

“HISTORY WILL TEACH US NOTHING”: A STUDY ON GENDER,
NATIONALISM AND HEALTH IN THE CONTEXT OF PERFORMATIVITY

by

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NATIONALISM AND HEALTH IN THE CONTEXT OF PERFORMATIVITY

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ABSTRACT

“HISTORY WILL TEACH US NOTHING”: A STUDY ON GENDER,
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Keywords: performativity, gender roles, nationalism, health.

The purpose of this thesis is to provide a conceptual reading and the process for my works that I have produced in the two-year-period of my master's degree. The main theme of my works is the concept of “performativity” on the social and cultural construction of identity, which is examined in terms of gender roles, nationalism and health. The notion of “believing” comes out as the focal point when analyzing and defining these concepts. Most of my works try to question the normalization of the subtle and constantly repeated inured notions and the role they play in the formation of one's identity.

ÖZET

“GEÇMİŞ BİZE HİÇBİRŞEY ÖĞRETMEYECEK”:
TOPLUMSAL CİNSİYET, MİLLİYETÇİLİK VE SAĞLIK ÜZERİNE
PERFORMATİVİTE BAĞLAMINDA YAPILMIŞ BİR İNCELEME

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Anahtar Kelimeler: performativite, toplumsal cinsiyet, milliyetçilik, sağlık.

Bu tezin yazılış amacı son iki yılda ürettiğim işlerin kavramsal altyapısını ve sürecini sunmaktır. Kimlik inşasının sosyal ve kültürel bağlamda “performativite” kavramıyla ilişkisi, toplumsal cinsiyet, milliyetçilik ve sağlık konularında incelenmiştir. “İnanma” mefhumu bu kavramları tanımlarken ve analizini yaparken odak noktası konumundadır. Ürettiğim işlerin çoğunda farketirmeden sürekli olarak tekrarlanan kanıksanmış nosyonların normalizasyonu ve kişinin kimlik oluşumundaki etkisi sorgulanır.

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this thesis is to provide a conceptual reading for the works that I have produced in the two-year-period of my master's degree that I exhibited in the "History Will Teach Us Nothing" exhibition. By naming my exhibit after Sting's song titled "History Will Teach Us Nothing", I indicate that I refer to every literal meaning of the word "history".¹ The main theme of my works is the role of the concept of "performativity" -that is produced by Judith Butler on the gender roles- on the social and cultural construction of identity which is examined in terms of gender roles, nationalism and health. Most of my works try to question the normalization of the subtle and constantly repeated inured notions and the role they play in the formation of one's identity.

Butler sees gender as an act that has been rehearsed, like a script, and we, as the actors make this script a reality over and over again by performing these actions.² Performativity process requires repetition, for the repeated act will then become normalized and internalized. "Repetition is at once a reenactment and reexperiencing of a set of meanings already socially established; and it is the mundane and ritualized form of their legitimation."³ After the internalization step, we produce and spread it through certain acts, living in the fictive reality of its effects. We turn it into a norm and alienate people who are not a part of it. Identity acts as a passive blank page, a tabula rasa in the first place, that the learned knowledge of values are inscribed as the building blocks, making it a complex cultural construction open to manipulation. These culturally constructed identities "regulated by the power structures are, by virtue of being

1 <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/history>

2 Retrieved from <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Performativity>

3 Butler, Judith (1999) [1990]. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York: Routledge, p. 178.

subjected to them, formed, defined, and reproduced in accordance with the requirements of those structures.”⁴

While analyzing the concept of performativity, “believing” comes out as the focal point in all of my works, as the notion of believing is correlated with the concept of “performativity”. Everything starts with believing -as “İnan/Believe I-II” were the foremost projects in my graduate year - we see/hear, we believe, we trust, we learn and we perform; than it becomes our reality, our truth. Considering the notion of believing in the formation of the identity, I underline and emphasize the fact that believing goes alongside with manipulation and misguidance. Related with this statement, how it is getting impossible to form an identity liberated from all the additions. And how people are loosing their ability to think objectively, to believe in themselves, in their own thoughts and reasoning. Taking performativity as the integral part, I indeed try to challenge and question the stability and integrity of the identity, which is constructed with the bits of what is perceived from the others, stiffening, nailing it by performing over and over again.

In the installation view of the exhibition, “**İnan/Believe I**” (Figure 1, 2) welcomes the visitors as the first piece that they see, placed on the intervening column in the gallery enabling my intervening choice of installation. This video piece shows a single strand of hair, writing “inan/believe”, in a basin, gradually being washed away, playing with the notions of peculiarity and instability of the concept of believing. A variation and continuation of this piece that came out when thinking about the concept of “believing” is “**İnan/Believe II**” (Figure 3, 4) which (was not exhibited in the “History will Teach Us Nothing” exhibition) is consisted of two pieces, two stages. The first piece is a white, big, banner written "inan", on it using a formal 'serif typeface' font Times New Roman, in a big font size colored black, centered on the banner. It was hung in a very high column that no one could reach without a big ladder. An unexpected banner with only the word "inan" written on it, placed in the most frequently used places in the Sabancı University, with no sign of who/when/why put it there; a sign which can be read, like an order which comes from a high official. It gathered everyone's attention, creating different scenarios about it. The banner was found so provocative and seditious by the school administration, that it was pulled out right away

4 Butler, Judith (1999) [1990]. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York: Routledge, 4.

on the very next day that it was hung. Presumably after one week from this banner, I prepared eight, white 'inan' posters about 50x70 cm. big, written with a small, more informal font, set in a ambiguous place on the page. Besides verbally, it was technically provocative as well because of it's indecisive placement on the page. This was just the adverse of the cold big poster. The former one was placed in the very center, with a determined formal font and size, it seemed as if it came from above. Whereas, this one was from inside, it was calmer, more informal, smaller and reachable. The reaction given by the people for the 'inan' posters was different than the reaction given to the big 'inan' banner. The decision for it to be taken down was given by the school's administration from high above; like the banner itself, whereas, for the posters, people did whatever they wanted to do with them. Some were taken down or ripped, some were turned into Mimar Sinan (meaning Sinan the Architect), people played games on some of them, some were used as the informal place for writing something on the university's corridors. The reaction for these ones came from inside, whereas for the big banner the reaction was from high above, from outside, from the administration. I was constantly walking around the corridors and checking if something was written, and taking photographs. So I have the whole process of them from being only 'inan' at the beginning and then progressing and turning into something else. As in the works of Fluxus, the viewer is not only viewing but actually interacting, contributing, -this time without knowing if it was an art piece or not. The first and second stage of this work, had a action-reaction relationship partaking in the public domain. With the fist 'inan' banner I poked the people and with the posters, I got the reaction from the people, by themselves. The reaction given to both of them, differed in the sense of where and how those banner and posters were hung attitudinally.

