

TAMING OBJECTS OR SELVES?
ANALYSIS OF THE EXHIBITION “HANEDEN”

by
Neslihan Koyuncu

Submitted to the Graduate School of Arts and Social Sciences
in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

Sabanci University
Fall 2014

© Neslihan Koyuncu 2014

All Rights Reserved

TAMING OBJECTS OR SELVES?
ANALYSIS OF THE EXHIBITION “HANEDEN”

APPROVED BY:

Erdağ Aksel
(Dissertation Supervisor)

Selim Birsal

Ahu Antmen

DATE OF APPROVAL:

ABSTRACT

TAMING OBJECTS OR SELVES?

ANALYSIS OF THE EXHIBITION “HANEDEN”

Neslihan Koyuncu

Visual Arts and Visual Communication Design, M.A., Thesis, 2014

Thesis Supervisor: Erdağ Aksel

Keywords: Home, Domesticity, Domestic Objects, Readymade, Defamiliarization

This is a supplementary text for the exhibition called HANEDEN / HOUSEHOLD and therefore should be reviewed together with the exhibited works. In this text, the concepts of home and domestic objects are examined through the artworks exhibited. Based on research in the fields of psychology, consumer studies and art, I intend to elaborate on the relationship of the individual with the object(s) in the light of various novels that are being selected on the basis of the personal relationship between the characters and the domestic objects. The quotes from novels act as unfamiliar agents in the same way that domestic objects became unfamiliar or estranged when placed in an exhibition space. When a domestic object is detached from its habitat (home) to an art space, the scent of the object changes as well. As Freud mentioned in his famous 1919 essay on the uncanny, the familiar object, described as *heimlich*, becomes the unfamiliar, *un-heimlich*, uncanny. The role of a person also changes from *the user of an object* to *the viewer of an art object* in this situation. This process of *defamiliarization* takes place in the form of novel quotes to illustrate what is explained in terminology throughout the text. By creating sort of a *mise en abyme* with exhibiting domestic objects in the first place and connecting the writing about them with literary quotes that are equally having an effect of estrangement, “art removes objects from the automatism of perception.” (Shklovsky 1917)

ÖZET

EHLİLEŞEN EŞYALAR YA DA BENLİKLER?

“HANEDEN” ADLI SERGİNİN ANALİZİ

Neslihan Koyuncu

Görsel Sanatlar ve Görsel İletişim Tasarımı, M.A., 2014

Tez Danışmanı: Erdağ Aksel

Anahtar Kelimeler: Ev, Evcil, Evcil Nesnelere, Hazır Nesne, Defamiliarization

Bu, HANEDEN sergisini destekleyici bir çalışmadır ve sergideki çalışmalarla bir arada konumlandırılacak bir metin olarak ele alınmalıdır.. Bu tezde yuva ve evcil nesnelere kavramları sanat eserleri üzerinden irdelenecektir. Psikoloji, tüketici çalışmaları ve sanattan araştırmalarla birlikte, karakter ile ev nesnesi arasındaki kişisel ilişkiye dayanarak seçilen çeşitli romanlar ışığında bireyin nesne ile olan ilişkisi araştırılacaktır. Bu roman alıntıları sergi alanına doğru yer değiştiren ev nesnelere yaşadığı yabancılaşma sürecini temsil etmektedir. Bir ev nesnesini ait olduğu çevreden ayırdığımızda nesnenin esansını da değiştirmiş oluruz. Freud’un 1919’da yayınlanan *tekinsizlik üzerine yarattığı* eserinde bahsettiği gibi tanıdık nesne, *heimlich*, yabancı olan, *un-heimlich*, haline gelir. Bu durumda kişinin rolü de *nesne kullanıcısından sanat nesnesi izleyicisine* doğru bir değişim gösterir. Bu *kırılma (defamiliarization)* süreci metinde roman alıntıları şekline bürünmüştür. Gündelik ev eşyalarının sanat mekanına yerleştirilmesiyle ve bu konu hakkındaki yazıları edebi alıntılarla ilişkilendirerek oluşturulan mizanbim sayesinde “sanat nesneye dair var olan algının otomatizmini ortadan kaldırmaktadır.” (Shklovsky 1917)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my advisor Associate Professor Erdağ Aksel who recommended me this master studies in the first place and encouraged me to go on afterwards; Selim Birsal for his constructive criticism; Ahu Antment for her inspirational teachings and to all other instructors and beloved friends who I had the chance to meet during my education.

I would like to thank especially my mother Ümmühan Damarlı who gave inspiration with her strength and energy even in her most difficult times, my father Servet Koyuncu for his endless love and support, and my brother Yusuf Koyuncu for his never ending help in life and even in the exhibition.

I would like to express my special thanks to Ilka Eickhof, Ezgi Başer and Birce Altay for their help as good editors and friends; Büşra Yeşilay and Kaan Temizkan for their constant support outside of school; Serra Örey and Osman Koç for their key effort on the artworks and finally Bilge Ertem, Kerem Ardahanlı and the Hoşaf studio for their help with the exhibition in Kadıköy in 2015.

Lastly and mostly, I would like to thank to Ömür Bali who became the core of my life and has always been a source of inspiration that spurred my ambition.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION.....	1
CHAPTER 2. DOMESTIC AS ENTITY.....	4
2.1 Domestication / Taming.....	4
2.2 The Meaning of Home.....	6
2.3 The Relationship of Domestic Object and the Person.....	9
2.4 The Domestic in Art.....	13
CHAPTER 3. WORKS FROM THE EXHIBITION.....	22
3.1 Iron Boards: Staircase of Home.....	23
3.2 Nightstands: Construction of Home.....	25
a. “Yadigar / Souvenir ”.....	26
b. “İş / Business”.....	28
c. “Ayıp / Shame”.....	29
d. “Zaman / Time”.....	31
e. “Evladiyelik”.....	34
f. “Metamorfoz / Metamorphosis”.....	36
g. “Rüya / The Dream”.....	36
h. “Tehdit / The Threat”.....	38
3.3 Work In Progress: Outside of Home.....	41
CHAPTER 4. CONCLUSION.....	45
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	48

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1 *Tehdit detay*

Figure 2 *Sticker*

Figure 3 *Brillo Boxes* by Andy Warhol

Figure 4 *Satellite* by Robert Rauschenberg

Figure 5 *The Wait* by Edward Kienholz

Figure 6 *The Dinner Party* by Judy Chicago

Figure 7 *Kinetic Furniture series* by Theo Kaccoufa

Figure 8 *Fountain* by Theo Kaccoufa

Figure 9 *In The Supper Rooms* by Julie Schenkelberg

Figure 10 *Symptomatic Constant* by Julie Schenkelberg

Figure 11 *Symptomatic Constant detail* by Julie Schenkelberg

All following artworks by Neslihan Koyuncu

Figure 12 *Exhibition plan of Haneden vol. 1*

Figure 13 *Installation view Haneden vol. 1*

Figure 14 *Çocuk Masası*

Figure 15 *Nightstand Sketches*

Figure 16 *Yadigar*

Figure 17 *Yadigar video screenshot*

Figure 18 *Yadigar detail*

Figure 19 *Yadigar detail*

Figure 20 *Business*

Figure 21 *Business detail*

Figure 22 *Ayıp*

Figure 23 *Zaman*

Figure 24 *Zaman detail*

Figure 25 *Zaman detail*

Figure 26 *Zaman detail*

Figure 27 *Zaman video screenshot*

Figure 28 *Zaman detail*

Figure 29 *Evladiyelik*

Figure 30 *Metamorfoz*
Figure 31 *Metamorfoz detail*
Figure 32 *Rüya*
Figure 33 *Rüya detail*
Figure 34 *Rüya detail*
Figure 35 *Rüya detail*
Figure 36 *Tehdit*
Figure 37 *Sona Kalan / Straggler*
Figure 38 *Varolmanın Tedirginliği*
Figure 39 *Su Altı / Under Water*
Figure 40 *Model of the sea installation*
Figure 41 *Model of figure with sea bagel*
Figure 42 *Module from sea installation*
Figure 43 *Pool no.1*
Figure 44 *Pool no.2*
Figure 45 *Taming Nature*

1. INTRODUCTION

Objects that one can see, touch, smell and use are surrounding the human habitat. We find ourselves in our everyday lives around these objects. The “measurable, quantifiable and easily manipulated” quality of (objects) things around us tends to make people around the objects define themselves also as measurable and objectified. (Flusser 1999: 85) Therefore objects may act as a comparative scale to maintain our rationalizing and understanding of the world.

“Sonra, vazonun dışında eşyayı, çevremi gördüm; demek, düşünmem bitmişti, (insanın, sürekli yaşadığını hissetmesi için, bazı değişmez ölçülere başvurması iyi oluyordu.)” (Atay 1973)

"And then I saw the object and my surrounding atmosphere on the surface of that vase; that is to say my thinking process was over (it was helpful to fall back on invariant measures to feel constantly alive.)" (Atay 1973)

As things evolved with us in time through *our* constantly changing needs, in time they also changed the human behavior, and vice versa. Although, the common approach on the creation of a history takes human at its center, the contrary approach may open up new possibilities in understanding the nature of objects. For instance, when an object is found at an archeological excavation, the object is seen as a relic for the history of *humanity* and treated as a trace of human existence. The imagination of the contrary approach offers the human trace (touch) an evidential quality for the history of object and takes over the object to its center. As in creating stories of humanity through found objects, it is only possible to create the stories of objects through human beings who use them. In the case of this text the human trace may be a careless brushstroke on a third coat paint on the nightstand, an abandoned video cassette inside a nightstand filled with memories of a definite time and place or manufacturing the object in pair to assign different gender roles to each of them.

When the people attempted to understand the objects around them, the time-specific meaning associated with the object by the individual has revealed that the relationship of human with the object is not just passive according to Susan Pearce who wrote “Interpreting objects and collections” in 1994. She defines objects as “both active and passive, and how meaning develops as an interactive process between thing and viewer.” (Pearce 1994: 19) Taking this interaction into consideration means that objects are capable of actively evoking emotions in people that may result in humane relationship with objects and emotional attachments to them. Elaborating these emotional relationships may be helpful for our effort to comprehend the early life and career of objects in this text.

