

MIMESIS; RECREATION FILMS AND FILM FIGURES THROUGH  
DIFFERENT MEDIUMS BY FOCUSING ON MIMETIC DEVIATION

By

DİLAY ÖZGÜVEN

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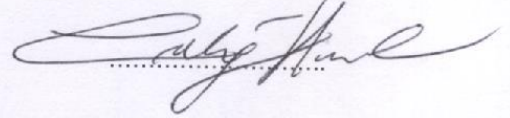
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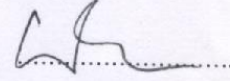
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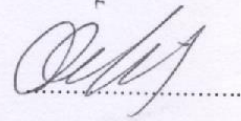
Prof. Dr. Erdağ Aksel  
(Thesis Supervisor)



Doç. Dr. Wieslaw Zaremba

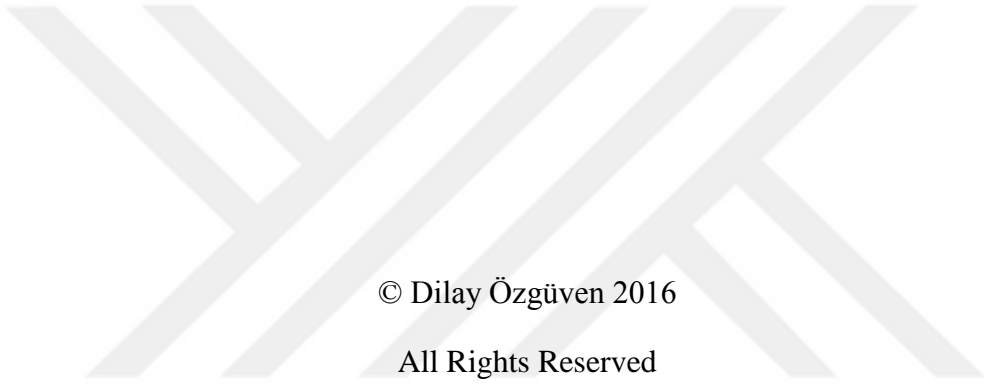


Yrd. Doç. Dr. J. Özlem Oktay Çerezci



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## **ABSTRACT**

### **MIMESIS; RECREATION FILMS AND FILM FIGURES THROUGH DIFFERENT MEDIUMS BY FOCUSING ON MIMETIC DEVIATION**

**DİLAY ÖZGÜVEN**

M.A. Thesis, August 2016

Thesis Advisor: Prof. Erdağ Aksel

Keywords: Mimesis, Make-believe, Bertolt Brecht, Theatre Vérité, Imitation,  
Appropriation

The focus of this thesis is how the subject matter of mimesis can be discussed in terms of how imitating the other can lead to the process of becoming another, thinking like another and therefore understanding the other in this act of embodiment. Mimesis will be approached as a method to deal with the corporeal experience of embodying different characters and the act of idolizing. The characters in the movies exist as images and the act of idolizing has a distance in which the adoration is addressed to the image of a person. But what I am interested in, is the idea of taking a step further away from the admiration. Therefore, the process of searching for an idol leads to becoming that character and acting in sync with a person outside of oneself. This idea will be framed by examining other artworks in various media including the films of Jean Luc Godard who has an approach in his movies where he lets his actors to portray both themselves and their characters in that particular movie. I will also reference my own work which includes paintings and installation to explore the subject matter of mimesis.

# ÖZET

DİLAY ÖZGÜVEN

Yüksek Lisans Tezi, Ağustos 2016

Tez Danışmanı: Prof. Erdağ Aksel

Anahtar Kelimeler: Mimesis, İnanırmak, Bertolt Brecht, Theatre Vérité, İmitasyon,

Benimsemek

Bu tezin konusu, başkalarını taklit etme yoluyla nasıl bir başka kişi gibi olunur, düşünülür ve en sonunda bu kişinin varlığını benimsenir. Taklit, film karakterlerini anlama yolunda bir method olarak kullanılmakta ve bu karakterleri idolleştirme yönünde bir araca dönüşmektedir. Filmlerin içinde yer alan bu karakterleri idolleştirmek, bu karakterlere duyulan imrenme ve hayranlık duygusundan ortaya çıkmaktadır. Fakat asıl ilgilendiğim konu, hayranlık ve imrenmeden daha ilerisine ulaşmak. Böylelikle, karakterleri idolleştirme süreci, bu karakterler gibi olma ve onlarla eşzamanlı hareket almaya dönüşmektedir. Bu konu, Jean Luc Godard' ın filmleri dahil olmak üzere bir çok eser üzerinden incelenecektir. Godard filmlerinde oyuncuların, karakterlerden bağımsız varolmasına izin verdiği bir method geliştirmiştir, ben de bu methodu kendi resim ve enstelasyonlarımda referans olarak kullanacağım.



**To my family**

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

TITLE	
APPROVAL	
ABSTRACT	i
ÖZET	ii
DEDICATION	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	iv
INTRODUCTION	1
BACKGROUND/OVERVIEW	4
WORKS	
Previous works on mimesis	15
A Triptych: Nana	19
Landscape paintings	25
Portraits: Idol Persona	27
CONCLUSION	33
VISUALS	35
REFERENCES	50
APPENDIX	
Exhibition	55



## INTRODUCTION

Mimesis is a method for the exploration of ideas such as appropriation, imitation, embodiment and 'make-believe'. The approach to this concept will be expressed through works in which characters from the movie history are imitated. The imitation becomes a way of examining the idea of embodiment in the works. The idea of shadow becomes important in some of the work where the imitation is explored. Characters in movies are recreated as shadows in a series of photographic and video works. This explores the desire of mimetic behavior. The shadow veils the identity and becomes a vehicle for representing the idolized characters. An influence for the work is 'Brecht Theatre' where the characters on stage acted also as their real selves via the technique of method acting so that the audience was not immersed in the experience of 'make-believe'. The detachment felt by the audience and that they were alienated from the action of the play influenced my mimetic appropriation where I become the visual representation of the movie characters via inserting my shadow in the film stills. The series of photographs employs the distancing effect of Bertolt Brecht by letting the shadow veil that character in the movie to insert another in the movie as that character. However, the photographs only suggest the presence of the character. It cannot be completely part of the scene, the person is there only as a shadow, sneaking in the movie. The shadow breaks the continuity of the photograph, managing to be there only in part. Jean Luc Godard, inspired by Bertolt Brecht, enabled his actors to act both as themselves and their roles in

his films. The three paintings titled as *A Triptych: Nana* (Figure.1) was inspired by this idea and approaches the concept of mimesis from three different aspects. Although the character Nana from Jean-Luc Godard's movie *Vivre Sa Vie*, is the main figure in this triptych, the other works show various characters throughout the film history who I have idolized. Embodying all these characters has let me comprehend my artistic approach to the subject matter of mimesis. The influence for the later portrait paintings also stemmed from this technique of alienation. Not all of the characters examined are from Godard's films but actresses from throughout the film history making the idea more universal and about the idea of acting in general. Painting the portrait of Rosemary Woodhouse, the main character from the movie *Rosemary's Baby* by Roman Polanski, I realized that I was also painting the portrait of Mia Farrow. Therefore, the title of the painting is also named *Mia or Rosemary* (Figure. 9). The idea of the actresses slipping in and out of their characters motivated these series of paintings.