CHAPTER 1

PERFORMATIVITY ON GENDER

First of all, in terms of its relation to my works in this text I am limiting the analysis of performativity on gender. There are a lot of questions to ask and analyze about the role of the gender performativity in the construction of identity. What is the distinction between sex and gender? How, why and by whom is gender produced, reconstituted and sustained? As Judith Butler asks “How does one “become” a gender?”⁵ What role does the notion of performativity play in the construction of gender? What are the categories and how are the transitions between those categories seen by the society?

Sex means both the biological and physiological properties that define “male” and “female”, whereas, gender, in its broadest sense, is the social and cultural definition of “male” and “female”. It is the normalized, culturally stabilized, social extensions of the biological sexes. Culturally constructed characteristics and roles given by the society; for instance almost everywhere in the world, women do more housework than men or in most of the world it is a man's duty to earn money for the family. In Judith Butler's words Gender ought not to be construed as a stable identity or locus of agency from which various acts follow; rather, gender is an identity tenuously constituted in time, instituted in an exterior space through a stylized repetition of acts. Gender is neither the causal result of sex nor as seemingly fixed as sex.”⁶

The question that interests me and cover my works mostly is, how come the characteristics of gender become this permanent and what ensures this? Well, the answer is the notion of performativity which is ensured by the patriarchal hegemony and the heterosexual matrix. My intention here is not to clash heterosexuality and homosexuality at all. The thing that bothers me about the heterosexual order is the fact that naturalized heterosexuality requires gender and gender brings inequality of the

5 Butler, Judith (1999) [1990]. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York: Routledge,141

6 Butler, Judith (1999) [1990]. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York: Routledge,178

sexes and oppression along with it (Butler). **“I agree with Barbara Kruger/ Barbara Kruger'a katihorum”** (Figure 5, 6) is a work about the severe male dominance, the inured patriarchal social order and how all the values in the society serve to make this order abiding. Adapting Barbara Kruger's poster about the abortion debate in the United States to the 'turban' debate in Turkey. Using the same way as Kruger, such as the sentence structure, wording, colors, style, moreover, supporting my attitude by the title “I agree with Kruger”. I continue her manner, her stance on the turban issue; not likely, not resembling but same. I used only official data from TBMM's⁷ official site.⁸ In the TBMM voting dated 09.02.2008,⁹ which would let turban be worn in the public sphere, 411 of the 550 leaders voted yes, which corresponds to 74%. As it is given in the official site of TBMM, the number of female leaders are 48, and the male leaders are 494, making the ratio %8,85 to %91,14.¹⁰ Besides the numeric data, the visual data, -the photographs of the leaders in the parliament- are again taken from the TBMM's official site. Here, my stance is not against turban but to the rigorous male dominance and hegemony in the decision mechanism, especially when it comes to a subject merely about women. Technically, besides maintaining all of the aspects Kruger used, I used a grainy filter on the background consisted of the leaders' photographs. Putting an auto censor on the poster; referring to every censored data public has to receive from the government, to all of the knowledge blocking, suppression, misguided communication public has to face.

How does a human being turn into a gendered being? When motherhood, a natural ability, was fixed to women as a characteristic, as a duty, automatically women turned into a fragile being which is dependent on a man's protection, lacking wholeness, needing to be completed. Man became identified with mind, and woman became identified with body, turning into an object of desire. That is to say, falling one step back, in the social existence. Now comes the question of how we maintain these cultural values and hence the inequality.

We again face with performativity, conjoined with believing. When the social characteristics and roles are fixed on to the sexes, it goes on with the recursive practice.

7 Turkish National Assembly

8 <http://www.tbmm.gov.tr/>

9 http://www.tbmm.gov.tr/develop/owa/Tutanak_B_SD.birlesim_baslangic?P4=20078&P5=B&PAGE1=1&PAGE2=21

10 http://www.tbmm.gov.tr/develop/owa/milletvekillerimiz_sd.dagilim

Gender Performativeness is not a one-time act but a repeated process, a social ritual which is naturalized and normalized on the body. When it starts in the first place, everyone sustains it, clinching it onto the social unconscious. There is nothing left in the end to the latter generations but to maintain this cultural and social *destiny*. **“Venus doesn't feel pretty today/ Venüs bugün kendini güzel hissetmiyor”**, (Figure 7, 8) is about inverting the traditional roles and features. Reversing the roles of *back* and *front*, *essential* and *remnant*. Entering into Venus de Milo's world -the Greek goddess of love and beauty, the archetype of female beauty- from the door opening inside of her, to her private. On the *front* of the painting, Venus is depicted from her back, painted with henna -being one of the oldest cosmetics- dried and falling off. On the *back* of the painting, the remnant of the henna on the front is displayed, as the actual stain of henna. The remnant of the henna, becomes the principal image, as the dried henna falls off. As the actual process of applying henna, the envisaged material falls off, the willed one arises. Thus, the remnant becomes the essential. It is not a different material, but freed from all the excess. The one at the *back* of the canvas, becomes the principal, being the actual desired image. All of this process turns the canvas into the skin of Venus. The unusual action of using both sides of the canvas, takes the painting out of two dimensionality and makes it three dimensional. Again there is an action of making the spectator look at the part that no one looks in the sense of traditional painting. **“Dialogue/ Diyalog”** (Figure 9, 10) which is a collaborative project is again about breaking up the clichés. It is consisted of one video projection made up of short video sequences in each of them, one women talking in an inscrutable way. The issue that I am dealing with is about the stereotypical characteristics that are stuck to women and all the clichéd and kitsch sayings that come with those stereotypizations such as ‘It's impossible to understand women’, ‘Women speak another language’ etc. To remove every meaning that has been put into those already empty sayings -which people think they are for real by believing in them- by exaggerating and thrusting, and indeed by making it incomprehensible. First of all, I started off trying to show scenes from a woman's daily life, such as while she is cooking, chatting with another woman, when she's enjoying herself on the balcony singing alone. However, because I forced the performer to turn all of the thinking systems, speaking templates, upside down, and talk in a way that she hadn't tried before, it was becoming impossible to make the speech up because the brain tries to act in its normal way, only putting different words convenient to the regular speech templates. Therefore, I decided to make the person doing the