Sherry Turkle, the writer of “Evocative Objects: Things We Think With”, goes one step further and claims that “the objects are able to catalyze self-creation.” (Turkle 2007: 9) This idea offers a deeper connection to daily objects around us that causes co-existence. After admitting the power of an object, it may be misleading to read an identity to it regardless of the objects around the person. Turkle defines these objects that provoke thoughts and feelings as *evocative objects*. (Ibid.) Based on the thought that the human beings have grounds suitable for the act of filling an object with emotional value because “our brain links ideas together in memory.”(Ibid.) Therefore, objects gain a potential to stimulate the physical memory. In case of art production, this potential of stimulation helps the artist to think with the object and then create with it. The most common example of this process can be named as the ready-made art, a term coined by Marcel Duchamp who borrowed it from the clothing industry and modern mass production. MoMA defines the term as follows;

“[The] [t]erm applied from 1915 [and refers] to a commonplace prefabricated object isolated from its functional context and elevated to the status of art by the mere act of an artist’s selection.”¹

Here, the act of the artist stimulates the physical memory of the viewer, who is exposed to the ready-made art object. For instance, a person may carry leftover affects over a domestic object from a past experience related to the place it inhabited and the efficiency it fulfills. The viewer of the art object re-lives these leftover affects when

¹ Matthew Gale. “Art Term: Ready-made.” *Grove Art Online, Oxford University Press, (2009):* http://www.moma.org/collection/theme.php?theme_id=10468

she/he sees a piece of furniture in the exhibit and reconstructs a reaction to the art object through a past experience. (Erickson 1993)

The artworks produced for the specific exhibition entitled “Haneden” will be examined in the light of the relationship between the viewer, the artist and the evocative objects. “Haneden” was first exhibited in FASSART Gallery at SU, in June 2014. The content of the exhibition is the similar to the second exhibition that takes place in a studio/gallery space in Kadikoy, Istanbul in January 2015. The exhibition is co-hosted and promoted by Hush Gallery in Kadikoy. The first exhibition worked as a study for the second one that is the graduation exhibition for the masters program at Sabanci University. In both exhibitions, nightstands are the main actors of the theme.

In this text, the idea of the history of objects is enhanced with the help of a micro historical approach. *Second hand* domestic objects are used as the main medium for this purpose. The common historical approach towards humanity puts mankind in the midpoint of the scientific thought. By mankind being in the center of scientific studies such as history, environmental science or even astronomy, humanity lives calmly in the throne of *the tamer*.

"...İnsanlar kâinatın sahibi olmak üzere yaratıldıkları için, eşya onlara uymak tabiatındadır." (Tanpınar 2001)

"...As human beings are created to possess the universe, objects are meant to adapt them." (Tanpınar 2001)

What happens if we switch roles between the human as the tamer and the object as the tamed one? What if human traces would be the relics of the history defined and the object is the midpoint in the system? As the historian Eduardo Galeano stated, the history of hunting has always blessed the hunter not the hunted, unless the hunted have their own historians. (Galeano 1991: 104) The history of taming also blesses the tamer not the tamed. This text aims to look from the perspective of the tamed ones, the domestic objects. It is not aimed to stay truly objective for both sides. Domestic objects are blessed in the relationship of their users by grasping the task of an historian of tamed.

2. DOMESTIC AS ENTITY

2.1 Domestication & Taming

Domestication is a process of bringing things home, from wild nature to civilization, from public to private. It refers to the human effort to tame the nature and to have sovereignty over it. There are uncountable fields dealing with the study of domestication. The term covers the domestication of media and technologies and the domestication of non-human living things, such as plants and animals. The issue is studied by anthropologists, sociologists, botanists, evolutionists and archaeologists. In this essay, the domestication of objects will be analyzed accordingly.

In the book by Cassidy & Mullin, “Where the Wild Things Are Now: Domestication Reconsidered”, Cassidy states that domestication first took place in human and animal life “between 10 and 12 thousand years ago”. (Cassidy & Mullin 2007: 1) She also expresses that it happened in a time of transition from savagery to barbarianism, when private property was constructed. (Ibid.) With the coming needs of settled living and a massive growth in population, human kind had learned to use plants and animals for their own interests.

Although past research asserted that the emphasis in the process of domestication is the “*human control* and the conversion of animals into property”, as denoted by Cassidy, recent scholars, primarily working outside of anthropology, emphasized the *mutuality* between human the tamer and the domesticates as the tamed ones, rather than emphasizing just *the human control over domesticated*. The idea of cooperation and mutuality even served for the idea that plants and animals are not passive but active, resulting in the idea of *the domestication of humans*. This refers to the idea that also the domesticates are having an active role in the domestication process, possibly being active in domesticating the humans. These thoughts frame the main thesis of this essay; are we taming objects, or are they taming us within the boundaries of the domestic space?

"For instance, there is something new about my hands, a certain way of picking up my pipe or fork. Or else it's the fork, which now has a certain way of having itself picked up, I don't know. A little while ago, just as I was coming into my room, I stopped short because I felt in my hand a cold object, which held my attention through a sort of personality. I opened my hand, looked: I was simply holding the door-knob." (Sartre 1964)

In addition to the analogical concepts of domestication, one can also incorporate the process of naming things around us with the idea of domestication and taming. Penelope Lively mentions the power of language in taming wilderness when we give name to things in her novel *"Moon Tiger"* (Lively 2010: 51)

"I control the world so long as I can name it. [...] Tame the wilderness by describing it, challenge God by learning His hundred names."

According to Carol Kaesuk Yoon, naming all living things in nature is to create an all-encompassing hierarchical system over everything. (Yoon 2010: 4) It is mainly to give an order to life. Although she asserts that the taxonomy disconnects human beings from the things classified, the nature. This means that an effort to understand the world around us – by defining and classifying things – causes to separate us from the reality: Because the human-made classification is not capable of defining the reality of the nature. For the renown environmentalist Henry David Thoreau the earth is not a mere fragment of dead history to work on as it is a fossil, it is a living earth that can not be tamed with human effort. (Thoreau 1988: xiii) Naming things in nature means assuming it is a stable and not in constant flux.

Apart from the naming procedure in nature, another field that deals with the act of human beings naming things is sociology. According to sociologist David Leary, human beings are urged to understand "reality" and whenever that call for understanding comes they look about for "similar instances" in order to categorize the hitherto unknown through words. Names function as the labels of things. Human beings tend to label the experiences with surrounding things to understand them. It is only possible by understanding and defining the unfamiliar to make it familiar. "Familiar", in Latin *"familiaris"*, means "domestic, private, belonging to a family, of a household."²

² http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=familiar&allowed_in_frame=0

Turning the unfamiliar thing into the familiar, bringing things outside into the private also gives person the dominant role in the relationship. Thus, human beings dominate things and give them “a local habitation and a name.” (Leary 1995: 270)

There are even words assigned for general things that are not illegible in terms of perception or memory in a sudden moment of miscommunication or because of the lack of knowledge. These things were given a name, but one we can not link to a specific object anymore. In Turkish these miscellaneous objects are called “şey”. In English the “miscellaneous unspecified objects whose name is either forgotten or unknown”³ are:

“Whatchamacallum, whatchamacallit, thingummy, thingumajig, thingumabob, thingamabob, thingmabob, thingmajig, thingamajig, gizmo, gizmo, gubbins, gimmick, doojigger, doohickey, doodad, whatsit.”(Ibid.)

These names are a proof that is impossible for things to escape the desire of human beings to define and therefore dominate and tame objects of the world. If the naming is a part of domestication process, what is the meaning of the domestic for the human? Considering the word “domestic” comes from the Latin word “*domus*”, house, what is the meaning of the house where things become domestic behind its walls?

2.2 The Meaning of Home

Assuming that domestication starts with bringing things home, I will now draw attention to the meaning and the significance of home in human life. Gaston Bachelard mainly focuses on the power of the house from a psychological point of view and describes the house as a “psychic state” that bespeaks intimacy. (Bachelard 1994: 72) He differentiates between the house where we were born and a home that, as a space, is an “embodiment of home” and “dreams” and also of “subtle shadings of our attachment for a chosen spot” (Bachelard 1994: 15, 4) The house becomes the corner of the world that human beings feel the comfort of home while confronting the vastness of the universe. Bachelard suggests that “the house is our first universe, a real cosmos in every sense of the world.” (Bachelard 1994: 5)

³ <http://www.visualthesaurus.com>

He also expresses that any inhabited space procreates the essence of home, which on the other hand drives human beings to create an imagination of *the home*. This imagination has walls that convey the illusion of protection and comfort. Memory and imagination within the borders of a house deepen the relationship of the inhabitant with the house. This mutual activity sustains the creation of a *home*. Bachelard emphasizes that the chief benefit of the concept of the home is that its protective capacity lets the *daydreaming* inside. It functions as a shelter for the dreamer to have freedom and peace while integrating his/her thoughts, memories and dreams. (Bachelard 1994: 6)

On the other hand, Flusser differentiates between a home and a house, but emphasizes on the meaning of the home rather than the house (the space) as Bachelard does. Flusser expresses his point of view while referring to the things at home and the relationship of a person with these things. In the essay entitled “Taking Up Residence in Homelessness”, he expresses that human beings have dwelled in “a home” (*Wohnung, Haus*) through out a long period of human existence. But they have not possessed a “home” (*Heimat*). (Flusser 2002: 92) By this statement Flusser differentiates between the different meanings of home and emphasizes that the human settlement in its current sense has a relatively short time of existence. (Ibid.) According to Flusser, this meaning comes from “the secret threads that tie the person with a home to people and the things of home.” (Flusser 2002: 93) He explains that these secret threads come from a consciousness beyond adult life into the regions of childhood and past memory. (Ibid.) Although Flusser suggests that there is a connection between the person and the things at home, he denotes that this attachment is rather mysterious and harmful. This attachment results in sanctifying things. In addition, as to Flusser, this reduces freedom by setting limits to the person, and the relationship of object and the person becomes “paganistic”. (Flusser 2002: 94) He refers to the passion towards a fetish object such as a religious icon and limits of such religious bonding to an object when he uses the word *paganistic*.

These limitations induced by things on people can also be observed within the relationship of home and the person. Home is the familiar space that enables a suitable environment for the creation of habits. Its familiarity also comes from the unfamiliarity of the outer world. Hence, the familiar agent, home, has a dialectic relation with the outer world. According to Hegelian analyses of Flusser, this dialectic between home and the world creates the dynamic of consciousness. (Flusser 2002: 100) Gaston Bachelard also defines this dialectic between the home and the outside of home, the

universe, as an “I” and a “non-I”. (Bachelard 1994: 5) Without a home a person is defined as unconscious. Therefore, the home acts as the primary element to find the self in the world, for self-existence. (Ibid.) On the other hand, Flusser argues that it has a contradictory side as well. Although the home gives ground to people in the world, it also benumbs the senses and constricts the perception of being open for the outer unusual. (Flusser 2002: 101)

In reference to the previously mentioned subject of habit, Flusser argues that if the relationship between the home and the world would be called “external dialectic”, there needs to be an “internal dialectic” of the home and the habit as well. The habit helps the person to recognize the unfamiliar as information. First it covers up what the person is used to see at home, and when a strange, unknown object enters it is the habit, the familiar, that makes them recognizable. As Flusser wrote:

“The habit is like a cotton blanket: It covers up and rounds off the edges of phenomena.” (Ibid.)

In this text, these habits and the covering of what is seen everyday are important in order to understand the relationship of the person with the artwork that itself is a domestic object in the exhibition. Additionally, according to Roland Barthes home is always there for an inhabitant, as if it is taken for granted. He suggests that the familiarity benumbs the senses and perception that empties the home as a signifier. “It becomes an empty sign, ready to receive meaning.” (Barthes 1997: 5) More than being ready, it is waiting and attracting meaning. This is the process of what happens when a domestic object is overly assimilated inside a home, it is emptied from the signs assigned by the user. After it is taken out of its habitat and placed in an art space, it waits for its viewer to receive meaning.