In the following section the 'Background/ Overview' as art object will be discussed with a focus on mimesis as a methodology for creating artworks that are based on a corporal experience.



## BACKGROUND/ OVERVIEW

Examining the meaning of the term mimesis may be crucial in the context of the bodily experience as artwork. Thus, some effort will be made to determine the definition, which Shepherd and Wallis tell us “is a Greek word. It [may be] associated with the following English words: imitation, representation, copy, and similarity, fake”. (Shepherd & Wallis, 2004, p.212). Thus, defining mimesis as copying may not be a proper approach to understanding this state. The famous quote by Samuel Taylor Coleridge may illustrate a further define mimesis in that “imitation as opposed to copying consists either in the interfusion of the same throughout the radically different, or the different throughout a base radically the same” (F. Rogers, M. Rogers, 1985, p.141). A concrete example of Coleridge’s precept may be illustrated by Rene Magritte’s painting *The Treachery of Images* also known as *Ceci n’est pas une pipe*. Serena Anderlini-D’Onofrio distinguished that:

*“In Rene Magritte’s painting The Treachery of Images, the visual technology of oil color produces the painting. A caption French for the cognitive statement “this is not a pipe” is inscribed under the object of visual mimesis” (Anderlini-D’Onofrio, 1998, p.62).*

Magritte’s *The Treachery of Images* is a visual representation of a pipe in the medium of painting. The title of the painting “This is not a pipe” clearly signifies that the object in the painting is not a pipe. This artwork corresponds with

Coleridge's phrase that the pipe in the painting depicts a profoundly similar representation of an actual pipe; nonetheless it is an imitation of the pipe. In support of this idea, Aristotle suggestion that "mimesis is the art of arranging one thing to have an effect that properly belongs to another" may also be brought into play (Shepherd & Wallis, 2004, p.212) To clarify Aristotle's view "mimetic activity brings out the hidden similarities, the deep correspondences between things. In recognizing these similarities, a person may thus gain a deeper understanding of the interconnectedness of the world" (2004, 215-216).With respect to Aristotle's opinion "The pleasure of mimesis is essentially the pleasure of cognitive recognition – 'in putting one's self in the place of another, in the play of imagination and in the enjoyment of aesthetic effect' (Groos 1901:300)" (Goldman, 1998, p.20). The terminology of "imagination" is important in this sense. Goldman illustrates correlation of imagination and imitation as;

*"Nuances of 'copy' as etymologically reflected in imag-based (imago, imitari, imaginary) terms gave linguistic sanction over the years to a Platonic metaphysics which prioritized the physical original over the replica. Indeed, the very semantics of the terms 'pretense', 'fictional' or 'literal' was conceived as being anchored to an 'implicit opposition between a phenomenon true to some extra-institutional reality and phenomenon that is not' (Fish 1980:243)" (Goldman,1998, p.19).*

In these respects, Aristotle, like Plato, recognized the dramatic illusion reposed on deception; imitations engendered fictional persona who perform fictional acts in fictional worlds. (1998, 20) Beyond being an artistic form of expression however,

the desire for imitation as Marie-Laure Ryan notes in 'Narrative as Virtual Reality' "comes naturally to human beings from childhood; so does the universal pleasure in imitation" (Ryan, 2001, p.40). To further demonstrate Ryan's remark on the desire for imitation, Mark L. Howe's indication that "the foundations of a rudimentary interpersonal self in the early months can be indexed by an infant's imitation of facial expressions." can be used as an example (Howe, 2004, p.49). The infant's long for imitation is basically related to "Freudian notion of desire where it depends on a mediator, this significant instinctive behavior occurs when a being is in a desire to copy or model another being" (Packer, 2005, p.215). The urge of imitation may lead to conflict because; "A group children playing with toys who end up fighting because the imitation of one child's choice of toy by the others soon makes that toy the prize of them all and then the source of grief" (Packer, 2005, p.215). To establish the struggle of the mimetic desire Packer cites Rene Girard that;

*"The implications of imitative desire are numerous, but especially notable is that it often leads to conflict, because whenever a model sees his or her own desire reflected by the interest of the imitating subject, the value of the desired object for the model is inevitably confirmed, which then increases the model's desire and in turn the original subject's again"* (Packer, 2005, p.215).

To simplify, imitation may lead to a point where individual obtains other personas or desires alongside with his or her own. Remarkably;

*“Tendency to imitate can lead into the process of depersonalization...as such it suggests that one of the attractions of mimesis is not to do with claims to knowledge and control but precisely with their opposite, with the abandonment of human agency and personality, indeed with empathy and yielding” (Shepherd & Wallis, 2004, p.219).*

To clarify the term “empathy” Becky Lynn Omdahl noted;

*“The use of the word empathy in social science literature can be traced to Theodore Lipps' use of the German word *empathie*. Theodore Lipps discussed how people respond emotionally to works of art (Lipps, 1906, cited in Reynolds, 1982). Translated literally, *em* equals 'one' and *pathie* means 'feeling'. Thus, empathy was first used as a reference to a state in which the receiver experiences the same (one feeling) as the target.” (Omdahl, 1995, p. 14).*

In addition to Omdahl, Mark H. Davis mentioned; "empathy occurred was an inner imitation, or *inner Nachahmung*, of the observed person or object, a process referred to today as motor mimicry" (Davis, 1996, p. 5). This significant appropriation occurs when an individual is in a desire to model another individual. "Empathy suggested a more active attempt by one individual to get 'inside' the other, to reach out in some fashion through a deliberate intellectual effort" (1996, 5). Thus “We are looking at mimesis as a process in which a person enters into,

submits to or is taken over by a copy, embodies the 'other'. The process is very similar to that of empathy" (Shepherd & Wallis, 2004, p.218).

Phillip Dybicz's words, "mimesis seeks to explain human action" (Dybicz, 2010) may support Shepherd and Wallis's view on imitation. Dybicz quoted Aristotle where he defined the impulse of human action as:

*"Mimesis requires the representation of human action in a controlled structure that permits us to move from particular to the universal and thus reach a deeper understanding of the nature and significance of that human action." In other words, human action is based on intention" (Dybicz, 2010).*

Despite the mimetic desire that corresponds with the imitation of others, Kendall Walton explains his theory of mimesis based on make-believes (Ryan, 2001, p.111). To illustrate mimesis as make-belief "[Walton] uses the example of imagining himself participating in a spelunking expedition to demonstrate that simulation can become a means of self-discovery." The demonstration was:

*"In the theater of his mind, he crawls for hours in a dark and humid hole until he reaches a shaft so narrow that he must abandon his pack and move forward by wiggling between the hard walls. His headlight goes out, and he lets out a scream of panic as he finds himself in total darkness. Though he does not believe for a moment that he is actually in danger, the simulator undergoes a genuinely upsetting imaginative*



*experience, one that gives him the shivers every time he thinks of it. The act of pretense makes him realize his deep-seated claustrophobia and explains to him his real-life fear of elevators and crowded places” (Ryan, 2001, p.112).*