performance read it from somewhere, as s/he looks, making all of those very uneasy. I decided to turn this project into a collaborative one, not limiting it by only using one woman. I asked the performers to write their own text, whatever they want, since it was not going to be understood whatsoever. It could be about her quarrel with the neighbor, her last weekend, her breakfast or something very personal from her private life etc. I changed their text by replacing the order of the words in the consecutive sentences, forming a new and incomprehensible text. It looked like a different text even to those who wrote it. It was not going to be totally schizophrenic either. The viewer would hear someone talking with the same words in the same language that s/he speaks, try to catch the words as if s/he is understanding it, get lost in the vague word flow and in overall s/he is not going to understand a thing. I asked the performer to talk by looking in the camera, as if she is looking in the eye of the viewer, giving the sense of as if they are chatting, making the performance even harder. After getting the text ready, I wanted the performer to decide the place where the shooting is going to take place. It could be a cafe, a shopping mall, her house, her school, her work wherever she wanted to express herself. The viewer can start watching this video anywhere, and by watching 15-20 seconds of it, s/he can understand the point. The installation in the exhibition is consisted of a screen and a headphone attached to it, with a chair for the viewer to sit down, inside a little, separated room. This makes the viewer come face to face with the woman speaking on the screen, where they can have eye contact, putting them in a dialogue, isolating him/her from the other people and other works in the exhibition place, where s/he can only concentrate on listening and trying to understand the woman talking to him/her.

We accept the usual as natural (Nochlin, 1971) says Linda Nochlin in the article “Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?” We are tend to perceive everything we are used to happening around us as natural. This arises from the institutional structures to proceed in the same existing social order, passed on as it is, without changing. As we see in the article's title, there are questions asked about women such as; “Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists”, or one of the most common, “Why are all the best cooks man?”. As Nochlin suggests the one asking this question actually does not inquire the answer because he/she has it inside his/her head that there are no great women artists or great cooks etc. because women are incapable of greatness. It is actually not a question, but an attempt to make the other person say the

answer. Generally, as Nochlin and Butler suggest in their articles, the first reaction of the feminists to a question like this, is “to swallow the bait...attempt to answer the question as it is put: that is, to dig up examples of worthy or insufficiently appreciated women artists (or any figure) throughout history”¹¹, and say how their abilities are actually different than men in a feminine way. This answer actually only hammers this negative attitude, and nothing else. First we have to start by admitting that there really were no great woman artists, and to be able to ask why. The other answers does not take the argument anywhere far from the limits of the same patriarchal hegemony, struggle desperately inside. The answer to the question Nochlin asks and many other characteristics that are stuck to women, is as Nochlin suggests; “The fault lies not in our stars, our hormones, our menstrual cycles, or our empty internal spaces, but in our institutions and our education -education understood to include everything that happens to us from the moment we enter this world of meaningful symbols, signs, and signals.”¹² I wonder how many people are aware of the fact that one of the biggest hotels in Istanbul, Conrad, has a principle of not hiring any woman in its kitchen.

The normalized and expected thing is to live a life contended with the roles and characteristics of the gender categories, that is imposed by the social order. The ones that do not fit into those categorizations and templates, always seem strange. Think of a woman who consciously refuses to give birth, think how she will cause disgust in the society's respect. Another example would be, boys who are not keen on playing or watching soccer but force to make themselves like it in order not to be left out, alienated. My cousin used to hate soccer when he was little. He is in the eighth grade and he is a Fenerbahçe fan right now. How did this take progress? How come we adapted ourselves to those social, cultural templates?

There is an ambivalent condition of the transition between the gender categorizations in the heterosexual social order. When a woman acts like a man, it is something appreciated in the society. In Turkey there is a saying “Erkek Fatma”, to the masculine women which has a very positive connotation. On the contrary, when a man acts like a woman, this corresponds to the worst curse that he can hear, the fear of feminization, associating with homosexuality. The sayings ring in my ear right now, “don't be a coward like a woman”, “don't talk like a woman” etc. It is a way of insulting

11 Nochlin, Linda. "Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?" *ARTnews* January 1971: 22-39, 67-71

12 Nochlin, Linda. "Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?" *ARTnews* January 1971: 22-39, 67-71

and humiliating a man, dragging him down to the level of womanhood. “**Küfür/ Swear**” (Figure 11, 12) is about this tradition of swearing. In Turkish and probably in other languages, there is a very limited choice in terms of swearwords that can be used to curse at a man. The utmost is calling him ‘gay’, which is in a way feminizing him, in a very crude mode, calling him a woman. The other things that can be said is, to swear at his mother, sister, wife, to his integrity (*namus*). In all of those, you swear at him by damaging, destroying his manhood, his masculinity. Here, by decorating, beautifying with a fluorescent pink ribbon tied with a knot- which are all clichés attributed to feminine- the metal rectangular prism’s geometry, rationality, stiffness, hardness which are correlated with masculinity- is destroyed. Besides being beautified, the rectangular prism is squeezed and crushed with the ribbon tied around it. In terms of material; the prism is made of metal, which is hard, raw, stable, rational, expected. The ribbon is made of cloth, a soft type of fabric, which is flexuous, twisty, tender, playful, unguessable. In terms of color, one is raw-metal color, a dead gray, the other is a fluorescent pink, that is grabbing and biting the viewers eye. Contrary to the nature of the materials, we see the cloth winning over the metal. The reaction of the metal to the act of squeezing, the curves, the crinkles, the dents; estranging and softening from its prior and essential stiff form. There is an illusion created and empowered by the juxtaposition of two contrasting gestures along with two contrasting materials. One is squeezing, an act that is done by force, based on power and intensity, firm, solid. On the other hand the other gesture is loose, soft. The contrasting symbolicalness of the two materials and the two gestures, gives the viewer the sense of the illusionistic reality of the painting. That is to say, the sculpture is performing -both conceptually and formally- the act of swearing at a man.

