

WANDERING/ DOL- AŞ- MA

by
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WANDERING / DOL-AŞ-MA

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ABSTRACT

WANDERING/ DOL-AŞ-MA

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M.A., Visual Arts and Visual Communication Design

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This study of complementary text quality aims at offering textual basis of my five works (four experimental videos and one audio-visual installation) produced in the last two years within the framework of the concepts such as time, memory, experience, home movie and experimental video through interpreting these. All concepts discussed have been attempted to be explained/given a meaning particularly in the context of photograph and moving image, and then, my works have been interpreted over these concepts. In the core of my works, there lie concepts of experience and performativity, and time and memory that I believe to constitute the base of the former two. In my works I attempted to create a different meaning and perception by combining together the images I collected generally via several media (video, photograph, sound). Thus, by being abstracted from their contexts through the process, these personal images, which could merely be a memory, document, representation of reality, gain some qualities to provide opportunities for various interpretations.

Key Words: Time, Duration, Memory, Moving Image, Experimental Film and Video, Performativity, Gender, Video Diary

ÖZET
WANDERING/ DOL-AŞ-MA

Pınar Asan

M.A., Görsel Sanatlar ve Görsel İletişim Tasarımı

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Tamamlayıcı metin niteliğindeki bu çalışma, zaman, bellek, deneyim, home movie, ve deneysel video gibi kavramlar çerçevesinde son iki yılda ürettiğim beş işin (dört deneysel video, bir görsel işitsel yerleştirme) okumasını yaparak, bu işlerin metinsel altyapısını sunmayı amaçlamaktadır. Tartışılan tüm kavramlar, özelde fotoğraf ve hareketli görüntü bağlamında anlamlandırılmaya çalışılmış ve bunu takiben işlerim bu kavramlar üzerinden yorumlanmıştır. İşlerimin özünde deneyim, performativite ve bunların temelini oluşturduğuna inandığım zaman ve bellek kavramları yatmaktadır. İşlerimde genellikle farklı araçlar (video, fotoğraf, ses) ile topladığım imgeleri yeniden bir araya getirerek başka bir anlam ve algı yaratmaya çalıştım. Yani normalde ancak birer anı, belge, gerçeğin yeniden sunumu olabilecek bu kişisel imgeler, süreç içerisinde bağlamlarından soyutlanarak çeşitli okumalara imkân verecek nitelikler kazanmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Zaman, Süre, Bellek, Hareketli Görüntü, Deneysel Film ve Video, Performativite, Toplumsal Cinsiyet, Video Günlük

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INTRODUCTION

This is a supplementary text that aims to discuss my two years of practice and experience during my MA studies. It is the final written product of a process and duration based experience.

The first chapter examines the concepts of time, duration and memory. Although these concepts set an essential ground for further discussion throughout the whole text, in the first chapter definitions of these concepts have been only outlined in order to open a path for the following discussions. In the first chapter time and Henri Bergson's approach to time is discussed from a very general perspective. Time as a very broad and important concept, has unfortunately been explained from a very reductive perspective to be able to emphasize its presence in my works. Therefore, I have chosen to refer only some theories of Bergson to set a clear ground for the following discussions through the text. However, it is always possible to start the whole discussion from very different approaches of both Bergson's and other philosophers such as Gottfried Leibniz, Immanuel Kant, Parmenides and Heraclitus, Martin Heidegger etc.

As the fundamental concept of life time is related to experience and perception. And the very concept of experience is a total sum of personal memories and their perceptual reflections. Memory is the smallest unit/fragment of time that has been stored by the mind according to its emotional reflection. In this sense, it is a frozen moment which represents a certain set of emotions. For sure, again the definition of memory is not so limited. However, due to the fact that this is a supplementary text, I preferred to take memory as a basic concept like time and tried to link it more to the act of editing. Therefore, I unfortunately had to keep out psychological aspects of memory creation which Sigmund Freud explains in detail in many different ways.

After giving brief account of the concepts of time, duration and memory, in the following chapter I examine the relationship between memory and moving image and its different manifestations in such forms as home movies and other types of experimental film and videos. In this chapter, I discuss creation of meaning and creation of memory by making an analogy between the nature of editing and memory. In my works, I use personal home movies and self referenced images to create new meanings out of them. In this sense, through narration and editing, I also try to draw the audience's attention to the inner time of the image in order to emphasize the process

that I have experienced in the creation. Therefore, I have studied some experimental film and video makers in order to contextualize my personal practise in relation to all that came before me. Jonas Mekas, Stan Brakhage, Maya Deren and Sue Friedrich, as some of the most important film and video makers for me, are discussed in order to draw a certain framework further discussions of my work.

The last chapter focuses on works from last two years. This chapter analyses the production process of each work and discusses my conceptual and formal concerns. Each work comprises different links with previously stated theories and moreover reflects the choices that have been made during creation process. As a result, I attempted to discuss the pre-production, production and product processes as a whole and give information on them.

CHAPTER 1

1.1 Time and Duration

The definition of both space and time are taken into consideration not only to be able to understand how the human mind works, but also to interpret the meaning that has been created literally and visually. As major subjects of religion, philosophy and science, both space and time can be seen as the essence of life and arts. In daily life, we do not question the meaning of time. Moreover; we take it as a given notion and give a meaning to it through our experiences. To be able to understand the definition of time and its reflections on still and moving image, we need to start with the definition of space because for a long period of time, time has mistakenly been taken as the fourth dimension of space.

Space (noun): Three-dimensional extent in which objects and events occur and have relative position and direction.¹

Time (noun): Measured or measurable period, a continuum that lacks spatial dimensions.²

Henry Bergson, one of the most important philosophers of time, believes that for humans, the perceptual experience is a space-time composition. To put it in a more simple way, subjects experience spatiality and create meaning out of it in a certain period of time. However, Bergson also offers that this combination could be understood as two separate elements in order to give exact meanings to space and time as different concepts. Melissa Clarke who dedicates her essay “The Space-Time Image: the Case of Bergson, Deleuze, and Memento” to the interpretation of Bergson’s theory of time, summarizes Bergson’s conceptualization of time and space in order to stress the differences between them. According to Clarke, from Bergson’s point of view, space is “discontinuous and homogeneous” because it can be measured in numbers. Therefore, space is a “quantitative multiplicity” that means it consists of multiple

¹ “Space” Def. *Encyclopedia Britannica*. 2008. Encyclopedia Britannica Online. 17 May 2008 <<http://www.britannica.com/eb/article-9068962>>.

² “Time” Def. *Encyclopedia Britannica*. 2008. Encyclopedia Britannica Online. 17 May 2008 <<http://www.britannica.com/eb/article-9108686>>

elements varying only in size. In this logic, it can be said that the features of space are “extension” and also “actuality”. While the extension of space can be measured, its actuality would be declared connected to this extension. On the other hand, time is a “qualitative multiplicity” which means every unit of time is essentially unique and different only in kind. Therefore, time is “continuous” and “heterogeneous” because it contains small units that follow each other constantly and infinitely. For this reason, time is also characterized by “intension” and, generally speaking, “virtuality” while space was defined through extension and actuality. And this very virtuality is the one that is opposed to actuality because of “the extensionality of space as a constitution of a quantitative multiplicity, and a denotation of differences in degree among its elements”. However, Clarke states “time as a qualitative multiplicity denotes differences in kind. That is to say, there are different times...time is not homogeneous like space is.”³

Then, what is time? What are the fundamental elements of time? In order to highlight Bergson's distinctive approach to time, Clarke first mentions the commonly held view concerning time that the present has ontological status, whereas the past is considered to "be" no longer. However, Bergson, in contradiction to the common belief, points out that the case is the opposite. For him, “it is more reasonable to claim that the past *is*, in an ontological sense, while the present more precisely *becomes*.”⁴

When we think the present as going to be, it exists not yet; and when we think of it as existing it is already past⁵

Bergson characterizes the present as the “passing-present” because it already passes by its nature. In this sense, there is always duration that operates in the present for the present to become past. For this reason, from his point of view, the present is more of a becoming (passing) while the past is (existing). And, in that sense, duration is always needed to be able to experience time. In other words, experience already always requires continuous time or duration, because there must be some continuity between the present and the next moment. In addition to Bergson, Gilles Deleuze, to stress the point, explains that “if the present was not past at the same time as present, if

³ Clarke, Melissa “The Space-Time Image: the Case of Bergson, Deleuze, and Memento” *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy* - Volume 16, Number 3, 2002 (New Series), pp. 167-181

⁴ I.b.i.d

⁵ Bergson, Henri. *Time and Free Will*. Trans. F. L. Pogson. New York: Macmillan. 1959, p 143

the same moment did not coexist with itself as present and past, then it would never pass and a new present would never arrive to replace this one.”⁶ To put it in another way, a past must be somehow present in order for the present to move to the next present moment. That continuity is provided duration and on an individual level this continuity is operated by memory.

1.2 Memory

Duration is the logical relation that functions between the present and all levels of the past. As stated above, memory allows us to access the past individually; and for humans, memory is essentially coexisting with the duration of the past. Memory plays a role in keeping the present in contact with the layers of the past in all their different manifestations. For Bergson the nervous system is the “material symbol” of the inner energy that constitutes memory. “It is the energy of memory which allows the living being to free itself from the rhythm of the flow of things and, in this way, to retain in an increasingly higher degree the past in order to influence the future.”⁷ Moreover, memory recollects the experienced pasts -different moments of the past experiences- and carries them to the present. “The human mind, stores the experience of the past as memory traces, and in the storage there are only affinities and associations based on similarity or contrast.”⁸ That means, the mind also assembles the memories according to their similarities and by doing that, creates the notion of experience. In other words, as we remember the past and bring these fragmented moments together according to their sentimental reflections or connotations in our mind, we constitute the present in light of the past. The past here means the sum of our personal experiences.

Then, if these are the basic principles of the mind regarding the creation of memories and experience, is it possible to establish a parallelism between how creation of a moving image happens and how the mind works and discuss the notion of experience in terms of both memory and the moving image?