Walton’s theory of mimesis on make-belief offers “the idea that the term ‘fictional’ can be taken to mean ‘true in the appropriate game of make-believe’ or, equivalently, true in the fictional world of the representation.” (Walton, 1990, p.34) What Walton focuses on is the imaginative imitation where he creates mimesis via imagining. It is important to realize that Samuel Taylor Coleridge’s theory of suspension of disbelief engages with Walton’s theory of mimesis as make-belief. Correlatively in suspension of disbelief theory, Shepherd et al cited Coleridge where “the act of imitation is often supposed to encourage belief in its audience, or rather, in Coleridge’s famous phrase, ‘that willing suspension of disbelief for a moment, that constitutes poetic faith’.” (Shepherd & Wallis, 2004, p.23) In the support of this idea, Ryan mentioned,

*“Fiction has been hailed for its ability to foster understanding and even attachment for people we normally would condemn, despise, ignore or never met in the course of our lives. As we project ourselves into these characters, we may have led to envision action that we would never face or approve of in real life” (Ryan, 2001, p.111).*

Thus, the illusion of imitation is significant in the theory of suspension of disbelief that it may create correlation between audience and spectator. On the

contrary to Walton and Coleridge's view on mimesis, Bertolt Brecht realized that; to be able to focus his audience on subject he had to come between his spectator and characters. In Brecht's theatre;

*“The suspicion of mimetic illusion impinges on the study of performance. [Brecht theatre] was opposed to any form of theatre that encouraged the audience to submit to illusion: instead they were to watch the action of the stage as if at a sporting event, commenting and criticizing even as they are taken up by the excitement. The actors must make an act of imitation, which is at the same time a process of mind. Pure imitation, a mere showing of what has been observed, is not enough: the point is to reflect on it” (Shepherd & Wallis, 2004, p.213-214).*

Brecht had developed a new form of drama 'the epic theatre' "in which various devices purposely 'alienate' audience members from the show they are watching. This methodology of Brecht influenced many others that they achieved imitation through reality rather than imitation as make-believe. French director Jean-Luc Godard may be a genuine example to Bertolt Brecht's methodology. To be able to demonstrate, perhaps the strongest influence of Bertolt Brecht on Godard's cinema is on *Vivre Sa Vie (My Life to Live)*. David Sterritt proposed "with Brecht in mind Godard designed *My life to live*, with a self-consciously "theatrical" feel and a deliberately episodic structure." "While [Godard] wasn't looking for any particular effects, he wanted to explore some of his most deeply felt themes through an approach he later called 'theatre vérité'." (Sterritt, 1999, 64) To clarify

the term *theatre vérité* also known as “theatrical realism which combines the arbitrariness of stage drama unfolding in continuous ‘blocks’ that cannot be ‘retouched’ by the director with film’s unique ability to capture ‘chance’ events in a definite way.” (1999, 64) Godard designed his scenes in a way that he shot them one time only and they were in the same order as the story “it is an unusual procedure, since in standard filmmaking scenes generally shot more than once, in a chronology different from the final film.” (1999, 64) On the other hand Godard “improvised his scenes as he went along, sometimes writing dialogue and rehearsing actors on the spot just before he would ‘roll the cameras for a take’.” (1999, 18) To demonstrate “One important scene [in *Vivre Sa Vie*], is an interview centered on Anna Karina’s character, was shot in a completely improvised style – ‘she didn’t know in advance what questions I would ask her’ – inspired by Jean Rouch, a filmmaker who became a hero for Godard by using spontaneous cinema to explore diverse cultures and personalities.” (1999, 63) To demonstrate Rouch’s technique James Kirkup notes;

*“Cinema Vérité” was one of the terms used to express the realism of “cinema truth”, a term invented by Rouch himself. It reached its full expression in a film he made in collaboration with the young sociologist Edgar Morin in 1960, Chronique d’un été (Chronicle of a summer, 1961), a work of radical originality set in the period of Algerian decolonization and created entirely in the streets of Paris by means of hand-held camera with synchronized sound. (Kirkup, 2004, p.35)*

Thus Jean Rouch's invention of the term "Cinema Vérité" influenced Godard. To support this notion Sterritt mentioned that; "Godard was influenced by Cinema Vérité that his first feature film *Breathless* (1960) was shot without a script. He improvised the film as he went along, sometimes writing dialogue and rehearsing actors on the spot just before he would 'roll cameras for a take'. (Sterritt, 1999, 65)With Brechtian approach in mind;

*"Godard introduces theatre vérité as a means of engaging us with characters that do not fit any of the standard movie categories. On one hand, they are not fully developed figures inviting us to identify with them emotionally, we have little idea who they are and for a long time we can barely make out what they look like. On the other hand, they are not just abstract embodiments of socio cultural types either."*  
(1999, 68)

Thus the characters of Godard are not claimed to be stereotyped movie characters. According to Sterritt the reason behind this might be that,

*"Godard uses the occasion to reinforce the link between his improvisatory theatre vérité and human lives, fictional (Nana) [protagonist in *Vivre Sa Vie*] and nonfictional (Anna Karina) [actor who plays Nana], that are its subjects. [In one of the scenes of *Vivre Sa Vie*, Godard is] peering over Nana's shoulder as she composes her letter. We witness not only the continuation of the film's story through the words she writes, but also a documentary account of Karina's*

*physical movements as she performs an activity whose very ordinariness blurs the line between acting and simply being” (1999, p.79).*

To support on Sterritt, Kaja Silverman and Harun Farocki’s cites on Godard “an actor exists independently of me...I try to make use of that existence and to shape things around it so that he can continue to exist.” (Silverman & Farocki, 1998, p.2) may illustrate clearer image. Thus “Godard does not base the ‘truth’ of Nana on the ‘truth’ of Anna Karina because, like Brecht, he abhors method acting. Rather, he typically asks of his actors that they let their ‘reality supports his [fiction]’.” (1998, p.2-3) To illustrate acting of Anna Karina as both Nana and herself, Sterritt mentioned, “Karina is showing both her close identification *with* and critical distance *toward* the character she plays. She achieves this double state through the Brechtian technique of not burrowing into Nana, but standing alongside her so as to ‘observe’ her actions and ‘quote’ her words – “staying prudently outside” in order to refract “inside” realities” (Sterritt, 1999, p.75-76). Hence Silverman and Farocki mentioned that “Godard reminds us of one of the ways in which Nana is an ‘other’: we are obligated to look for her ‘essence’ in the face of Anna Karina (Silverman & Farocki, 1998, p.13).

As can be seen above, through Brechtian methodology, Godard accomplished to direct his actors to exist both as the character and themselves. For instance, in *Vivre Sa Vie* Anna Karina portrayed Nana through her own existence. So that she reflected her own mimesis on Nana’s presence.

The following section of the thesis is titled ‘Works’. This section is on how mimesis affected approach towards art and the connection of my work through mimesis to concept of Jean-Luc Godard’s “theatre vérité”.



