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Portfolio

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On Deniz Soezen's work

Deniz Soezen explores themes of culture, location and language questioning the notion of identity and belonging. Moving image, objects and sound are placed in relation to each other within exhibitions and beyond. The audio-visual elements of her work shift in the shapes of documentary-style recording, anecdotal storytelling in varying languages and lecture-performances and songs.

Deniz Soezen engages with the representation(s) of self and other through the lens of her experience of living in and between different spaces, cultures and languages. She creates and produces work that presents a multiplicity of viewpoints and voices, proposing a more pluralist perspective on being and becoming.

Deniz Sözens künstlerische Praxis hinterfragt Konzepte der Identität und Zugehörigkeit in der Auseinandersetzung mit Kultur, Orten und Sprache(n). Bewegte Bilder, Objekte und Soundaufnahmen werden innerhalb des Ausstellungsraums und darüber hinaus zueinander in Beziehung gesetzt. Mögliche Präsentationsformate reichen dabei von dokumentarischen Aufnahmen über Re-inszenierungen von Anekdoten in unterschiedlichen Sprachen bis hin zu Lecture-Performances und Liedern.

Deniz Sözen beleuchtet die Repräsentationen ihrer selbst und anderer ausgehend von ihrem Leben zwischen unterschiedlichen Kulturräumen und Sprachen. Ihre Arbeiten präsentieren eine Vielfalt an Perspektiven und Stimmen und bieten Anregung zu einem pluralistischen Zugang zu Sein und Werden.

Deniz Sözen'in isleri kimlik ve aidiyet kavramlarını sorgulayarak kültür, mekan ve dil temalarını irdeliyor. Birbiriyle iliskilendirilerek yerlestirilen hareketli imgeler, objeler (çiniler, el dokuma halılar, kolajlar, çizimler ve maskeler gibi) ve sesler gerek sergiler bünyesinde, gerekse sergi mekanlarının ötesinde, sanatı hayata tasıyor. Çalısmalarının görsel-isitsel unsurları belgesel tarzı kayıtlar, çesitli dillerde kisisel perspektiflerden anlatılan hikayeler, sunum-performanslar ve sarkılar gibi farklı biçimleri kapsıyor.

Deniz Sözen farklı mekanlar(ın), kültürler(in) ve dillerin hem içinde hem de aralarında yasama deneyiminin süzgecinden geçirdigi öz temsil(ler)i ve ötekinin temsil(ler)i ile anlamlı bir iliski kuruyor. Farklı bakıs açılarını temsil eden, çok sesli, olmak ve dönüsmek üzerine daha çogulcu bir perspektif sunan isler yaratıyor ve üretiyor.

The tri-lingual artist book in English, Thai and Armenian was developed in response to an audio-visual research-project conceived during the MAK Schindler scholarship artist residency* in Los Angeles. The artistic research is concerned with the psycho-geography, hidden histories and the geographical overlapping of officially designated ethnic enclaves “Little Armenia” and “Thai Town” in East Hollywood.

The artist book opens with a reflective text on Deniz Soezen’s experience and position as artist of mixed Austrian-Turkish/European background in Los Angeles. She researches what “official multiculturalism” may mean in the US/Angeleno context. Video-stills are juxtaposed with selected quotes from interviews with the residents of Thai and Armenian descent in East Hollywood. The translations are made visible through the thin paper and are legible due to japanese binding. The multilayered and multilingual history of Thai Town and Little Armenia is echoed by the experimental book design.

* the residency programme is funded by the Austrian Federal Chancellery / Arts Division, in cooperation with the MAK (Austrian Museum of Applied Arts/Contemporary Art) in Vienna

Multi-part installation and trilingual artist book, 2014/15

Artist book Trans Angeles
Edition: 100, numbered and signed + AP
Size: 100 x 160 mm; japanese binding
Images: 52 videostills from ‘Trans Angeles’
Graphic design: Toledo i Dertschei
Selfpublished 2015 in Vienna, Austria

8-channel audio installation, duration variable, 8 headphones, loop
featuring excerpts of interviews with residents of Thai Town and Little Armenia and Deniz Soezen’s perspective on the project.

