides, in its dictionary meaning, trace means “to find someone or something that was lost or to find the origin of something”.¹²

In order to trace the shadow prints of the mind, the automatic writing is an essential method to connect with the baggage of memory and abstraction of the rational structure of thinking and writing. Automatic writing comes with a sentence that has no end; there is no full stop to interrupt the stream of consciousness. One long sentence builds associations like a thread to untie the knots of rationality and this gesture of writing adds no reason to words to find concrete meaning. Continuous sentences without punctuation reveal themselves within the palimpsest of memory. Although in automatic writing nothing is corrected or re-written, crossing over can be a method to emphasize word’s inaccuracy but yet necessary position. Unpremeditated free association is a methodology which “Surrealist games used to liberate the artist from the

¹² http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/british/trace_1?q=trace

constraints of rationality and discourse by substituting logical processes of creation with indeterminacy and chance.”¹³ In order to liberate the meaning, making fragmentation of texts in a simultaneous and spontaneous approach is vital in the process of modernist writing. The point is not the legibility of writing but using words as mediums of abstraction, to create verbal and visual representations. For instance, the modernist approach of Apollinaire can be examined in the sense of fragmentation and ‘simultaneity’ that calligrams called ‘Poems of Peace and War’ (1913-1916) contains verbal and visual representations, thus concrete poetry. “Also the concrete poetry subverts the traditional linear form of words to a non-conformist regularity. In that sense, surrealist writers question the reality presented or represented in their own poetic texts.”¹⁴ (Spector, 17) No doubt that the fragmentation of structure such as in the cubist paintings is in relation to simultaneous depiction of time and space. The cut out words, their non-linear formation and their anti-logical combination or deconstructive representation becomes like everything and nothing at the same time.

iii) Mouth as a Waste Disposal

Modernity as a ‘civilization’ project constructed itself through the concepts of order and beauty. One can assume that the modern system is conditioned to exterminate or ignore the off-system being. Every mode of purity and order generates its excrescence inside the boundary in which it is defined. In this sense, it is possible to mention about the body as a system that is defined with its boundaries.

Body can be a metaphor of social, cultural or physical system that eats in order to be nourished and creates its excrements. This definition of body indicates that defecation or regurgitation implies a border between inside and outside of body. Since the interior entity seems like unclean and uncanny, a clean-up is always needed for dirt and waste. So as to maintain the order, cleaning and sweeping are thought as crucial acts to remove the contaminated thing which should not transgress the line between

¹³ Brotchie, Alastair. A Book of Surrealist Games. Ed. Mel Gooding. London: Redstone Press, 1991. <http://societyofpoetry.wordpress.com/2010/01/25/surrealist-games>.

¹⁴ Spector, Jack J. Surrealist Art and Writing, 1919-1939. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997.

subject and object. Therefore any act that indicates the manifestation of this transgression is eliminated and excluded from the social realm. We encounter with the same attitude in social body and physical body. Such as the consciousness erases the inconvenient memories and makes them invisible until they regress, society projects the same attitude towards waste and residue as contagious excrement. There is a tale about Diogenes the Cynic who chooses to live in a waste shelter, in a way signifying social exclusion or alienation. Diogenes prefers to live in a tub without any possessions as an outcast in a society. By practicing his belief, he possesses neither social identity nor a city, as he says “I am citizen of the world (cosmopolites).”¹⁵ (Diogenes, 63) From this perspective, being in relation to waste or ignoring its existence are two different ways to approach the subject. I consider waste as a source of knowledge to reach the information about the social body. The contents of waste and residue are some sort of vestige to trace the actions and the order of precedence of any society. They maintain recollection of objects of memory and “access to garbage means access to vast amounts of information about each and every household.”¹⁶ (Altay, 11)

In order to comprehend mental and physical relation between production and consumption, the idea of waste and residue provides a significant memory record. All these aspects are reminiscent of subject’s endless production and consumption in order to maintain his/her life. In this sense, the concept of waste (contamination-residue-garbage) has a relative relation to eating. When the idea of production and body comes together, it seems worth to mention about the function of a mouth. All that system of waste is in relation to cycle of the body because of the action of eating. The action of eating is exercised by ‘an organ of consumption’, that transforms and decomposes objects in order to enter the body. Besides, it is possible to call a mouth ‘an organ of emission’ that produces words in order to communicate; it is an instrument of speech. In particular, the thoughts as abstract meanings transform to a sensual verbal state. Therefore mouth can be considered as a medium or organ of both digestion and emission.

¹⁵ Diogenes, Laërtius. “Βίοι καὶ γνῶμαι τῶν ἐν φιλοσοφίᾳ εὐδοκιμησάντων”. Vol. 2. Trans. Robert D. Hicks. [Lives of Eminent Philosophers]. Loeb Classical Library ed. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1972.

¹⁶ Altay, Can. "We're Papermen" he said, 2003. Istanbul: Can Altay, 2009.

The other aspect to put forward is the metaphorical connotations of mouth. Mouth indicates a state of threshold which is between inside and outside. This relation can be read in terms of Sigmund Freud's notion of the 'uncanny' (unheimlich) to explain the in-between position of the mouth. "We are reminded that the word 'heimlich' is not unambiguous but belongs to two sets of ideas, which without being contradictory, are yet very different: on the one hand 'heimlich' means what is familiar and agreeable, and on the other, what is concealed and kept out of sight."¹⁷ (Freud, 224) My concern with the implication of boundary which demarcates the familiar and the unfamiliar is the kind of threat this boundary proposes. In order to discuss about threat, there needs to be a disturbed bounded system. One may expect that in a bounded system, 'abject'¹⁸ can be comprehended as threat which disturbs an order or identity. As a matter of fact, abjection in the works of Julia Kristeva literally means the state of being between a subject and an object. Abject refers to a human reaction to something loathsome, itself as a horror and a breakdown of meaning, resulting from the loss of separation between self and other or subject and object. Mouth is one of the outlets on the body which causes abjection. Residues are instances for abjection. Therefore, residues can be called neither subject nor object. Indeed, abjection is directly related with 'throwing away' or transgressing a line of contamination as practises of body and mouth do. As Mary Douglas claims:

the body is a model which can stand for any bounded system. Its boundaries can represent any boundaries which are threatened or precarious. The body is a complex structure. The function of its parts and their relation afford a source of symbols for other complex structures. We can not possibly interpret ritual concerning excreta, breast milk, saliva and the rest unless we are prepared to see in the body a symbol of society and to see the powers and dangers credited to social structure reproduced in small on the human body.¹⁹ (Douglas, 116)

¹⁷ Freud, Sigmund. The "Uncanny". The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud Volume XVII (1917-1919): An Infantile Neurosis and Other Works.

¹⁸ Kristeva, Julia. Powers of Horror : an essay on abjection. Trans. Leon S. Roudiez. New York: Columbia University Press, 1982.

¹⁹ Douglas, Mary. An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo , Purity and Danger. London: Routledge, 1970.

With regard to issues of threat, a hole in a body reminds one of an inaccessible unknown darkness. It is also interesting to notice that mouth by its structure can be the apparatus to actualize violence or in other terms castration. The fear of castration implies the possibility of loss of body integrity therefore loss of power. The tooted mouth as an instrument of castration can be instantiated in different ways. For instance, the praying mantis is one of them as Ruth Markus proposes:

Ironically, the mantis is also associated with teeth in many cultures—as both a cure for a toothache and a symbol of nutrition and digestion. “Because the mantis eats her sex-partner, the teeth have come to symbolize both cannibalism and castration. Represented by a mouth filled with threatening fangs or with a toothed vagina designed to castrate any predator, she becomes Surrealism’s other main trope, the vagina dentata.”²⁰ (Markus, 33-39).

Therefore, the other cautionary representative about myths of mouth is ‘Vagina Dentata’ (toothed vagina) to warn about women with toothed vaginas. It is probably foretold to construct fear against forceful sexual intercourse but on the other hand, it is used in the terminology of psychoanalysis as a horrifying imagery of female genital. In Lacanian terms, “lack”²¹ is defined in relation to female who is already-castrated and it represents the ‘lack’ due to the absence of the phallus. On the body of female the mouth becomes a signifier as a threat. Also, we can give the example of *La Bocca della Verità* which means ‘mouth of truth’ in the portico of the Santa Maria in Cosmedin in the 17th century. There are various myths about the carved ancient portrayal of a god but the

²⁰ Markus, Ruth. “Surrealism’s Praying Mantis and Castrating Woman.” *Woman’s Art Journal* 21, no. 1 (Spring/Summer 2000): 33-39.
http://www.umflint.edu/research/student_programs/MOM/2005_journal.pdf#page=89

²¹ Akhtar, Salman. Comprehensive Dictionary of Psychoanalysis. London: Karnac Books, 2009.

“Lack: in an elegant elucidation of Jacques Lacan’s concept of ‘lack’, Dylan Evans (1996) has discerned four uses of this term: (1) lack of being, which has an existential ring to it, (2) lack of having, (3) lack of object, and (4) lack of a signifier in the Other. The first gives rise to ‘desire’, the second to ‘demand’, the third to the hunger for an object, and the fourth for the search for meaning.”

most significant one is, it is a lie detector in the Middle Ages, to cut hands for punishment.



Figure 1, *La Bocca della Verità*, Santa Maria in Cosmedin, Rome

Mouth is also one of the constitutive entities in Samuel Beckett's work called 'Pas Moi' (Not I). It is a twenty minute monologue written in 1972. The interesting point of the work is the bodiless mouth which speaks on a black background with an exaggerated manner of expression and illuminated by a single beam of light. The mouth without a head or body creates an uncanny feeling which is already telling a story and denying the protagonist (herself) of the story but it conveys a traumatic experience in a monologue through fragmented sentences. Beckett considers the mouth as "an organ of emission, without intellect"²² (Bair, 665) and it is worth to notice that the emission of the words in the way she speaks is like eating her words.

²² Bair, Deirdre. *Samuel Beckett: A Biography*. London: Vintage, 1990.