## WORKS

### PREVIOUS WORKS ON MIMESIS

The content of this thesis and also the works based on the term ‘mimesis’. My influence on working with a term ‘mimesis’ originates from Cindy Sherman’s photography series *The Untitled Film Stills*. “[The photographs were] fan-magazine glimpses into the life (or roles) of an imaginary blonde actress, played by Sherman herself. The photographs look like movie stills—or perhaps like publicity pix—purporting to catch the blond bombshell in unguarded moments at home. The protagonist is shown preening in the kitchen and lounging in the bedroom. On to something, Sherman tried other characters in other roles: the chic starlet at her seaside hideaway, the luscious librarian, the domesticated sex kitten, the hot-blooded woman of the people, the ice-cold sophisticate, and others.” (Peter Galassi, 1995-96)<sup>1</sup> Observing what she accomplished was fascinating for me. She played imaginary movie characters thus she had created mimetic visualization that exists in her mind. In her photographs she changed her outlook to become characters. The moment I had come across with her artwork; I was thrilled with the work’s impact on me. I’ve realized I have been idolizing movie characters my whole life and I’ve mimicked their behaviors and gestures. The emergence of mimetic behavior exists in me in a way that I used to mime actors from movies while watching them. After this realization I have started to construct my own artwork as a photography project. However, my approach was

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<sup>1</sup><http://www.moma.org/interactives/exhibitions/1997/sherman/>

slightly different than Cindy Sherman. My first artistic approach on mimesis constituted usage of shadow as an element of imitating. I've installed a regular projector to a white curtain as in the local tradition of Hacivat and Karagöz<sup>2</sup> shadow puppetry. In this work which titled as *Mimesis*, I projected still-frames from movies; *Nosferatu* directed by F.W. Murnau in 1922<sup>3</sup>, *Les Quatre Cents Coups* directed by François Truffaut in 1959<sup>4</sup>, *Psycho* directed by Alfred Hitchcock in 1960<sup>5</sup>, *Vivre Sa Vie* directed by Jean-Luc Godard in 1962<sup>6</sup>, *Persona* directed by Ingmar Bergman in 1966<sup>7</sup>, *Taxi Driver* directed by Martin Scorsese in 1976<sup>8</sup>, *The Elephant Man* directed by David Lynch in 1980<sup>9</sup>, *Mulholland Drive* directed by David Lynch in 2001<sup>10</sup>, *Big Fish* directed by Tim Burton in 2003<sup>11</sup> and *Volver* directed by Pedro Almodovar in 2006<sup>12</sup> to the curtain. When I stepped in between the projection and the curtain, my shadow is reflected on the still-frames. In that sense I was able to enter to the movies as a shadow. This is the point where my work starts to differ from Cindy Sherman. When I entered to the film-stills I did not change my appearance. It was important for me to realize that I was not able to take their place in the films. Hence this constituted huge difference from my work with Cindy Sherman's. Sherman changed her appearance completely to look like her imaginary film characters. However, in the end both her work and mine constitute mimetic behavior in different perspectives.

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<sup>2</sup>The Karagöz and Hacivat shadow puppetry performed behind a white curtain that is stretched around a frame. Puppeteer moves the figures around by holding them in front of a light source. This enables the shadows to reflect on the 'curtain'.

<sup>3</sup>Character *Nosferatu* portrayed by Max Schreck.

<sup>4</sup>Character *Antoine Doinel* portrayed by Jean-Pierre Leaud.

<sup>5</sup>Character *Norma Bates* portrayed by Antony Perkins.

<sup>6</sup>Character *Nana Kleinfrankenheim* portrayed by Anna Karina.

<sup>7</sup>Character *Elisabet Vogler* portrayed by Liv Ullman.

<sup>8</sup>Character *Travis Bickle* portrayed by Robert De Niro.

<sup>9</sup>Character *John Merrick* portrayed by John Hurt.

<sup>10</sup>Character *Rita* portrayed by Laura Harring.

<sup>11</sup>Character *Ed Bloom* portrayed by Ewan McGregor.

<sup>12</sup>Character *Raimunda* portrayed by Penelope Cruz.



My artistic approach in my first project, I was trying to reflect myself to my idolized characters. Throughout the process I followed their movements as if I was their shadow.

After these early experiments, I have developed the project and acted in film sequences with the characters to produce a video of the performance. This time I was able to act like them. I mimed their gestures and tried to connect with the characters. I was a shadow in the films following every single movement of the characters. This work was more challenging compared to my early work because the first projects were photographical and did not require acting. However, in my following projects I had to act synchronized with the characters in order to be their shadow. Hence I was able to observe every characteristic gesture of every character I mimicked. Mimetic behavior in these two works is significant because I was trying to catch every single move of the character; I have imitated their existence. This progress led me to another path.

After acting as a shadow in the films, I have decided to take characters out of their films and re-create them as shadows. This work was also performed on a white curtain. I reclaimed this piece as it had opposite characteristic than the first two works. The reason for that is that these characters did not exist in their movies anymore. I took them out of their environment and created their mimesis as if they were shadows. The crucial aspect on this is that the shadows on the curtain were a representation of actual characters. In this work *Hall of Fame*, the characters are; Death from *Seventh Seal* in 1957<sup>13</sup>, Patricia Franchini from *A bout de soufflé* in 1960<sup>14</sup>, Norma Bates from *Psycho* in 1960<sup>15</sup>, Holly Golightly from *Breakfast at*

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<sup>13</sup>Directed by Ingmar Bergman, character portrayed by Bengt Ekerot. In the performance character portrayed by Çağatay Tuna Özkan.

<sup>14</sup>Directed by François Truffaut, character portrayed by Jean Seberg. In the performance character portrayed by Ece Polen Budak.

*Tiffany's* in 1961<sup>16</sup>, Nana Kleinfrankenheim from *Vivre Sa Vie* in 1962<sup>17</sup>, Rosemary Woodhouse from *Rosemary's Baby* in 1968<sup>18</sup>, Travis Bickle from *Taxi Driver* in 1976<sup>19</sup>, John Merrick from *Elephant Man* in 1980<sup>20</sup>, Freddy Krueger from *A Nightmare on Elm Street* in 1984<sup>21</sup>, Pvt. J.T. 'Joker' Davis from *Full Metal Jacket* in 1987<sup>22</sup>, Leon from *Leon: the Professional* in 1994<sup>23</sup> and Verbal Kint from *The Usual Suspects* in 1995<sup>24</sup>. At this point my approach came closer to Sherman. I have changed my appearance in order to look like character's shadows. Thus I imitated their look. However unlike Sherman, I hid my characters behind the shadows. In brief these works led me to a stage where I constructed a work both connected to Cindy Sherman and also to concepts in mimesis. That is why I tend to name my previous artworks as a research stage where I assembled information to build a structure.

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<sup>15</sup>Directed by Alfred Hitchcock, character portrayed by Antony Perkins. In the performance character portrayed by Buse Altınparmak.

<sup>16</sup>Directed by Blake Edwards, character portrayed by Audrey Hepburn. In the performance character portrayed by Ebru Gümrükçüoğlu.

<sup>17</sup>Directed by Jean Luc Godard, character portrayed by Anna Karina. In the performance character portrayed by Dilay Özgüven.

<sup>18</sup>Directed by Roman Polanski, character portrayed by Mia Farrow. In the performance character portrayed by Özge Karagöz.

<sup>19</sup>Directed by Martin Scorsese, character portrayed by Robert De Niro. In the performance character portrayed by Yunus Emre.