2.3 The Relationship of Domestic Object and The Person

As emphasized above, the domesticates can remain “subject-persons” rather than “object-things” in the process of domestication. (Orton 2010) In addition, the possibility of mutuality between domestic objects and the person will be analyzed in the following. Sociologist Karin K. Cetina argues that:

“[...] Object-centered sociality characterizes social relations between individuals by means of objects. The theory posits the “objectualization” of social relations in which objects progressively displace persons as relationship partners and increasingly mediate social relationships.”
(Cetina 1997: 1)

Considering that domestic objects play an active role in relation to the person, Lena Cowen Orlin examines “Taming of the Shrew”, written by Shakespeare, in respect to the *performance of things* in the story rather than focusing on the characters themselves. (Orlin 1993) The story of the play is about tricking a shrew that he’s a lord with the help of assigned social stasis to the objects in accommodation. This makes it the story of objects’ taming a person. She argues that the “things have a cultural project” and she analyzes the objects in order to reveal the nature of their project. (Orlin 1993: 168) She does this analysis anthropologically, based on “the social life” of objects rather than the “stage symbolism of dramatic properties” in the play. She later states that influenced by Arjun Appadurai’s writing, “things have a *social life*” and following “Igor Kopytoff, who suggests that things have a *cultural biography*” and that they, relying on Mary Douglas and Baron Isherwood, “constitute *an information system.*” (Ibid.)

This information system occurs with the object being a signifier that depends on the user of the object as well. Within the social relationship of the object and the user, the person can assign information onto the object to make it act as a signifier for a particular purpose. In case of this particular art exhibition the objects are placed and produced in a specific information system created by the artist. This idea brings us back to the concept of evocative objects, the things to think with which was mentioned beforehand. (Turkle 2007, Orlin 1993)

Orlin also mentions that the objects have their own lifetime inside the commodity state, which is the period of an object in circulation. There is also the time period when the object is out of the circulation system. Breaking the limitation of an object living only within a circulation process and dying after the exchange is done opens new possibilities and establishes a ground for the concept of *the biography of object*. According to Igor Kopytoff, “one should ask questions similar to those one asks about people in doing the biography of a thing.” These possible questions to do a biography of an object are;

“What, sociologically, are the biographical possibilities inherent in its status and in the period and culture, and how are these possibilities realized? Where does the thing come from and who made it? What has been its career so far, and what do people consider to be an ideal career for such things? What are the recognized “ages” or periods in the thing’s “life”, and what are the cultural markers for them? How does the thing’s use change with its age, and what happens to it when it reaches the end of its usefulness? (Appidurai 1988: 66)

In the exhibition, second hand furniture pieces used in the artworks also aim to have biographical references within them. The traces of the time and other factors such as aging, weather, condition, or functionality are kept to strengthen and convey intended meanings. For instance in the work “Tehdit / the Threat”, a possible mud stain by a cat’s paw and careless brush strokes from the previous owner’s painting attempts are testimonials of the object’s past experiences, as in the biography of a nightstand. (Fig. 1) Kopytoff states that there are inevitable cultural responses to such biographical details that shape the attitudes of the viewer to particular objects labeled as art. (Appidurai 1988: 67)

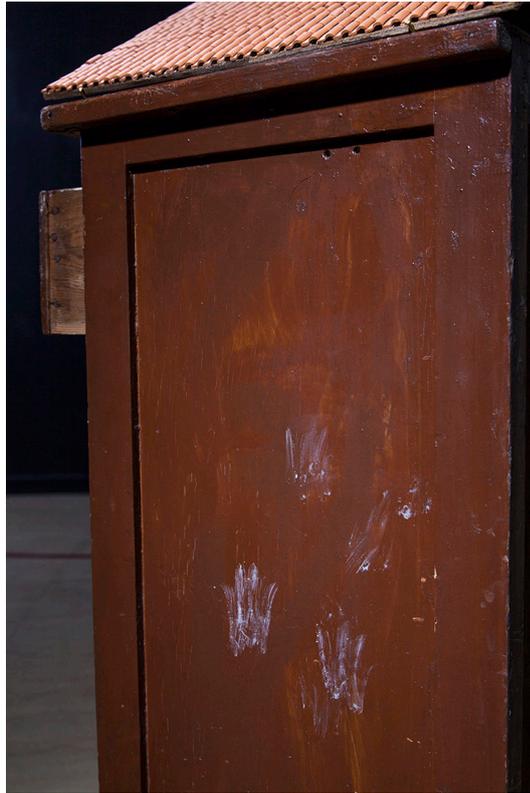


Fig 1 *Tehdit detay* by Neslihan Koyuncu, 2014

In the review of *Taming of a Shrew*, Orlin makes a list of the actions that things are capable of in the story. “They construct an environment; fix identity; register distinction; create a system of value; provoke competition; arouse expectation; substantiate deceit; effect social bounds; offer compensation; resist certain control; perform transactions; legitimate the social order.” (Orlin 1993: 172) Considering the domestic object’s effect on the environment of human beings (the inside and outside of home), the domestic objects concretize the distinction between the natural world and the home. This distinction relies on “what we nonetheless call *creature comforts* that appeal to all the *natural* human senses within the borders of home.” (Ibid.) As Orlin states, comfort is the main indispensable element of a home that apparently comes with the domestic objects into the human environment.

Through the creation of a comfortable zone that belongs to the human self, domestic objects gain power to *fix identity* as well. Orlin suggests that “as the pronoun *my* is coupled with an object – my hounds, my house, my port, my chamber, my goods, my chattels, my household stuff, my fields, my barn – self-definition is asserted through possession.” (Ibid.) (Fig. 2) In his well-known book, the “Way of Seeing”, John Berger defines a term for such people as *spectator-buyer*. He suggests that the spectator-buyer

believes that “she/he will become if she/he buys the product.” (Berger 2008: 134) The object will transform the person “into an object of envy for others.” (Ibid.) This situation is basically about the public image of the person in consumer society. In case of this essay the emphasis is not on the consumer society – the buyer – but the spectator in this equation. Also Clare Hocking defines “objects as mirrors” that reflect the individual identity of the owner by his/her construction of *self* through the objects. (Hocking 2000) Therefore, it is possible to assert that the object can still carry the function of a mirror in the same concept but in a different context such as in the process of interpreting an artwork.



Fig 2 *Sticker* by Neslihan Koyuncu, 2014

“Bütün büyük adamların maiyetlerinde çalışanlara daima elbiselerini ve öteberilerini vermeleri bu yüzdendir. Roma imparatorları, krallar, büyük diktatörler hep kendileri gibi düşünsünler diye eşyalarını dostlarına hediye ederlerdi....Siz farkında olmadan tarihin büyük bir sırrını, bir çeşit psikolojik mekanizmayı keşfettiniz!” (Tanpınar 2001)

“That’s why all great men always donate their old clothes and stuff to their employees. Roman emperors, kings, great dictators used to present their things to their friends so that their friends will think the same with them all the time... You’ve discovered a major secret of history, a sort of psychological mechanism by coincidence!” (Tanpınar 2001)

Neurologically, deciphering the meaning of an artwork differs from reading a road sign. (Veraksa 2011) According to Veraksa the road sign directs the person immediately to his/her consciousness to identify the signified. Contrarily, when a person comes across with a painting, he/she tries to decipher the symbols first by its visual properties. Therefore, the meaning may vary between different viewers because the symbol interpretation is subjective to each viewer compared to a sign reading that needs an objective observation. Veraksa states that:

“In contrast to a sign, a symbol has no one-to-one correspondence to its referent, and can only be used by orientation within its matter. However, the moment interpretation begins to unfold, the symbol itself slips away, and transforms into different systems of meanings.” (Veraksa 2011: 90)

Both Veraksa’s system of meanings and Douglas & Isherwood’s information system mentioned above are going to lead us through the analyses of artworks and the search of a possible creation of myth with the domestic objects.

2.4 The Domestic in Art

According to Christopher Reed, the idea of domesticity is an invention of modern age. (Reed 1996: 7) It is the “repressed Other of modernism”, so Lynne Walker who reviewed Reed’s book, titled “Not at Home: The Suppression of Domesticity in Modern Art and Architecture.” (Walker 1999: 50) Reed cites from the cultural historian Walter Benjamin that the idea of domestic has started after the working space got separated from the living space for the first time in the early 1800’s. This brought a new value to the idea of domesticity in terms of *place*. Other than the attributed definition of a space for just living, the values and the features that are carried with the notion of the domesticity are privacy, comfort and focus on the family in modern age. (Reed 1996)

On the other hand, the modern art did not embrace domestic imagery, as one would expect from that time of period. Reed claims the reason for this is “the conceptual invention of the avant-garde.” (Reed 1996: 7) In his book, Reed defines avant-garde as the following:

“As its military-derived name suggests, the avant-garde (literally advance guard) imagined itself away from home, marching toward glory on the battlefields of culture. Ultimately, in the eyes of the avant-garde, being undomestic came to serve as a guarantee of being art.”(Ibid.)

One of the reasons for the domesticity to be obscured by the avant-garde is that the domestic space is constructed and linked to a “space of femininity” – due to various reasons that are embedded in the way gender was and is being constructed in our societies. Reed mentions this issue when he reviews Griselda Pollock’s studies on the work of women Impressionists. According to her, compared to so called feminine spaces, “dining-rooms, drawing rooms, bedrooms, balconies, terraces, and private gardens – in short the spaces of domesticity”, we can find the masculine spaces are perceived as urban spaces like “the theaters, nightclubs, cafes, and brothels”. (Pollock 1988) Reed says that in Pollock’s argument even when man uses domestic context in his artwork, his perspective is different than a woman’s perspective. As if a woman would be the only one who knows of the “daily routine and the rituals” at home unlike a man, who acts like an “audience” and is only a witness at home, an outsider. As our gender is socially constructed, the home is the central area of these issues of sex in the society and in art.

This issue is still prominent in contemporary art, so that there are woman artists working with metal or wood in the atelier to precisely redeem from the “feminine” references, since those workshops are perceived as “masculine” spaces regarding the creation of art. The turning-away of female artists from traditional “feminine” works such as embroidery and ceramics could be read as a form of resistance regarding the adaption of the cultural code of a deeply patriarchal society that is often remaining unquestioned.

Reed also gives reference to Greenberg, who was an art critic associated with “American Modern art of the mid-20th century.”⁴ He made a demeaning definition of domestic as the “antitheses of art” and degraded it to “kitsch”. According to Greenberg the definition for kitsch is “knick-knacks of the middle class home”. (Reed 1996: 15) This idea of “knick-knacks” leads us to Baudrillard who in his book “For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign“ refers to the house of the bourgeoisie that is packed with furniture and objects. (Baudrillard 1981: 51) This is an example of the domestic objects’ purpose as a signifier for a particular analysis in consumer studies.