Figure 2, Samuel Beckett, *Not I (Pas Moi)*, 1972

Related with the idea of the previous work, speaking such as eating words, in the project of John Latham, he proposes to eat the book of Clement Greenberg with his students from Saint Martin School of Art. The work called “Still and Chew: Art and Culture 1966-1967” are composed of chewed pages of the cult book ‘Art and Culture’ of Greenberg. The significant aspect about the work is, the copy of the book is borrowed from library and when library demanded the book back, he returns distilled pulps of the pages but library doesn’t accept it since it is unreadable. The gesture of Latham can be read as he responds “the American's prose by eating it - or, rather, chewed it over, the paper being masticated, pulverised with saliva into a pulp and spat out and returning a phial containing the distilled "essence" of Greenberg.”²³ In this sense, the book is dismembered and altered to another form which questions the digestion of knowledge proposed by ‘Art and Culture’.

²³ Moorhouse, Paul. "John Latham', Tate Britain, 5 September 2005 - March 2006." And The Word Was Made Art. Tate Britian.
<http://www.tate.org.uk/tateetc/issue5/wordwasmadeart.htm>.



Figure 3, John Latham, *Still and Chew: Art and Culture 1966-1967*

CHAPTER 2

Case studies;

artists with similar concerns, the way they deal with the problems

This chapter will focus on four artists, who use different artistic languages in order to deal with their posed questions around the concepts of identity, ephemerality, language and body. The notions that are discussed in the first chapter include an interpretation about the issues and works that will be argued in second and third chapter. In this second chapter, I will elaborate on the works of four artists whose artistic practices have been an inspiration for my own artistic engagement which will be analyzed in the third chapter.

i) Richard Long; ephemeral marks

Richard Long deals with the relation between art and nature by using outdoor materials which he is involved during the journeys of investigation. He does not call his work a land art due to the reason of his attitude towards nature that is different from that of land artists. He leaves ephemeral marks on the earth by not claiming a real estate or not exploiting the means nature provides him. He deals with nature in contrast to creating art objects; he uses what is already there and transient mortality of their physical existence resembles the reality of human nature. What I find significant in his works is that they are inherently impermanent and he uses active simplicity through geometric forms such as line, circle, and square and so on. These forms conform to the direction of his movements and the shape of the land. Therefore the land itself with its

topography and components proposes an idea; accordingly he chooses to make a movement by using his own body. Body and land becomes a medium in Long's art practice and action of the body becomes compatible with the inert mode of nature. The straight line is the precursor of other elemental figures and the interesting thing is he makes it seem as if he subtracts a line from the nature. But actually he just gives a form to the nature by his movement through receiving the light from a different angle. This surrogate line draws a border in a landscape that sometimes divides the terrain into symmetrical sections such as the piece called "Walking a Line in Peru", 1972. But sometimes the simplicity of line turns into a minimalist circle; again he walks on the edge of the shape to make it visible like a circle. In this case, line and edge becomes powerful and sensitive metaphors.

On other hand, he sometimes makes addition of raw materials that he finds at that specific site to draw a line. But the essence of drawing ephemeral marks on an unvisited but photographed geography is crucial in terms of the impossibility of altering it with the human agency but only by the nature itself. As Richard Long said in an interview:

Those works were made in isolation one to one with the place and the spirit of work and place should not be altered by visitors. That is why it is not important whether outside works remain or change or disappear. Information about them can be transmitted through words and photography. But words and especially photography have the tendency to enhance distance and remoteness: what you see in photography is in part time and somewhere else.²⁴ (Fuchs, 134)

In this sense, what is the contribution of landscape when it is documented as photography and exhibited in a gallery? How is it possible to determine the place of the artwork if it is not shown in an art institution? Several approaches may be determined by different locations of the artwork: the photographs of documentation of certain actions represented in a gallery or landscape itself or the dislocated substances that are brought to gallery from its source or the temporality of gestures in the nature as a proposition with no evidence. Richard Long places substances which belong to exterior inside of art institutions. Those dislocated substances have the floor with concrete or dispersible materials as their landscape. Some of the dispersible works are done by

²⁴ Fuchs, R. H. Richard Long. New York: Thames and Hudson, 1986.

chalk which is a sedimentary rock and its fluidity pervades the site on the level of ground in a horizontal axis. In contrary to concrete interior sculptures, the dispersible works are disarranged and abolished in order to be rearranged in somewhere else. In exterior and interior works, he redefines or re-contextualizes a landscape so as to bring out a relation between art, nature and his response to specific site. The works in which he uses the mud in his hands to leave traces in order to mark a circle on the wall transmit the sense of an exterior component and it refers to the artist's actual hand as a medium. Moreover Long's art practice is formed around the meaning of leaving traces of his physical and mental existence.



Figure 4, Richard Long, *Walking a Line in Peru*, 1972



Figure 5, Richard Long, *White Water Line*, 1990



Figure 6, Richard Long, *Making River Avon Mud Arc*, 2000

ii) Daniel Buren; disappearance of an artwork

Indeed, this is another implication of the Ready-made's address to site: that the gallery is a place of transformation, where either the utilitarian object can acquire the aesthetic mantle of the art object, or where a conceptual turn in art may supersede and transcend the banality of everyday. Here, the question posed by the ready-made is resolved into sculpture. It is in these contexts that Buren proposes that not only must the site be revealed as implying the identity of the art object, but the object must act as a critical mirror to the ground on which it stands.²⁵ (Kaye, 191)

Daniel Buren explores the aspects and paradoxes of art and artist's position in relation to history of art and its institutionalization. He attempts to produce unsalable or ephemeral works to avoid the possibility of storing-preserving which is valid in an institution; at the same time these are the works 'in situ'. Buren is concerned with where and how an artwork locates itself. Therefore he produces works with respect to the location, in response to the site to emphasize the discourses site constitutes over and through an artwork. "It is a repetition with differences, neutral and anonymous, reducing the work to zero level."²⁶ (Buren, 854-855) In this sense, he disrupts the location by reducing work to nothing and thus pointing to the boundaries of that particular site.

In the meanwhile, Daniel Buren has reductive approach for his own identity as an artist as well as for the identity of his works; he erases his own traces as an artist to confront the traces of the space or "its container (its boundary)." (Kaye, 191) He attributes no originality or authenticity to himself as an author whereas site specific works automatically bring a uniqueness that comes with entity of the site. In these contexts, he prefers to substitute his artistic identity with the identity of any frame (site) which gains its authority by capability of transforming an object to the work of art. Yet, Buren serializes his neutral forms: visual tools that are called stripes. By early 1966, he had adopted the standard binary pattern: he would use alternated bands of white and of a

²⁵ Kaye, N. Site. Site-Specific Art: Performance, Place and Documentation. London: Routledge, 2000.

²⁶ Buren, Daniel. "Beware." Art in Theory, 1900-1990. Ed. Charles Harrison and Paul Wood. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1992.

single color per work, each band having the same width which is 8.5cm. His practice is accompanied by ready-made cloth that is inherently involved in everyday life of Paris which is used for the windows of cafés. The displacement of everyday object from the cafés of Paris and installing it in institutions of art as a gesture subverts boundaries of public and private sphere.

The act of repetition, singularity of variations and insistence on ephemerality are the main features in his art practice. How Daniel Buren approaches the ideology of institutions and art is crucial because his works “each of which cannot be moved elsewhere and will have to disappear at the end of its exhibition. Such disappearance through destruction opens a breach in the artistic ideology.” (Kaye, 188) In this sense, work of art questions its destruction as object and if immortality is a criterion for the value of the art practice, it is cancelled by this attitude. Buren makes a work called *Within and Beyond the Frame* in which his nine banners extend from gallery window to the outside indicating the blurred boundary between inside and outside. How is it possible to determine the borderline between the public and the private space? Is there a borderline in the first place? In a conversation between Olafur Eliasson and Daniel Buren, he says; “There is no outside... Really, it’s useless to try to pinpoint what’s inside or outside of the system, because drawing that line does not take our thinking any further. It just doesn’t matter anymore.”²⁷(Griffin, 212)

²⁷ Griffin, T.. "In Conversation: Daniel Buren and Olafur Eliasson." Editorial. *Art Forum* 43.9. May (2005): 208-214.

http://blog.escdotdot.com/wp-content/uploads/sanderson_buren_eliasson.pdf



Figure 7, Daniel Buren, *Within and Beyond the Frame*, 1973

iii) Bruce Nauman; bodily presence

Bruce Nauman mostly uses language and his bodily presence in an intrinsic relation to each other. This kind of relation appears in his works via referring to his lineage to Samuel Beckett, Marcel Duchamp, and Minimalism. In the early works of Nauman, his art practice is concerned with the language as a representational signifier, the body as an instrument of gesture and the studio as a space of mental production. Nauman recorded, with video camera, certain bodily actions he undertook in his studio. What is significant in his work is his obsession with the ground since he uses it as a metaphor of gravity and a place of thrust. In this sense, the ground presents a sense of security and orientation of space while also creating the feeling of possibility of a

sudden threat. The act of movement by feet that is walking or jumping back and forth or round and round provides a repetition just like the ground and the walls of the studio suggest permanence and temporality. In his *Slow Angle Walk (Beckett Walk)* in 1968, he makes his body perform parallel to the ground with one foot on the floor while the other is on the air, trying to walk slowly on a line drawn on the studio floor. One leg is like rooted in the ground and the other tries to find the balance. The feeling of entrapment inside the body and repetitive words and actions pushing the limit of enclosed spaces are some of the common features in both works of Bruce Nauman and Samuel Beckett. Thus Nauman's body in most of his works become like a closed system, speaking to itself, repeating itself, positioning itself against itself. He is as if asking and searching for his own presence inside himself. In the photograph work *Eating my Words* in which he eats the letter-shaped breads with jelly, altering physical food to a mental one, Nauman repeats the same gesture of feeding himself with himself.