<sup>20</sup>Directed by David Lynch, character portrayed by John Hurt. In the performance character portrayed by Çağatay Tuna Özkan

<sup>21</sup>Directed by Wes Craven, character portrayed by Robert Englund. In the performance character portrayed by Mert Üngör

<sup>22</sup>Directed by Stanley Kubrick, character portrayed by Matthew Modine. In the performance character portrayed by Çağatay Tuna Özkan.

<sup>23</sup>Directed by Luc Besson, character portrayed by Jean Reno. In the performance character portrayed by Efe Özmen.

<sup>24</sup>Directed by Bryan Singer, character portrayed by Kevin Spacey. In the performance character portrayed by Halil Atasever.

## A TRIPTYCH: NANA

I have been working with movies in order to develop an artistic approach to painting. Hence the paintings *A Triptych: Nana* (Figure. 1) is also based on a movie. I focused on a single character named ‘Nana’ portrayed by Anna Karina from Jean-Luc Godard’s movie *Vivre Sa Vie (My Life to Live)* from 1962. As David Sterritt mentioned; *My Life to Live*, the story of a young woman named Nana who becomes a prostitute – the first of several Godard heroines to take this desperate route – and meets a tragic end. He began shooting on Paris locations in early 1962 and emerged a few weeks later with one of the most emotionally and intellectually rich achievements in all of New Wave filmmaking” (Sterritt, 1999, 62).

My work is constituted of three separate paintings. These paintings demonstrate three separate scenes from the movie *Vivre Sa Vie*. All three paintings, I have depicted Nana in three different postures. In *A History of the French New Wave Cinema*, Richard Neupert cited; “As Bordwell points out, the opening title sequence and first scene shoot Nana from 45-degree angles, beginning with a left profile and ending by filming her from the rear, which “announces this ‘theme’ of varying camera/ figure orientations” (Neupert, 2007, 241). As it is mentioned in the first scene Nana is shot with left profile. Thus as in Jean Luc Godard’s film, my triptych starts with the scene Nana from her left profile. As stated by Sterritt;

*“[She] sits in silhouette before a window... This may be considered a Brechtian interlude, undermining melodrama by pushing its*

*conventions (sad music, romantic pose) to the breaking point; but it might also be seen as patently, using clichés of the Hollywood “woman’s picture” to sympathize with Nana over how easily her contentment can vanish into puffs of lonely cigarette smoke. Either way, Godard is honoring two Hollywood giants here Alfred Hitchcock, whose masterful profile shots in Vertigo and Psycho could have inspired Nana’s pose, and Douglas Sirk, whose use of glass to separate isolated individuals from the plenitude of nature prefigures her place before a window revealing an inviting but unreachable world” (Sterritt, 1999, p.82).*

I wanted to appropriate the Nana from the film to the Nana in the painting. Robert Ebert noted; “With her porcelain skin, her wary eyes, her helmet of shiny black hair, always smoking, hiding her feelings, she is a young woman of Paris”. The visual definition that is built by Ebert is reflected in my painting. My attempt was to illustrate Nana as she was, without any contribution of my own. She is represented in the paintings as she is perceived by the audience. However as Kaja Silverman and Harun Farocki’s cited; “[Godard] typically asks of his actors that they let their ‘reality supports his [fiction]’.” (Silverman & Farocki, 1998, 2-3) I wanted to create this notion in my work. With the genuine representation of the character Nana, I constituted an environment that reflects my imagination. In my fiction, I applied textures on the characters. The texture covers certain parts of characters and with that I play with the idea of perception of environment. The texture could be perceived as space. The plain color block on the background and the texture creates a contrast. Harun Farocki describe the film as; “The film is like

a drawing which consists only few lines, yet those lines we can see an entire body, or a complete landscape This is a kind of *via negativa*- a portraiture through negation, through what isn't there, rather than through what is" (Silverman & Farocki, 1998, 5). The paintings, Nana were depicted in no space. Background in each painting does not indicate a certain place whether the characters are inside or outside.

Richard Neupert (2007) noted that Jean-Luc Godard explored methods like, laterally tracking, arching and panning shots: 180-degree line variations. In my work three paintings connect with plain colored shapes. Even though these shapes do not indicate any space, because of the perspective these three paintings give a panoramic image. This panorama relates with Jean-Luc Godard's technique of shooting. Kaja Silverman noticed that; "Godard maintained that the camera in *My Life to Live* does not spy, trap, or surprise Nana, but 'simply [follows] her.'" (Silverman & Farocki, 1998, 7) Sterritt (1999) mentioned that Godard edited record shop scene with lengthy pans... [The] camera's easy movements lend a supple attractiveness to the scene. The other item that joins the paintings and supports panoramic continuation is the writing on all three paintings. In the first painting there is writing behind Nana. A part of the writing cropped and continues in the following painting. In the last painting, we can see the same writing behind Nana but this time the writing is mirrored. As if all three paintings represent a scene in a film. And the scene starts with first painting, continues in the second, and ends in the last painting. There is a technique in cinema what is named "pickup". Farocki defines "pickup" as;

*“A pickup is when the same line is spoken at the end of one shot and the beginning of the next, and it is used by filmmakers when shooting to give themselves more flexibility during the editing process... [Nana] asks: “What’s that look for?” ... By uttering the same words twice, Paul and Nana emphasize them; it is as if they are so important that they warrant a violation of the rules of filmmaking. A device which is usually purely technical becomes semantic.” (Silverman & Farocki, 1998, p. 4-5).*

The writing is taken from a film affiche. I have placed this affiche strategically that three paintings possess a part of the writing in French. As Sterritt claimed; “...Godard often fills his frames with carefully selected words and syllables.” (Sterritt, 1999, 82) In the first painting we observe a sentence “Qu’est qu’u...” that refers to “What is...” in French. This “poster alongside Nana, promoting Hollywood star Paul Newman in his popular movie *The Hustler (L’Arnaqueur)*, a sardonic allusion to the tenacity of hustlers and hustling in her daily round” (1999, 82). Godard’s placement of words and syllables contributes to scene where we can identify various meanings out of it. There is one word in the scene that was again unfinished led me to appropriate Godard’s way of hinting the words. In this scene there is a word, placed top right corner of Nana that I thought I could make my own word, and present it in a way that serves a meaning in the painting. This word, I have placed in the first painting, the bold word on the right corner is either “Vérité” – “Reality” or “Virilité”- “Masculinity”. The word “vérité” associates with the “reality” that I created in my paintings. While I played with figure and space and I built up my own fiction out of a film. I appropriate my own reality out

of *Vivre Sa Vie* and with this mimetic behavior I question the notion of “Reality”. On the other hand, “Virilité” correlates with the figure on the third painting. The figure has a body of a woman wearing lingerie. Yet the head of the figure belongs to a man. This let me to question “Masculinity” in my paintings. While all other figures in my paintings are women, this specific character differs from the others. I have placed the head, as if it is a mask, a man mask, which contrasts with the woman body. To demonstrate further analysis Shepherd et al cited;

*“Mimetic illusion has also been deliberately and knowingly exploited, however, as a technique of both negotiation and protection. This strategy has appealed to feminists who see women as caught up into a system of representation which is controlled by men, where the woman finds it difficult to escape from an image that is thrust upon her. Within the image she has no identity of her own and is simply assimilated to male representations. But to challenge it can mean speaking as a man, in masculine terms, and thereby still not inhabiting her difference as a woman (Shepherd & Wallis, 2004, p. 214)”*