CHAPTER 2

PERFORMATIVITY ON NATIONALISM

As it was in the gender part of my thesis, I have to limit the part on nationalism to the area that relates to my works, since it is one of the widest subjects that have been analyzed and argued upon. First I would like to start with the definition of nationalism, how it arose and for what purposes it was used. As Levent Köker states, “Nationalism is an ideology. This ideology, a) aims to ensure and sustain the unity of the state and the nation. b) gives the individuals a certain world view as the members of that particular government and nation, and ascribes duties and expects them to fulfill those duties.”¹³ Those notions and sentiments of unity and completeness of the nation it encompasses, and the feeling of belonging, is accomplished and constructed through the idea of the national identity being the only essential constituent, the primary matter in an individual's life. It accomplishes these concepts by stressing on the sameness, the common characteristics of the community. Besides these features, one of the key characteristics of nationalism is constructing the national identity through the other.

If we are to define the Turkish conception of nationalism, first we have to consider the evolution process of its political construction. In Köker's words, “The ones established the Turkish Republic wanted the new state to be a “nation state” and in that sense they were nationalist. However, in order for the state inherited from the Ottomans to be a nation state, there has to be a nation. What were the elements that unite a nation? Lets use the words of the Republic's establisher: unity in the political entity, unity of language, unity of race and origin, historical affinity, and ethic kinship”.¹⁴ The Turkist

13 “Milliyetçilik bir ideolojidir. Bu ideoloji, (a) devlet ile milletin birliğini sağlamayı ve muhafaza etmeyi hedefler ve (b) bireylere belli bir milletin ve -dolayısıyla o millet ile ayrılmaz bir birlik oluşturmuş bulunan-devletin mensupları olarak belirli bir dünyâ görüşü getirir ve bu çerçevede de ödevler yükler, onları bu ödevlerin gereğini yerine getirmeye çağırır.” Köker, L. (2007). Türkiye'nin Milliyetçilik Problemi. Translated by the author of this thesis.

14 “Bu durumda, devletin insan unsurunun bir milleti oluşturabilmesi için, millet kavramında içkin (mündemiç) olan birlik unsurlarının sağlanması şarttı. Neydi bir milleti meydana getiren birlik unsurları? Cumhuriyet'in kurucusunun diliyle söyleyelim: "siyasi varlıkta birlik, dil birliği, ırk ve menşe (köken)

nationalist movement became the dominant ideology in the last period of the Ottomans, in the War of Independence, and in the establishing phase of the new state, which later on became one of the most essential principles of the Turkish Republic (Yüksel, 2009).

The contemporary understanding of nationalism in Turkey appears to stand between the notions of devotion to the country and patriotic citizenship that are derived from the War of Independence period, and the nationalism that is affiliated with the Turkist-Islamist culture, based on the ethnical, racial and religious discourses. This shift of the emphasis on the Turkish nationalism, from a secular, modern way to a more negative, closed, aggressive, conservative one seems to cause the negative tension. Turkish nationalism originates from being a Turk; it's not a coincidence that the motto of one of the most popular newspapers in Turkey, is "Turkey belongs to Turks".¹⁵

There is a need for some mediums, in order for the nationalist discourse to be imposed on the individuals. The ones that I will try to analyze that are used to convey the knowledge, are public mass education and the mass media. Starting from the public mass education in which the curriculum is determined and defined by the state, the base is prepared with an excessive knowledge loading of the nationalist notions. Then this knowledge is constantly reestablished and updated by the visual media, the press which appears to be manipulated by the state and the internet. Thirdly in the society, with the performative acts done by the individuals, those conceptions are internalized, fixed and transposed to other individuals.

With the public mass education being mandatory in the level of elementary grade, it seems to become the main source for carrying out the state's social and political discourses, since (theoretically) it embodies every citizen in the country. The textbooks become the main instrument and source in the public mass education through which the national curriculum is regulated, produced and controlled by the state. During the primary education period, the child internalizes all of the given knowledge since s/he has not built up an awareness level to question. Textbooks in particular include everything needed for the state's nationalist identity construction such as; how to be a

birliđi, tarihi karabet (yakınlık) ve ahlaki karabet." Köker, L. (2007). Türkiye'nin Milliyetçilik Problemi. Translated by the author of this thesis.

15 "Türkiye Türklerin'dir." *Hürriyet*, 26/05/2010. Translated by the author of this thesis.

citizen, how to pay taxes, how to properly perform the gender roles, how to love the country, even how to sacrifice yourself for the country if needed. Assembling all of these notions, starting from a very early age, it is expected from the citizens to obey and show an unconditional loyalty to the state.

In the school textbooks, one of the most emphasized elements in the nationalist discourse is the concept of militarism. From the very early stages of childhood, the normalization of war, violence, militarism is thought. The notion of history is based on wars and triumphs and the argument that Turkey is under “internal and external threat” is constantly underlined in the textbooks. Its definitely not a coincidence for a 160-paged- history book to repeat the word “war” 154 times. (“Milli Tarih!/ National History!”). Does anyone remember anything else than wars, conquests, and triumphs, in the history classes in the primary school? The awkward part is that it is such an inured and normalized conjuncture that it is impossible to comprehend how abnormal this is unless you stop and think it over.

When we analyze the textbooks in the militarism context, three main parts come out in Altınay's article: “the myth of army-nation, the fiction of essentialist military identity; the normalization of war/violence, affirmation and glorification; and the militarized conception of citizenship.”¹⁶ In the history and the national security textbooks, the expression of how the Turks were a nomadic, warrior “militarist-nation” even when they were a tribe in Middle Asia is constantly underlined. As I mentioned in the previous paragraphs, the concept of history is told and standardized as if it is only consisted of wars and triumphs. As Altınay argues, the army-nation myth becomes the father myths of the Turkish nationalism especially after the 1930's. “As an important result of this myth, militarism is culturalized, constructed not as an extent of the army, defense or a state organization, but an extent of culture.”¹⁷ In order to apprehend how this notion of “Every Turk was born as a soldier”¹⁸ -which became one of the features of the Turkish culture presented proudly- (Altınay, 2009). We have to consider what

16 “Militarizm bağlamında baktığımızda üç başlık öne çıkıyor: Ordu-millet miti ve özcü askeri kimlik kurgusu; savaşların/şiddetin sıradanlaşması, olumlanması ve yüceltilmesi; ve askerileşmiş vatandaşlık anlayışı.” (Altınay, A. (2009). Ders Kitaplarında Militarizm. Translated by the author of this thesis.

17 “Bu mitin önemli bir sonucu olarak askerlik kültürelleştirilmiş, savunmanın, ordunun veya genel anlamda devlet örgütlenmesinin değil, kültürün bir uzantısı olarak kurgulanmaya başlanmıştır.” Altınay, A. (2009). Ders Kitaplarında Militarizm. Translated by the author of this thesis.