Another similar work is *Walking in an Exaggerated Manner around the Perimeter of a Square* which is produced in 1968. The minimalist square which is again drawn on the studio floor has no tendency to create a massive and masculine objecthood as opposed to general characteristic of minimalist artworks. Nauman takes *Black Square* of Kazimir Malevich as a reference of total abstraction beyond materialism again to challenge dominant materialism of minimalist approach. He poses or mimics a manner of neither masculine nor feminine to walk around the square as a performing sculpture at his disorganized studio setting. On the one hand, he performs repetitive actions by walking around the edge of the square, back and forth. On the other hand, he performs those gestures in his studio, "they are neither scripted nor edited"²⁸ (Archer, 102). Yet, he gives references to art history, adding another layer with his interpretation and by performing with his own body. Accordingly, the position of the artwork as well as the identity of the artist is emphasized. In Bruce Nauman's one of the earliest works, he reprises Marcel Duchamp's *Fountain* (1917) by his posture as a fountain. Nauman "presented himself as the found object and photographed his upper body while spouting water from his mouth in *Self Portrait as a Fountain* (1966-1970)." (Archer, 100) His approach of presenting the body of the artist as a readymade is a radical suggestion to interpret an already readymade work. In this way, the photograph of Bruce Nauman that

²⁸ Archer, Michael. *Art Since 1960*. London: Thames and Hudson, 1997

portrays himself as readymade extends the concept beyond the questions of the relation between work of art and art institutions. In this case, Nauman challenges the values of originality and authenticity and his self portrait can be a critique of the identity of the artist and the artwork.



Figure 8, Bruce Nauman, *Self Portrait as a Fountain*, 1966-70



Figure 9, Bruce Nauman, *Eating My Words*, 1967



Figure 10, Bruce Nauman, *Slow Angle Walk (Beckett Walk)* (still), 1968

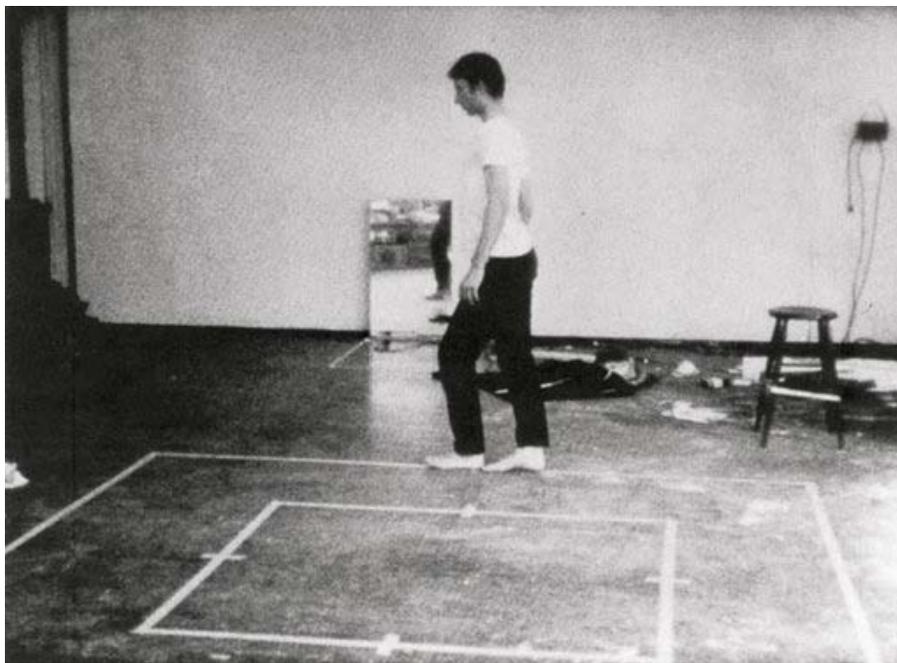


Figure 11, Bruce Nauman, *Walking in an Exaggerated Manner around the Perimeter of a Square* (still), 1968

iv) Ann Hamilton; gesture of temporality

Ann Hamilton's work is mainly engaged with fundamental questions regarding the position of the artist, value of the work of art, its relation to the transformation of nature and human labor. Her installations and their relation to the site propose a responsive gesture to forgotten past of the space and add sound to the silence of peoplelessness. Through the emphasis on the human labor in her works and metaphor of threat with her use of textile, Hamilton criticizes the processes of hand work, industrial production and the idea of repetition in their historical context. This way, she reveals the contradictions of invisible human labor and the idea of excess through using visible human labor and accumulation of materials. Therefore Hamilton's installations point out the problematic relation between accumulation and accretion because accumulation refers to the factor of human intention embedded in the excessive amount of materials while the accretion is associated with natural expansion. Thereby, she avoids any possession of materials used in her installations and allows them to recycle or to refunction in other realms. "In finishing her works, Hamilton has often returned materials to their sources or to other usable functions. Thousands of wrestling dummies filled with sawdust were recycled as wood pulp. The books from *Aleph* were recycled for toilet paper. The flour from the Walker show was donated to a hog farmer to be used as feed."²⁹ (Stewart, 225) Hence, the essence of installations is based on temporality and that's why physical experience of the ones who attend, make and observe the works is essential.

She realizes a work called *Ghost...a border act* (2000) in a closed textile factory. Mostly she chooses to use the site which lost its original function where once human and labor relation is so evident. Hamilton proposes a revival of those sites, albeit in a new form this time, which are mostly dead due to their loss of function. She installs two organza rooms which are translucent and there is a corridor between these two rooms. A table and a chair are located in both of the rooms and video projectors in each of the

²⁹ Stewart, Susan. The Open Studio, Essays on Art and Aesthetics. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005.

room are set upon the tables. The projectors which show an action of drawing a line with a pencil turn around the room's organza walls. In the other room, the video is played backward so that it appears as if pencil erases the line. The formerly abandoned site takes a breath again with the existence of the installation. Those organza walls are sewed as different threads and they are combined as they make a wall in order to make four walls. Two aspects of the work are significant. Firstly, they are creating a site inside a site; four walls of two organza rooms mimic four walls of the factory. Secondly, closed textile factory works again with the tailors of those organza walls; the gesture of sewing, attaching and the sound of sewing machine return back to its site. "The materiality of the work thereby turns on its synecdochal relation to a transformed substance." (Stewart, 226) Therefore, Hamilton's installation reinscribes the site and reveals invisible past of the space as well as substitution of human labor with industrial technologies. Besides in this installation, these two organza rooms can be considered as the room of the writer and the room of the reader in relation to drawing and erasing a border. The idea of border is emphasized by the border between two rooms and by the hand which draws and erases the line. The work can be interpreted as referring to the modes of process of writing as production and reading as consumption.

Hamilton produced a work, called *tropos* at the Dia Center for the Arts, New York in 1993, which is placed in a large room having a floor covered with horsehair in a former factory. An attendant reads each line of a text silently while at the same time, with an electric burner in hand, burning each line from the book as it is read, filling the air with smoke. "One sees the trace of time in the weight and individual mark or rhythm of each reader's hand."³⁰ (Hamilton, 113) The materiality of text is transformed to smoke by the act of burning and immaterialized text is absorbed by the horse hair and somehow rematerialized again. During the time period installation is in situ, 48 second hand books are burnt by the personal choices and the hands of visitors. "In this work Hamilton continues her investigation of reading as literal absorption— erasing mechanically reproduced letters with the measured sensory, repetitive acts of the body and adding a new mark of unmaking, or rewriting the page." (Hamilton, 113) The

³⁰ Hamilton, Ann. *Ann Hamilton: An Inventory of Objects*. Ed. Joan Simon. New York: Gregory R. Miller & Co, 2006.

http://www.annhamiltonstudio.com/objects/tropos_books.html

materiality of the work is the intrinsic component of it which creates a synecdochal relation. The horsehair becomes an indicator of animal slaughter and the idea of excess is essential considering the contradictions inherent in the logic of industrial production. The meaning of tropos is to return as physical, “in a physical turn of the body.”³¹ Therefore the figure in solitude at the center of the space burning the lines of a book, the sound coming as the voice of place, sewed horsehair on the floor and the smoke of burnt pages are all components of installation. The voice of a man who murmurs from the outside of space comes from speakers disturbing the silence of interior. Her works are usually accompanied by multiplicity of media and components such as voice, smell, video and installation. Therefore the physicality of the visitor is essential to experience the space with all these exterior elements. “Arrangement invites the quest to use their hands, feet, nose, ear and mouth as well as their eyes.”(Stewart, 223) There are some significant complementary precursors that she uses in most of her pieces. One of them is voice which is usually embodied in the space. It may sound as a murmur or a spoken gesture of a written poem or novel. Hamilton sometimes explores the idea of using a solo figure in her installations; it can be herself, a potential visitor or someone else who makes the action during the time of the installation. One of the other crucial elements is table which seems to operate and explore as an object of thought. The use of books in Hamilton’s most of the installations allegorically bears a tactile presence accompanied by the trace of the body. Furthermore, each book can be considered as a container, a form of a body. In this work, the correspondence of speech and the book is significant. Because the voice is in inarticulateness and the book is not legible so the obstruction is one of the recurring ideas in the *tropos*. Hamilton describes her relation with voice and meaning as “language is known as sound by the body before it is known as meaning by the mind and by memory.” (Stewart, 228)

Ann Hamilton realizes a work called *Face to Face* in 2006 by taking photographs with her mouth. She inserts a pinhole camera in her mouth, stands face to face with the person who is going to be photographed while her mouth is open as they look at each other. Generally, a person should not open his/her mouth in the public since it is thought as a vulnerable position. But in this case, Hamilton stands face to face with another

³¹ Hamilton, Ann. *Ann Hamilton Studio*. Web. 12 Feb. 2012.
<http://www.annhamiltonstudio.com/projects/tropos.html>.

person like revealing something that is inside. It is just making oneself vulnerable but physically present to another person albeit in silence. She mostly chooses to use voice as a component in her works such as whisper, murmur and etc. The voice of artist can be in her hands or in her eyes. In this work, she uses the organ of voice, mouth, as an organ of sight. Moreover, the shape of the open mouth resembles the shape of the eye. The open lips of the artist allow the light to enter the chamber of mouth and when she closes her lips it serves as a shutter. There is not only a direct eye contact with a person in an intimate encounter and sharing a time period as in a ritual of two souls but also Hamilton's mouth records the person as she sees the world with her mouth. "The mouth as a site of penetration, of the consumption of nature, and of the production of language and narrative, the mouth becomes emblematic of the most concrete and abstract of boundaries and itself appears on the borders of the private and the public, the silent and the articulated." (Stewart, 247)