⁶ Gilles, Deleuze “Cinema 2 The Time- Image” University of Minnesota Press, 2007

⁷ Bergson, Henry. *Creative Mind*. Trans. Mabelle L. Andison. Connecticut: Greenwood Press. 1946, p 193

⁸ Arnheim, Rudolf “Art Today and The Film, in the *New American Cinema*, ed. Gregory Battcock, New York, 1967, p.63-64

According to Andreas Huyssen, “all representation- whether in language, narrative, image, or recorded sound-is based on memory.”⁹ Because any visual representation whether a photograph or a moving image can be literally entitled as revitalization of a human experience. For a moving image work, for instance, the image that is about to be represented in front of the lens is a captured reality¹⁰ which will soon be a memory of the creator. Continue with the aforementioned perspective of time; representation is the freezing of a moment that is about to be past, in other words the moment which has just been experienced.

As stated before, every image that is stored in the mind has a personal meaning and that image always has connections with other images that are stored. Depending on the emotional reflection of the image, the mind constructs a meaningful structure out of such blocks of fragments. The camera, like the mind, is also a tool that collects and stores the images of the outside and inner (imaginary) world. And the very editing, by organizing them according to a certain structure like memory, creates a new meaning out of the collected images. Additionally, film and video also offer a new way of meaning creation through framing, image manipulation, sound/silence and darkness among others. Therefore it would be appropriate to say that the film making process embraces a reality that one –both the film maker and audience- interacts with personally and emotionally, and is articulated with lived pasts/experiences. In *Theory of Film*, Siegfried Kracauer raises fundamental questions about the moving image’s relation to experience. Kracauer writes:

In recording and exploring physical reality, film exposes to view a world never seen before... What is meant here is [...] our ordinary physical environment itself. Strange as it may seem, although streets, faces, railway stations, etc., lie before our eyes, they have remained largely invisible so far. Why is this so? [...] Film renders visible what we did not, or perhaps even could not, see before its advent. [...] Its imagery permits us, for the first time, to take away with us the objects and occurrences that comprise the flow of material life.¹¹

⁹ Huyssen, Andreas “Twilight Memories: Marking Time in a Culture of Amnesia”, New York: Routledge, 1995.

¹⁰ Here I use the concept of “reality” in more of a philosophical sense that although the image that will be represented could be a part of a fiction scene, it is still a reality of an experienced moment.

¹¹ Kracauer, Siegfried. “Theory of Film” Princeton, N.J. : Princeton University Press, 1997 pp. 299-300

However, there is always an unavoidable split that opens up between experiencing an event and representing it. And the very presence of this split could be taken as a powerful activator for artistic creativity in film and video making. The person, who stands behind the camera and documents the moment, is the one who also experiences that moment. The creator, at that moment, stands on the one side of that split: experiencing and documenting the experience. On the other hand, the audience who views the representation of that moment in the form of a still or moving image work stands on the other side of the split: seeing and experiencing what the creator “remembered” and how she has chosen to represent that moment. For certain, this process that seems simply consisting of an experience also includes many other layers and intentions such as experiments in content and form, questions concerning ontology of art and the relationship between audience and art work. However, regardless of the aforementioned layers and intentions, when only the nature of the experience is taken into consideration, it can be articulated that the experience of the creator as a collection of memories, is individual because it is her mind that recollects all the mentioned memories and brings them together in a very personal and unique way. And furthermore, it is the artist herself who reorganizes these images of memories, makes decisions during this process and arrives to a conclusion in the form of an art work. However, the recorded image that the audience is confronted with is both individual and public. It is individual because each person gives meaning to the image from his/her own perspective, personality and sensibility. And it is also public due to social, cultural and semiological codes used in the creation of this meaning.

CHAPTER 2

2.1 The Moving Image and Experimental Film& Video

In the beginning of his essay 'The Ontology of the Photographic Image', Andre Bazin identifies the origin of art as "a human desire to overcome death." For Bazin, the act of artistic creation is "a variation of resistance to the passage of time."¹²

In the field of visual culture, an image which has connections with a scene of a film or a video, the colour of a billboard or a photograph of a friend constitutes a narration formed by our personal experiences and our unconscious. As individuals living in the middle of a flow of images and signs, we hold impressions of the daily routines and remembrance of the days we live, people we know etc. At the same time in order to be documented and remembered, these remembrance are reproduced through different media such as photography, film and video. Additionally, thanks to several opportunities provided by these media, beyond direct presentation of the moment, different meanings are created as well. These images which are also mechanically reproduced realities create their own systems of symbolization and meanings:

Still and moving images gathered together and streamlined their prehistory of illusion and deception by means of 'natural magic', giving modernity a perfect site on which to play out the continuing dramas of reality, the unconscious and the imagination.¹³

Film's and video's relation to reality, for sure is inherited from photography. Film, just like photography comes from the tradition of an optical illusion that is based on a peculiar ability of the human eye. Additionally, photography, unlike written or graphical representations, cannot resemble other kinds of things but is always one specific unique in the sense of the uniqueness of the moment that it represents, regardless of being a fiction or a documentary photograph, and is endlessly reproducible. Moreover, it is not simply a reproduction of a reality; rather a proof,

¹² Bazin, Andre, Gray, Hugh "The ontology of the Photographic Image", Film Quarterly, Vol. 13, No. 4 (Summer 1960), pp. 4-9

¹³ Mulvey, Laura, *Death 24x a Second*, Reaktion Books, London, 2006

“documentation” of a past moment. Laura Mulvey summarises Roland Barthes’s ideas on photography as a “now-in-the-present which can be captured not by combining tenses but by combining a past tense with a present time deictic: the photograph’s moment was now”. For Barthes, “the photographic image is a recording of absence and presence simultaneously”.¹⁴

The moving image preserves the moment in which the image is recorded, inscribing a reality into its representation. Duration of the image itself (the inner time of the motion) that has been represented through the film and the flow of the celluloid film image have direct contact with the presence of time. The former completely depends on the structure constructed and is in relation with the narration. For example, the duration of a person’s walk is perceived by the audience within the moving image as a certain period of time. Whereas the latter is the physical duration of the film which moves at twenty four frames per second and constitutes the total duration of the work.

As for video in addition to its formal, contextual and social differences from film, all the motion therein is the product of electronic technology - video runs twenty five frames per second and projects the image without presence of a film, but some other devices to create the same movement.¹⁵ In this sense, both film and video are time and duration based art forms that are made of a series of still images, namely frames. And the moving image consisting of frames occupies a certain period of time, constitutes a structure; the narration.

Narration does not only vary in terms of the content included, but also formal components such as framing, alignment of the images to constitute the whole and use of sound among others. Since the first years following the discovery of the moving image, numerous personal, social and political themes have been treated through these different formal languages. And the audience has been giving meaning to moving image works through the form created throughout the narration. From the beginning, commercial narrative cinema has directed the perception of the audience and despite some exceptions, the whole film viewing experience has been underestimated by crowding out critical thinking and questioning. All the same, since the beginning of the 1900’s many artists working with the moving image have challenged this mass

¹⁴ Barthes, Roland, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, Trans. Richard Howard, New York: Hill and Wang, 1981.

¹⁵ In order to express the similarity between these two media only in terms of time, I made a reductive explanation. In fact, there are various differences between these two.

experience, and have presented a counter-stance where design-process-product phases as a whole are problematized. Over the years, this counter-stance presented such a deeply rooted tradition that it constituted the genre of experimental film and video, flourishing in a manner to embody various perspectives within it. Experimental film and video at this very point changed the whole definition and perception of the viewing experience. It not only challenged mainstream filmic experience but also demanded to redefine it.

Throughout its history, experimental film and video has tried to discuss and represent various issues including time, reality/fiction, binary of conscious and subconscious, potentials of film/video camera, gender, moving image's similarities with or differences from other art forms, amateur-professional discrepancy, its interaction with social sciences and subject-object issues etc. Compared to mainstream film and video works, experimental film and videos as very subjective interpretations, seek to turn the whole process into experimentation both for the artist and audience in form, structure and narration. In sum, this history is one of seeking selves of the film makers. Therefore, the production and viewing experience is liberating for both the artist and audience, and possesses a quality allowing improvisation.

2.2 Home Movies and Video Diaries

Although the concept of home movie has been used to characterize family movies which were mostly 8mm films shot during the 1950's in the United States, today it has broadened its borders and could be considered an art form mostly due to its most well known practitioner Jonas Mekas who dedicated nearly 50 years to the recognition of experimental film and video. His 8 mm. visual diaries are mostly based on his personal memories, on the avant-garde film community, and film makers. While, as in a home movie, the characters are mostly family members, in his films avant-garde film community members were filmed. And at that very point, he has used the split between art and non-art as a starting point of his artistic creation and made us think of the real value of a moving image. Although his visual diaries were his individual "family" documents, they became also social, cultural and aesthetic formations which could be viewed and discussed publicly. In time, he made experiments with the form of the image and editing to be able to create a realistic approach through his films. He was

not only using basic formal principles of home movie practise but also was trying to create a personal filmic style.