⁴ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Clement_Greenberg

"Mutfak dolabını açtı, baktı: Niçin bunca şey ediniyoruz, nasıl birikiyor bunca şey; niçin iki cezvemiz olabiliyor; şu kapağı kırılmış demlik bile niçin atılmadan kalmış burada; şu sapı sallanan tavayı niçin bunca zaman saklamışım, ya boş kavanozlar?"

İnsan bir ömür boyu kaç tava kullanır, kaç tencere gereklidir bir yaşam için?" (Soysal 1976)

"She opened the cupboard and looked inside: Why do we have so many things, how come so many things pile up like this; why on earth do we have two coffee pots; why is that teapot with a broken lid is left here and not thrown away; why have I kept this pan with a loose handle for such a long time, and what about these empty jars?"

How many pans will someone use during his lifetime, how many pots are necessary for a life?" (Soysal 1976)

Returning to the aforementioned state of the domestic in art, tensions have begun to dissolve with the "two independent movements – Pop and feminism". (Reed 1996: 253) According to Reed, these two "made domesticity a central element in their defiance of modernism." (Ibid.) He states that "for feminists, the domestic was not a retreat from the world but the arena where social forces interact with daily life." (Reed 1996: 255) Therefore, the postmodernist wave has come to introduce a new approach to the idea of home and domestic.

BRILLO box, designed by James Harvey in 1961, was appropriated into an artwork by Andy Warhol in 1964. (Fig. 3) When Harvey, himself being an abstract expressionist painter, designed the soap pad box, he did not call it art. Therefore, when Warhol used replicas of BRILLO boxes in a gallery exhibition as an artwork, it stirred discussions on what art actually is and what not. According to the views of Michael Golec in the book titled "The Brillo Box Archive: Aesthetics, Design, and Art", the Brillo box was an embodiment of "rationalization and modernization of domestic life in the United States". (Golec 2008: 16) He suggests that when the BRILLO box was shown within the realm of art by Warhol, "the critic Harold Rosenberg's idea of *action painting* in the art world turned to *scrubbing action* in domestic sphere." (Golec 2008: 9) Also the aforementioned art critic Clement Greenberg who represents modernist antagonism towards the domestic expressed that he was worried about the production of high art in the United States in his article "Avant-Garde and Kitsch". (Ibid.)



Fig 3 *Brillo Boxes* by Andy Warhol, 1964. Installation at The Andy Warhol Museum, ©AWF

On the other hand, Arthur Danto, who is a professor of philosophy and an art critic, stated that the BRILLO boxes were revolutionary in a sense that “they offered a new answer to the philosophical question of the nature of art”⁵. After the impact of BRILLO box on the philosophy of art and aesthetics the *object* gained importance in the art production. “The internal beauty of an object— the ideas it embodied and how it was conceived, the intellectual process of the artist who created the work – became more important features of works of art.” (Ibid.)

After Warhol, artists such as Robert Rauschenberg and Jasper Johns followed the path Warhol started in the late 1950’s. In reference to “Not at home: The Suppression of Domesticity in Modern Art and Architecture” by Reed (1996: 193), Lisa Wainwright analyzed Rauschenberg’s fabrics in terms of reconstructing the domestic space with the art production, referring to his “operation of collecting stuff as a means of constructing a personal narrative.” (Ibid.) Wainwright suggests that Rauschenberg intends to recreate himself in the act of making art while using *memorabilia*. He used found objects – some of them referring to his memories from home and childhood – in his artworks where the objects became both familiar and unfamiliar, ascribed with new meanings. Wainwright expresses that “the collage technique” he used functioned in that “uncertain *gap between art and life*”. (Ibid.)

According to Wainwright, fabrics that Rauschenberg uses in his artworks relate to the home, mostly visible as curtains, clothing and bedspreads. (Reed 1996: 197) In his

⁵ “Aesthetics: Arthur Danto”.

<http://www.warhol.org/education/resourceslessons/Aesthetics--Arthur-Danto/>

painting titled *Satellite* he uses laces, prints and even a pair of socks on the canvas. (Fig. 4) Since the artist – himself being a gay – was struggling with “the machismo posing of the New York School”⁶, traces of dealing with gender issues through “gender-assigned characteristics of domesticity and comfort” can be observed in his artworks. (Ibid.)

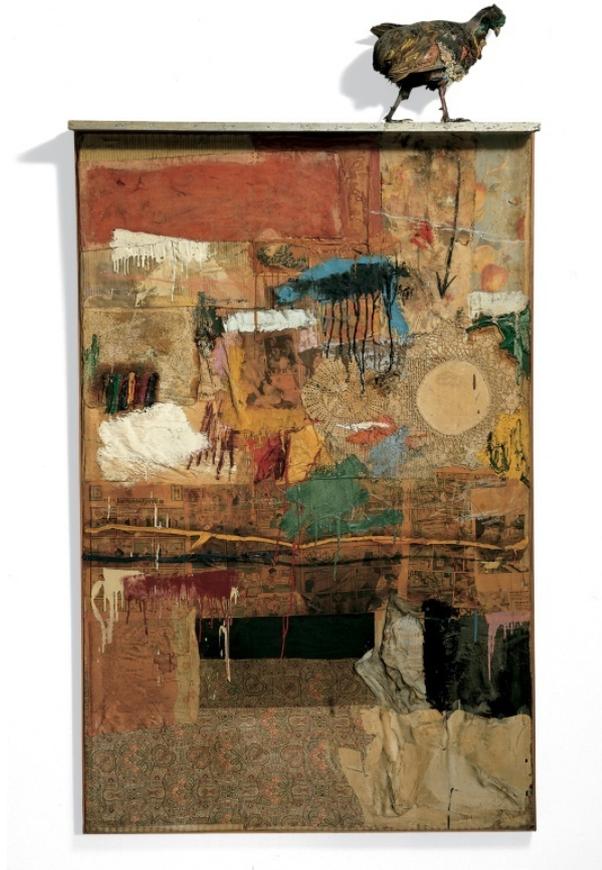


Fig 4 *Satellite* by Robert Rauschenberg, 1955. Whitney Museum of American Art, New York.

Another example of artist who deals with domesticity is Edward Kienholz. He makes “freestanding, life-size sculptures, many in the tableau art form, of full-size reconstructed spaces, human forms, and assemblages of objects.” (Cole 2004: 12) In his reconstructions Kienholz sometimes uses domestic objects to create a scene from a house depending on the concept. In the work titled *The Wait* (1964-65) Kienholz creates an old woman figure on a chair and surrounds the figure with “things that define her now-small world.” (Ibid.) (Fig. 5) According to Ardra Cole, who wrote an essay about Kienholz’ retrospective exhibition in 1996 (Whitney Museum of American Art, New York), the old woman figure within the installation “is simultaneously weighed down

⁶ P. Walsh, “Index of Selected Artists in the Collection”, *Allen Memorial Art Museum*. http://www.oberlin.edu/amam/Warhol_BrilloBoxes.htm

and comforted by the memories, as she grows old, alone, surrounded by decaying domesticity.” (Ibid.) Cole also mentions about the capacity of his works to “remain fresh wounds” and scars in our memory. (Cole 2004: 14) He mostly expects the viewer to be a voyeur in his installations. He sometimes coerces the viewer to be active participants by putting obstacles to overcome. This obstacle can be a stair to climb up or a skirt to lift in order to discover what is hidden underneath. The viewer needs to participate in order to satisfy his/her voyeurism. In addition to the coerced participation, the assembled objects and the whole scenery capture the viewer into its realism and make the viewer *think with the objects*. Here is the reaction of Ardra Cole as a viewer of Kienholz artworks:

“I laughed and cried; I felt pain, revulsion, shame, pity; I remembered, imagined, denied, confessed, promised - all the while aware that, as a viewer, my role was significant. The artists' role was to fire me up - make me feel and think. They did their job and well. The rest was up to me.” (Ibid.)

As Cole states, Kienholz is capable of making the viewer feel and think with the objects rather than words by creating realism with collective fear. He is called as making “*provocative art*” with *evocative objects* as it is mentioned in the text.



Fig 5 *The Wait* by Edward Kienholz, 1964-65. (c) Edward Kienholz

As it is mentioned before that the domesticity was mainly involved in art world through feminist art movement. In the defiance of modernism domesticity became a central element in feminist art. Domestic space was seen as an arena where social forces interact daily life and the subject of domesticity entered into the art realm accordingly. The most epic feminist art work exemplifies this situation is *The Dinner Party* by Judy Chicago exhibited in 1979 for the first time. (Fig. 6) This work brings out the forgotten names of historical woman figures who were not appreciated in male-dominated histories. The artist used individually symbolic, china-painted plates and table runners with embroidery. The dinner table represents a social gathering with the glory of sacramental tradition but also it has references to domesticity because of the domestic objects used in the installation.



Fig 6 *The Dinner Party* by Judy Chicago, 1975-1979. Brooklyn Museum, New York.

Moving forward to contemporary examples of domestic use in art, London based artist Theo Kaccoufa creates mainly kinetic art works with inanimate domestic objects. His kinetic furniture series and domestic appliances, exhibited in 2008, include domestic references. As he uses furniture pieces to create his own language for conveying a message, his chair work titled “Monument to the Ism” is critical of 20th century vigorous art movements’ recent struggle. (Fig. 7) In the work “Fountain” he

uses a bedroom drawer to create a flowing waterfall from the drawers. (Fig. 8) As in the Haneden exhibition, the work “Tehdit” is also used with a small amount of water as a medium in order to convey a message.



Fig 7 (on the left) *Kinetic Furniture series* by Theo Kaccoufa, 2008. Flower East, London.
Fig 8 (on the right) *Fountain* by Theo Kaccoufa, 1994. Flower East, London.

In addition to Kaccoufa’s kinetic furniture pieces, Julie Schenkelberg uses domestic objects in a more expressive way in her home installations. (Fig. 9) According to the reporter Forrest Perrine, the artist creates domestic earthquakes that represent a collective memory through the domestic objects in every home. (Forrest 2012) She also expresses that the piles of objects and our memories are interlinked with each other and situated in our brain. In the work “Symptomatic Constant” she relates the piles of domestic objects to a shipwreck in the Midwest. (Schenkelberg 2014) (Fig. 10, Fig. 11) She states that “the installation emerges from its firm grounding of earth and envisioned water, reaching toward the tranquil place in the sky beyond the storm.” (Ibid.) She touches the fragile souls of abandoned objects in decay as much as I intended to do so in Haneden with the second hand furniture pieces. Both contemporary artists use water in their connection to domestic place. In this text the situation of water will be probed within personal parameters of the psychic state.



Fig 9 *In The Supper Rooms* by Julie Schenkelberg, 2010. Asya Geisberg Gallery, New York.