18 Her Türk asker doğar

percent of the men in Turkey played with a gun as a toy, or how many of them dreamed of being a soldier when they grow up, to understand how militarism is culturally internalized. The superior “geo-strategic” location of Turkey and how it is under threat inside and outside, is constantly repeated, establishing “the idea that “Turkey has no friends” [Türkün Türkten başka dostu yoktur]. Creating a constant feeling of insecurity, stressing the expressions of threat, enemy; justifying the inevitableness of war and thus the essential need for a powerful army. (Altınay, 2009) As Altınay emphasizes, in the textbooks, firearms and war are depicted as the most effective means to protect the rights. “The social struggle is inevitably identified with 'war', the amicable/peaceful solutions to the problems between individuals/societies and defending rights without violence is indicated as impossible.”¹⁹

The second part of performativity on nationalism section is about the role of the mass media. The knowledge gained from the schools is constantly updated and reproduced in the mediums of the mass media, making its effect unquestionably powerful since it reaches everyone. It is important to keep the individuals of the nation intercommunicated and interconnected, in order to empower the feeling of unity and the spiritual bonds that tie the nation together. By means of the mass media, even though the individuals within society are not acquainted with each other, they get excited, saddened, rejoiced at the same things, -like a national soccer game, or the Eurovision song contest etc.- making the nation inwardly united. The most effective means of the mass media are, television in terms of the news and the TV series, the newspapers and the internet. In the present day of our time, the knowledge flow is distributed through these media with respect to the state's political and social discourses, appears to result in reforming and reconstituting the nationalist identity construction.

First of all I want to analyze television and the newspapers in terms of news, which is the most dominant instrument for knowledge distribution used by the mass media. The fact that news are associated with reality and the claim of being objective, unbiased, urges the society to put the news on a sacred and respective position and believe in them. (Yüksel, 2009). If we scrutinize this notion of being objective, we see

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“Toplumsal mücadele ”kaçınılmaz olarak “savaş ”la özdeşleştirilmekte, “hakları korumanın en etkili aracı ”olarak “ateşli silahlar ”gösterilmekte; insanlar/toplumlar arası sorunların “barışçıl ”çözümü ve (insan hakları mücadelesinde olduğu gibi)“şiddetsiz ”hak savunması bir imkansızlık olarak kurgulanmaktadır.” Altınay, A. (2009). Ders Kitaplarında Militarizm. Translated by the author of this thesis.

that it actually is quite different than that. Firstly, deciding what is valuable enough to be on the news, and how to be looked at it, makes the claim of being objective far from being true. Besides the legal restrictions and censorship, the visual media sector and the press seeming politically standing close to the state and the political power, demolishes the claim as well, which makes us read or watch an interpretation of reality. The media does not only determine the subjects people discuss but also imposes how to discuss and the perspective the society looks through, goes beyond its role of announcing, but shaping and controlling the society's thoughts and mentality.

The second part about the television is the serials, in which the daily life is turned into spectacles recreating the prevailing values of the society and reaching a vast audience with its popularity. In terms of the construction of identity, it is an indirect and an unnoticeable way to load knowledge. They give surreptitious and subtle inscriptions about politics, religion, gender roles and tyranny. As we see in the example of “Kurtlar Vadisi” (Valley of Wolves), the power and effect of these inscriptions can never be underestimated. In the survey “Gençler Hayatı Nasıl Algılıyor”²⁰ (How do young people perceive life?) done by Uluslararası Politik ve Strateji Araştırmalar Merkezi (UPSAM) among the high school students, Polat Alemdar (the leading actor in Kurtlar Vadisi) was the most popular answer to the question of “who is your role model?” and again its not a coincidence. The knowledge passed on the news is repeated in different contexts in the serials, making it more abiding. By the constant repetition of messages on television, the hegemonic ideologies are easily transmitted to a very big population.

Internet which is widely used in the present time, has an effect more different than television or newspapers in a sense that it is harder to be legally controlled, and its a source for people to both gain and give information. It is a place to enable every ideological practice, gathering followers of such groups and stimulate their expressions.

With the negative effect of the transformation and alternation of globalization in the world, the ethnical, sexual, racial, religious, cultural differences are more underlined than ever. The distinction between us and them is deeper and stronger thus, nationalism stands out among the other ideologies. People are concerned with loosing their identity, social assimilation, turning them into just anyone with the expanding effects of globalization. Hereby, it causes a paranoid, sinister look towards the ones not belonging

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<http://ilef.ankara.edu.tr/gorunum/2006/11/genclerin-rol-modeli-polat-alemdar/>

to 'them'. The contemporary nationalism revealing itself as a popular, masculine nationalism and manifests itself in places like soccer games, internet forums or streets, is an aggressive, intolerant to difference, dangerous and heavily religious perception of nationalism. It is turned into an aggressive discourse based on ethnic discrimination, which has neither respect nor toleration for anything different. Nationalism is tried to be imposed on the community through every means. It starts in the public education with the textbooks that the curriculum is designated consciously by the state's policy, then it continues perpetually to be reproduced and kept up-to-date by the means of mass media. Through the internet and individual's performative manners in the public life, these discourses are kept spontaneously disseminated. After all this analysis, a question emerges in my mind, I wonder what percent of our opinions, our discourse, our character belongs really to us that we decided with our own reasoning and rationality?

“Milli Tarih!/ National History!” (Figure 13, 14) is about the newly emerging segregationist notion of nationalism in Turkey. In this work, I scanned a-160-paged seventh grade history book, published by the Ministry of Education in Turkey and calculated the repetition of the words. It was conclusive for me to see that, in those 160 pages, the word 'Ottoman' was used 308 times, 'state' 298, 'war' 154, 'army' 99, 'Türk' 131, 'Russian' was used 135 times. Enabling to see that the notion of history is thought through wars/triumphs, Ottomans-Turks/others.

The white beret has become the social symbol of the newly emerged racist, segregationist nationalism, after the murder of the Turkish Armenian journalist Hrant Dink. Putting it on the history book, is a reference to indicate how and where the origins and roots of that crooked mentality is established; trying to answer, or 'react' in the same manner by using the same symbol.

CHAPTER 3

PERFORMATIVITY ON HEALTH

In the third part, I will try to analyze the notions of “performativity” and “belief” on the context of health and medicine, by analyzing the notions of the unquestioned belief in the scientific knowledge, thus medicine, how it is seen as salvation and doctors seem as sacred, the analyzation of the terms illness, disease and symptoms, and finally the concepts of risk, victimization and paranoia.