Figure 1. Jonas Mekas, *Diaries, Notes & Sketches*, 1969

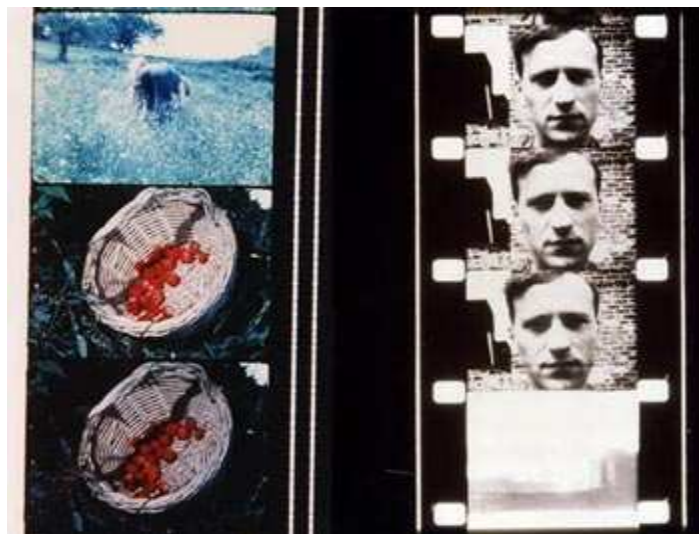


Figure 2. Jonas Mekas, *Reminiscences of a Journey to Lithuania*, 1972

Today, camcorders have replaced 8 mm. film cameras with their practicality and accessibility. Moreover, nowadays TV's are widely used, just as 8 mm. film projection systems were used at homes during the 1950's. In addition to this, internet is also becoming a common screening source. Therefore, video diaries/home videos can also be perceived as the contemporary reflections of the same tradition. After the emergence of video cameras, Mekas also turned his attention to this new medium and began to explore the possibilities of video cameras. In 2007, he began his project 365

Series where he posted a video diary every day to his official website and shared them with the public. Again, the subjects of those videos were Mekas' friends and his everyday life. In his works, Mekas not only proved that personal memory is adequate for creating an artwork, but also by documenting time of the flowing everyday life, he made it a part of collective memory. Stan Brakhage also, in his early experimental film works, constantly used his family films including the birth of his first child, his family life on the farm as a starting point to create non-narrative experimental films.



Figure 3. Stan Brakhage, *Dogstar Man*, 1964



Figure 4. Stan Brakhage, *Anticipation of Night*, 1952

In Brakhage, the family visuals are used only to create a new meaning out of them. In his works, home movies are used as a working resource and a method. In other words, he used his personal footage as only a starting point. The images are far from being simply documentations of some important individual moments and memories. On the contrary, they remain to contrast the themes and the structure of the film. Through manipulation and editing, these images are abstracted from the personal context thereof; they gain an artistic quality and therefore become available for various textual readings.



Figure 5. Stan Brakhage, *Window Water Baby Moving*, 1962

In that case, why cannot every home movie is called an art film? In other words, what are the differences between a home movie and an “artistic” home movie? What makes a home video a work of art is certainly the control of the artist on the image. While the subject matter has been chosen from the fragments of everyday life and personal memories, the construction of the narrative and meaning differentiate it from a so called ordinary home movie. Additionally, as avant-garde film makers using home movies declared themselves to be against commercial narrative film-video making and representative style, they also have created more of an experimental visual language which is also a rejection of “high art”. Moreover, as Jeffrey K. Ruoff articulates that “the home model of visual communication rarely deals with personal trauma and family strife. Divorces are as rare as weddings are commonplace.(...)The emphasis on celebration never really limits the free play of memory.(...)Outsiders see only the visual surface of the events depicted, not their emotional substance.”¹⁶ And in “artistic home movies” any kind of image that attracts the artist can be used as a part of the narrative.

2.3 Performing Gender

In artistic home movies or any other experimental film and video work, it is the intention of the film/video maker to use personal home movies to create a whole new body of meaning. The new meaning created, becomes artist’s individual expression of memory, identity and self. In other words, the artist takes a chance to manifest her/his personal journey, formulate questions regarding self representation of self and performs the very self.

For Judith Butler “Performativity is...not a singular ‘act’, for it is always reiteration of a norm or set of norms, and to the extent that it acquires an act-like status in the present, it conceals or dissimulates the conventions of which it is repetitions.”¹⁷ It is like time that needs duration to realize itself and every realization within this duration is different from each other. Moreover, it is multilayered and complex. The complexity of the performativity is above all else related to gender roles. The interpretation and reflection of the concepts such as time, memory and experience are

¹⁶ Ruoff, Jeffrey K. “Home Movies of the Avant- Garde: Jonas Mekas and the New York Art World” *Cinema Journal*, Vol. 30, No. 3 (Spring, 1991), pp. 6-28

¹⁷ Butler, Judith. “Bodies That Matter: on the discursive limits of “sex”. New York: Routledge, 1993

different for the sexes. Due to the fact that women artists' and in general all women's experience is affected by their gender and that the female gender has meant being an outsider, throughout the whole history of experimental film and within history of video, "women" artists have dealt with the experience of *becoming* a woman. Although, the contextual or formal concerns change through time, *women* artists' themes overlap with each other as they generally problematize representation. Since art history has been constructed by male artists, critics, audience women artists first had to deal with the male gaze in order to be able to declare independence and question their own subjectivity. This path has led the artists to create various particular visual and formal languages rejecting phallogentrism which makes its own existence meaningful on the basis of an objectified woman image. Therefore, it became possible to go beyond representations determined by the male gaze, and femininity had the opportunity to be represented by the women themselves.



Figure 6. Maya Deren, *Meshes of the Afternoon*, 1943



Figure 7. Maya Deren, *At Land*, 1944

Dealing with the reconstruction of the western male dominated art history, feminist art history allocates an important and privileged position to Maya Deren due to the originality of her art and efforts on the creation a feminist artistic approach. Deren's works belonged to a period when feminist art history had not been institutionalized yet. She is the first famous woman artist who uses herself in her films and creates personal symbolic images. She provides a reference point for the next generation of woman artists, particularly the ones who produced during the 1970's, and who addressed male domination in the art world by using themselves and criticized existing representations of women as objects of desire.



Figure 8. Maya Deren, *Meshes of the Afternoon*, 1943

In her experimental narrative films, Deren deals with the unconscious, the body, form and montage to create an integrated meaning that reflects her concerns not only as a film maker, but also as a woman. Dealing with the themes oscillating between the concepts of real and imagery, Deren tried new non-narrative forms and obtained her important position within the history of experimental film. In her experimental narratives like *Meshes in the Afternoon*, *At Land*, *Rituals in Transfigured Time*, she decomposed unity of time and space, and presented an opposing attitude towards conventional cinema's linear narrativity. In her book she also refused "linear" model of understanding as well, and titled the book *Anagram*.



Figure 9. Sue Friedrich, *Odds of Recovery*, 2002

Sue Friedrich also has a performative and personal way of telling stories, while pushing the limits of conventional film and video narration. The courage of exhibiting her private and family life, creating a distant emotional state and a visual atmosphere allows her an exclusive position within the history of experimental film and video. She creates her own autobiographical images like Deren, and is concerned with the texture of the film like Brakhage and scratches on the film constantly. But on the other hand, she is neither as narrative as Deren nor as abstract as Brakhage. Moreover, she takes many different elements and makes sense out of these through different mediums and genres. The sense of time and space in her films and anonymous connections of the

subject matter influence viewers' perceptions and take the issue to another level where it is not important whether the images have a personal meaning. She uses autobiographical mode in third-person, voice-over narration usually spoken by a woman, a young girl, etc. According to William C. Wees:

Friedrich's third-person point of view (...) distances the filmmaker from her film, allows viewers a great range of readings (...), and encourages a viewer of the autobiographical "self" as a social subject and, in cinematic terms, as an *effect* of the films form and content rather than its *cause*.¹⁸



Figure 10. Sue Friedrich, *Gently Down the Stream*, 1981

¹⁸ Wees, William C. "No More Giants." *Women and Experimental Film*, Ed. Jean Petrolle & Virginia Wright Wexman, University of Illinois Press, 2005, pp:26



Figure 11. Sue Friedrich, *Head of a Pin*, 2004

In this sense, Deren and Friedrich both intentionally reveal their production process that led them to formulate some questions, seek answers to these questions and present findings thereon. Therefore, the whole production process becomes visible for the audience, as they witness a very subjective interpretation and its findings. And for the artist, it becomes a multi-layered process that reaches a conclusion, namely a work of art which has strong connections with autobiography, self-reference, self-consciousness and performativity.

CHAPTER 3

On Works

Focused on the centrality of recorded image (photography, film and video), here I will attempt to articulate the visual codes which are gathered together and constitute an integral meaning in my work. In this chapter I will try to give a brief account of the concepts that I deal with in my works. Moreover, I will try to explain the technical and aesthetic choices I have made to be able to visualize such concepts.

3.1 Svitlena or Gülbahar – Svitlena ya da Gülbahar



Figure 12. *Svitlena or Gülbahar*, 2006

In this work, I created an audio visual installation consisting of 100 photographs and record of 8 Ukrainian songs sung by a Ukrainian woman, Svitlena, living in Küçükbakkalköy, Istanbul. As a process and duration based project, this was a personal attempt to formulate some questions regarding such themes as womanhood, otherness, memory and domestic space through Svitlena's life. Owing to the fact that I was not from İstanbul and always felt myself as an outsider in this city of constant flow, I wanted to go till the further corners of the city and find a woman who shares the similar

feelings with me, though we would not seem so at the first sight. In other words, I considered the project as a meeting. And the work as a result would be the representations of the elements remaining in my memory. Therefore, I organized the whole project as a kind of field survey, but different from a social science project as I never looked for a certain answer or result. The only thing that I was looking for was an encounter that would create a relationship between me and the subject and lead me to the documentation of the whole process.



Figure 13. *Svitlena or Gülbahar*, 2006

As I shared the idea of the project with some friends, one of them suggested me to meet one of her friends, Svitlena of Ukrainian origin, living in İstanbul and I found myself far away from the downtown, in a district called Küçükbakkalköy that reminded me of a huge open construction site. I approached a pink house at the end of an empty land.



Figure 14. *Svitlana or Gülbahar*, 2006



Figure 15. *Svitlana or Gülbahar*, 2006

Svitlana came to İstanbul 7 years ago to earn money with her *shuttle trader*¹⁹ uncle. She left her son Sasha with her mother in Ukraine. However, things went bad, and she had a falling out with her uncle. She had not been able to return to Ukraine, as she had worked illegally and had no money. After a while, she met her current partner. He was a waiter at a diner in Laleli where she had been lunching. “At the beginning I didn’t like him” she says. They had joined in a religious marriage, and Svitlana became a Muslim woman named Gülbahar. Now they have two children, and she is carrying the third. The two children have no birth records, since Svitlana is an illegal immigrant in Turkey and they are not able to go to Ukraine. Therefore, the children cannot attend school, as they do not officially exist.