As it was stated, the woman’s identity dissolves in man and this notion creates a dilemma where we question the masculinity and femininity. The representation of this specific character forms a mimetic illusion and as Diamond notes;

*“From Plato's point of view women are 'mimetic' creatures in that they are both readily subjugated to illusion and likely to deceive*

*others. To engage in mimetic activity will thus make a man womanier. Even while mimesis supposes itself to be making a copy of a reality the process of doing mimesis has effects: it feminizes. (Diamond 1997: (Shepherd & Wallis, 2004, p. 217))”*





## LANDSCAPE PAINTINGS

The series *Landscape Paintings* are three 200x160 cm paintings. They follow the work to *A Triptych: Nana*, however these paintings are relatively larger compared to *A Triptych: Nana*. In this series I have worked on actors by placing them in an environment where we can question the reality. As Elin Diamond defined; “Mimesis... posits a truthful relation between world and word, model and copy, nature and image... referent and sign in which potential difference is subsumed by sameness” (Diamond, 1989, p.58). In these paintings while I have formed mimesis of women, I also worked on nature, and created a copy, imitation of nature. While I continued to study the term “mimesis”, I wanted to explore the correlation between mimesis and nature.

I wanted to form a stage-like background where I have the protagonist centered. The women in these paintings are; Isabella Rossellini as Dorothy (*Blue Velvet* by David Lynch in 1986) (Figure. 2), Juliette Binoche as Julie (*Blue* by Krzysztof Kieslowski in 1993) (Figure. 3) and Liv Ullman as Elisabet (*Persona* by Ingmar Bergman in 1966) (Figure. 4). Similar to *A Triptych: Nana* images of the women in these three separate canvases, are taken out from movie stills. They are presented in the same posture and mimic as if they are in their movie. However, in these landscape paintings, the environment in the background is from nature. But the so-called nature, only remains as the mimesis (imitation, make-belief) version of the reality. To elaborate; the reality and the represented reality differs in this sense. “[The] difficulty lies in conceiving that what is imitated could be still to come with respect to what imitates, that the image can precede the model, that the

double can come before the simple" (Sanders, 2009). While I used elements of nature, I also utilized parts of film posters as words and syllables. I wanted to keep them slightly hidden, so that the viewer is not able to read the whole phrase. In all three paintings, I used perspective, a sense of depth by placement of landscape and the poster. The film posters are chosen not to be of the film of the protagonist in the paintings. So that when we observe the painting as a whole, it represents a movie, where we see the opening or closing credits, the main character (protagonist) and the imaginary place where the character lives. As Elin Diamond notes;

*"There is always a tension in the word mimesis because it can refer to both the 'activity of representing and the result of it': 'activity' has overtones of productive work, adaptation to and transformation of reality: 'result' is conceived as an inert copy of reality. In fact many uses of 'mimesis' tend to belong with one approach or another, rather than both at once" (Sheperd & Wallis, 2004, p.217).*

To continue with Oscar Wilde; he refers to mimesis in his essay "The Decay of Lying" that; "Life imitates art far more than art imitates life." In the essay, written as a Platonic dialogue, Wilde holds that anti-mimesis "results not merely from life's imitative instinct, but from the fact that the self-conscious aim of life is to find expression, and that art offers it certain beautiful forms through which it may realize that energy."

## PORTRAITS: IDOL PERSONA

My following work constitutes eleven<sup>25</sup> 100x70cm separate paintings. These paintings represent women figures in cinema. While I study the term mimesis in various aspects, I wanted to consider different techniques in my paintings as well. My previous painting was larger in size compared to this series *Portraits: Idol Persona*. These eleven paintings are portraits of women. While I have minimized the scale of paintings, I desired to maximize the area that my women fill on the foreground, and leaving very limited negative space on the background. This negative space on background is depicted pure black in order to create unknown place where all these women meet. This contrast between background and foreground of the paintings led the spectator to focus on each expression in each painting.

I have been interested in woman representation in cinema and I have been studying their presence. For me, to imitate someone, to mimic their gestures and to idolize them is a magnificent matter. Since I researched over Cindy Sherman's artwork, I have been drawn in to act of mimesis. What she had accomplished with her work basically is the reason for me to work on mimesis. Her appearance as iconic imaginary figures led me to extend my perspective on human behavior and mimetic illusion. While I have been searching additional aspects of different artists, I have come across with a photography series *Actrices (Actresses)* by contemporary artist Kate Barry. Her point of view on mimetic illusion induced me to create *Portraits: Idol Persona*.

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<sup>25</sup>Ongoing work. The number of the painting could increase.

*“Through the lens of her most unusual artist’s eye, the 25 portraits made by Kate Barry are striking for their great beauty and their indefinable, hushed and melancholic atmosphere, where merge a combination of spareness and sobriety, precise composition and mise en scène, and painstaking background work. Kate Barry had a peerless way of capturing each and every actress in their most personal aspects, complementing their media images, precisely in their gaze which so powerfully delivers, creates or reinstates—it matters little—natural beauty and silent mystery” (“Actresses by Kate Barry,” 2015).*

This distinctly represents Barry’s work. With Sherman in mind, I have started to work on how an actor represents herself in screen. In my work *A Triptych: Nana* I have been able to observe Anna Karina’s existence in her character “Nana”. Thus observing Barry’s photographs led me to think about actresses and how they manage to stay in the character and get out of it. As Goldman quotes from Plato;

*“Much of the early engagement of philosophy with caricature and dissembling had its roots in the Platonic concept of mimesis -- 'to liken oneself to another either in voice or in appearance is to make a mimesis of the person to whom one likens oneself' (Plato 1974:1. 393c5). This is mimesis as impersonative art where the actor projects a self into a persona and a situation (Plato 1970:1. 667; 1974:1. 602) (Goldman, 1998, p. 19)”.*

Plato's identification on concept of mimesis, defines my way of seeing these women. Because I am questioning their dual existence with my paintings *Portraits: Idol Persona*. While I have portrait eleven women icons, I have also raised the issue of their moment of existence in their characters. While an actor adopts a character she also projects her own gestures and mimics into that character. Thus each painting in this series *Portraits: Idol Persona*, named after both the character and the actress who portrays the character. These are; Grace or Lisa (Figure. 5) (*Rear Window* by Alfred Hitchcock in 1954), Anna or Nana (Figure. 6) (*Vivre Sa Vie* by Jean-Luc Godard in 1962), Françoise or Nicole (Figure. 7) (*La Peau Douce* by François Truffaut in 1964), Bibi or Alma (Figure. 8) (*Persona* by Ingmar Bergman in 1966), Mia or Rosemary (Figure. 9) (*Rosemary's Baby* directed by Roman Polanski in 1968), Magali or Gradisca (Figure.10) (*Amarcord* by Federico Fellini in 1973), Catherine or Marion (Figure. 11) (*Le Dernier Metro* by François Truffaut in 1980), Müjde or Fahriye (Figure. 12) (*Fahriye Abla* by Yavuz Turgul in 1984), Isabella or Dorothy (Figure. 13) (*Blue Velvet* by David Lynch in 1986), Juliette or Julie (Figure. 14) (*Blue* by Krzysztof Kieslowski in 1993) and Penelope or Raimunda (Figure. 15) (*Volver* by Pedro Almodovar in 2006) To elaborate on the context of self-representation in characters Wendy Doniger stated as;