Firstly, starting from the Age of Enlightenment, there started a manner of accepting the truth of scientific knowledge as absolute. Yet believing without questioning, putting the empirical theory of scientific/medical knowledge to a sacred position and almost worshipping it. As Good argues “there is -quite ironically- a close relationship between science, including medicine, and religious fundamentalism, a relationship that turns, in part, on our concept “belief”.²¹ The belief in the scientific knowledge in the concept of medicine, does not remain at the intangible level of opinions and ideas, but having a direct physical effect on the people's lives, by being applied on individuals' bodies.

Medicine is seen as the salvation, because of the great effect of the fundamental devotion to science. Yet doctors being the representatives of the scientific knowledge in medicine, are seen as sacred, almost as the prophets of science. Thus, the doctors are put in position above all else in the eyes of the patient in the first place, and what they have in between is a relationship based on power. The patient is the sufferer, where as the doctor is the cure, the remedy. The only reason for the patient's suffering to end is the doctor. The patient speaks in a language with sufferer words, yet the doctor speaks with a scientific knowledge language (filled with “scientific” words the patient cannot understand). This power relationship is indeed the demand of the patient, since s/he

21 Good, B. J. (1994). *Medicine, rationality, and experience: An Anthropological perspective*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 7.

goes to a doctor to solve the problem that s/he could not solve. Frustration can be born if the doctor cannot provide any answers.

As to understand or decode the framework of the medical encounter between the patient and the doctor, we have to analyze the interaction between the terms “illness”, “disease” and “symptom” that each have different roles. Illness is the sum of the anomalies that occur in the body of the patient, interfering, affecting the running of the order of her/his life. This is a subjective, sensual, special situation which the patient lives and senses the impacts on the body. Whereas, disease is objective, scientific, impersonal, and rational. The intermediary notion between illness and disease is the concept of “symptom”, that provides the connection between the patient and the doctor. The patient tells those personal indications, “symptoms” to the doctor and s/ he interprets and relates those symptoms to the diseases included in her/his medical knowledge, categorizing the illness, “diagnosing” it as a disease. The medical treatment of the diseases are in one way, giving the same medicine, treatment to all of the patients taking part in the same disease category. Every individual is categorized in a disease category, being generalized, the state of being an individual becomes destroyed.

Thirdly, I will discuss the concepts of risk, victimization and paranoia. The notion of risk, points to the potential of being sick. This situation brings the obligations of constantly being under surveillance, medication and protection. The individual is obliged to keep the body under surveillance, as Yaprak Sarıışık states in her thesis “screening becomes not only a personal responsibility for one’s health, but also a virtuous behavior.”²² This concept of risk contains the risk of contaminating others with the disease as well. “Illness is no longer seen as confined to the physical individual body or the present. It also exists outside the body as a “possibility” for the entire population, and as a “possibility” of illness in the future.”²³ Meaning, you have to protect yourself to protect others. The health and the sickness of the society are in your hands. Therefore, you have to be checked and be careful, and pay the utmost attention every time with your own body for the sake of others. Therefore disease “becomes,

22 Sarıışık, Y. (2010). Mosquitoes, Sex Workers, Nuns, and “Our Ignorant Folk”: Narratives of HPV Infection and Vaccination Among Turkish Doctors. Sabancı University, 38.

23 Sarıışık, Y. (2010). Mosquitoes, Sex Workers, Nuns, and “Our Ignorant Folk”: Narratives of HPV Infection and Vaccination Among Turkish Doctors. Sabancı University, 30.

even when it is not present, an ever-existing future possibility”²⁴ With the result of all of these, a sense of paranoia is created. Mass media performs a significant role in the exploitation of the public in this sense by constantly pumping the notion of victimization, misery, paranoia, resulting with medication madness and health insanity. As Oya Baydar says in her book titled “Çöplüğün Generali”, about the role of visual media, “we started to assume the spectacle on television screen as real. Turning the high-tech society into a remote control society.”²⁵, turning everything into virtual pills with a placebo effect. **“Voyeur Objects Part I: TV-Monitor/ Voyör Nesneler Bölüm I: TV- Monitör”** (Figure 15, 16) is an ongoing collective project about being a TV controlled society in which the participants frame a snapshot of their reflected private lives from the turned off television or monitor, turning it into parodies of their real life. I wanted the participants to watch their own movie from the eyes of the TV's and monitors around them that they are used to watch other people's lives, and get informed.

We are living in a time of commodification, and we, as the audience, internalize and apply what we see without questioning and searching for a new way. Like everything else health services, medicine, and vaccines have become commodified products. Just recently about the swine flue in Turkey, there was a huge polemic about whether to get vaccinated or not, since there were controversies about the efficacy and the side effects of the vaccines and yet the Ministry of Health was very much persisting on it. As Good argues, “In medical anthropology, analysis of “beliefs” is most prominent in cultural accounts of those conditions such as infectious diseases for which biological theories have greatest authority”²⁶ What I'm dealing with here is the manipulation and abuse of the people's utmost belief in the scientific knowledge, therefore the medicine as in the most contemporary issues about the so called “flu epidemics”. **“Dangerous Liaisons I: Galosh/ Tehlikeli Yakınlaşmalar I: Galoş”** (Figure 17, 18) and **“Dangerous Liaisons II: Flu Mask/ Tehlikeli Yakınlaşmalar II: Grip Maskesi”** (Figure 19, 20) are about the recent health madness especially broke up

24 Sarıışık, Y. (2010). Mosquitoes, Sex Workers, Nuns, and “Our Ignorant Folk”: Narratives of HPV Infection and Vaccination Among Turkish Doctors. Sabancı University, 30.

25 “Ekranada gördüklerimizi gerçek sanmaya başladık. Şu ileri teknoloji toplumunun bir kumanda toplumu olduğunu” Oya Baydar, Çöplüğün Generali, 2009, Can Yayınları,159. Translated by the author of this thesis.

26 Good, B. J. (1994). *Medicine, rationality, and experience: An Anthropological perspective*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 20.

with the flu debates. Using the title “Dangerous Liaisons”, Stephen Freear’s movie,²⁷ I wanted to underline not the dangerous side of the sicknesses, but the conspiracies, the intrigues that people have to face in the recent years about the health sector. Are we really in a time of epidemic disease? Or are those really conspiracy theories? Should we get vaccinated? Should we stop every physical contact with outside, or else will we really die? Who and what should we really protect ourselves from?