Figure 16. *Svitlana or Gülbahar*, 2006

¹⁹ People who travel under the disguise of tourist, but carry consumption items from one country to another to make a living.



Figure 17. *Svitlana or Gülbahar*, 2006



Figure 18. *Svitlana or Gülbahar*, 2006

During the whole project, I was not very sure about the medium that I wanted to use. I was like the only witness of a nomadic woman abandoning her very self, her language even in private space and remembering all these as a sweet memory. After we had spent some time together and she had told me almost every detail of her life, she introduced me to her friends, cooked for me and watched TV with me. Then, I decided to take photographs of her recent life: the new home. Feeling as if she was the only witness and agent of this story, Svitlena with pleasure accepted my wish to document her current life with photographs, as she thought it would at least be a way to claim her present life. The still pictures were as her present memories. However, since I thought that the photographs are required to contain a sense pertaining to the memory, I asked Svitlana to sing a song in her mother tongue. Then, she began to sing some Ukrainian folk songs. With quite an excitement, as it had been a long time since she spoke Ukrainian, she started to sing. In this manner, her voice, the reflection of her past, accompanied photographs, the representation of her current life.



Figure 19. *Svitlena or Gülbahar* Exhibition View, 2008



Figure 20. *Svitlena or Gülbahar* Exhibition View, 2008

The photographs as a whole neither have a beginning nor an end, as the story I listened to. They consist of moments, the “unflowings”, and fragments. Although that was not a very easy decision to make, I finally decided to shoot nearly every detail in the house to be able to emphasize both the presence and the absence of Svitlena. I took more than 300 photographs of her private space. I never showed her face to create a claustrophobic sense of space including a few fragmented figures around. Within the photographs, there are very indirect hints of someone existing in the house. However, all the photographs of details from the house somehow show only the traces of those living within this space. The fact that someone’s presence in the house is merely implied created an uncanny tension which might give some clues about Svitlena’s situation. The photographs, which were printed in 9x11 sizes, resemble sizes of family photographs. However, unlike family photographs, the house and the people are represented through narrow angles, in other words without perspective. In sum, *Svitlena or Gülbahar* invites the viewer to witness individuality of a transplanted woman.

3.2 Persephone

My grandmother was a superstitious woman. In my childhood, she used to talk about one of her beliefs on nearly every strange occasion: Do not your cut your nails at nights, a bat getting into your house is a sign of divine gift, number 7 is always the lucky number, etc. Although my cousins and I knew that these beliefs never sounded rational or meaningful, it was also a pleasure for me to listen to them and wonder what would happen, if I were to break the rules. Perhaps that is why I like reading or hearing about superstition. And for me one of the most interesting books concerning the issue was İsmet Ziya Eyuboğlu's *Bütün Yönleriyle Anadolu İnançları / Anatolian Beliefs in All Aspects*.²⁰ When I read the book, I realized that there were many references to Greek Mythology as well. As I began to read Greek myths, I encountered the myth of Persephone, the dark goddess of the underworld.



Figure 21. *Persephone*, 2007

Persephone, daughter of Demeter (goddess of the Harvest), was kidnapped by Hades (ruler of the nether world) because of her irresistible beauty and taken off to live in the underworld. When Demeter realized that her daughter was kidnapped, she went into such a deep sorrow that all the plants ceased to grow. Therefore, Zeus (king of the gods) commanded Hades to return Persephone to avoid the drought. It was the rule of the Fates that anyone who consumed food or drink in the underworld was doomed to spend the eternity there. Although, Hades could not disobey the command of Zeus, he was afraid of losing Persephone. So, he tricked Persephone and made her eat four pomegranate seeds for her to be condemned to spend her life in the underworld.

However, after the Gods' negotiations, they agreed that Persephone was going to stay in the underworld four months of the year. In these four months, the soil would

²⁰ Eyuboğlu, İsmet Zeki. *Bütün Yönleriyle Anadolu İnançları*. Koza Yayınları İstanbul. 1974

not give any product and the earth would lose its fertility as Demeter would be longing for her daughter. And, while Persephone was with her mother above the ground, the earth would be freshened. This story is the story of the creation of the seasons in Greek mythology.

In the video, inspired by the myth of Persephone and the pomegranate seeds, I wanted to produce fake pomegranate seeds by cutting gummy bear candies and leave the seeds to the doors of numerous houses. I have chosen gummy bear candy both because of its material quality and symbolic meaning. Those gummies were red, soft and had a very suitable shape to be cut into pieces of equal dimension that would resemble pomegranate seeds, and from a symbolic point of view, transformation of the gummy bears could be read as a modification of a childish object/ image. Furthermore, the seeds were left at the doors to be able to manipulate the myth of Persephone and change its meaning through a performance that constitutes the core of the video. Doors seen in the video belong to some houses in Kadıköy, the district in which I live and have had acquaintance with for years. I chose to represent these doors which are in direct relation with my life.

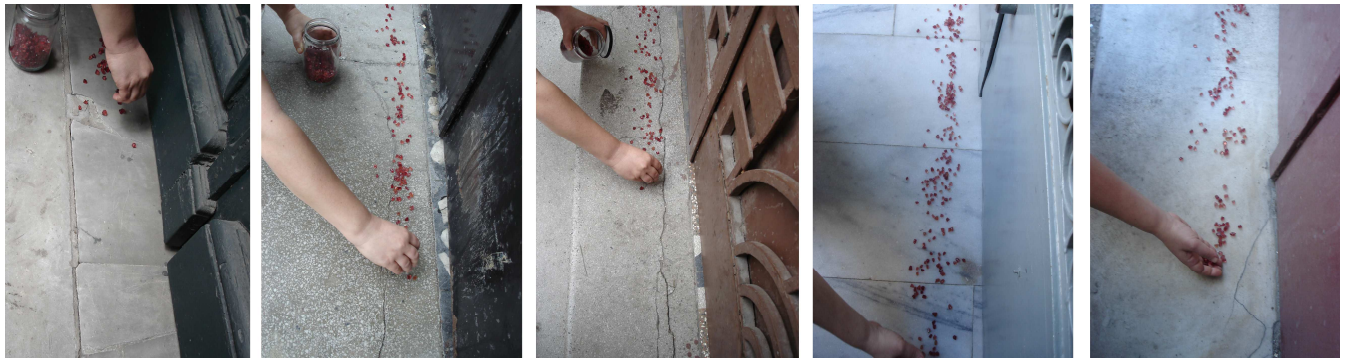


Figure 22. *Persephone*, 2007

The video is technically and imagistically modest. Formally it comprises of a single monitor. It is designed as a stop-motion video that loops both to highlight the presence of time and show the whole process one by one using individual photographs. The sound was used to add another layer of meaning to such static visuals and create a sense of space. In the first part, we hear a sound that resembles a tick tack and only see hands cutting gummies from a high angle shot. Repetitive movements of the hands create the inner time of the image. The viewer somehow waits until the end of the whole process and feels the time of the completion duration. Additionally, due to the high angle shot and fragmented framing of hands, we concentrate more on the act of

cutting, because there is no evidence of space or any other element -apart from the sound- that would take viewer's attention. In other words, the viewer is intentionally directed to the content and time of the image. In the second part, as the viewer sees the hands leaving seeds to the front doors of the houses, she/he hears the inner sounds of the houses that indicate the life therein, at the same time these sounds pertain to the outside of the first space where the cutting act occurred. In the second part, as in the first, again the act of leaving the seeds is also repetitive and regular. Compared to the first part, due to the changing doors and the rhythm of the act, the speed seems to be increased and creates a curiosity. The video ends with the sound of the empty jar rolling on the ground that falls on a black screen. Thus, the performance ends, and then loops again.