Figure 12, Ann Hamilton, *Tropos*, 1993

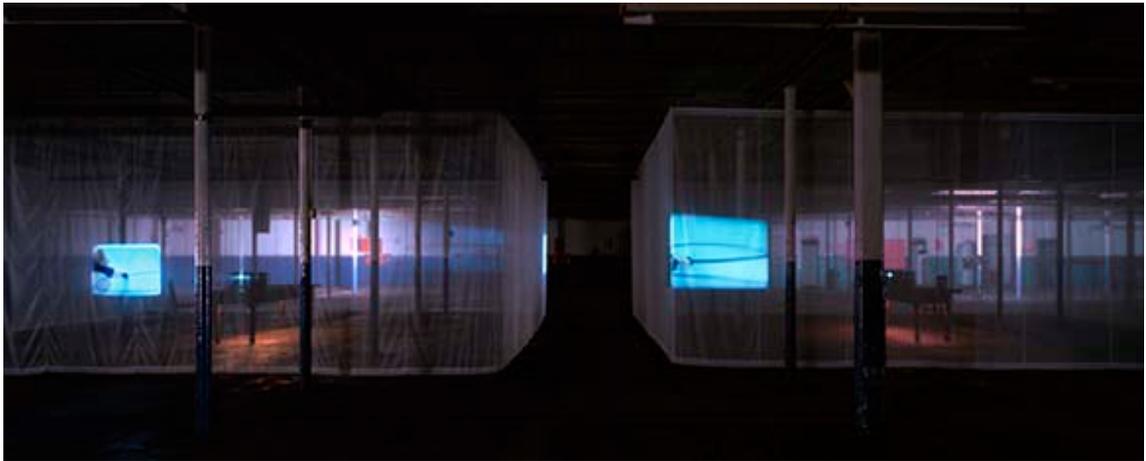


Figure 13, Ann Hamilton, *Ghost... a border act*, 2000

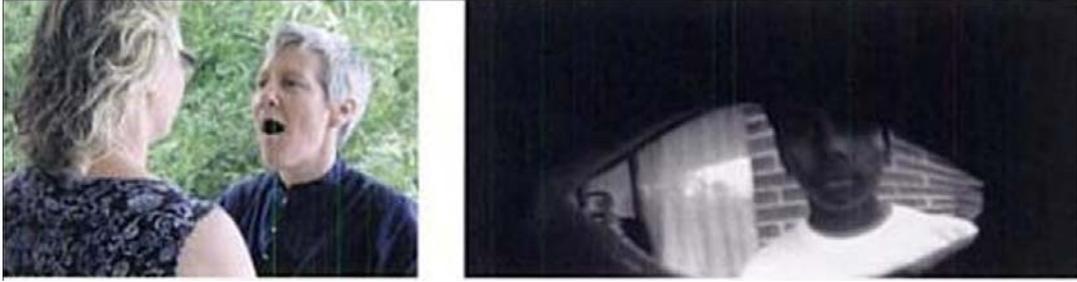


Figure 14, Ann Hamilton, *Face to Face*, 2001

CHAPTER 3

In this chapter, I will elaborate on my works from the exhibition called *IFEELIAMEATINGMEMORIES*. In the light of first and second chapter, I will maintain continuity while discussing my art practice.

Along the way, as an artist, I believe that process is a fundamental principle in totality of my work; therefore I always try to emphasize 'how' a work is created in relation to other works, rather than 'what' is created in each pieces. My working method and research process is engaged with social, cultural and geographical contexts in terms of forms, signs, symbols, readymade utterances and readymade objects. I comprehend that all signifiers and symbols are like guidelines in a specific geography. Impermanent and historical materials which can be called waste or residues of the social body have become essential materials of my art practice. They bear the vestige of memory in order to trace a path of the geography where I live. Therefore I devoted my energy to recollect and to accumulate readymade images or readymade objects in order to penetrate into the cultural and historical past of connotations. Most of the works come from an accumulation of collected souvenirs to indicate that things are public yet private and visible yet invisible. The problematic point of holding private materials belonging to personal realm is not only that I have found them in the public realm but also they invite me to their household and consciousness, yet in the same time dismiss me as an uninvited visitor. All along my journey, the surplus of memories are the things that I collect in my bag in order to figure out how to deal and confront with them. I have started with the photographs I collected from second-hand stores and I have had an inconvenient relation with them since they belong to private realm as memories of a particular person. But once I collected piles of old photographs, it was not possible to resist their scent of time. I still wander around the territory of a private history mentally and physically.

i) Anomalistic | *Ayrıksı*, 2010-2011

Preventing forgetfulness, stopping the disappearance of things and beings, seemed to me a noble goal, but I quickly realized that this ambition was bound to fail, for as soon as we try to preserve something, we fix it. We can preserve things only by stopping life's course. If I put my glasses in a vitrine, they will never break, but will they still be considered glasses? Once glasses are part of a museum's collection, they forget their function; they are then only an image of glasses. In a vitrine, my glasses will have lost their reason for being, but they will also have lost their identity.³² (Boltanski, 91)

With the motivation to search for materials that are gone through the scent of time, I found myself in the second-hand shops looking for the books I cannot read since I do not know their language. But the significant point is that these are languages of the geography I opened my eyes to. It may appear as a nostalgic action but the only assumable nostalgia is where/when we start to obliterate speech in order to realize new words. The collected books are allegorically representatives of the minorities who live within the geographical boundaries of Turkey. Whereas these are just books which are the containers of thought, comprehension of their content is obstructed due to the reason of non Latin alphabets or ignorance of the languages. The collected books have been all decomposed into inside and outside, that is the content and the cover.

The book itself, as a materialization of body of thought, is deconstructed in the work *Anomalistic | Ayrıksı*. The name comes from a Turkish saying 'ayrık otlar' (couch grass) which has creeping rhizomes so they grow rapidly and occupy the garden. They are not desirable and should be plucked away quickly from the soil to give a space and efficiency to desirable plants. The soil can be land, territory or geography which suggests communal living in which some voices lose their ground of dialogue. They are still visible yet not legible at the same time. Accordingly, it would be right to mention about "'sous rature' (~~under erasure~~) is a philosophical device used by Martin Heidegger and this is to write a word, cross it out, and then print both word and deletion. Since the word is inaccurate, it is crossed out. Since the word is necessary, it remains legible."

³²Boltanski, Christian. *The Museum as Muse: Artists Reflect*. Ed. Kynaston McShine. New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1999.

(Derrida 1998: XIV) Although the action contains a form of concealing it also reveals by the act of concealment.

I have realized this work, *Anomalistic*, with dismembered pages from ten books that are chosen according their languages, namely Ottoman Turkish, Syriac, Hebrew, Kurdish, Bulgarian, Greek, Georgian, Lazuri, Armenian, and Circassian. Those books are all found objects, reached after a long search, some of which were hard to find since they are rarely left or collected due to their value. The first failure occurred when I attempted to comprehend the contents; they become just signs and symbols. Due to the failure of capturing their meaning, they are both visible and invisible to me. Therefore I have decided to sew every word to the next word and to the next. If a sufficient distance is taken to pages, a black thread appears like a black mark concealing the letters. When the distance dwindles away, ruptures and ripped parts make themselves visible. In contrast to the regularity of black lines on the front face of the page, the backside has disarray and disorganized lines of knots and threads. The act obliterates the legibility of it as language. A form of subversion is exercised when I prick up the needle into straw-colored page with a black thread. It seems that an invisible violence, working through silencing the speech of someone else, is lurking in the action of sewing a word much the same as in every act and in every word practiced.

Furthermore, the crucial part is the way in which books convey knowledge. Books define a system of thoughts and beliefs, or they are defined as the objects of civilization. A book can be recognized as a precious object, symbol of sanctity in Eastern culture; but in *Anomalistic*, the books lose their original function and become altered books. The performed action of tearing every page of the book is to disrupt the integrity of its wholeness and to subvert its subjection. Alternatively, the separation of interior and exterior sections enables to compose a nonlinear arrangement of page numbers and it proposes a new mode of reading. Moreover, this work makes an emphasis on process because it contains repetitive labor. Handwork gains significance through sewing on derelict books because the ongoing process of the installation indicates a relation to past and future. Also *Anomalistic* proposes a potential engagement of the possible attendant as a public labor. The crossed out pages are positioned on the table as opposed to none crossed out pages with the operation tools; needle, black thread and the scissors. Therefore during the exhibition, the process of practicing the action still continues. A

square table is set up at the center of a square shaped site with the light of simple lamp. *Anomalistic* opens up a position for the visitor to be a part of the action.

It is possible to assume a table as an object to make discussions or decisions around, where thought is actually produced. *Anomalistic* contains a table and just one chair in order to convey the feeling of the existence of a possible person in solitude. This person can erase, conceal or rewrite the texts at the site of the exhibition. Therefore the attitude of the work is driven by a process of transformation. In that sense the form of the installation is in continuous change in accordance with the identity of the exhibition hall so that new interpretations can be realized for new sites.