Photo credit: Martin Bilinovac

Shown at:
– Trans Angeles, solo exhibiton, start gallery, MUSA, Vienna 2015
– Mobilizing Memory–Vienna, curated by Isin Önol and Ayse Gül Altinay, Kunsthalle Exnergasse Vienna 2015
– Armenien, Shedhalle Tübingen 2015
— jaywalk, MAK Center Artists and Architects-in-Residence, Mackey Apartments and Garage Top, Los Angeles, 2014


Թրանս Անջելես






That Town
















HOLLYWOOD


Little Armenia

Deniz Soezen installed a street sign opposite of the Mackey Apartments (artist residency), designating the zone as “Little Austria”. The building was built by the Austrian architect R.M. Schindler (1939). It was purchased by the Republic of Austria in 1995 and made available for the activities of the MAK Center Los Angeles.

The work is a humorous reflection upon the “Austrian-ness” of the MAK Center, which calls itself “the California satellite of the MAK – Austrian Museum of Applied Arts/ Contemporary Art in Vienna”

Little Austria
Reflective vinyl on aluminum
137 x 63 cm
Graphic design: Erik Charlot

Little Austria Panorama, Colour Print (mounted), 116 x 20 cm

Photo credit: Tom Sky, Martin Bilinovac

Shown at:
–Trans Angeles, solo exhibition, start gallery, MUSA, Vienna, 2015
– jaywalk, MAK Center Artists and Architects-in-Residence, Mackey Apartments and Garage Top, Los Angeles, 2014

Collection of contemporary art of the City of Vienna


Little Austria


CITY OF LOS ANGELES
FOUNDED 1781
Little Austria



Deniz Soezen shares her experience of the Medical Marijuana Evaluation Center, Los Angeles by dressing up in a “dirndl” and wearing a blonde wig playing with the clichés of “Austrian-ness”.

While exhaling marijuana smoke live on camera, the artist tells how her place of birth (Vienna) was mistaken as her first name by the Californian receptionist who issued a medical marijuana license for “Vienna Soezen”.

This multi-part installation includes a plastic cannabis plant and a framed California-state license for the consumption of medical marijuana issued for “Vienna Soezen”.

Vienna Soezen, Video-performance
Video loop, 2 min 11s
medical marijuana license, 24 x 18 cm
plastic cannabis plant, approx. height: 60 cm

Photo credit: Martin Bilinovac

Shown at:
–Trans Angeles, solo exhibition, start gallery, MUSA, Vienna, 2015

Collection of contemporary art of the City of Vienna





This (lecture-)performance using digital technology and internet (skype) is exploring various aspects of Swiss involvement in colonial history and the current discourse about cultural difference in Switzerland. Deniz Soezen impersonates various figures of Swiss popular culture and colonial history by wearing masks: Heidi, the folk singer Mani Matter, the comedian Victor Giaccobo, African sculptures of public collections in Zurich and Basel and last but not least Alpine carneval masks. Video-interviews with “indigenous“ Swiss, links to YouTube clips or the sharing of image and audio material are integral parts of the performance.

Skype performance, 9 cardboard masks, audiovisual content and YouTube videos, Zurich–Vienna, 2012

live re-enactment Heidi goes live, multimedia performance, Ars Electronica Center, Linz 2014

Shown at:
— PANik 8: Performance as Post-Colonial Strategy! organized by Irene Lucas and Ruby Sircar, VbKOE, Vienna, 2012
– Marianne.von.Wiillemer Prize for digital media, Ars Electronica Center, Linz, 2014




HG. BUREN





Deniz Soezen asked Turkish weavers in the small town of Gördes to translate the design of her own childhood drawing (1987/ Turkey) into a wool carpet. The artist documented this complex process which inevitably led to questions regarding trade and globalization. The weavers' perspectives are presented in a short documentary-style video-piece which is shown together with the original childhood drawing and the carpet.