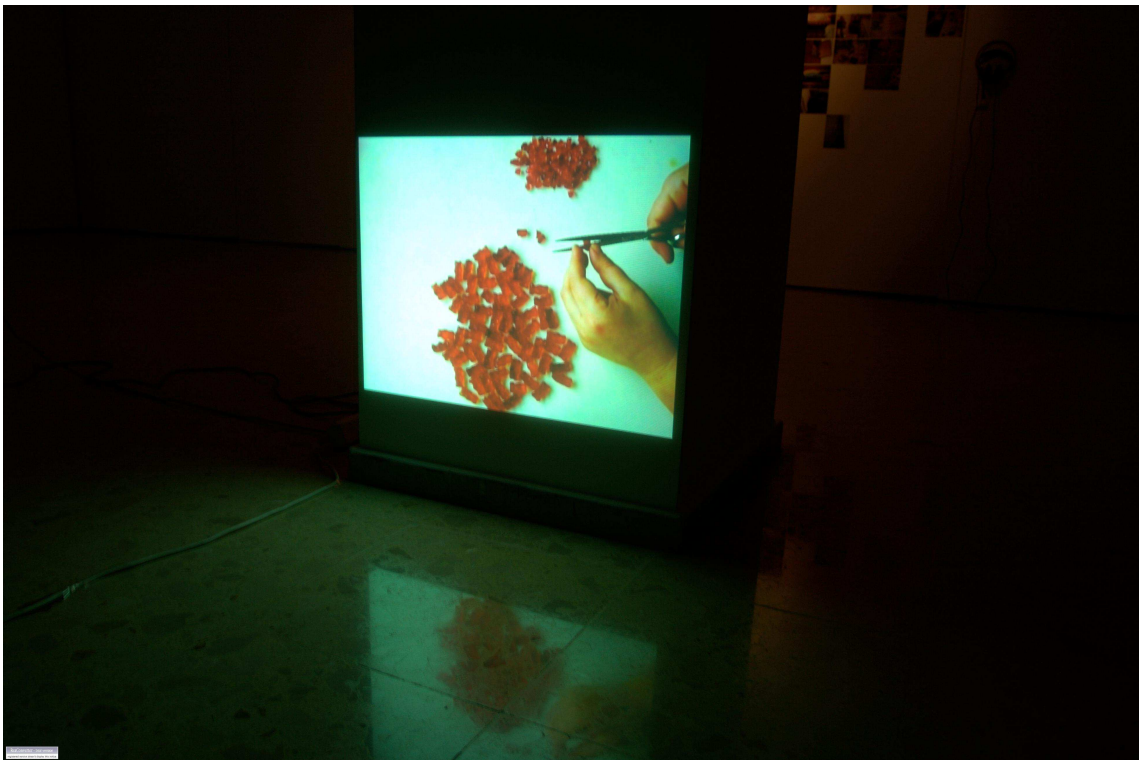


Figure 23. *Persephone* Exhibition View, 2008

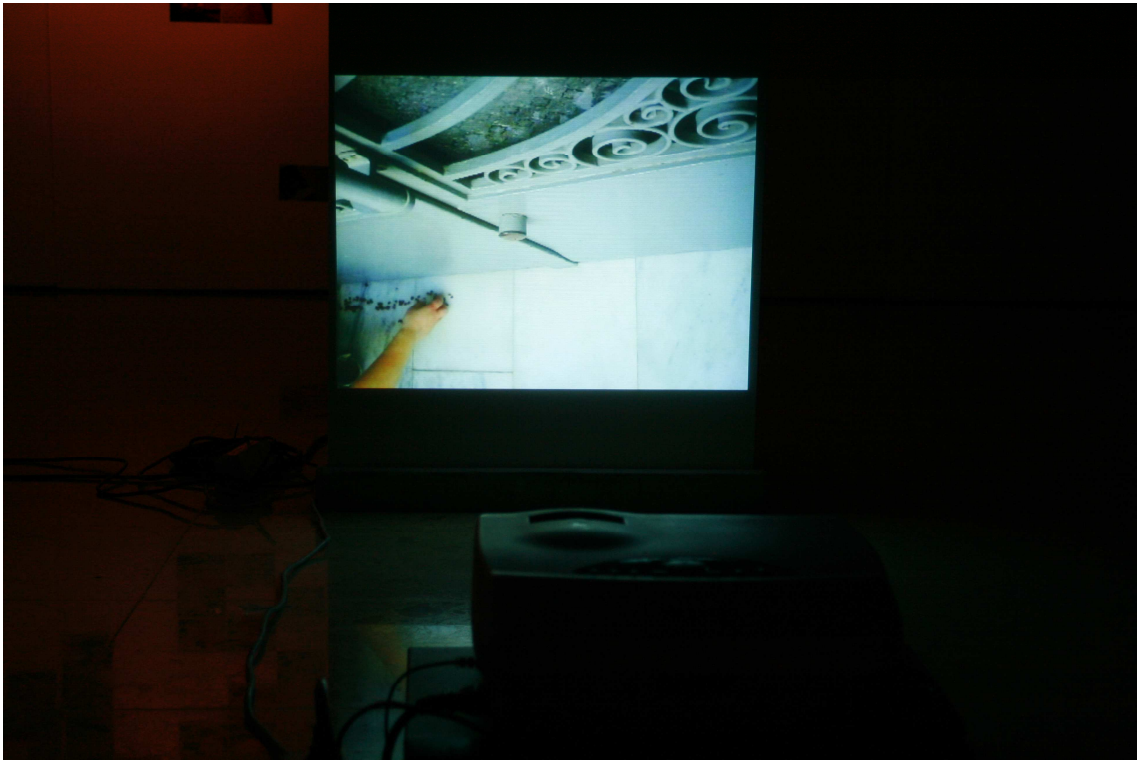


Figure 24. *Persephone* Exhibition View, 2008

The story I wished to treat was quite old. However, as I brought it to today, it somehow became contemporary. Therefore, in the whole video, I wished to reach a visuality lying between the past and present, photograph and video. Thus what I attempted to do was to carry photography, a medium pertaining to the period preceding the moving image, to our day by creating a movement with it. And I realized this attempt by reducing whole video into a gaze where we closely witness the performance from a very close distance. I tried to emphasize “framing” and representation by fragmenting the space and the body to create meaning and narrate the performance in an unusual way. In this sense, apart from the content of the video, I also wanted to discuss if it is possible to create a performance video in a very simple and modest form using very economic and minimal visual language.

3.3 The Squid – Mürekkep Balığı

I have been collecting images at every occasion since the day I bought my handycam: friends meetings, family celebrations, birthdays, holidays and short trips around the city. The footage that I have collected until now are my visual impressions and visual memories of certain moments of my life. In other words, they are originally fragments of a non linear visual diary.



Figure 25. *The Squid*, 2007

The video titled *The Squid* found its inspiration from the footage that shot during a short trip to the coast. It was a melancholic and cold winter day. I and three friends of mine were on the road without knowing where we were heading to. Therefore, we took a path that led to a beautiful beach called *The Ancient Beach*. It was a very long beach that reminded me of Patara Beach where I used to go for holidays with my family when I was a child. However, *The Ancient Beach* seemed deserted unlike my childhood's crowded and noisy beach image. Before starting to edit *The Squid*, I watched the footage again and again to find the very common point among

them. The images which were shot on a beautiful beach were quite fascinating and cinematographic. But so paradoxically, my being there was a coincidence as I only meant to go on a short trip and I was apparently shooting an ordinary home movie. Therefore, I wanted to perceive images' common points in order to make a new video out of them. Rough footage possessed many basic characteristics of a home movie such as jump-cuts, no certain narrative structure, hand-held camera, overexposed images, etc. Moreover, due to the nature of its context, it was produced solely for the purpose of documenting a personal experience which later became a memory. However, although images were fragmented and improvised, at the same time they functioned as my impressions of that day. The impressions were consisting in some feelings such as remembering, melancholia, passing of time etc.

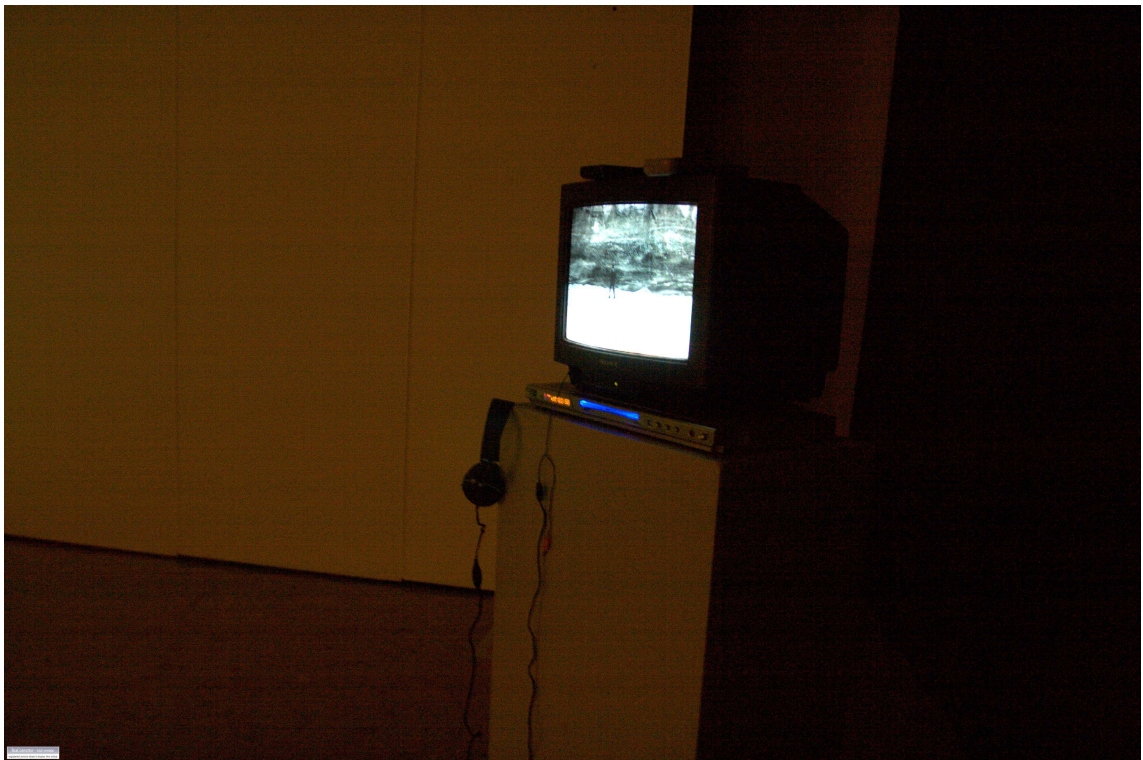


Figure 26. *The Squid*, Exhibition View, 2008



Figure 27. *The Squid*, Exhibition View, 2008

After watching the footage again and again, I decided to construct a single channel video as a circle as the way memory works and shadow out mentioned themes as impression, which would display a thematic and textual continuity through the whole narration, without being too obvious. Heidegger²¹ indicates that the memory belongs to today, because it reconstructs the past from the point of today. In other words, the mind recollects the moments and makes their collages at the present moment. Therefore, in the video I created a multi-layered time that would imply both the past and the present. I used the beach; the space as the main structure of the narration. More of a philosophical sense, the beach became the very space through the movement and the function that subjects created. As Marleau- Ponty points, the space and our position were “defined with reference to the apparent of a lived here-and-now.”