Figure 15, *Anomalistic*, installation, 2010-2011



Figure 16, *Anomalistic*, 2010-2011



Figure 17, detail

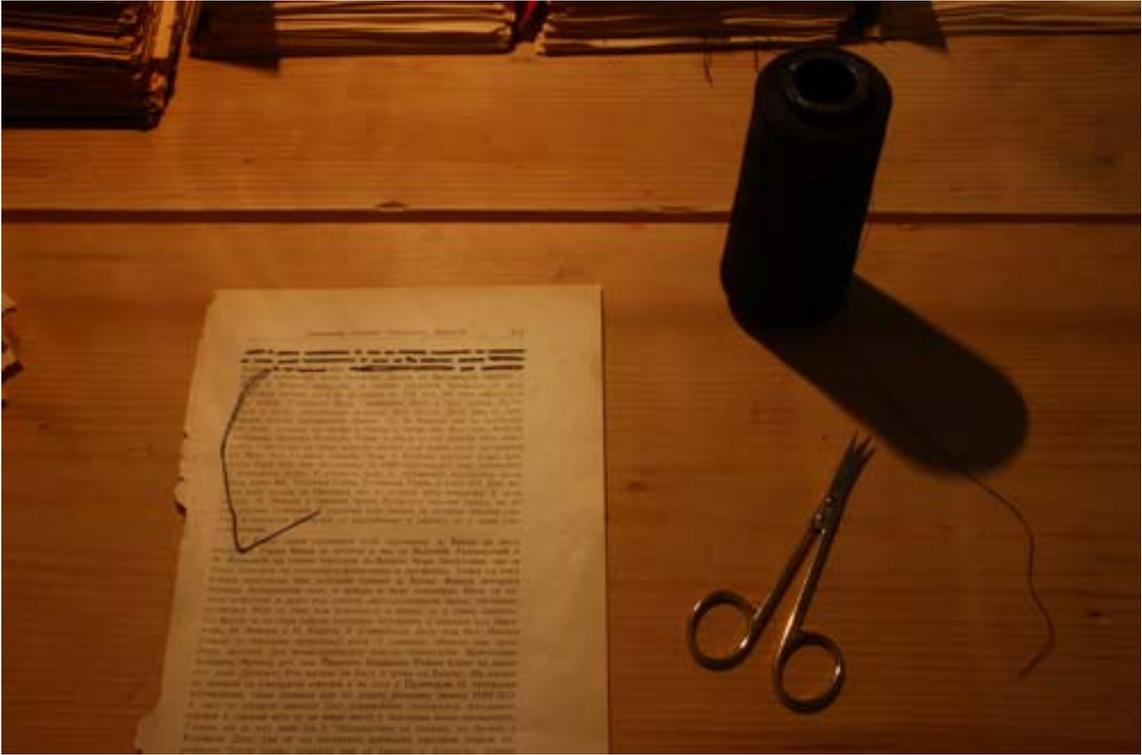


Figure 18, detail



Figure 19, detail



Figure 20, performing the work at the exhibition site



Figure 21, performing the work at the exhibition site



Figure 22, view of the installation



Figure 23, view of the installation

ii) Command | Ferman, 2010-2011

Command | Ferman is realized after various encounters. First of all, garbage bags were the materials that I used for covering the floor of my studio to make practices of certain gestures on them; such as writing, making abstract Turkish maps, to accumulate substances that I brought from outdoor. At that time, I was working on the translation of a readymade utterance of a popular newspaper entitled *Hürriyet*. It is the statement “Türkiye Türklerindir | Turkey belongs to Turks” that has multiple meanings so that I have borrowed the readymade sentence. Then, I started to collect translations of this statement from the people around me and I prefer to use translation of languages which are employed in *Anomalistic*. What is interesting about this work is that I did not prefer to use official translations but oral ones as if allowing a possible failure of interpretation. Also the work is limited by the extent of the individuals around me who knows that language. Hence, I consider oral translation as an attempt to search for the traces of these languages in the minds of the people. The languages of which I could find the oral translations were Hebrew, Armenian, Ottoman Turkish, Georgian, Kurdish, and Turkish. The translated sentences are written in a style called ‘divani’ which is used for writing rescript (ferman) in the Ottoman era. Originally, the significant point in this style is to curve the lines and to leave no space between words in order to avoid adding or subtracting any word on the official document.

Separately, one of them belongs to the traces of my own private history that is written with the technique of automatic writing. Through automatic writing, loss of meaning is maintained by the loss of reason in order to open up a space for an inner language. The way of writing without the authority of logic by just following the fluidity of associations promises to be extroverted and introverted at the same time. It is a kind of exposition of myself to a visitor (a reader) but also it is not legible because of the distorted and twisted form of writing. Also the form of my own writing leaves no gap between words. But what I consider essential about this one is its physical location in relation to others in the exhibition site. The other six of the *Commands* are very strictly and vertically positioned on the wall side by side but this one *Command* is stuck

in a purgatory state at the corner. Taking a position at the corner refers to an exhibition of Kazimir Malevich entitled *0.10*. In 1915, Malevich hangs his *Black Square (1913)*, which he calls “zero form” referring to its unconventional form, at the most conventional part of the room that is upper corner. The way *Black Square* is placed in the exhibition is reminiscent of the traditional display mode of an icon in Russian Orthodox homes. Just like those icons in Orthodox homes, Malevich considers his super materialism as a divine reality beyond and above the apparent world.

My point of departure in realizing the work *Command* was the question of relation between authority and discipline exercised in primary education. My problem with the logic of primary education system is about the constraints practiced through disciplinary mechanisms. Accordingly, the form of writing in *Ferman/Command* is associated with punishment technique which is applied in order to teach the child what is ‘right’ and what is ‘wrong’. This technique is based on repetition of the same sentence until the punishment is fulfilled. Therefore it is not coincidence that I write repetitive sentences with white marker on a black trash bag. In this case they are black garbage bags instead of a black board. Those readymade consumer objects are displaced from their original context and altered to a blank paper allowing one to write on them from top to bottom. There is also a formal resemblance between a garbage bag and a notebook; they are both arranged from pieces that are connected to each other, the separated one piece can disturb the totality.

Consequently, black trash bag suggests a function of concealment in different contexts in the sense of not exposing something publicly. Probably because of the cultural codes I have grown up with, I have drawn a connection between black trash bag and black board as daily objects which conceal some things while revealing others. When I was a child, all the pornographic magazines are covered with black plastic bags or all the alcoholic drinks are put into black nylon bags. Therefore a plastic black bag implies hiding something disposable inside and this way imposes and reproduces the proper mode of behavior through revealing the disciplined self.



Figure 24, *Command*, installation, 2011



Figure 25, *Command*, installation, 2011



Figure 26, view of the installation



Figure 27, detail



Figure 28, detail



Figure 29, detail



Figure 30, detail

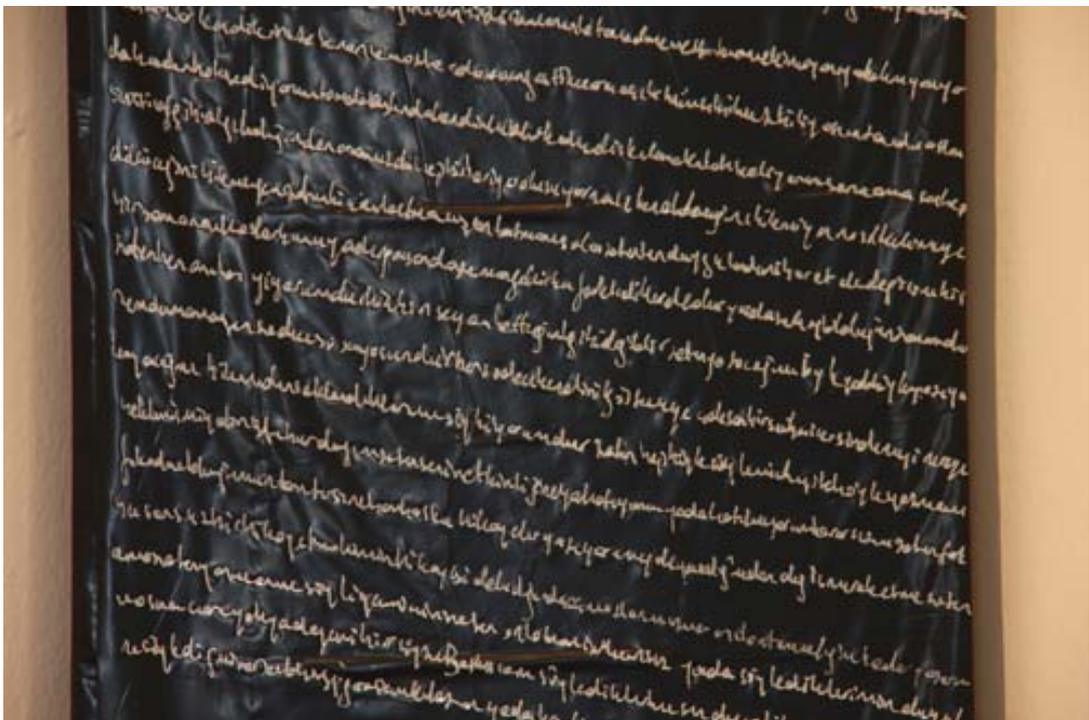


Figure 31, automatic writing, detail

iii) Conserve 1 | Muhafaza 1, 2011

Through all this process, my relation with letters, words, sentences, paragraphs, pages and books have led me into a different approach about the experience of reading and writing. Books are not only objects but they are also the embodiment of idea of civilization and progress. Chewing book pages and spitting them out contain a form of destruction and reformation at the same time. I give a readable object an unreadable form and it creates the sense of appreciation of source of knowledge as well as questioning the possibility of a rupture in that knowledge.

Conserve1/Muhafaza1 is an attempt to problematize the boundary between language and body. Mouth is filled up with words that are silenced but it is also the most fundamental organ to transform the body into a language by uttering words through the action of tongue, lips and teeth. In the work *Conserve1*, the mouth chews book pages after they are torn from the body of the book. I try to question the possibility of digesting them physically and intellectually. The mouth the function of which is literal consumption substitutes the eye which is indeed the original organ of intellectual absorption. It enables an act of transference of what is outside into inside and vice versa. The action of silencing a book manifests violence through an orifice of the body.

The books used in the video installation are again collected from second hand shops and they are written in Cyrillic and Arabic alphabet. But the name of the book is intentionally obscured and the body of the performer is not visible in the video. The video and the installation of masticated pages are complementary components. During the exhibition, the video is projected at the level of the human height so as to confront the visitor. The composition of waste book pages are constantly in change, firstly they formed an incomplete rectangular in relation to the grid structure on the floor. The installation refers to a rectangle but the position of every page is significant, none of them were touching each other in that claustrophobic space. Secondly, after a few days, I decided to sweep them up with a broom to the corner. In this alteration, the accumulation of masticated pages accorded with the gesture of the video and they appear as abominated parasites.

The necessity of the video is a way of presenting a gesture which cannot be performed constantly and lively. The performativity of the mouth is in a repetitive action of mastication but it continues until the limit of absorption instead of the endurance limit of the body. Therefore the sound of the video becomes like the sound of the exhibition. The mouth cannot digest but gives back the essence of the book to the exhibition site. So, the sound of the parasites becomes the sound of the space.