Galosh doesn't carry the outside to inside and vice versa. It is all about sterilization, isolation. The wall put between inside and outside. What does it recall? Hospitals, health centers, protection, hygiene. What is my intervention? I turned that sterilization, hygiene obsession, into a microbe, a virus spreading like an epidemic. In fact, it is resembling to the caricatured microbe figures in the science fiction movies, or cartoons. Referring to all of those consciously created insanity, about medical addiction, sterilization deriving from the fear and terror of the so called epidemics like bird

flue, swine flue, mad cow etc. Here again we have a learning system based on perception from outside which is manipulated especially via the biased media. Internalizing every information we receive from television or newspapers, without questioning, channels our outlook towards everything without knowing. That mentality haunts us, suffocates us; makes us forget how to believe in ourselves, in our own reason, senses. At the end it seems to me that we loose our ability of reasoning and decision making.

“Dangerous Liaisons II: Flu Mask/ Tehlikeli Yakınlaşmalar II: Grip Maskesi” (Figure 19, 20) came out as the continuation of the galosh piece, revolving around the same concepts. I ask the same questions about the intrigues that people have to face in the recent years about the health sector. All of the blocked and misguided information people has to face about the health sector. Each passing day, a new thing is put forward about the protection against diseases. Do this, do that, eat this, don't eat this, to prevent swine flu, cancer etc. And two months later they discard what they had said and say something else. My intervention here is again, to turn the flu masks into something that is exaggerated, overblown and turning it something to obstruct people's

27 Dangerous Liaisons is a 1988 drama film based upon Christopher Hampton's play, *Les liaisons dangereuses*, which in turn was a theatrical adaptation of the eighteenth-century French novel *Les Liaisons dangereuses* by Pierre Choderlos de Laclos. (Retrieved from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dangerous_Liaisons)

daily life. The main difference here is the fact that I didn't buy any of those masks, but taken the ones that are distributed by the school administration, when the swine flu started to spread terror everywhere and the madness of hygiene and protection started. The university administration fulfilled the duty of precaution and protection against the swine flu, by distributing (and constantly refilling) flu masks all over the campus. After collecting enough flu masks, I created a mesh resembling a fish net, by tying them to each other. Hung them in two pieces longitudinally in the corridor, blocking the way and channeling the people to pass through the opening I created; turning the people into microbes, leaking, fleeing from a slit on the mask wall/net.

Both in “Dangerous Liaisons I: Galosh” and “Dangerous Liaisons II: Flu Mask” pieces, I am using ready made material where the object is transformed and used in such a way that I'm not intervening in the material but the placement creates its meaning.

CONCLUSION

In this thesis, I tried to find the answers to the questions that have been flying around my mind. I tried to discuss and analyze the notions of gender, nationalism, health that encompasses my works in the context of performativity conjoined with the notion of believing, in the construction of an individual's identity. How do we learn, what are the elements effecting that process? How do we accept the existing order as the natural without questioning? I wonder what percent of our opinions, our character belongs really to us that we decided with our own reasoning and rationality or what part have we found it ready in our reality and continued as it was?

In the first part of Chapter 1, I discussed the notion and the role of performativity on gender roles. I tried to analyze the distinction between gender and sex and why, how and by whom is gender produced, reconstituted and sustained? How one is categorized from the moment s/he is born.

In the second part, focusing my point to Turkey, I examine the notion of performativity in terms of nationalism and the political construction of national identity. Analyzing each of the mediums used for the construction; textbooks in public mass education, mass media- TV, newspapers, internet and the individual acts. I tried to discuss the concepts of alienation, xenophobia and the contemporary street nationalism that came out as the result.

In the third part, I entered into and met with a new concept, medical anthropology, which I did not have much experience on. Health is a very individualistic and yet very social as well. "Believing" again comes out as the focal point as it encompasses every other concept I discuss in this thesis. Believing accepting without questioning causes in this concept the scientific knowledge to be seen as taboo, medicine as salvation and doctors as sacred. With the constant repetition of the concepts of risk, victimization, an environment of paranoia is created, manipulating people's utmost belief in scientific knowledge and medicine.

APPENDIX: PHOTOGRAPHS OF THE WORKS



Figure 1 “İnan/Believe I” as seen from the entrance of the exhibition.



Figure 2 “İnan/Believe I” detail



Figure 3 “İnan/Believe II” banner

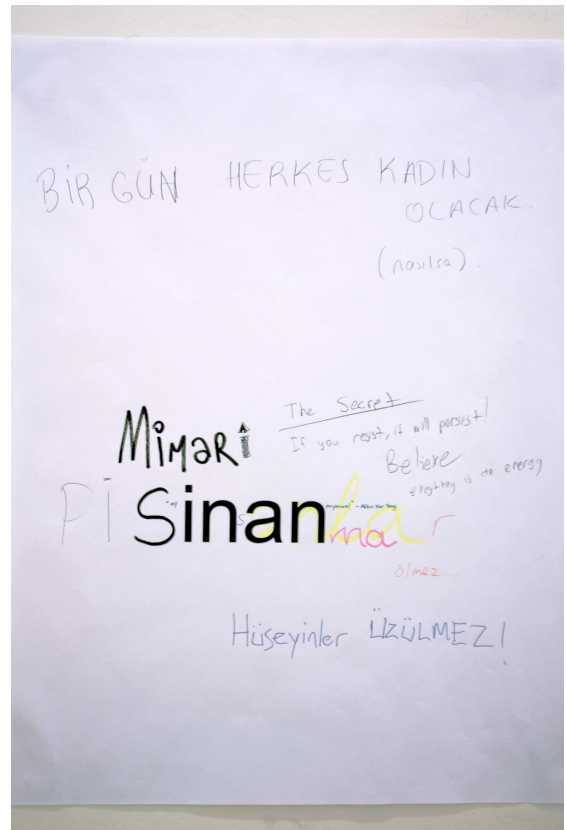


Figure 4 “İnan/Believe II” poster



Figure 5 "I agree with Barbara Kruger / Barbara Kruger'e katılıyorum"



Figure 6 "I agree with Barbara Kruger / Barbara Kruger'e katılıyorum", detail



Figure 7 “Venus doesn't feel pretty today / Venüs bugün kendini güzel hissetmiyor”



Figure 8 “Venus doesn't feel pretty today / Venüs bugün kendini güzel hissetmiyor”, detail