²¹ Heidegger, Martin. (Volume:11, 1997) *Zaman Kavramı*, İstanbul: Cogito

²² Therefore, the space and its time is emphasized in the video, as well as the subjects and their memory, were represented in order to give their interpretation of that space. Images were manipulated into black and white to emphasize the past and support the strength of visuality that would attract the viewer and take him/her into the video's narration. In other words, by the activation of the physicality of the image (color), it has been tried to prevent any analytical explanation regarding the narration. In the video, the viewer first sees the sea and the beach and a man walking on the beach. We then see the man writing on the wall. Then suddenly the time reverses and different times get into each other through juxtapositions. The transitions between the images mark the multi-layered time and video's conceptual concerns such as time and memory. Juxtaposing the images and looping the video work as the way memory works, creating a kind of unity and continuity between the past and the present. Reversed movement, slow motion, long shots and juxtaposition, when used altogether, direct us to the past/ present cycle on one hand, and they also emphasize different layers of time and experience on the other. In *The Squid*, I drew upon different approaches of different filmmakers. As it was stated above, Brakhage's abstraction of personal home movie images and his creation of a total new meaning out of them had been a great inspiration. Although *The Squid's* formal characteristics are very different than Brakhage's, the basic idea was to abstract personal images as much as possible and reorganize them as they would open paths for other textual readings. Additionally, like Maya Deren and Sue Friedrich, I used my own images to emphasize both autobiographical and performative aspects of the video. In sum, *The Squid* is a short video, which addresses and recalls some themes without explicitly explaining them. It stays somewhere between real and imagery, today and yesterday, literal and symbolic.

²² Merlau- Ponty, Maurice. *Signs*. Trans. Richard C. McCleary. [Evanston, Ill.] : Northwestern University Press, c1964.

3.4 What Time Is It There? – Orada Saat Kaç?

What time is it there? is a single channel experimental video. I made use of several personal video images in order to create new sorts of meanings. In addition to this, by adding a performance section I attempted to reinforce the atmosphere tried to be created with the images.



Figure 28. *What Time is it There?*, 2008

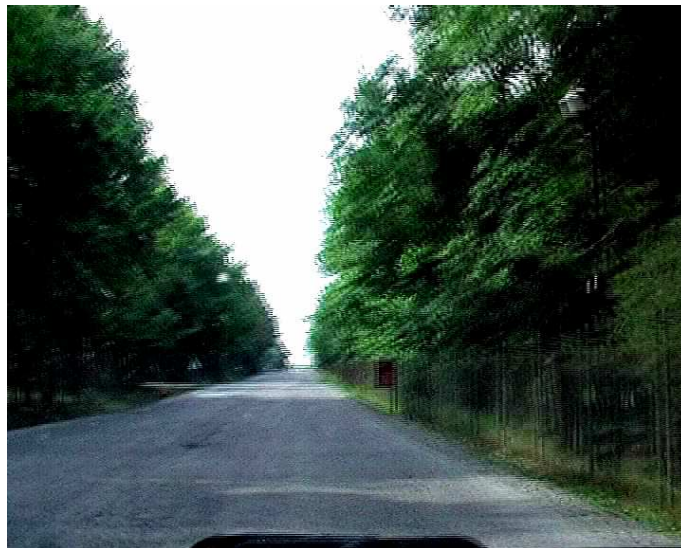


Figure 29. *What Time is it There?*, 2008



Figure 30. *What Time is it There?*, 2008

This video is partially an autobiographical work on remembering, waiting/expecting and leaving/going etc. Every image other than the performance has been selected from my own visual diaries and home movies, the moments that I recorded without any intervention at all. Most of the images I recorded until now are the documents of the moments I found highly meaningful and share more or less the same visual quality and content. When I decided to make *What Time is it There?* I had some feelings and themes in my mind. Just from the beginning I preferred to search for some visuals that would go with the feelings and themes in my mind. Therefore, by taking my video images as the basis, I listed images that seemed appropriate to me in a manner to constitute a structure that would contain above mentioned themes.



Figure 31. *What Time is it There?*, 2008

The video opens with an image of a woman in a forest, looking around. Following this image, we see some other images taking part until we see the same woman again sweeping dried leaves in the forest. The performance of sweeping the woods was considerably metaphorical, but at the same time material. I figured that when this image goes into play all through the video, themes such as leaving the city and remembering would be understood more clearly. Use of a fixed space kept watching and leap between the images together. Placing the end of this performance at the beginning of the film, I divided integrity of the act. Showing end of a linear act would give preliminary information on the next things to be seen. In this manner I would be able to keep the interest of the audience alive as well as to make her/him to ask questions on the meaning of the following image. Here, Marina Abramovich's *Balkan Baroque*, Trinh T. Minh-ha's *Reassemblage* and Sue Friedrich's *Sink or Swim* with their depictions through several visual styles was considerably illuminating for me.



Figure 32. *What Time is it There?*, Exhibition View, 2008

Marina Abramovich, in *Balkan Baroque*, represents separate pieces of performances which are highly minimal and existentialist. By re-performing basic actions of everyday life which are linked to each other, she creates a fragmented body of narration and represents critique of art, humanity and gender.

What Trinh T. Minh-ha did in her work *Reassemblage* was looking for answers to the questions what a document and a documentary is and how the presentation should be. However her particular method was narration. Minh-ha attempted to destroy the parts expected by the audience, namely beginning, middle and end. She also made use of repetitive sounds and cuttings, inserting black titles to create an experimental visual form and prevent the viewer to identify with the images. In this sense, she directed the viewer's attention to the idea of representation and its meaning.

Yet in Sue Friedrich's *Sink or Swim* with the narrator's and even a story's presence, almost all visuals are personal documents. The images correspond to the narrative by establishing slight connections. There we see the result, a narrative, experimental, personal film that explicitly questions what a personal document is and pushing the limits of the genre.



Figure 33. *What Time is it There?*, Exhibition View, 2008

These experimental forms provided me essential references for this video. But I intended to eliminate the narrative and to enable the images themselves to create a unity: audience to be carried to a certain place by each single image - calling a feeling although cannot be expressed with the words and the story being capable of explaining itself. Therefore, I tried to approach the editing as the way that memory works. I took every image as a memory fragment that had duration and brought them together in the present. Moreover, I used slow motion and repetition effects to make the images correspond with the concepts of remembering and past. In this sense, I wanted the viewer to abandon her/his passive reception of the work and on the contrary think more on the meaning of each visual and its reflection on the whole structure.

3.5 Any Noon – Bir Öğle Vakti

Any Noon is a single channel experimental narrative video in which I tried to constitute a story around the theme of violence against women. The idea behind it was to represent a violent crime against a woman in a public space and her struggle with this incident. I have worked with some grassroots women organizations voluntarily for a long time and seen or heard so many stories concerning the issue. As the issue has kept me occupied because of its importance, I decided to make a video thereon without using clichés, and to present a different approach to reflect the emotional state of such a trauma. However, due to sensitiveness of the issue, basic concern and the question was whether it is possible to represent such an issue without using any other visual forms that has been used before. Therefore, I came up with the idea of telling the story by constructing a minimal narrative structure that can not only emphasize the reality of the situation, but also leave enough space for the viewer to think on it objectively. The video opens with a shot where we hear the sound of bird chant, and the camera shows a young woman slowly wandering across a field with dirt covering her slippers and wearing only female underwear. The first scene is outdoors and we encounter a slowly moving body merely through the representation of one foot and dirty toes moving across the ground.



Figure 34. *Any Noon*, 2006

The feet and toes then appear in the following scene in a shower, again dirty and moving. The horror of a violent act comes clearly through the pain contained within these gestures and story is being told by both the gaze and body language that we witness. Through the lens we move from the crime scene to the final images where the red nail polish fails to be put on and a brush falls to the floor.

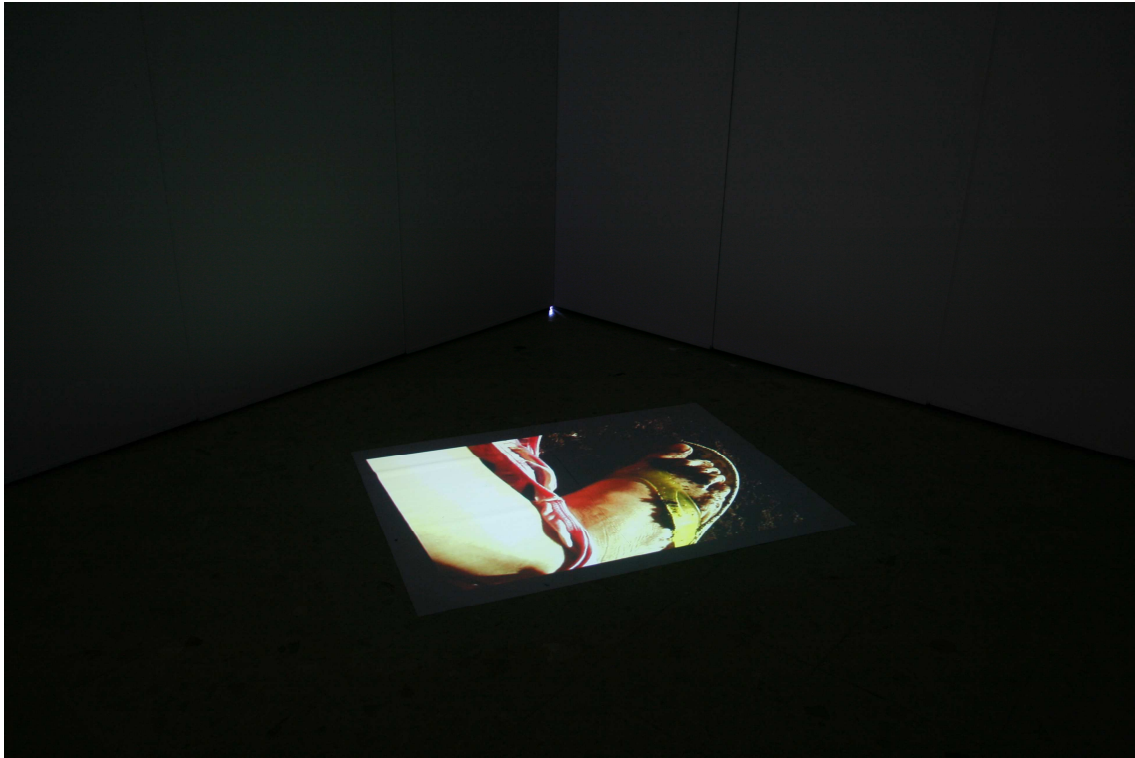


Figure 35. *Any Noon*, Exhibition View, 2008

In the video, the viewer witnesses the whole story from the eyes of the protagonist, the camera. I have preferred to show the situation by fragmenting the body – feet only- and use first person camera to invite the viewer to feel total empathy with the protagonist. In this way, the female subjectivity that is witnessed in *Any Noon* is discussed through the protagonist’s perception of her own image. In addition to this, this perception directly absorbs viewer and does not allow a clear distinction between the viewer and the subject. Furthermore, I placed the image at the centre of the black screen to create a sense of witnessing. Placement of the figure within the frame and representation of her movements in this descriptive space has been chosen to underline both the metaphorical aspect and sense of space. Another aspect of the video was its relation to the reality. Violence against women is a social problem that is doubtlessly real, that is hard to represent. Therefore, *Any Noon* attempts to question the “reality” of

such an act. Time of the shots, sound and the space that is represented are taken into consideration to create a realistic atmosphere. In the first part of the video, the integrity of the images is stabilized to create such an atmosphere. The rhythm and time of the first sequence is organized in order to give reference to real time. The transitions and the similarities between the angles of the shots constitute the narration and thus, the video conveys a mood of claustrophobia and unavoidable reiteration of the violent act.