Figure 32, *Conserve 1*, video stills, 2011



Figure 33, *Conserve I*, installation view, first situation



Figure 34, *Conserve 1*, installation view, second situation



Figure 35, *Conserve 1*, altered book pages, first situation



Figure 36, altered book pages, second situation



Figure 37, altered book pages, detail

iv) Follow the Alphabet | Alfabeyi Takip Et, 2011

Follow the Alphabet is a kind of altering the usual aim and the form the semaphore alphabet is used for. This alphabet is a type of sign language which is used to convey information in a distance through two flags by a signal man. It can be used to signal messages at sea or on a land by means of eight possible directions which are actually drawing a whole circle. Mostly the flags are colored red and yellow on the sea whereas blue and white flags are used as means of communication on the land. In contrast to Morse code, the information encoded by semaphore alphabet doesn't have confidentiality but expositing. It is the form of an open articulation in case of emergency. Originally, the alphabet starts with the command "follow the alphabet". By changing the context and keeping the form of the performance, the guide on the screen starts with the sign of "follow the alphabet" but constructs an endless sentence (message) that lasts for fifteen minutes. The timer is set to fifteen minutes before the guide starts. Besides, commands of the alphabet which are drawn in a primary school notebook are settled upon a pedestal with two paper Turkish flags and the egg-shaped metallic gray timer. During the exhibition, composition in the video is right in front of the monitor to invite an attendant to repeat the guide's body language according to manual set-up. In the video, guide stands in a strong white space that may indicate the in-between situation of being object and subject at the same time in no man's land. Besides, the positioning of the work is also relational to the exhibition site where it has a stance between two columns; one of them is in the inside of the site, the other is at the outside which is separated with a glass wall.

The guide (kılavuz) performs 'Our Vow' (Andımız) which is a common practice of every monday morning in Turkish primary schools before entering the classroom. In common practice, children are repeating the sentences after a selected student on the stage. However, in the video guide suggests a 'repeat after me' action; it is not orally but physically performed. Therefore the language of the body corresponds to the physicality of the body by means of sign language.



Figure 38, *Follow the Alphabet*, installation, 2011 (first situation)



Figure 39, *Follow the Alphabet*, installation, 2011 (second situation)



Figure 40, *Follow the Alphabet*, installation, 2011 (third situation)



Figure 41, *Follow the Alphabet*, video stills, 2012



Figure 42, photograph of the performing visitor

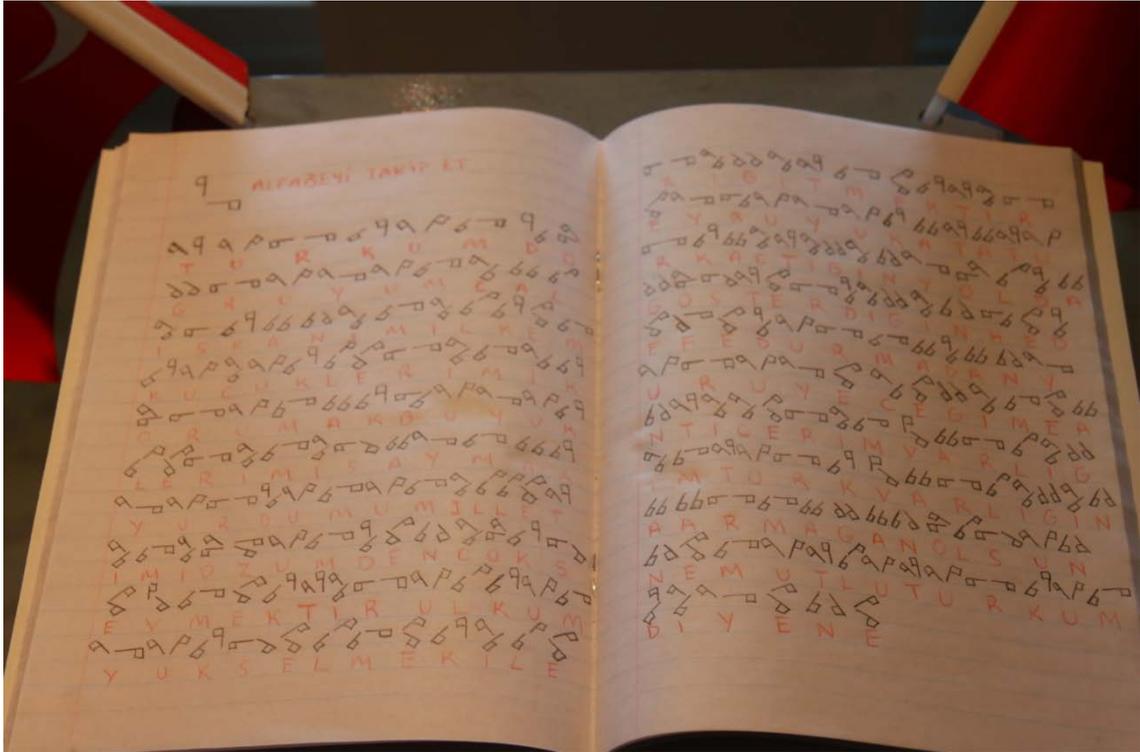


Figure 43, detail

v) “walking around the perimeter of a” Circle, 2011

“A Line (Traced) by Walking”, 2011

This work consists of two videos that are made in reference to Bruce Nauman and Richard Long. Both of them have been recorded as a gesture which is performed in my studio where I personally produce mentally and physically. What I find important in these reference-based works, is their relation to the act of walking as a very simple gesture. Therefore the undertaken action of walking by bare foot in my studio contains a meaning about my presence and my identity as an artist. In this way, I mark a certain path with certain repetitive action as a bodily experience. I choose to integrate myself in the exhibition site with my attitude in the production site (studio). The experience of walking bare foot makes me feel the tangible safety of the ground. Although at times I do nothing practically in my studio, I repeat the same action of walking as a way of thinking.

The most significant feature of these two recorded activities is their dispersibility and transiency enabled by the chalk powder instead of the solidity and permanency of Bruce Nauman's drawn square. On the other hand, a dispersible line is traced in a studio, as an artificial space, in contrast with Richard Long's practices in nature. Long mostly refers to a geometric form in space and the documentary evidences are the only objects that record his actions. Therefore, the question of where the artwork defines itself gains significance, whether in the gallery or in the landscape. In this sense, in my practice, relocation of a recorded gesture from the studio to the exhibition site suggests an idea of integrity between the production and consumption spaces.

But the common point of these two videos is the act of walking barefoot; the ideas of boundary, artistic identity and the metaphorical connotations of act of walking are concretized with bodily gestures. I think, a contour or edged forms always indicate an enclosure and defines an introverted or extroverted space. However the basic form which is line implies a possibility of space in horizontal expansion. The edge gradually disappears while I walk over and over again. When the line starts to disperse, the insistence on following the same movement which is done previously converts into an automatic circulation. When there is left no edge of the circle but only traces of actions, I begin to follow the traces. Repetition of walking on the circle and the line allows me to feel the materiality of the ground and give me opportunity to go beyond a physical representation. But even more specifically, video as a medium gives opportunity to record and to show the process of ephemeral marks.

At last, the perfection of geometric shape of the circle transforms into the shadow of the circle. The expansion of the chalk edge appears as a wave by the agency of consistency/insistency of my body. I do not stop rotating around the circle, so as the action creates a feeling as if I am trying to catch myself, I am getting farther.



Figure 44, "walking around the perimeter of a" Circle, video stills, 2011



Figure 45, *A Line (Traced) by Walking*, 2011

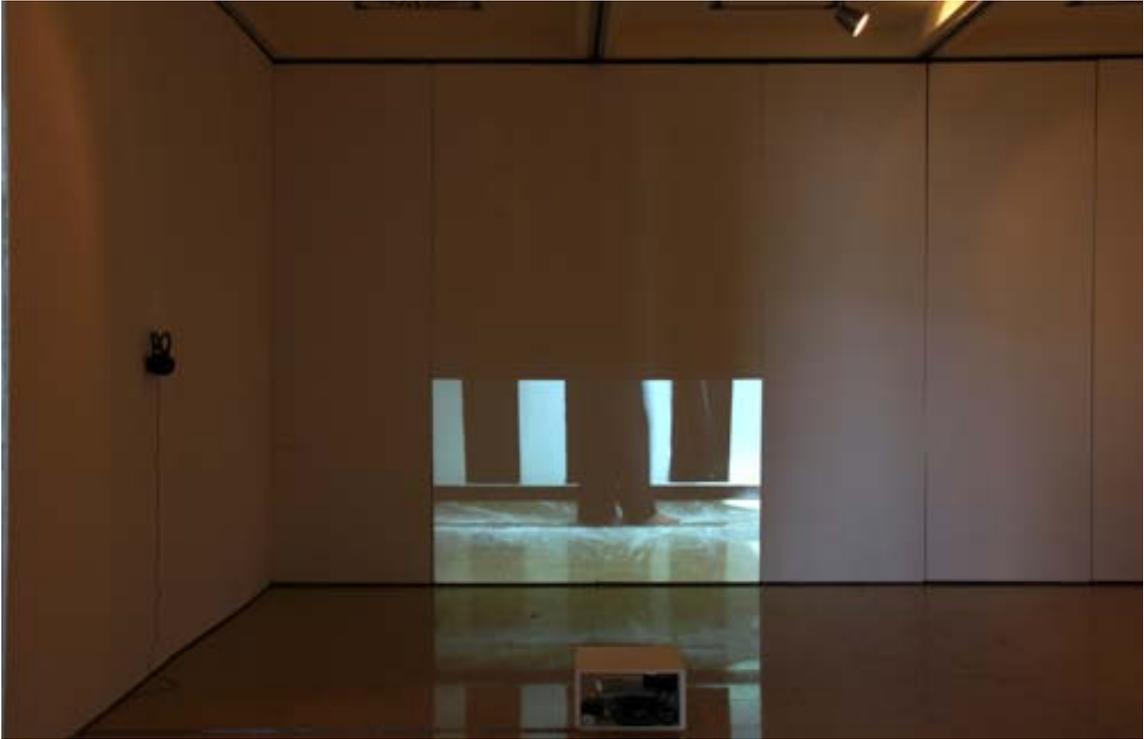


Figure 46, exhibition view



Figure 47, exhibition view

vi) Invitation | Davet, 2011

“...There is a metaphor which I love; living like a drawing compass. As you know, one leg of the compass is static, rooted in a place. Meanwhile, the other leg draws a wide circle, constantly moving...”³³ These words of Elif Şafak is one of the inspirations which urge me to imagine about this work. One of the legs of the compass is stable and is rooted into the ground but does the other leg is free to move? Where does that incomplete circle actually invite? How can the artist define herself? What does this gesture of ephemerality and simplicity propose? Why does the instrument of drawing a perfect circle rotate around itself?