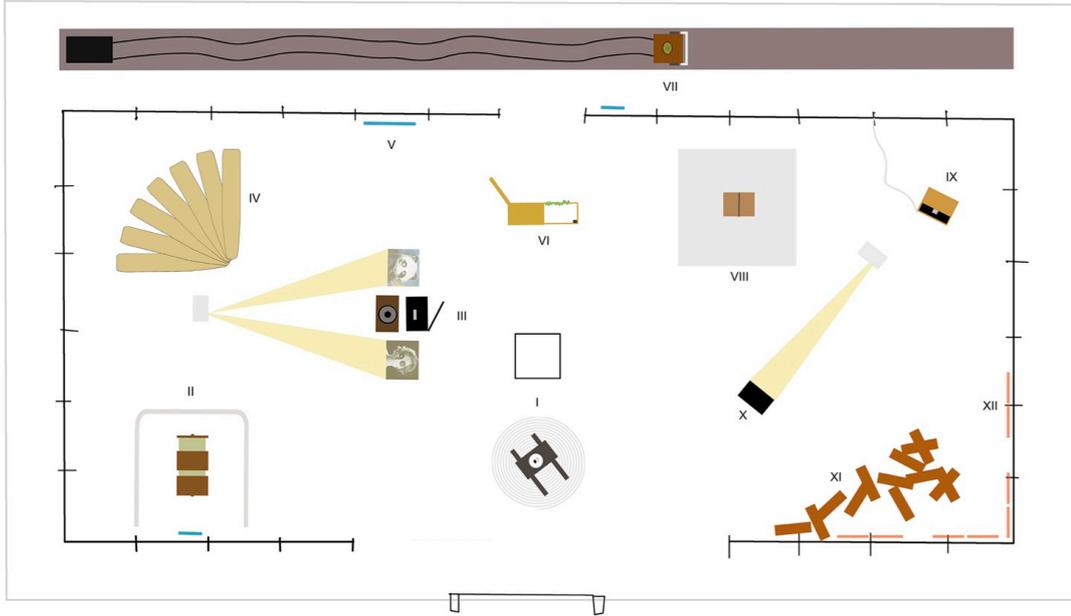
Fig 10 (on the left) *Symptomatic Constant* by Julie Schenkelberg, 2014. SiTE: LAB at The Morton, Michigan.

Fig 11 (on the right) *Symptomatic Constant* detail

3. WORKS

In the first exhibition held in FASS Art Gallery, I intended to create an architectural structure of a house by neatly positioning each piece. (Fig. 12, Fig. 13) It was not a rigid structure, but more following the traces of the rooms and of common family affairs within a home. Some of the works from the first exhibition were not used in the second one because of the size of the space (the second exhibition space was much smaller.) In addition to that, I took the time to judge the quality of the pieces in relation to each other, and decided that some of them needed more work and thought until they were ready to be integrated in the exhibition. In this chapter I will analyze each work that was realized in the studio in two years.

Exhibition Plan



- | | | |
|------------------------|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| I Evladiyelik | V Aile Portreleri / Family portraits | IX İş / Business |
| II Ayıp | VI Boşanmış / Divorcee | X Anı / Memory |
| III Zamanlama / Timing | VII Rüya / Dream | XI Sahip / Keeper |
| IV Merdiven / Stairs | VIII Tehdit / Threat | XII Uyku dili / Language of sleep |

Fig 12 *Exhibition Plan of Haneden vol. I*, June 2014. Fass Art Gallery, Istanbul.



Fig 13 *Installation view Haneden vol. 1*, June 2014. Fass Art Gallery, Istanbul.

3.1 Iron Boards: Staircase of Home

The work titled “*Çocuk Masası / Kids Table*” involves seven handcrafted wooden iron boards. (Fig. 14) They are aligned to form a spiral staircase reaching to the wall of the gallery. The thought here was to represent the curiosity and eagerness of a child towards the world outside of a home. This world promises a variety of possibilities that lie beyond the safety zone within the walls of home. The origin of the idea derives from my personal memory. In this way the artwork functions as a *souvenir* as Reed (1996) gives the definition from Susan Stewart’s book “On Longing Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection”:

“The souvenir must be removed from its context in order to serve as a trace of it, but it must also be restored through narrative and/or reverie.” (Stewart 1984: 135)

In Turkey, gender roles inside a family are strengthened with the daily practices of mother and father figures. If the mother is a *housewife* she is responsible with the orderliness of the house, meaning tidying, cleaning, cooking, washing clothes and

ironing. Therefore, a daughter watches her mother doing housework in a daily routine, most likely adapting and incorporating this structure without questioning or challenging it.



Fig 14 *Çocuk Masası* by Neslihan Koyuncu, 2014. Fass Art Gallery, Istanbul.

When my mother became seriously ill in 2013, I took care of her, and found myself in the position of the traditional housewife. I was responsible for the ironing, that demands skill and *perfection*. While I was ironing and simulating my mother, I realized that the relationship I have with the iron board is most likely a different one than my mother's. The object rekindled past memories when as a child I used it not as an iron board but as a *drawing table*. By means of the adjustable height of the iron board, the drawing table was raised higher as I grew up each and every year. After I realized what the object signifies to me, in the exhibition I used it as a symbol for resisting stereotype gender roles. The spiral staircase form supports the structural concept of the house by questioning the possibility of going outside.

3.2 Nightstands: Construction of Home

In the exhibition Haneden, I tried to reveal the poetic possibilities of ordinary objects, like Bachelard suggests with the everyday used words, such as drawer. (Bachelard 1994: 74) As to Bachelard, Henri Bergson assigns the role of controversial metaphor to the word of *drawer* in “L’Evolution creatrice”. He used the word, the concept of drawer in the meaning of “classified thinking”. (Bachelard 1994: 75) In the exhibition Haneden, nightstands are being displayed as metaphors and used as a medium to impersonate certain characters, gender issues, domestic facts as well as phenomena inside a home. During my mandatory visit to the family home in Antalya for 4 months, I had the chance to start to narrate stories with nightstand drawings on my sketchbook. (Fig. 15)

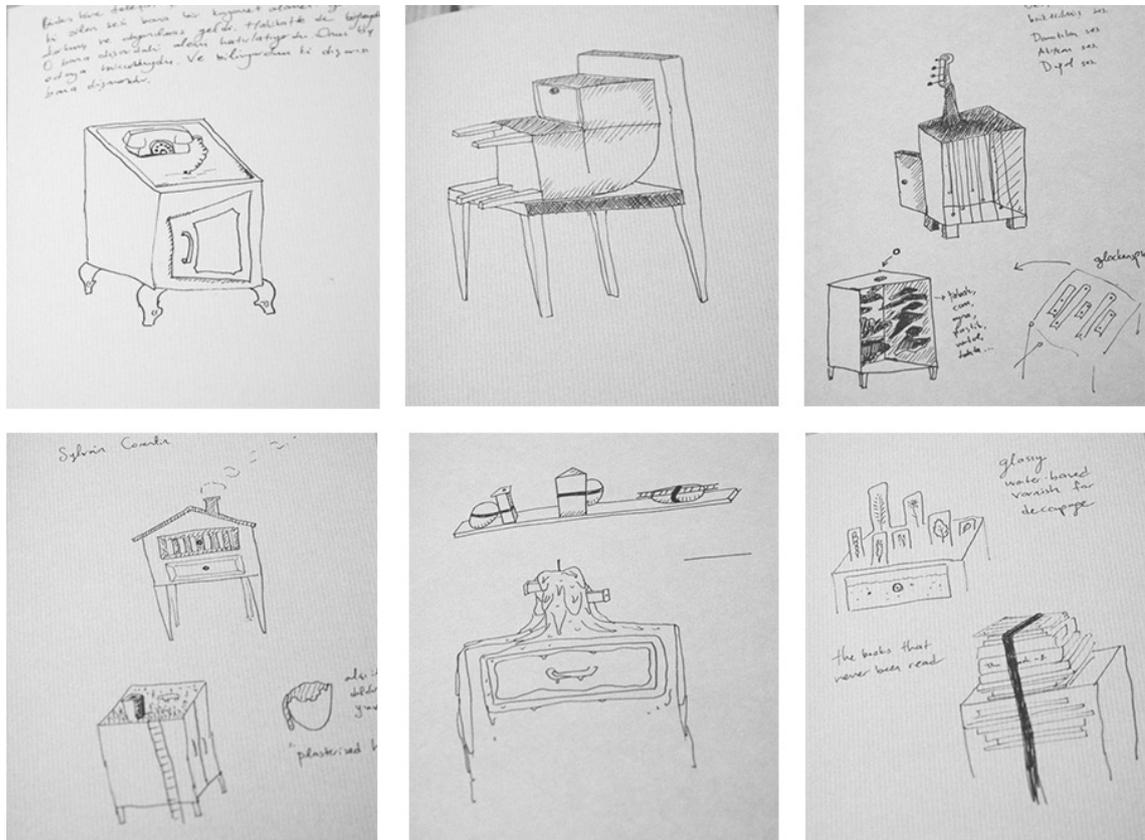


Fig 15 Nightstand sketches

The reason for using nightstands is related to the nature of the object. First of all, it is positioned just next to a person when he/she sleeps in his/her bedroom. Nightstands have also drawers or chests, “the hiding-places in which human beings, great dreamers

of locks, keep or hide their secrets.” (Bachelard 1994: 74) Therefore, one might say that the relationship of a human being with a nightstand has the potential to reach a deeper level than it is usually the case with a domestic appliance.

a. “*Yadigar / Souvenir*”

This work is made of found objects (nightstand, VHS cassette), polyester, metal, muslin and mirrors. (Fig. 16) When I bought my first nightstand I found a VHS cassette forgotten inside the lilac nightstand. This piece represents the origin of the series and the starting point of the idea of the thematic approach. After I inserted the cassette into a player, I realized this abandoned object is destined to have a different *career* in its life. The nightstand reminded me that an object can have a biography and the cassette is the biographical reminiscent of the object. The cassette was a 1-hour film of a conservative wedding celebration inside an unknown mansion recorded in 2002. (Fig. 17) The wedding celebration has Turkish women and men separately performing traditional wedding dances.

"Eşyaların biçimleri uzamış, bitkin ve hantallaşmış. Düş görüyor gibi bir hali var eşyaların; bitki ve maden gibi uyurgezer bir yaşamları var sanki."
(Baudelaire & Yücel 2009)

"The forms of objects are elongated, weary and bulky. As if the objects are dreaming; as if they are sleepwalkers like a plant or a piece of earth."
(Baudelaire & Yücel 2009)

After a long study, I decided to project the found video on the surface of the nightstand since in their destiny they are inseparable. A particular memory was turned up within that VHS cassette and then left and forgotten inside a nightstand to die, as if the nightstand was a wooden *coffin*. But in the end, somehow this memory was destined to be brought back to existence, finding new life and new spectators within an artwork. In this framework, the artwork acted as a memorial to that past event and the cassette as a relic for the particular place and time in the video. Therefore, I embedded the cassette onto the nightstand approximating a monument. (Fig. 18)



Fig 16 (on the left) *Yadigar* by Neslihan Koyuncu, 2014. Fass Art Gallery, Istanbul.
Fig 17 (on the right) *Yadigar* video screenshot



Fig. 18 *Yadigar* detail

The feeling of eternity that a memorial intends to give is also planned with the use of the video on the artwork. Filtered through a very fragile cloth the video then is projected onto the mirror. The reflection of the video on the surface of the mirror box goes towards infinity implying that feeling of eternity inside the nightstand. (Fig. 19)

The cloth muslin (*tülbent bezi*) that filters the video in this artwork is a cloth commonly used by Muslim women to cover their heads. This filtering action is necessary for the technique of projection, but it is also meaningful in terms of the subject of the video. Since the subjects of the video are mostly women wearing headscarves, the muslin carries the role of the woman trace. In addition to this piece, muslin is used in a similar way in a different artwork titled “*Evladiyelik*”.