Carpets can be seen as metaphors for migration. The title *Uçan Halım – My flying carpet* highlights the aspect of mobility, whilst echoing popular Orientalist cliches. The project can be considered as a homage to Italian conceptual artist Alighiero e Boetti who used to work with artisan embroiderers in Afghanistan and Pakistan in the 1970's.

The project enables spectators to explore multiple connotations of this artefact.

handwoven wool carpet, 135 cm x 190 cm
documentary – style video, 14 min, loop
original childhood drawing, ca. 21 x 10 cm

The piece was commissioned by Herbert Manser and Lisa Palak-Otzoup to be displayed in the "niche" of their living room in Basel, Switzerland. 2012

Shown at:
— Die Nische, invited by Manser/Palak-Otzoup, Basel, 2012
— Curators' Network Meeting, curated by Andrea Löbel & Jürgen Tabor, Kunsthalle Exnergasse, Vienna 2013

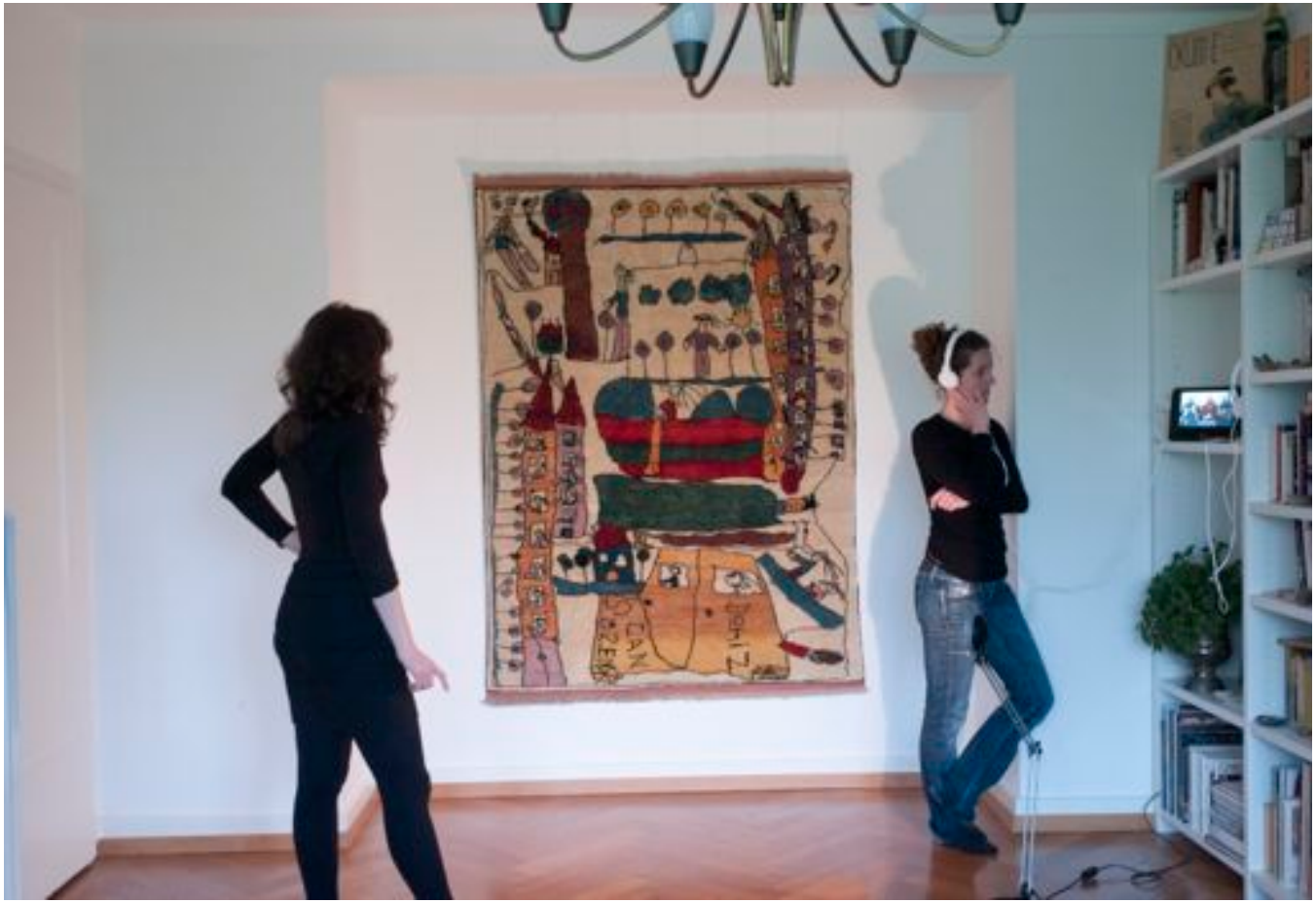














In autum 2011, the Museum Rietberg Zurich in Switzerland held an exhibition titled *Mysticism – Yearning for the Absolute*, which showcased forty important mystics from the 6th century BC to the 19th century, from different religions in the world – Hinduism, Buddhism, Daoism, Christianity, Islam and Judaism. I had the opportunity to conceive and implement a transcultural art education project that aimed to initiate a virtual dialogue between young people from two different cultures in conjunction with the theme of the exhibition. One of the mystics showcased in the exhibition was the Sufi poet Hz. Mevlana Celaleddin-i Rumi, whose tomb is in the city of Konya in Turkey. Mevlana's tomb and the Mevlana Museum built in his honor are significant sites for his worshippers and tourists from all over the world.

Being partly of Turkish origin with relatives in Konya, I was familiar with the Mevlana Museum. Growing up as a bilingual in Turkish and German languages, further enabled and motivated me to conceive a project between young people in Turkey and young people in Switzerland. The project aimed to enable young people who are geographically separated but digitally connected, to use digital media to widen each other's horizons, and explore differences and similarities in their approaches to mysticism and thereby foster greater understanding amongst each other.