Figure 9 “Dialogue / Diyalog” as seen at the exhibition

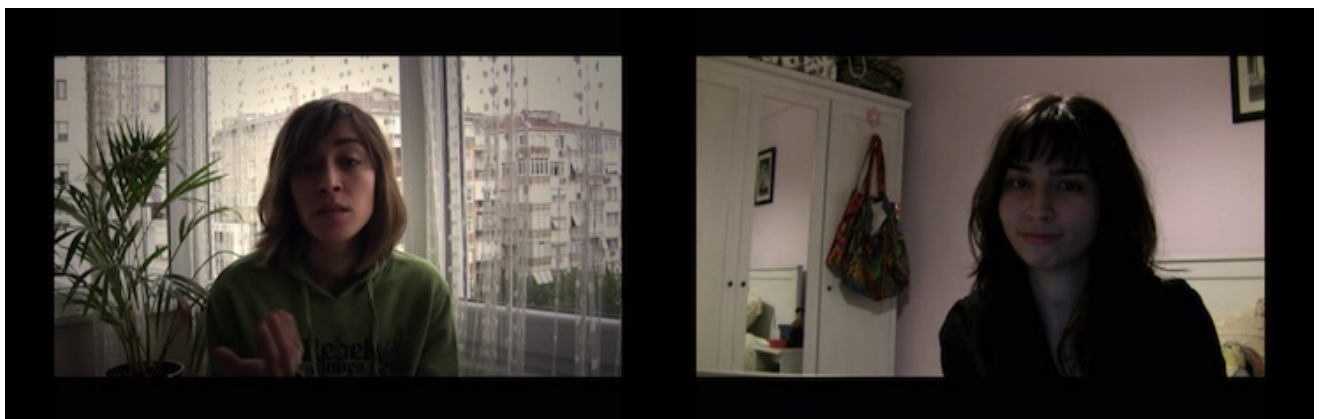


Figure 10 “Dialogue / Diyalog”, screenshots



Figure 11 “Swear / Küfür”



Figure 12 “Swear / Küfür”, detail



Figure 13 “Milli Tarih! / National History!”



Figure 14 “Milli Tarih! / National History!”, details



Figure 15 “Voyeur Objects Part I: TV-Monitor/ Voyör Nesneler Bölüm I: TV- Monitör”



Figure 16 “Voyeur Objects Part I: TV-Monitor/ Voyör Nesneler Bölüm I: TV- Monitör”



Figure 17 “Dangerous Liaisons I: Galosh/ Tehlikeli Yakınlaşmalar I: Galoş”



Figure 18 “Dangerous Liaisons I: Galosh/ Tehlikeli Yakınlaşmalar I: Galoş”, detail



Figure 19 “Dangerous Liaisons II: Flu Mask/ Tehlikeli Yakınlaşmalar II: Grip Maskesi”



Figure 20 “Dangerous Liaisons II: Flu Mask/ Tehlikeli Yakınlaşmalar II: Grip Maskesi”, detail

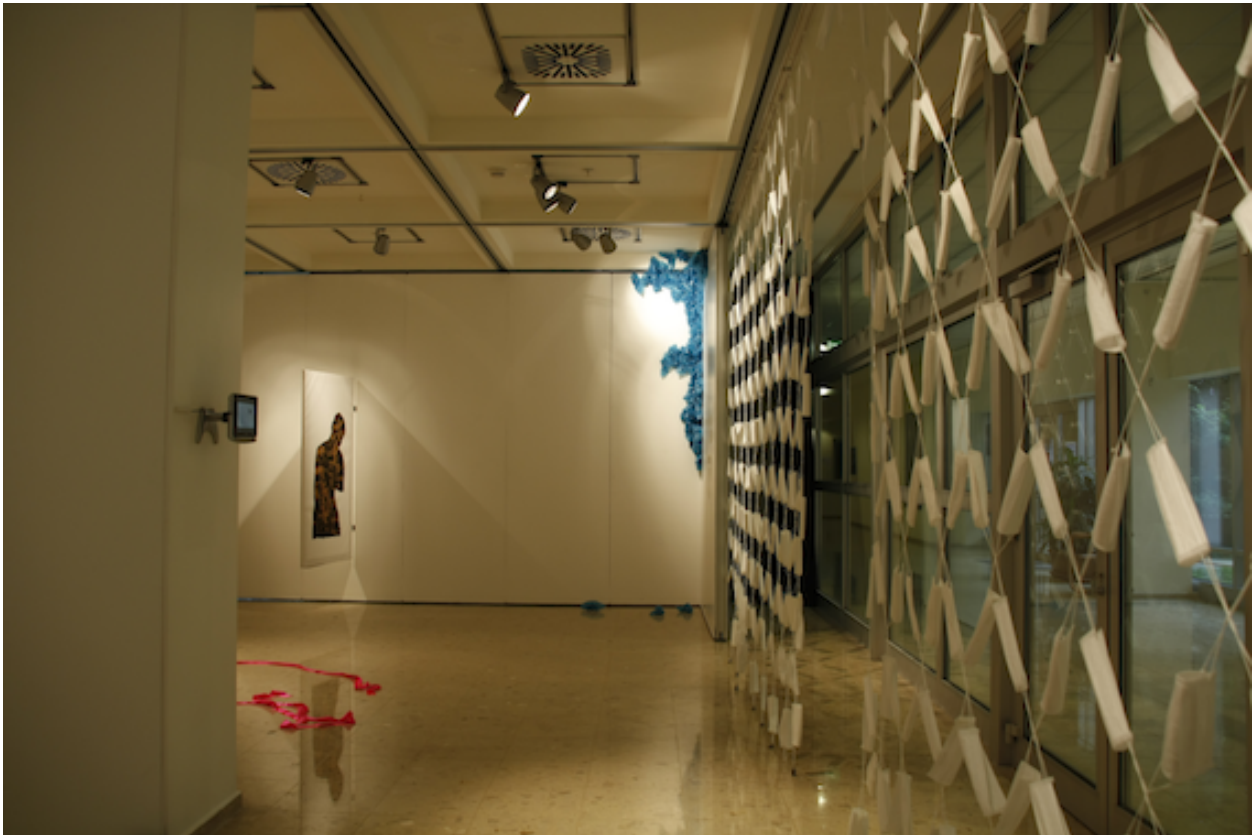


Figure 21, 22 Overview of the exhibition

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