“*Yadigar*” circles around the topic of memory in the construction of a home as it is mentioned above. In addition to that, as the iron boards are the staircases of a home, this piece is the representation of the memory as explained in Flusser’s and Bachelard’s words: Home is a shelter where the person and the things are connected to each other through the secret threads of memories. (Flusser 2002, Bachelard 1994)

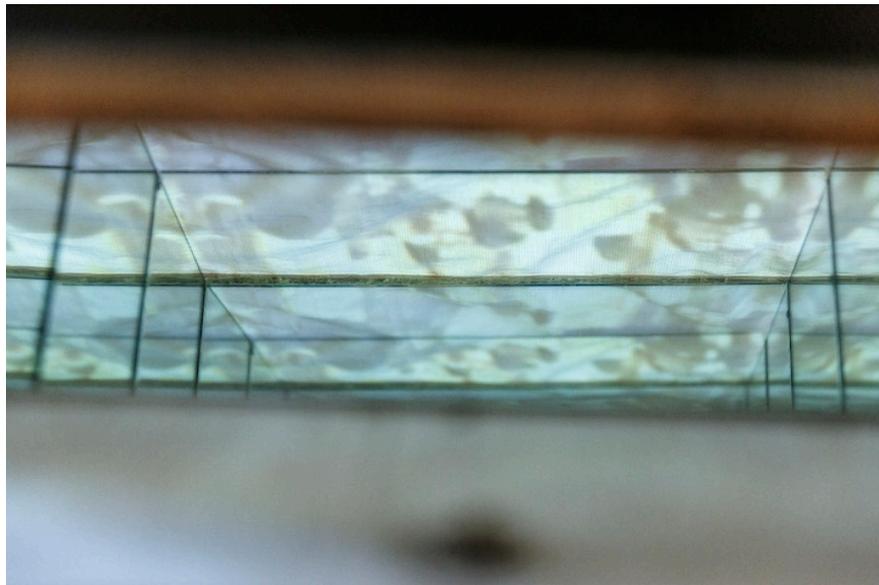


Fig 19 *Yadigar* detail

b. “*İş / Business*”

The work again is made of found objects (nightstand, briefcase, fluorescent light, fabric coated cable, bulb), polyester, polyurethane and velvet. (Fig. 20) As in its title, this piece represents the working male figure of the family. It appears as an altar to manhood. Since the nightstand is the most common hiding-place for secrets, as mentioned before, the secrets of a *husband* lie in this nightstand as well. In Turkish households it is common that disloyalty of a husband or a wife happens in guise of a

business work. The husband is a figure who performs a different role beyond the walls of home, while the life of a traditional housewife is mostly bound to be performed at home. A briefcase is the only item the man brings back home from the world outside. It functions like a movable nightstand that carries a similar meaning in terms of a hiding-place almost like a movable home for the husband that he locks with a pass codes, just like the home is the shelter of the family who locks the door with a key. A briefcase does not belong to a home but an office, so as an object it demands to go out of home; it is the exit ticket of the male figure. While this piece represents the gateway of home for the one member who has a life outside, it exposes the dirty clothes the husband tends to hide from the household. (Fig. 21)



Fig 20 (on the left) *Business* by Neslihan Koyuncu, 2014. Fass Art Gallery, Istanbul.
Fig 21 (on the right) *Business detail*

c. “*Ayip / Shame*”

Media used in this work are also found objects: nightstands, lacework, curtain rail, curtain rings, bulb, fabric coated cable, plastic cover and a motor. (Fig. 22) This piece implies to be the bedroom of the home within the exhibition. As it is the nature of nightstands, they are mostly sold in pairs. One for the husband and the other one is for

the wife, as if nightstands are separated into female and male gender categories themselves. This couple of nightstands is united with a single elongated drawer moving constantly into each other with the help of an electrical motor and gears.

In his book, Reed (1996) quotes Christine Poggi's "Vitto Acconci's Bad Dream of Domesticity", defining the *myths of home*. According to Reed "the home is associated with patriarchal power and authority, and with the sexual repression the nuclear family enforces." (Reed 1996: 238) Regarding this definition of sexuality inside the home, the action of the drawer within the artwork symbolizes the act of intercourse between husband and wife behind the locked doors and shut curtains of the private space, the bedroom. The rules of privacy automatically entail the counter reaction in case the rules are broken – shame. As in the work "*İş / Business*", this artwork also implies what is hidden inside. Plastic cover with laces on its edge turns the viewer inevitably into a voyeur through the transparency of the material. This fragile plastic cover is also used in the work "*Tehdit / Threat*" in the role of an inadequate protection against the threats of living.



Fig 22 *Ayıp* by Neslihan Koyuncu, 2014. Fass Art Gallery, Istanbul.

d. “*Zaman / Time*”

When the subject is about a space, one may consider the effect of time within that space. This work aims to represent time within the objective of constructing a home in the exhibition. Again, the work is produced with found objects (nightstands, metal clock, plastic clock motors, speaker, glass jar), particles of Styrofoam, a mirror, polyester and plush. (Fig. 23) I positioned a mechanic clock with a panda shaking his head from one side to the other as every second goes by on the surface of a nightstand. (Fig. 24) The mirror placed just in front of the clock actually blocks the person to see the time. (Fig. 25) Therefore, the clock shows the time for itself only losing its one and only aim of existence. There are twenty clock motors positioned inside the nightstand that are supposed to work perfectly. Because they are positioned so close to each other, their hands prevent themselves from running the time but they continue ticking anyway. This situation also tends to make the viewer loose the rationality of time again. (Fig. 26) On the other nightstand, there are two synchronized videos projected on each side of the nightstand. These videos include the record of the shaking panda on the old clock and the real person mimicking head shaking of the panda. (Fig. 27)

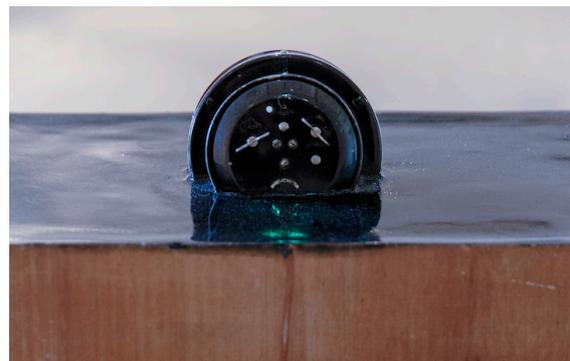


Fig 23 (on the left) *Zaman* by Neslihan Koyuncu, 2014. Fass Art Gallery, Istanbul.
Fig 24 (on the right) *Zaman detail*

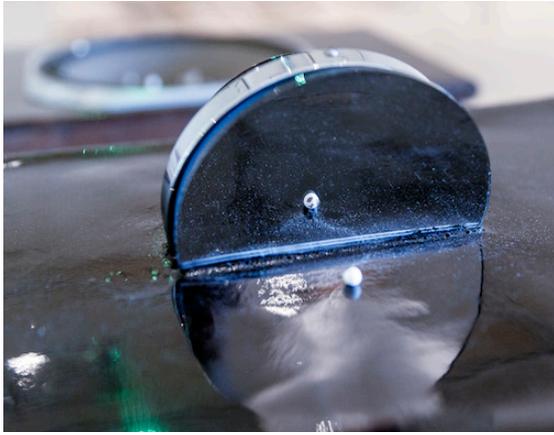


Fig 25 (on the left) *Zaman detail*



Fig 26 *Zaman detail*



Fig 27 *Zaman video screenshot*

On the same nightstand there is an old speaker playing the ticking sound of the clock. The viewers are encouraged and expected to place Styrofoam particles – panda heads – on the speaker in order to make them jump by the beat of the tick-tocks. (Fig. 28) The main aim of the image of the panda has no sense at all. The absurdity of the image intends to create an irrational icon by giving significance to an unworthy image. This idea is connected to the artistic interpretation of time in daily life. It is a critical approach for the tendency of humanity to attach particular importance to the notion of

time in everyday life. It aims to criticize the effort of rationalization towards time by dividing it into days and hours to make it countable. So that *time makes sense* and human beings may convince themselves that they are even capable of *taming the time*.



Fig 28 *Zaman detail*

By this effort, human beings make themselves captivated inside the limitations of time that they try to define. This emphasis is visible in every pattern of artwork. For instance the panda head shaped Styrofoam particles are repetitively jumping but at the same time, they are captivated inside the boundaries of the speaker. As in the video, the figure and the panda on the clock also repetitively shake their heads, but in the end the action leads them nowhere. Therefore, repetitive actions guide the person to confinement and passivity, and in the end they both fail to act. All repetitive patterns within the artworks are aimed to question the meaning and the aim of the daily routines. The overusing elements within the artworks support the feeling of non-sense and aimlessness in time.

e. “*Evladiyelik*”

This work is quite specific to its location in terms of its concept. “Evladiyelik” meaning, “very durable, fit to be an heirloom” in the dictionary of Redhouse. In Turkish culture its having one word definition for this situation shows the importance given to it. It refers to a cultural heritage regarding the object relations, gender roles and marriage. The objects that are named as *evladiyelik*, are sometimes purchased or collected for the child’s dowry from the day the baby girl or boy was born. Therefore something that is “*evladiyelik*” needs to be durable or ageless. According to Orlin, “the objects demand *protection*, which is the objective of the dowry negotiations and the terms of inheritance.” (Orlin 1993: 178) It may become a domestic appliance, a piece of furniture or an embroidery work for decorating the home. The dowry culture is mainly focused on girls, although mother figures collect dowry for boys as well. The girl is raised to become a bride and the boy to be a groom. The responsibility of collecting and growing the dowry is given to the girl when she is mature enough. Mostly in rural areas, the girl has to show off with her dowry after the engagement, just like she is exhibiting art. The neighbors and relatives see the exhibit and decide whether she is well prepared enough or not, judging her on what they see and deciding whether or not she will be a successful bride, wife, housewife and mother – this being the ultimate success for a girl or young woman within a patriarchal society.

In the artwork this phenomenon is handled by using the nightstand as an empty canvas. In the first Haneden exhibition this piece is positioned in the entrance as a symbol of where the family has its roots. This work is made out of found objects (nightstand, electric snow globe, fabric coated cable and bulb), plastic wrap, wood, muslin and lace. (Fig. 29) Rocker legs are attached to the nightstand as if it is a cradle to emphasize the meaning of the word *evladiyelik*. In his book “The Poetics of Space” Bachelard also associates the house to a large *cradle*, which is the human being’s first world that he is cast into.