A total of 34 videos were uploaded on YouTube and also integrated into the *Mysticism* exhibition. All videos were subtitled in German and Turkish. In Konya, I coordinated the project with the students, while my colleague Elea Himmelsbach, a Swiss-born art educator and curator based in London, was commissioned to coordinate the project in Switzerland. As art educators and coordinators, our roles were significant because we both posed as strangers (or aliens) to our respective countries of origin, eluding our relationship with the place due to our personal histories of migration. Hence, along with the students, we too were an integral part of the project in exploring our respective themes. This inspired our project to be titled *Uzaylılarin Semasından dervişlerin Semasına: Başka türlü bir karşılaşma* (Turkish title), *Vom Himmel der Aliens zum Himmel der Derwische: Begegnungen der anderen Art* (German title), *From Alien Galaxies to the Dervishes Skies: Encounters of a different kind* (English title)

Excerpt from a text written by Deniz Soezen; the full text was published online by the International Society for Education through Art, 2012

Transcultural Art Education Project:
Konya, TR / Zurich, CH
commissioned by Museum Rietberg Zurich, 2011

Video-trailer by Deniz Soezen,
Elea Himmelsbach & Can Soezen
Commisionned by Museum Rietberg, 2011

34 YouTube-videos produced in collaboration with participants in Zurich and Konya, 2011

Shown at:
– Mysticism - Longing for the Absolute, Museum Rietberg Zurich, 2011 and published on YouTube












KONYA_ZUERICH



In *My visit of Azizye mosque* the video opens with a photograph of a building. The narrator tells us that she is visiting a mosque. It is thus implied that the image is of a mosque covered with 'industrially fabricated tiles, which depict traditional Turkish tile design' and that it is situated in Stoke Newington. Despite this certainty in the telling the visual evidence is of a photo of the Astra cinema showing a Bruce Lee film that signals a time other than the present (with no tiles to be seen) as do the clothes of the bystanders in the photo.

The protagonist then plays more with the viewer: a chance encounter is described that seems to serve no purpose. The bystanders in the image that we are still looking at, are mirrored by that chance encounter with passers-by in the garage opposite. However, whereas the bystanders are all wearing "Western" clothes, the passers-by we hear about are described as wearing black headscarves. In the collapse of time between the narrative and the visual, subjectivity is all. Initially authenticity is emphasized through the narrator's disclosure of her father's origin to the women in the car, those "wearing black headscarves", itself a different signal to authenticity, telling them that she was interested in Islamic arts. This seeming innocent encounter, though, is undermined through an erotic dream that makes explicit the desire that charges through ethnic insiderism. The narrator dreams about the veiled woman and has an erotic dream.