Invitation / Davet is installed on the floor with a red background and a class compass that was used on the black boards. The white chalk of drawing compass attempts to make an incomplete circle. It leaves a white temporary trace on the red floor. This work is realized as a response to the site and will be realized every time in relation to space in variations. I consider realizing the work on the floor with the gesture of its temporality as proposing a different engagement; because the work starts to talk about its humble ephemerality and it is not positioned as just something to be looked at. *Invitation* makes an invitation for an attendant to leave a footmark on it such as the mark of the white chalk.

In the exhibition, *Invitation* is located at the center of the site positioning itself to the uninvited column which is commonly an element of obstruction for the exhibition space. However in this case, I tried to turn this obstruction into an opportunity. A part of the red area is stepped on by the column and it is dislocated ten degrees in reference to the column. What is significant of the ten degrees in *Invitation* is its ambiguous condition of slightly difference, not making a distinct move. The main idea in this work is to reinterpret *Invitation* with respect to this specific site and particular condition; therefore its site-specificity leads to a destruction of the piece at the end of the exhibition.

³³ Şafak, Elif: The Politics of Fiction. www.ted.com, 2010. Web. 4 Jan 2012.
http://www.ted.com/talks/elif_shafak_the_politics_of_fiction.html.



Figure 48, *Invitation*, installation, 2011



Figure 49, *Invitation*, installation, 2011



Figure 50, *Invitation*



Figure 51, *Invitation*



Figure 52, detail



Figure 53, detail

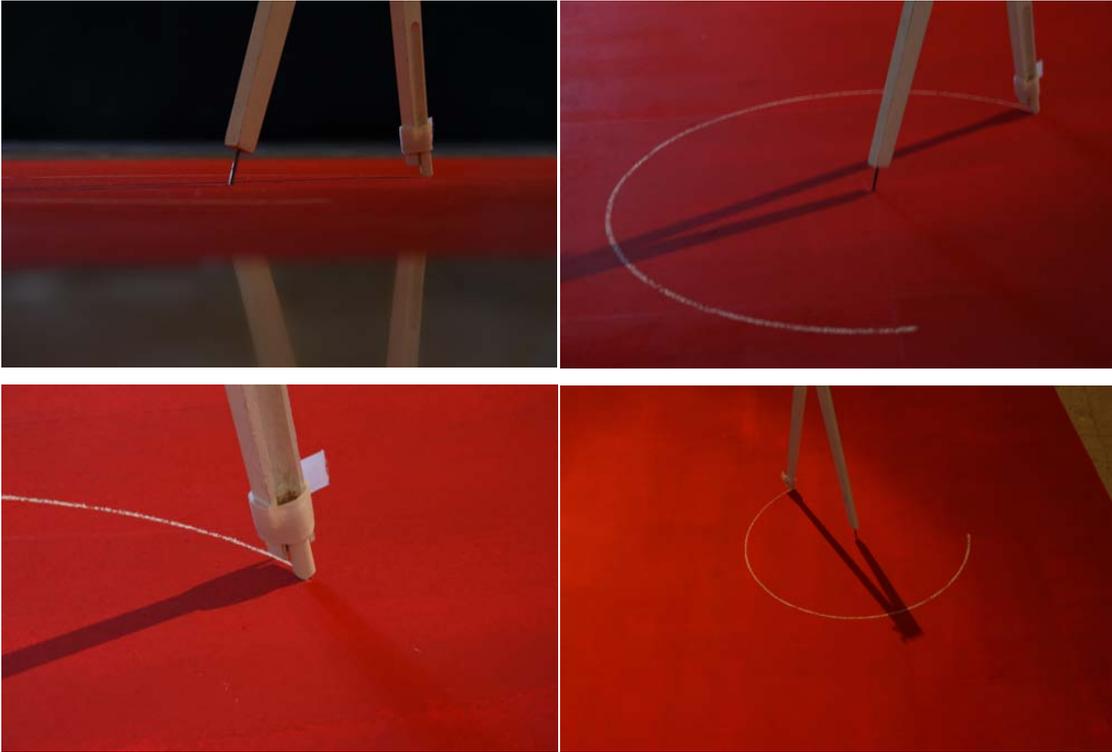


Figure 54, details



Figure 55, footprint on the *Invitation*



Figure 56, after the exhibition

vii) *D.*, 2011

In monologue nothing is communicated; one represents oneself as a speaking and communicating subject.³⁴ (Derrida 1973; 49)

D. is a sound work realized by recorded automatic talking. In a sense, this work represents a form of superimposition of private I and public I. I, as the starting point of all these works, need to make an absent presence in the site of the works, proposing an intimate relation between the visitor and myself. The question in my mind is about describing the voice of an artist. The voice can be anything such as hands, eyes, ears but I want to contribute to exhibition site a voice which can/cannot be 'heard'. The automatic talking is a self-reflexive attitude which presents my voice whereas the mode

³⁴ Derrida, Jacques. Speech and Phenomena and Other Essays on Husserl's Theory of Signs. U.S.: Northwestern University Press, 1973.

of talking both promises and denies an access to the meaning of content or confession. The voice represents myself but the told stories do not actually present me. The way I articulate myself brings together contradictions. It appears like a subjective history but the reflection of both of them upon each other obscures the meaning. Because there are two voices; one of them is assigned to the right channel while the other is assigned to the left one. The separation of voices creates dubious information: one of them confesses while the other one denies.

The voice talks with 'you' and 'I' pronouns which appear as if it makes a form of confession. It can be named as another form of stream of consciousness that is used in writing by the name of "automatic writing"; but I rather choose to call it automatic talking since there is neither prepared text nor decided theme. The reason of choosing speech as a medium is to remove the barrier between the consciousness and writing. In this way, it is only possible to use mother tongue to let the mind speak spontaneously; in a foreign language it is impossible to break out the enclosure of reason. Therefore I choose to talk in Turkish. Before one writes a text of any kind, s/he talks and verbalizes it inside her/his mind. Hence, I choose to let my mind speak as uncontrolled as possible by avoiding the obstruction of writing. The voices speak as if in a confession room within each other and to the visitor at the same time. The sound of the voice is heard in the space which is mixed with the sounds of other videos within the site, but the voice can only be heard as a whisper without headphones. Yet, the voice seems like revealing some information but it constantly produces paradoxes and contradictions. How is a representation possible in speech if we cannot represent them with words but also addicted to them?

In this manner, the voice of me (as representation1) and the image of me (as representation2) are present in the exhibition site but my-self is still absent.



Figure 57, engagement of different visitors with *D*.

CONCLUSION

In this thesis, I tried to ask questions such as ‘what do my works point to’ and ‘where are they rooted’. As I wrote in this text, essentially I am concerned with the idea of voice. How can a voice be represented and where is my own voice? How far do language and writing enable us to communicate or represent ourselves? My art practice and the context of my research are based on these relations of memory, identity and bodily presence to trace the vestige of visible and invisible marks.

What I problematize is the purgatory state between appearance and disappearance. In this sense, process draws out the rhythm of appearance and disappearance; process can be thought as a departure from one point to another or the state of being on the way. Personally, I do not believe that my work should be concluded or completed but one work induces on to another during the process of transformation. In the exhibition entitled *IFEELIAMEATINGMEMORIES*, I tried to continue making the works to intervene in their stable position in order to emphasize the process of change. Some of the main questions in my mind are: where and when can we decide that a work is completed or in progress? What kind of a function a studio and a place of exhibition propose interrelated with each other?

In this exhibition, I just attempted to erase the boundary between the production and consumption site of the work through three ways; projection of actions that I performed in my studio, changing some of the works during the exhibition process and also incorporating my acting body and voice into the site. Most of the actions I undertake are ways of projecting an impossible action to make continuously. The repetition of movements points to a state of limbo. Since I believe, the status of originality, appropriation or reference work can be described with purgatory, a form of repetition but also repeating differences.