“Life begins well, it begins enclosed, protected, all warm in the bosom of the house.” (Bachelard 1994: 7)

Under the nightstand/cradle, there is a rug made of muslin that transforms into a spiral formed headscarf. The spiral is a symbolic form for the infinity. In this case the

infinity is a pessimist or perhaps unrealistic provision for the destiny of this tradition within the culture. According to Reed's aforementioned quotation of Poggi, the myth of home that being a feminine realm is common in the society of Turkey as well. (Reed 1996: 238) The respective cultural codes persist within incorporated individual attitudes and beliefs.

Here, the muslin is again the symbol of the woman figure as in the work "*Yadigar/Souvenir*". This time it functions as a protection of a mother, who also maintains the persistence of the cultural code for the myth of home. In a way with this piece I procure the dowry of my own since it is handcrafted by my own mother.



Fig 29 *Evladiyelik* by Neslihan Koyuncu, 2014. Fass Art Gallery, Istanbul

f. “*Metamorfoz / Metamorphosis*”

The work is again made using a nightstand, wood and ivy. (Fig. 30) The nightstand has a broken leg when I bought it from a local flea market. This work represents the *object* itself in my construction of home. It emphasizes the change an object undergoes from a domestic object to an art object when it is placed in an art gallery. The distinction of the familiar and the uncanny as mentioned before is intended to be delivered in the sight of the viewers.

In the first exhibition, I grew the ivy inside the nightstand reaching the outside from a hole on the side to complete the other half of the carving. (Fig. 31) I exhibit it incomplete and let it continue its growth in the gallery space. In this work the missing half is projected with a wireframe carried by the fourth broken foot of the original. Therefore the necessary grounding for this object to undergo a metamorphosis is maintained.



Fig 30 (on the left) *Metamorfoz* by Neslihan Koyuncu, 2014. Fass Art Gallery, Istanbul.
Fig 31 (on the right) *Metamorfoz* detail

g. “*Rüya / The Dream*”

The work is built with found objects (a nightstand, a cactus, rubber wheels, plastic cover) and a metal sponge, aluminum, metal, wood and stamp ink. (Fig. 32) This piece aims to emphasize the daydream under the roof of home as Bachelard (1994) gives credit to its importance. When daydreams carry you to somewhere else but house, this elsewhere that is “not lodged in the houses of the past” becomes immense. (Bachelard 1994: 184)

The work is enacting a personal dream in which it was raining cactus spines from cactus clouds in the sky. The scene from the dream is embedded onto the nightstand and the viewer is expected to carry a cactus and *activate* the dream again. (Fig. 33) The sentence “Dream is destiny” is carved out of the rubber wheels transforming the wheels to roll-on rubber stamps. (Fig. 34) The viewer may guide the nightstand over the large inkpad on the floor and then roll it on the plastic path to leave the aforementioned stamp-marks on the floor. In a way the viewer reactivates the dream as if the ink marks are “drops of cactus spines raining from the cactus clouds”. (Fig. 35) This piece is located out of the main gallery space to represent the subconscious, where the dreams are created, in the construction of home.



Fig 32 (on the left) *Rüya* by Neslihan Koyuncu, 2014. Fass Art Gallery, Istanbul.

Fig 33 (middle) *Rüya* detail

Fig 34 (on the right) *Rüya* detail



Fig 35 *Rüya* detail

h. “*Tehdit / Threat*”

Bachelard also expresses that “the daydream transports the dreamer outside the immediate world to a world that bears the mark of infinity.” (Bachelard 1994: 183) This piece deals with the issue of “bearing the mark of infinity.” In this final work of nightstand series, “*Tehdit / Threat*” is the only piece that is previously exhibited in a group show and had a singular life of its own compared to the other pieces. One reason for its individuality may be that this work aims to represent the cosmos and the home itself within my construction of home. Unlike the others that have micro approaches to the specific issues around the notion of home this piece intends to have a macro approach. In other words, this nightstand is the *home*.

It is made of a nightstand that has a roof built using model roof tiles, plastic cover sheeting and water. (Fig.36) The emphasis of the work is the potential naivety of feeling safe under the roof of a house while confronting the vastness of the cosmos. Home is our corner in the world where we feel safe and protected. “It is our first universe, a real cosmos in every sense of the word.” (Bachelard 1994: 4) On the other hand, the outside world with its *immensity* is mysterious, concealing all sounds, colors and tracks with its “universal whiteness”. (Bachelard 1994: 41) Therefore, the human being “experiences all the qualities of intimacy” within the borders of home with “increased intensity”. (Ibid.)

“Çatımızın altında yaşayan uysal enikler
Nasıl telaşa kapılır ürkerler,
Silkinip doğrulurlar ansızın.” (Lucretius, Uyar & Uyar 2000)

“The tamed puppies living under our roof
How they get panicked and scared,
Then shake off and stand up all of a sudden.” (Lucretius, Uyar & Uyar
2000)

Bachelard also picks up on Baudelaire’s definition of immensity that is the word of *vast*. According to Bachelard, Baudelaire finds the *vast* inside the human being whose “poetic fate is to be the mirror of immensity.” Bachelard also interprets Baudelaire’s use of the word and says that, as if Baudelaire wants the reader to pronounce the word, *vast*, he places it on our breathing, “which must be slow and

calm.“ He also suggests that “the word evokes calm, peace and serenity” in spite of what it means. (Bachelard 1994: 196) Therefore, the dynamic rivalry between house and the universe is projected between the nightstand and the massive plastic cover filled with water that signifies the possible threats coming from outside world.



Fig 36 *Tehdit* by Neslihan Koyuncu, 2014

Water is obviously a personal symbol coming from the deep corners of my mind related to the family. I grew up in Antalya, a coastal city built next to waterfront with an endless horizon line that evokes feelings of immensity. (Fig. 37) Water naturally emanates when I recall the definition of a home from my childhood memories. I now realize that there are water images even in my older photographic works and paintings. (Fig. 38, Fig. 39) According to Sigmund Freud, “the dream element is itself a *symbol* of the unconscious dream thought.” (Freud 1920) He also mentions the connotation of water in dreams according to psychoanalysis, stating that the regular meaning of water in a dream is defined as the birth of the human being since “every single mammal, every human being, lived the first part of his existence in the water.” (Ibid.) In addition some writers such as Helen V. Emmitt, Mary Jane Lupton have also

situated “drowning as a return to the womb” and expressed water as a *feminine* symbol.
(Cregan-Reid 2005: 215)



Fig 37 *Sona Kalan / Straggler* by Neslihan Koyuncu, 2013



Fig 38 (on the left) *Varolmanın Tedirginliği* by Neslihan Koyuncu, 2014
Fig 39 (on the right) *Su altı / Underwater* by Neslihan Koyuncu, 2012

3.3 Work In Progress: Outside of Home

During my graduate studies I mainly focused on the objects and their stories at home and afterwards. These works and ideas have started to evolve into a concept out of home. While going beyond the walls of house, the aim is to go deeper into the roots of existence and free the inhabitant from the restraints of the comfort. After the series of nightstands and domestic objects that are human-made, I had an inclination towards organic forms that are comparatively free from human touch and free of any possible narrative before the artist's interference. Concrete as a material is open to be shaped freely and still has connections to the house in its period of construction. Its reference of pre-home period also helps for going into the roots of home within the artwork.

I began this journey with the understanding of “that objects, narratives, memories and space are woven into a complex, expanding web – each fragment of which gives meaning to all the others.” (Turkle 2007) Keeping this notion in mind, I decided to merge two separate spaces, the sea and the home, in an artwork. I planned to make a room full of concrete sea wall-to-wall, implementing a memory of my own in it. (Fig. 40) The memory belongs to a calm moment of child figure swimming upside down with a sea bagel before someone saved her from drowning. (Fig. 41) As Turkle mentioned that the web of meanings are woven by the interaction of the figure, the material, the referred space and the real space.



Fig 40 *Model of the sea installation*
Fig 41 *Model of figure with sea bagel*

Due to impossibilities regarding the time and space, only one module of the sculpture is realized. (Fig. 42) The idea of the figure sculpture is transferred to a smaller scale that will be realized in the future. In the process, I grew away from a definite inclination of personal memory to be able to emphasize the intactness of an object. For

the second stage I used concrete and real water to make miniature natural pools. (Fig. 43, Fig. 44) In a way, the untamable nature is objectified within the borders of art production. In every stage water stays as the main symbol of the artist.

In the end I took a step away from concrete material and became intrigued by the rawness of natural stones found on earth. I intended to rationalize the nature of the stones in a way that I geometricized the organic surfaces in mind and degraded them into facet outlines. As if creating a dictionary from a definite language, stone samples and organic materials are lined up in a row with their new agenda. (Fig. 45) Plastic counting bars are used as a scale to make the organic surfaces measurable. All these works and ideas are in progress and will continue after the graduation.