Deniz aka Suzan Dennis, the narrator is split in her desire for her exotic other, who is more visibly other, more present in difference that she, from the narration, can be assumed to be and in the erotic encounter we are invited to revise our image of the narrator's voice as itself erotic.

And so a merging of private and public: the secret desire and the public longing for wholeness that is never to be, a longing that is shot through diasporic art and writing for an impossible home. The narrative that fans out into multiple echoes and the different languages, Turkish and English, signal a turn away from the singular, certain subject that knows who they are and who knows where they are from. In the multiple languages and the mistranslations such easy notions of self and origin do not exist.

An excerpt from a review by Dr. Rachel Garfield, ©2010

The installation combines a video piece by Suzan Dennis (Deniz Soezen's British alter ego) with an installation of up to 140 hand-painted ceramic tiles and a tryptich consisting of photographs of Aziziye Mosque, former Apollo Cinema

Suzan Dennis:
Aziziye Mosque / Astra Cinema, installation, 2009

140 hand-painted ceramic tiles;
15,3 x 15,3 cm each, dimensions variable

My visit of Aziziye mosque / Astra Cinema
DVD-Pal; Great Britain 2009; 4 min 42; loop
Voice (English and Turkish): Suzan Dennis

Shown at:
— be longing, solo show feat. Suzan Dennis, Visual Arts Platform, Austrian Cultural Forum, London, 2010
— MFA-degree-show, Goldsmiths College London, 2009

Aziziye Mosque / Astra Cinema







Aziziye Mosque / Astra Cinema









Deniz Sözen takes everyday occurrences in the streets, transport, and snack bars of London and Vienna and retells them. Through the way in which she narrates and presents these scenes, personal experiences become significant situations in which questions of cultural identity and ascription, cultural translations and misunderstandings play a role in encounters and communication between people. Using various narrators, Sözen tells her own embarrassing or funny-to-absurd experiences in different languages, and also has others tell their own stories of comparable situations.

If the contact zone has been seen as a space of migration in which the negotiation of group interests and diverse ways of life takes place within specific conditions of power, then this adheres to a widespread tendency to see the “majority society” and the “migrants” as the two large blocks within these negotiation parameters. In particular where political rights and opportunities for participation in society are concerned this distinction is definitely justified. Works such as those by Deniz Sözen, however, observe a more complex structure within the contact zone, in which encounters between individuals and groups of different origin and multiple identities are involved in a permanent process of dissolution and reconstruction of what are only apparently clearly defined states of being.

Christian Kravagna: Living Across. Spaces of Migration. Exhibition Catalogue. Vienna, 2010

Home Stories / Public Diary Project
kabuki kebab / alternative title: 26. May 2008, Pitfield Str. (2008–2010)
DVD-Pal, 11 min 12

Home Stories / Public Diary Project
21. May 2008, New Cross Road
DVD-Pal, 1 min 47
voice/camera/montage/subtitles:
Deniz Soezen
Christl Mudrak is apprearing doing her performance Pedro – the Cat
Thanks to: Window 135, Tim Jones & Meena Chodha, Soledad Garcia

Home Stories / Public Diary Project
31. May 2008, On the Bus
DVD-Pal, 3 min, 56 sec
performance/voice/camera/ montage :
Deniz Soezen

Shown at:
– Living Across. Spaces of Migration, group exhibition (cat.), curated by Christian Kravagna, x:hibit, Vienna, 2010
– Art Salon Project 2, curated by boyleANDshaw, ARTPROJX SPACE, London, 2009






WELLBEING
ROLL
TO GO
SUSHI MAKI
ESKIMO




Home Stories/Public Diary Project
31.May.2008 On the Bus

Kilim Filim – a documentary-style video project in collaboration with Sara Hossein. Reasoning about the presence of carpets at documenta12, Sara Hossein and Deniz Soezen conceived an alternative art mediation project which provided the base for *Kilim Filim* shot in summer 2007. The project ties-in with the curatorial concept for the migration of form, which envisages establishing interrelationships and formal parallels between examples of carpets from different origins and contemporary art at documenta12.