*“Many cultures tell stories about people who pretend to be other people pretending to be them, thus in effect masquerading as themselves, impersonating themselves, pretending to be precisely what they are. This great theme, in literature and in life, tells us that many*

*people must put on masks to discover who they are under the covert masks they usually wear, so that the overt mask reveals rather than conceals the truth, reveals the self beneath the self; and it tells us that, although such masquerades cannot change people into other people, they may change them into others among their many selves (Doniger, 2005, p. 3).*

What Doniger mentions is that while a person goes in a road where she is getting behind the mask, pretending to be someone else, this action led them to reflect their being only in another self. Thus they represent their own image but in different perspectives. To illustrate; Kaja Silverman mentions;

*“Cinema’s abstractions are never as absolute as those of painting; a film can give us the “portrait” of a woman only in the guise of the “model”. And because Karina’s body and voice provide the necessary and ineradicable support for Nana’s fiction, she too becomes one of the enunciators of My life to Live (Silverman & Farocki, 1998, 29).*

Many directors have different ways of representing women in cinema. In *A History of French New Wave* Richard Neupert clarifies as;

*“[Eric Rohmer] built a critical perspective that included Hitchcock as a central figure. He and Jean-Luc Godard were quick to argue that Hitchcock’s mise-en-scène reflected a certain realism of*

*character and theme, creating a modern depth that revealed truth and a moral universe (Neupert, 2006, p. 129)”.*

To expand this idea, David Boyd and R. Barton Palmer quoted from Acevedo Munoz that;

*“[Alfred Hitchcock’s] female characters are very neurotic, but behind them there’s a man whose relationship with women “is” just as highly neurotic ... Hitchcock used the scenes of his films as a way of relating to his actresses. His difficult relationships with women enriched his female characters and inspired the most memorable scenes of his films, even if they also end up giving a rather negative image of the men. I haven’t such a complicated relation-ship with women; it’s much more generous and limpid. (Almodóvar on Almodóvar 147) (Acevedo-Muñoz, 2006, p. 178)”.*

As Godard managed in his films to represent reality and fiction, many other directors as Alfred Hitchcock, Pedro Almodovar and Ingmar Bergman etc. focused on women figure and represent reality of women in their fiction. As Sterritt mentioned; “...the boundaries between reality and artifice, joining fiction and nonfiction “characters” in a setting at once invented and discovered” (Sterritt, 1999, 84). Thus the women I represented in my paintings are imitation of their reality and also, they are the imitation of their fictional characters. This notion brings me to a point where I blur the line between reality and fiction. To elaborate an example; one can look to the painting of Isabella but could see Dorothy or look

through the painting of Dorothy but see Isabella. This brings us to the title of each painting. The title “Isabella or Dorothy” leads us to think the dual imagery of women in the painting. I disagree with Matthew Packer where he claims that; “[The] detachability of art from mimetic representation is the fact that the fundamental form of esthetic mimesis is not the imitation of “reality”, but the imitation of the others” (Packer, 2005, p.215). The mimesis should not be imitation of ‘others’. Mimesis could easily form with the imitation of reality. Doniger notes that; “This sort of self-imitation or self-impersonation is a basic human way of negotiating reality, illusion, identity and authenticity” (Doniger, 2005, p.10).



## CONCLUSION

I have searched through methodologies in mimetic representation; hence I have found concepts and worked in media that correlate with my artistic approach to the concept. Painting has become an important medium to explore the subject matter of my work because it is also a mimetic act in itself. Painting the portraits of these actresses in and out of their character on the same picture plane made me reevaluate the ideas of imitation, being an actress, how much of that role includes your own persona and also the level added when the characters are imitated in the act of painting. The influences for the work intellectually come from Godard and Brecht but the visual language used for the paintings have other painterly references. The style used is subtle in order to push the ideas forward while not letting the style take the dominance. Therefore, the painters that have influenced the work in a formal manner include Alex Katz and Robert Longo. The lack of color references to a certain period in cinema and makes the viewer think about the relationship between different modes of representation concerning imitation. Examples of photographic work have also been an artistic influence during the production process. Cindy Sherman's *Untitled Film Stills* deals with the clichés of representation of women in the media. Together, they make sense as a series that show the different characters embodied by Cindy Sherman. Sherman's work opens up a discussion about the representation of women and while she is in the photographs they are not self-portraits since she is not in them as herself. This roleplaying and construct has influenced my own work where I explore the idea of identity, idolization and becoming another. While Sherman deals with variation

identities what I am interested in is the change between the two identities and how they intersect: the actress and her role. Kate Barry's photographs have influenced the work in a different sense. Looking at her work, one can observe how actresses stay in their character but sometimes show glimpses of their real selves.

Bertolt Brecht has been an important figure during the research process in the idea of reflecting on imitation. His method is being critical on the act of imitation, reminding the audience that what they are watching is in fact a play, distancing them from being immersed in the fiction. Making an act of the imitation, not just imitating has been an important process and is the reason that the main medium that is chosen for the works is the medium of painting. In relation to Brecht, what influenced the ideas behind the work is the way Godard directs his actors. Nana in *Vivre Sa Vie* played by Anna Karina became a recurring figure in the paintings. Godard, inspired by Brechtian methodology, directed Anna Karina in a way that she existed both as Nana and as herself in the movie. The duality in this very idea has a lot to do with mimesis and projection of the self on other's presence. In some other works I employed the shadow to project a sense of self that is not fully present in order to give the idea of how imitation is actually a depersonalization. The shadow in the photographs is merely a shadow, a metaphor for this depersonalization. The body of work approaches the concept from various ways and in different media, exploring the boundary of imitation, appropriation, embodiment and reflecting on these ideas.