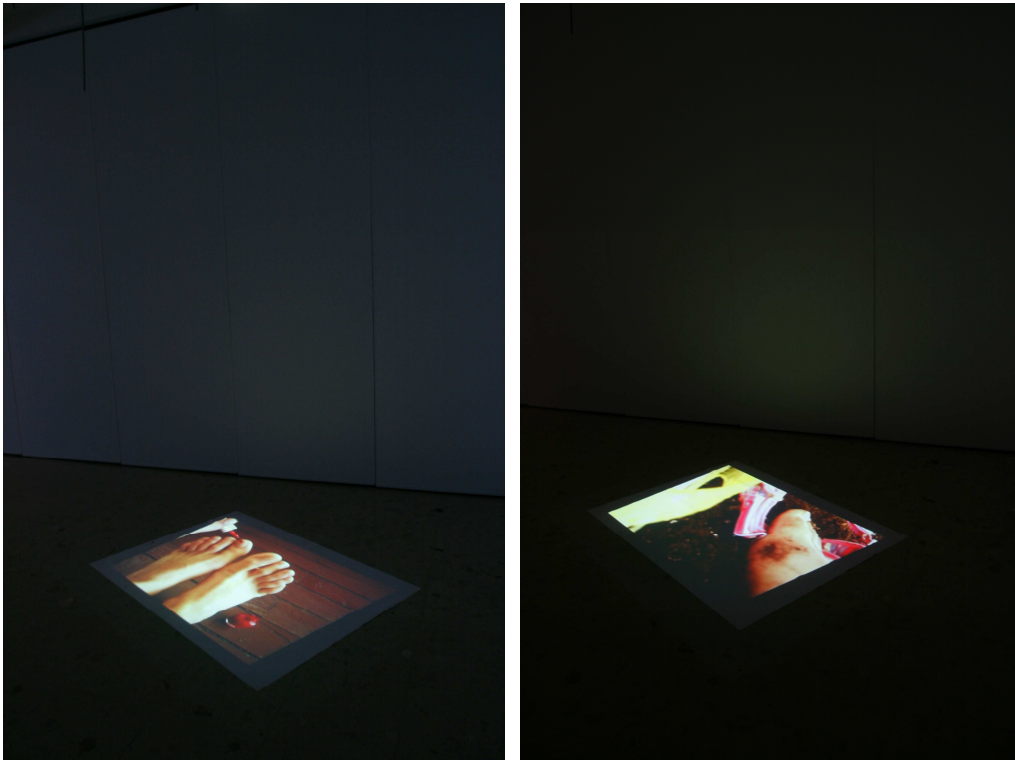


Figure 36. *Any Noon*, Exhibition View, 2008

In the second part, while the protagonist is in the bathroom, the realist approach leaves its place to a more surrealistic and symbolic visuality. The dirt that the protagonist carries to the domestic space, symbolizes unfortunately unforgettable reality of outside.

In the total narration, I tried to construct a minimal language that aims to show the situation that one might go through, but at the same time I refused to give direct message or to make comments on the trauma itself.

3.6 On the Exhibition: Wandering / Dol-Aş-Ma

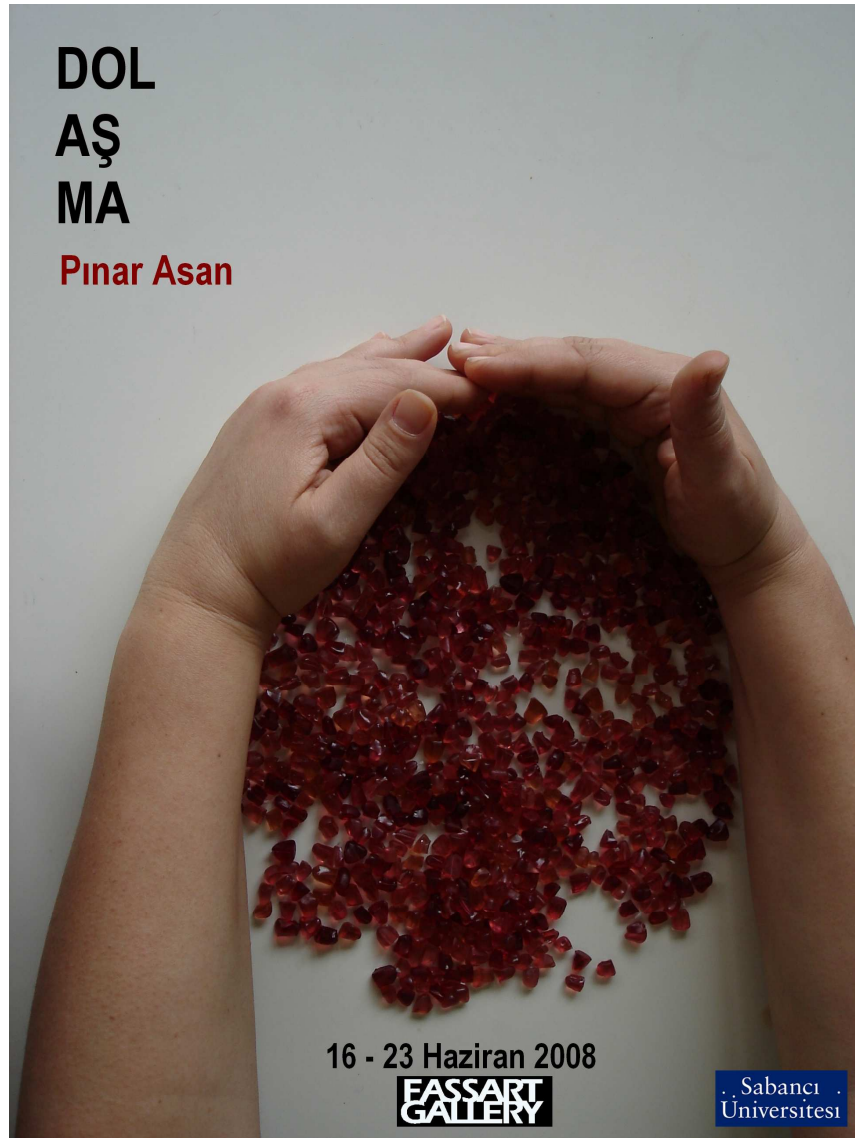


Figure 37. Exhibition Poster, 2008

As I have stated before, subjects experience spatiality and create meaning out of it in a certain period of time. In this sense, for a work of art, either a moving image work or a painting, it can be chosen to refer to spatiality to emphasize the experience of the viewer, to reinforce conceptual and formal approaches within that work.

Elizabeth Grosz expresses that “The subject’s relation to space and time is not passive: space is not simply an empty receptacle, independent of its contents; rather, the ways in which space is perceived and represented depend on the kinds of objects positioned “within” it, and more particularly, the kinds of relation the subject has to

those objects.”²³ Therefore, I preferred to exhibit my works in a gallery space to create a sense of space for the viewers, to enable them to experience the works physically and to understand the links among the works. I believe in this sense, all the themes that I have discussed through the text would manifest themselves for the works to be perceived deeply, and the viewer would establish further relationship with the images. Additionally, dealing with the exhibition space demands making many decisions that would also contribute to the work’s physicality and bring different textualities into light such as the relationship between time and space, and memory and space.