Other Works

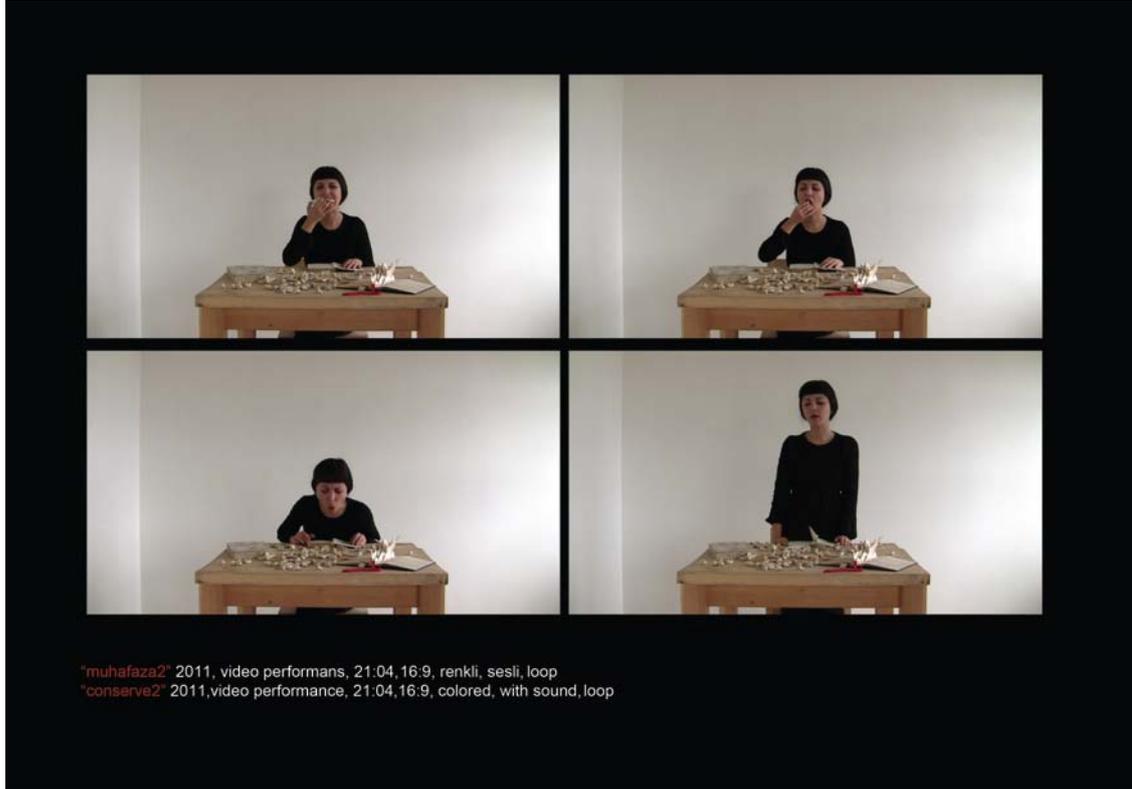


Figure 58, *Conserve 2 / Muhafaza 2*, 2011



Figure 59, *Maps / Haritalar*, 2011



Figure 60, *Remembrance or do not Remember* | *Hatırla(ma)*, 2011



Figure 61, *Container* / *Mazruf*, 2011

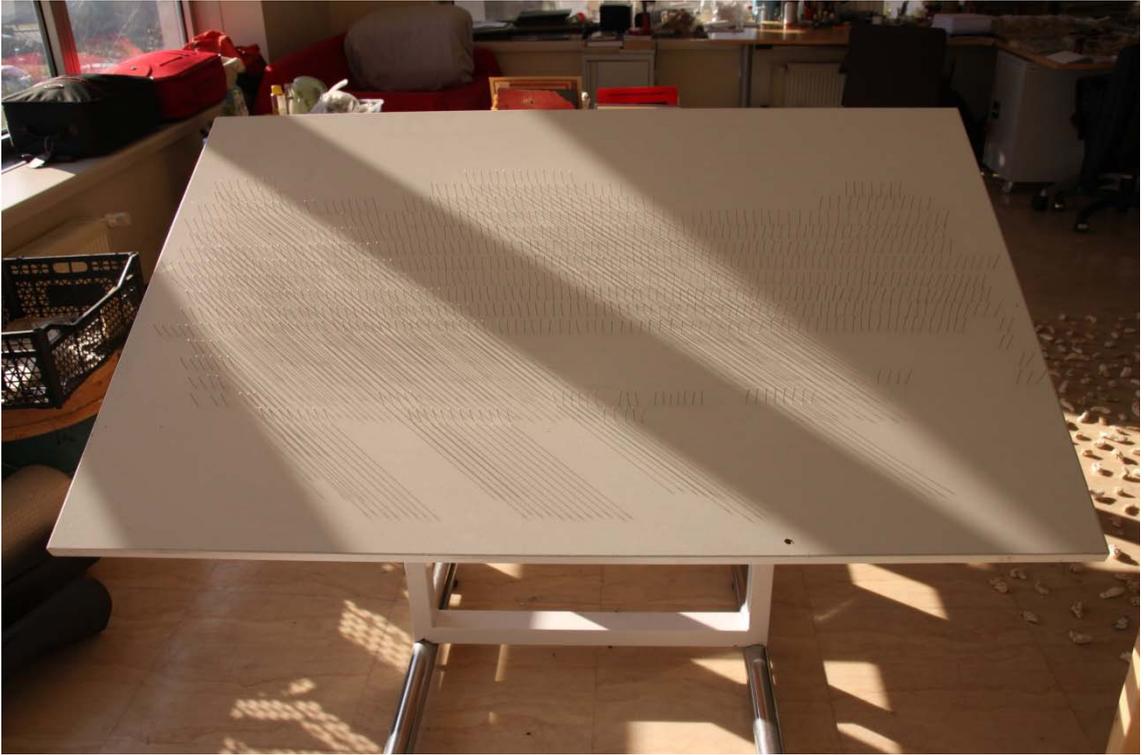


Figure 62, *Borders 2 | Sınırlar 2*, 2011

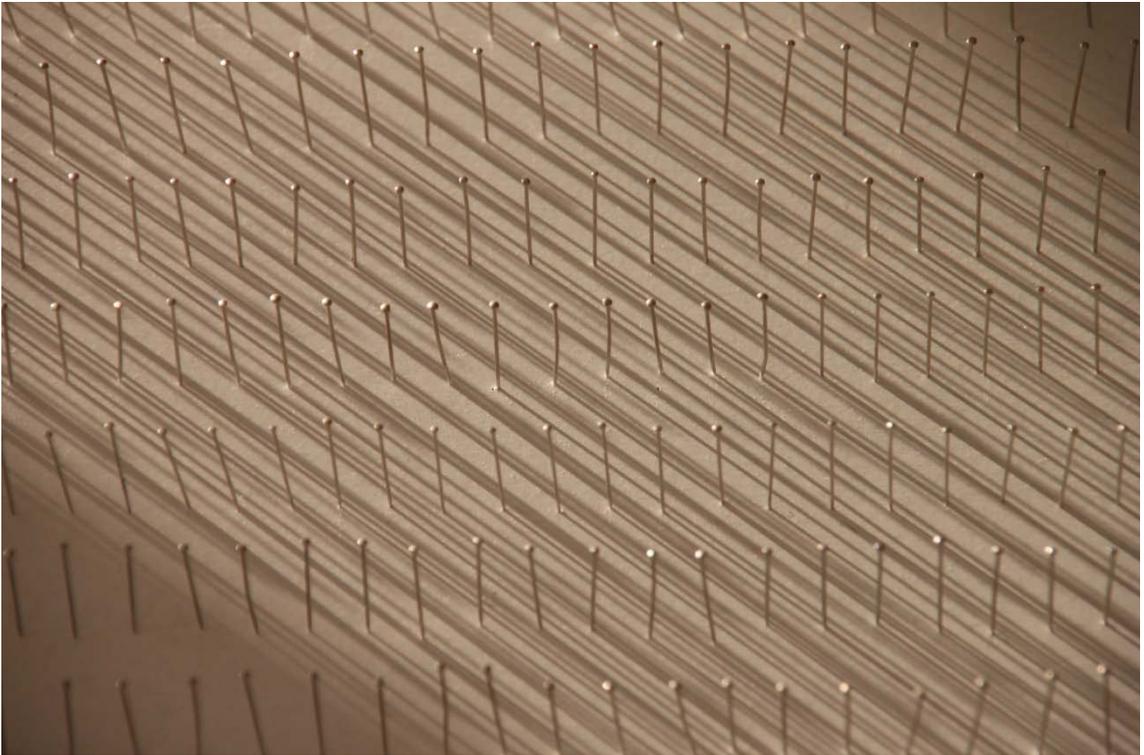


Figure 63, detail



Figure 64, *Mouths-Words-Hands* | *Ağızlar, Sözler, Eller*, 2010



Figure 65, detail

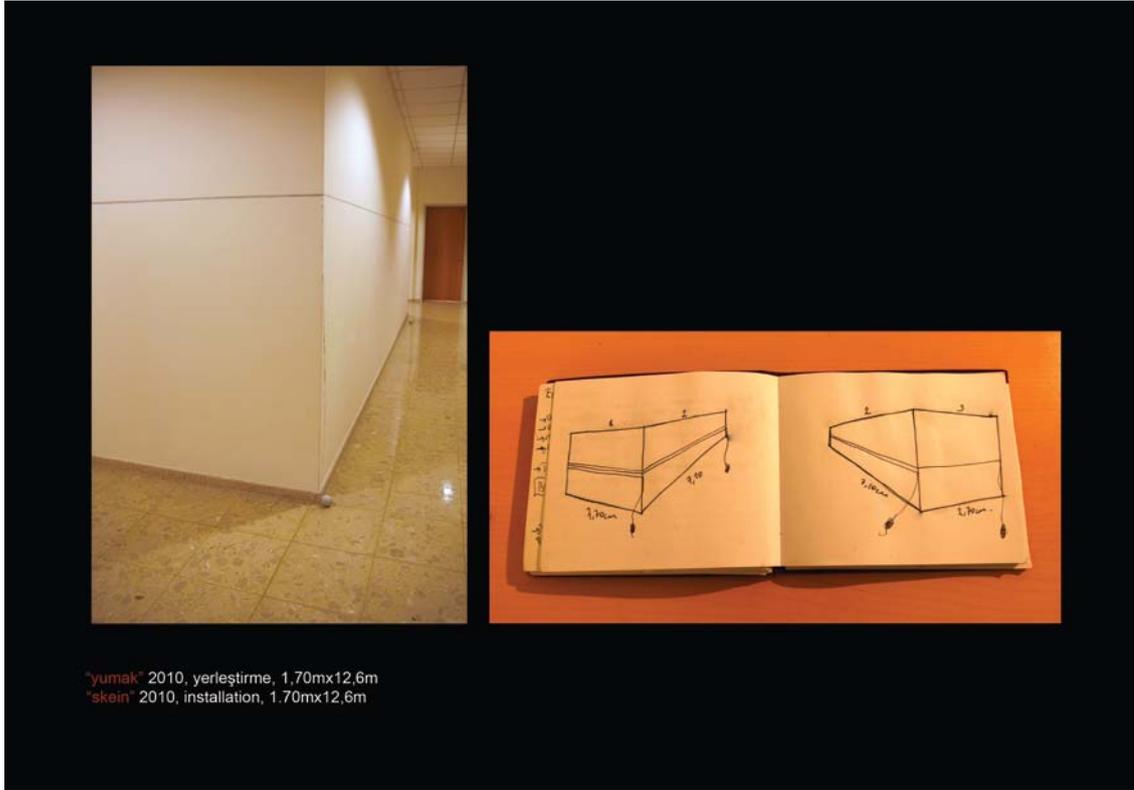


Figure 66, *Skein / Yumak*, 2010



Figure 67, detail

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