## VISUALS

Figure. 1 – A Triptych Nana



Figure. 2—Landscape with Isabella





Figure. 4 – Landscape with Liv



Figure. 5 – Grace or Lisa



Figure. 6 – Anna or Nana





Figure. 7 - Françoise or Nicole



Figure. 8 – Bibi or Alma

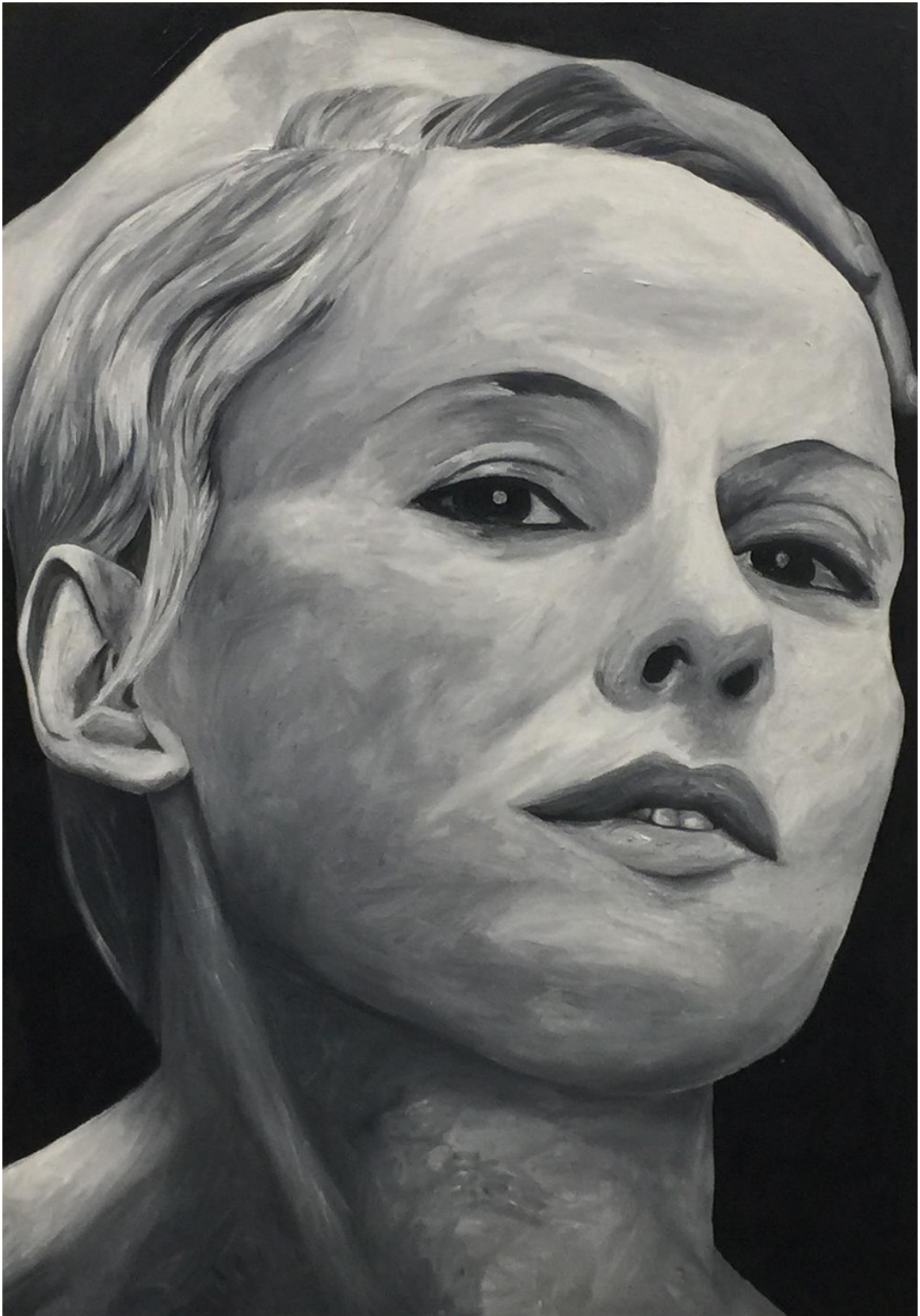


Figure. 9 – Mia or Rosemary



Figure. 10 – Magali or Gradisca



Figure. 11 – Catherine or Marion

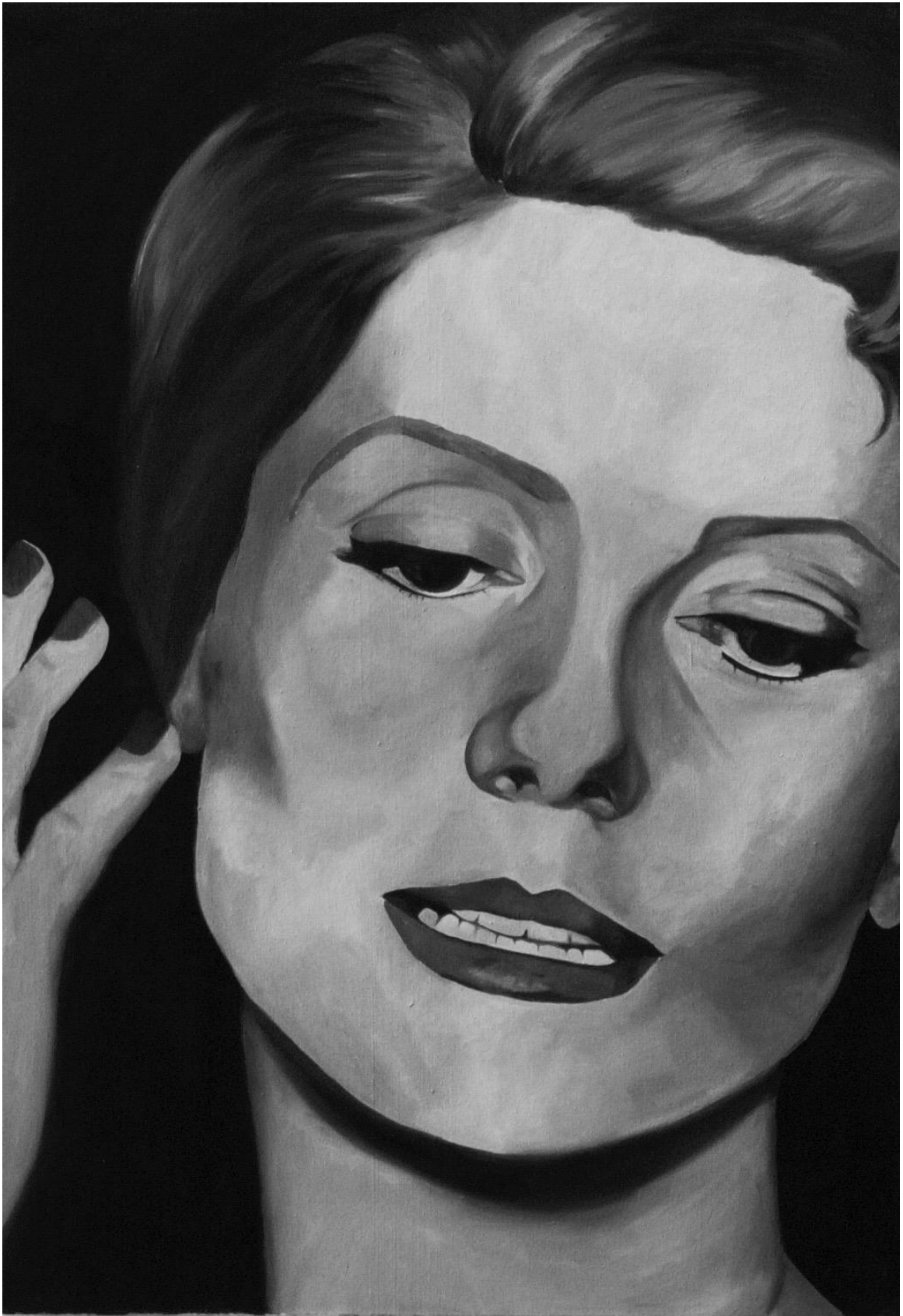


Figure. 12 – Müjde or Fahriye



Figure. 13 – Isabella or Dorothy



Figure. 14 – Juliette of Julie





Figure. 15 – Penelope or Raimunda



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**APPENDIX**

**EXHIBITION**