Focusing on local carpets in Kassel as the basis for aesthetic investigation, *Kilim Filim* intends to explore the cross-cultural transfer of knowledge, the re- ception of (Oriental) carpets and their meaning in different contexts.

The artists visited twelve participants living in Kassel – of German, Persian, Turkish and Moroccan origin – in order to film their carpets and textile-related stories . The participants included a carpet trader, a textile restorer, an imam of the local mosque, housewives and aficionados .

The carpets generated a myriad of comments on history, identity, memory, the loss of traditional crafts, globalisation and cultural exchange, concepts of beauty and comfort, home and belonging.

Kilim Filim – German/Turkish/Persian with English subtitles, 2008
Duration : 13 min 38, DVD-Pal, loop
Art mediation project, camera & interviews: Deniz Soezen & Sara Hossein
Script & Editing: Deniz Soezen
Sponsor: Fonds Soziokultur
Equipment: Projektmedienzentrum Offener Kanal Kassel

Shown at:
— Living Across. Spaces of Migration, group exhibition (cat.), curated by Christian Kravagna, x:hibit, Vienna, 2010


also in Turkey, Anatolia




They look like ducks...


for my standards an old oriental carpet


In Iran, Afghanistan and in Syria



For this series of objects photographs of the artist's family album have been distorted, re-worked and transformed into collages and mini-stages. The artist's personal archive was also used for the experimental video *Odaliske auf Tuchfühlung- eine Schleierfahndung* (English title: *Unveiling Odalisque*) which is exploring the attributes of various cultures by comparing the headscarf- wearing-habits of the artist's two grandmothers, one of Turkish, the other of German origin and the use of the veil by other family members.

three-dimensional cardboard objects, mixed-media (oil, acrylic, photo-graphs, textiles, cardboard), various dimensions, 2006/07

Shown at:
— 23 Ateliers, open studio in the framework of Wiener Bezirksfestwochen, Vienna, 2010
— Bäckerstrasse4 gallery, Vienna, 2009

Public Collection:
– Artothek of the Austrian Federal Ministry for Education, Art and Culture

Family Set-Up









Through animated sequences, documentary footage and experimental film strategies Deniz Sözen alias the Odalisque “Kalypso El Kader” is analyzing the attributes of various cultures by comparing the headscarf-wearing-habits of her two grandmothers, one of Turkish, the other of German origin.

«For women who wear it and artists who represent it, the veil is a garment whose meaning cannot be contained. (…) If the secret imagined to lie behind the veil reveals one thing, it is that it cannot be contained within a single truth, experience or understanding. Instead the veil emerges as a form of clothing that is rooted in specific historical moments and locations, its depiction is similarly contingent and its adoption, adaptation and rejection is always itself relational.” *

*Lewis, Reina in: Bailey, David/Tawadros Gilane: Veil-Veiling, Representation and Contemporary Art, Iniva, London, 2003, Preface

Odaliske auf Tuchfühlung – eine Schleierfahndung, 2005
Englisch titile: Unveiling Odalisque
Turkish title: Cariye örtü temasında
DVD-Pal, colour, stereo
Duration: 12 min, interactive version for installation

Concept, performance, animation and montage: Deniz Soezen
Camera: Deniz Soezen, Katharina Olschbaur, Niki Jantsch, Brigitte Kovacs, Karine Teyssier
Music: Hakan Gürses
Sound: Deniz Soezen, Can Soezen
Starring: Deniz Soezen, Oda Merten, Hayriye Soezen, Gülser Soezen, Ümit Soezen, Leman Hanim, a.o.
Production: University of Applied Arts Vienna, studio for experimental animation & video studio

Shown at:
– diagonale, festival of Austrian Film, Graz, 2006



















Portfolio