Fig 42 (on the left) *Module from sea installation*



Fig 43 *Pool no. 1*



Fig 44 *Pool no. 2*

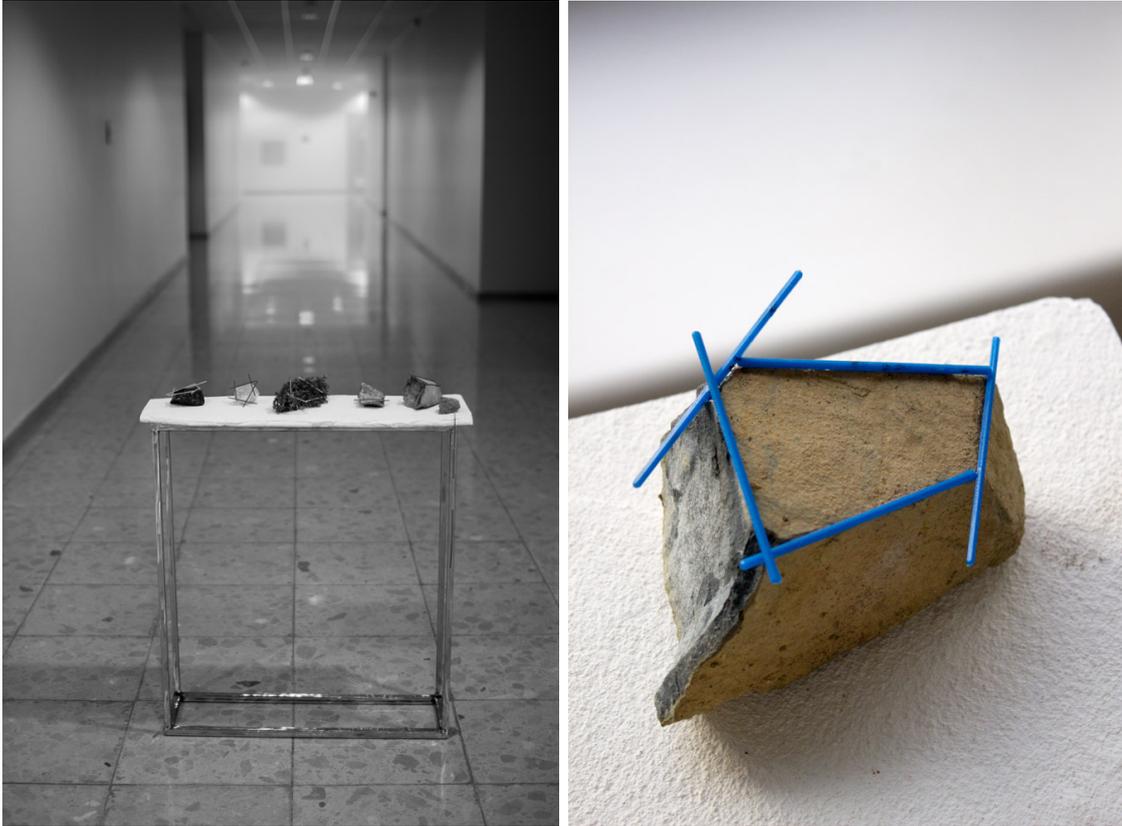


Fig 45 *Taming Nature* by Neslihan Koyuncu, 2014

4. CONCLUSION

Human beings are surrounded by a structural system that they themselves structure (Bourdieu, *Distinction* (1984) *opus operatum* and *modus operandi*), that is controlled through a *code of signification*. (Scott 2007) This code of signs are embedded into the structure of life resulting in the creation of *sign-objects*. The structural system organizes the sign-objects, meaning “each sign [is] appropriated and consumed by its user for its specific, culturally produced meanings.” (Scott 2007: 14) In the Haneden exhibition it is exactly these meanings that I intended to create within the *mythologies* of domestic objects by specific orchestration that resumes in the activation of all the senses. As Roland Barthes (1977) stated, it is sought to reveal the complexity beneath the simplicity of our *everyday cultural landscape*, interpreting the landscape “according to the memory of the body”, which is the childhood. (Barthes 1977: 20) Keeping in mind that the memory plays a big role in reading landscapes, the objects inside the exhibition space are meant to rekindle past memories of the viewer. In this respect, the meanings of home and domestic objects are examined throughout the text in relation to the dichotomy between the inhabitants of the home and the viewers of the art objects. The possible secret histories of the second hand objects are approached with new stories assigned to them. Therefore the phenomenon of *the biography of an object* is emphasized focusing on its new life as an art object. By demonstrating a polyvocality between different nightstands and their narratives, it is expressed that the objects may interact with each other as proof of their active beings.

“Ama bir karyolanı alt tarafı anlamsız bir düzlemin bir şeyleri, hele birini düşündürebilmesi ne ahmaklık. Bir insanla bir karyola arasında bağlantı kurulur mu hiç?

Sanki bana ait olmayan bir şeyi satıyormuşum gibi, sanki o tek başına gerçekleşmesi mümkün olmayan alışverişi, dostluk sevinci yüklü solukları, yeşilliği ve ölümü hatırlatan, yalnızlığa, uzaklığa, uykuya, uyanıklığa gebe tadı satıyormuşum gibi.” (Soysal 1976)

“But how foolish that a bed, a mere meaningless plane, can remind me something, even someone. How come it is possible to make a connection between a person and a bed?

As if I am selling something that doesn't belong to me, or selling that connection which is not possible to occur itself, those breaths filled with joy of companionship, that taste on the verge of loneliness, distance, sleep and wakefulness reminding of green fields and death.” (Soysal 1976)

According to Painter (1999) “when we talk about the objects we find ourselves talking about our lives, our beliefs, our relationships, our *mortality*.”

“Abdüselam Bey, içinde hiçbir çocuğun doğmadığı, büyümediği bu odaya “çocukların odası” adını vermiş ve garibi şu ki bu ad tutmuştu da. Belki de bu adın sihri yüzünden bu odaya garip bir hava sinmişti. Yavaş yavaş herkes evin kaybolmuş hayatının orada toplandığına inanmıştı. Orası birikmiş ayrılıkların, üst üste yığılmış ölümlerin, hatıra ve unutulmaların odasıydı. Yaşayanlar bir orada kendi çocukluklarının, ilk gençliklerinin ölümünü seyrediyorlardı. Büyük odanın ortasında daha ziyade karaya vurmuş gemi gibi bir yığın eşya hep onları hatırlatırdı.” (Tanpınar 2001)

“Monsieur Abdüselam named this room as “children's room” where no child had ever been born or grown; oddly enough this name was broadly accepted. Maybe the peculiar atmosphere in this room was resulting from the magic of this name. Slowly, everyone believed that the long-gone life of this house actually collected there together. That room was the place for cumulated break-ups, piled up deaths, memories and oblivions. Even the alive were watching the death of their childhood and adolescence. A raft of objects in the middle of the big room standing there like a stranded ship used to remind them of these times.” (Tanpınar 2001)

Where there is mortality there is also *existence*. This text and the exhibition have come to an end, but my existential queries with objects and water are still continuing, as seen in my “works in progress”. Miniature water ponds and concrete sea used as iconic images and the intended sculpture with legs coming out of the sea bagel referencing to a

personal memory are some examples of the works in progress. Bachelard (1994) finishes his book with the chapter titled “The Dialectics of Inside and Outside” after his whole interventions with home, the inside. It is inevitable to see the outside, beyond the doors of home after a time of such deep emphasis on the inside. In order to put an end to a saying I felt the same urge to have recourse with the contrary. I intended to go out of the shell of my childhood memories and subconscious when I transfer them to an art space through domestic objects. Now it is time to leave this shell I created of Haneden exhibition too and see what is out there. As I go *out* of the shell, I go deeper *into* it. Because as Bachelard (1994) also quoted Rilke’s poem:

“The world is large, but in us it is deep as the sea.”

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Atay, Oğuz. *Korkuyu beklerken*. May Yayınları, 1975.
- Appadurai, Arjun, ed. *The social life of things: commodities in cultural perspective*. Cambridge University Press, 1988.
- Bachelard, Gaston. *The poetics of space*. Vol. 330. Beacon Press, 1994.
- Barthes, Roland. *La Lumiere du sud-ouest* in *Incidents*, Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1977: 13-20.
- Barthes, Roland. *The Eiffel Tower and other mythologies*. Univ of California Press, 1997.
- Baudelaire, Charles, and Tahsin Yücel. *Paris sıkıntısı*. Türkiye İş Bankası, 2009.
- Baudrillard, Jean. *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign*. Telos Press Publishing, 1981. 51-52
- Berger, John. *Ways of seeing*. Vol. 1. Penguin UK, 2008.
- Bourdieu, Pierre. *Distinction: A social critique of the judgement of taste*. Harvard University Press, 1984.
- Cassidy, Rebecca, and Molly Mullin, eds. *Where the wild things are now: domestication reconsidered*. Berg, 2007.
- Cetina, Karin K. *Sociality with objects: Social Relations in postsocial knowledge societies*. *Theory, Culture & Society*, 14(4):1-30, 1997.
- Cole, Ardra. *Provoked by art*. Backalong Books/Centre for Arts-informed Research, 2004.
- Cregan-Reid, Vybarr. *Abstracts and Keywords: Drowning in Early Dickens*. *Textual Practice* 19, no. 1, 2005.
- Erikson, Erik H. *Childhood and society*. WW Norton & Company, 1993.
- Flusser, Vilém. "Shape of Things : A Philosophy of Design." *London, GBR: Reaktion Books*, (1999)
- Flusser, Vilém. *Writings*. Vol. 6. U of Minnesota Press, 2002. (p. 91-103)

- Forrest Perrine, "Julie Schenkelberg's Domestic Object Installations" *Beautiful/Decay Magazine*, October 2012: <http://beautifuldecay.com/2012/10/18/julie-schenkelbergs-domestic-object-installations/>
- Freud, Sigmund. *A general introduction to psychoanalysis*. Boni and Liveright, 1920.
- Gale, Matthew. *Art Term: Ready-made*. Grove Art Online, Oxford University Press, 2009. http://www.moma.org/collection/theme.php?theme_id=10468
- Galeano, Eduardo H. *The book of embraces*. WW Norton, 1991.
- Golec, Michael J. *The Brillo Box Archive: Aesthetics, Design, and Art*. UPNE, 2008.
- Hocking, Clare. *Person-object interaction model: Understanding the use of everyday objects*. *Journal of Occupational Science* 4, no. 1, 1997. (p. 27-35)
- Leary, David E. *Naming and knowing: Giving forms to things unknown*. Social Research. 1995.
- Lively, Penelope. *Moon tiger*. Penguin UK, 2010.
- Lucretius, C. and Uyar, Turgut & Uyar, Tomris. *Evrenin Yapısı*. İyi Şeyler Yayınları. İstanbul: İyi Şeyler Yayıncılık, 2000.
- Orlin, Lena Cowen. *The Performance of Things in 'The Taming of the Shrew'*. *The Yearbook of English Studies*, 1993. (p. 167-188)
- Orton, David. *Both subject and object: herding, inalienability and sentient property in prehistory*. *World Archaeology* 42, no. 2, 2010.
- Painter, C. *At Home with Art*. Hayward Gallery, 1999. (p.5-6)
- Pearce, Susan M. ed. "Interpreting Objects and Collections." Psychology Press, (1994)
- Reed, Christopher, ed. *Not at home: The suppression of domesticity in modern art and architecture*. Thames & Hudson, 1996.
- Pollock, G. *Modernity and the Spaces of Femininity*, na, 1988.
- Sartre, Jean-Paul. *Nausea*. No. 82. New Directions Publishing, 1964. (p. 4)
- Schenkelberg, Julie. "Symptomatic Constant", *Artprize*, 2014: <http://www.artprize.org/julie-schenkelberg/2014/symptomatic-constant>
- Scott, J. (Ed.). (2007). *Fifty key sociologists: The contemporary theorists*. Routledge. P.14
- Stewart, Susan. "On longing: Narratives of the miniature, the gigantic, the souvenir, the collection." *Duke University Press*, (1984): 135
- Soysal, Sevgi. *Barış adlı çocuk*. Vol. 43. Bilgi yayınevi, 1976.

Tanpınar, Ahmet Hamdi. *Saatleri ayarlama enstitüsü: roman*. Vol. 1. YKY, 2001.

Turkle, Sherry, ed. *Evocative objects: Things we think with*. MIT press, 2007.

Thoreau, Henry David, and Sattelmeyer, Robert. *The Natural History Essays*. Peregrine Smith Literary Naturalists. Salt Lake City: Peregrine Smith Books, 1988.

Veraksa, Alexander N. *Symbolic mediation in cognitive activity*. International Journal of Early Years Education 19, no. 1, 2011. (p. 90)

Walker, Lynne. *Not at Home: The Suppression of Domesticity in Modern Art and Architecture by Christopher Reed*. Woman's Art Journal 20, no:1, 1999.

Yoon, Carol Kaesuk. *Naming nature: the clash between instinct and science*. WW Norton & Company, 2010.