Figure 38. Exhibition View of *What Time Is It There?*, 2008

²³ Grosz, Elizabeth “Space, Time, Perversion” Routledge, 1995

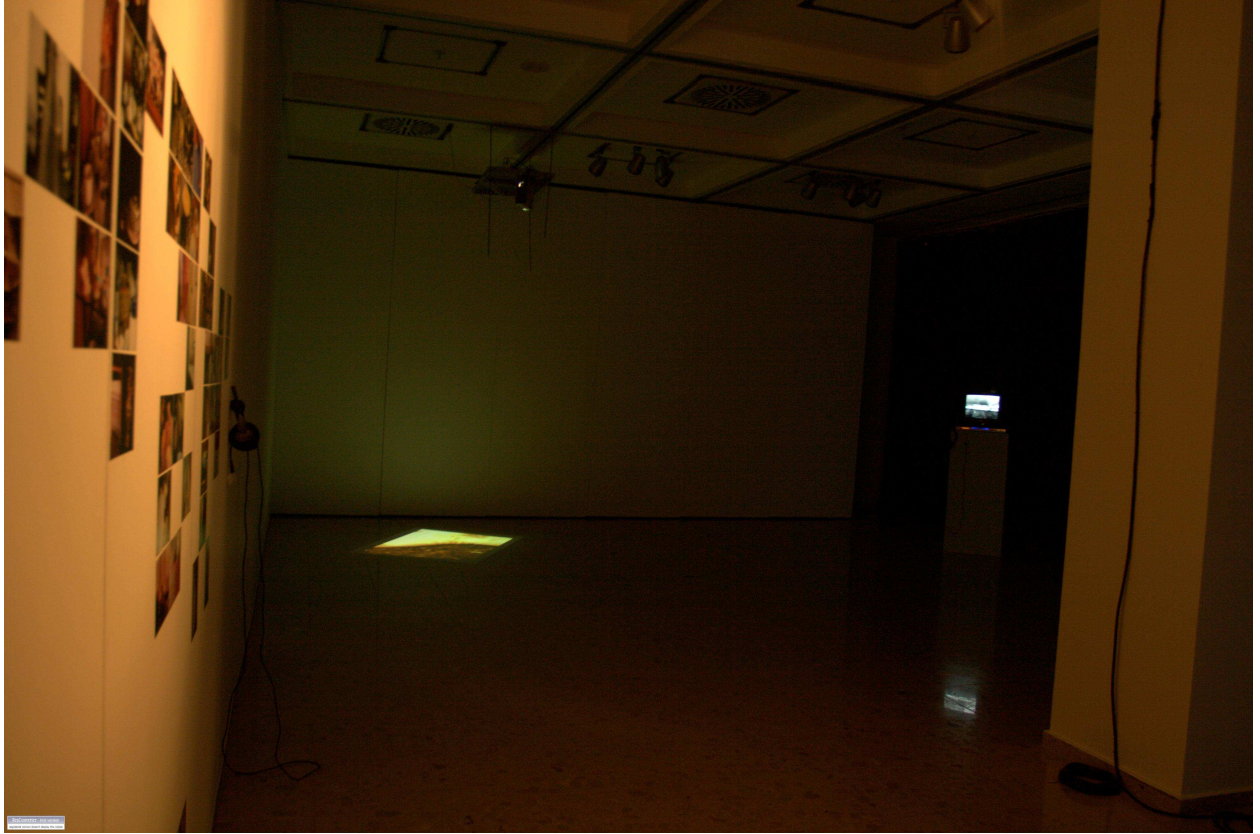


Figure 39. Exhibition View of *The Squid*, 2008



Figure 40. Exhibition View of *Persephone*, 2008

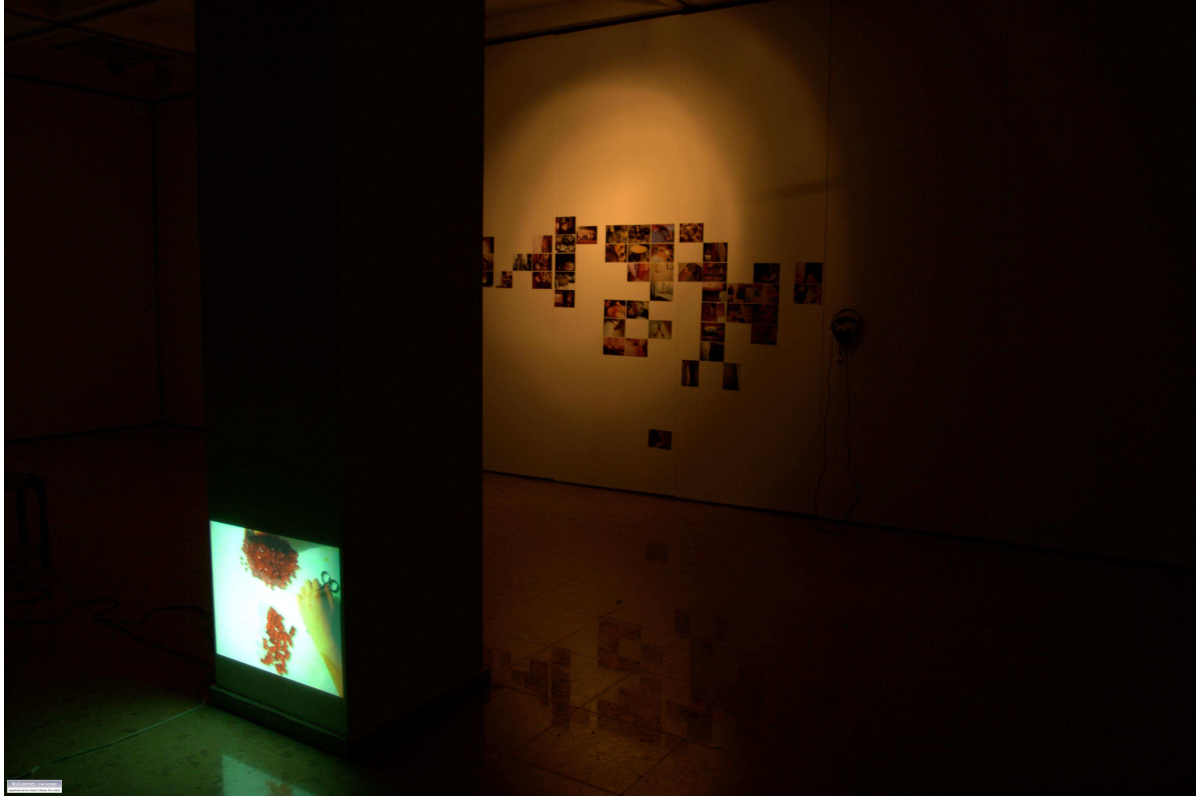


Figure 41. Exhibition View of *Svitlena or Gülbahar*, 2008

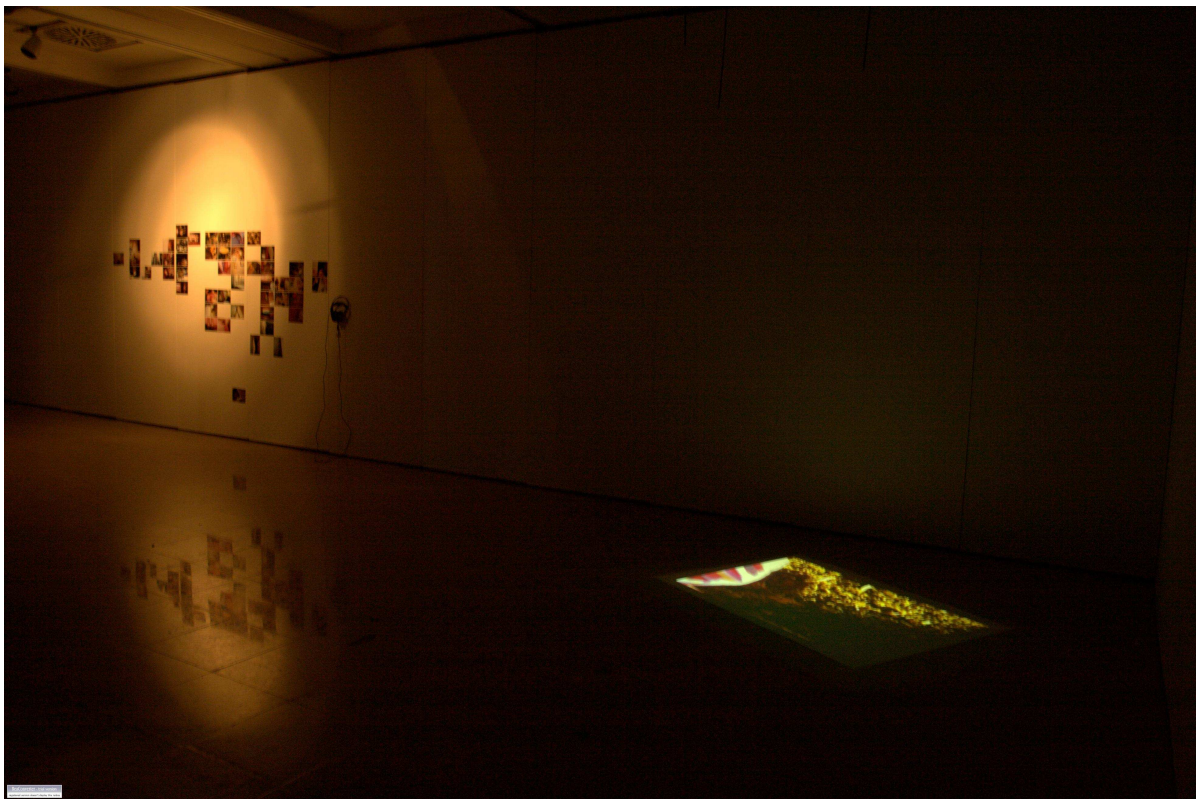


Figure 41. Exhibition View of *Any Noon*, 2008

CONCLUSION

Main purpose of this written text was to analyze the concepts of time, experience, memory and duration theoretically within the context of moving image and to discuss their reflection on my works. It is quite hard to set forth such comprehensive and deep concepts within a single text. Therefore, sometimes at the cost of being reductive, I attempted to set forth, make sense of these concepts on a basic level and connect them with each other throughout the text. By this text, I had the opportunity to reconsider direct and indirect connections between experiencing, remembering and representing, the fundamental problematics of my works. In addition to this, this process also revealed imperfections in my works to me. For the concept called meaning to correspond with something for the viewer, it is required to gather together even the most ambiguous and abstract images within a certain order in a manner to form an entire structure. I attempted to discuss on a personal level the facilities and difficulties of moving image in terms of meaning creation within the third chapter, yet during the process I realized the presence of a split between making, showing and writing just as the split between experiencing and representing. I think that experience and performativity is of crucial importance at this very point. Both writing and image require expressing or showing what is intuitional and undefinable. Even what we call memory wishes to become anonymous, while being explained to another person. It is the only way to create another meaning for another one and to share experience. In other words, this way leads beyond expression, to communication. In these two years, in order to gain experience in the genre of experimental film and video, I produced several works, which changed my perception of what an experimental video is and is not. I decided to make experimental video works, as the genre provides a boundless area to convey personal impression and ideas. Each of my works contributed to me a lot not only in terms of creative, conceptual and theoretical, but also structural and technical aspects involved in making a video.

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