

Fatma Bucak
So as to find the strength to see

Fondazione Merz, Turin
6 March – 20 May 2018

Curated by Lisa Parola and Maria Centonze

In collaboration with Fondazione Sardi per l'Arte, Fondazione Merz presents the first major museum show in Italy of Turkish artist Fatma Bucak.

Fatma Bucak grew up in Istanbul and was born in Iskenderun, a small town in the south of Turkey very close to the Syrian border. Belonging to the Kurdish minority is one of the key factors that has led Fatma Bucak to explore issues such as political and gender identity, state violence, censorship, repression, migration and religious mythology.

The exhibition, featuring site-specific installations, performance, sound, video, sculpture and photographs - many of which have been specially commissioned for the Fondazione Merz - continue the above themes.

Investigating the fragility, tension and irreversibility of history through a sequence of images, sound and performance, the artist creates a series of environments. These environments become the voice of forgotten stories, unexpressed thoughts of individuals excluded from history, of political and ethnic minorities, and socio-cultural structures in opposition to power.

The exhibition opens with a site-specific work, *Enduring nature of thoughts*. Dozens of enamelled basins are surrounded by the constant sound of falling water drops. Through these invisible yet audible leaks, the work plays on the tension between the real and the staged. Experiences and accounts of suffering, loss and marginalisation are at once materialised.

The obliteration of memory, stories and the rewriting of narratives are the central themes of the three installations; *342 names*, *Black ink* and *Fantasies of violence*.

In *342 names* the act of repeatedly etching names on a lithographic stone reveals the untold stories of the victims of enforced disappearance in Turkey. The names are predominantly those of Kurds, still a disadvantaged minority in Turkey, who 'disappeared' after the 1980 military coup.

In *Black ink*, a metal tablet is inscribed with a paragraph of text. The ink is made from the ashes of a burned book found in an independent Kurdish publishing house's charred warehouse, which suggests other untold stories and the deliberate destruction of cultural heritage.

Fantasies of Violence comprises of 117 double-sided zinc printing plates, visible from the front and the rear. Each plate is etched with abstract markings derived from representations of violence. They are accompanied on the back of each plate by a literary description of the violent act.

The images are removed from their original context, found in newspapers that the artist has collected, from Turkey, Europe and America. The abstraction of the markings breaks the images down into the basic compositional lines—as if to find the 'bones' of the image.

The fine lines of the anterior etchings are contrasted with the consumed raw metal on the back. These numerous plates are not actually being used to print onto paper, but instead become the focus of the work. The use of metal is an important aspect of the installation, being a cold and clinical material that can itself be used for weaponry.

Borders and insecurity are combined with themes of memory and excluded narratives in the installation *Damascus Rose*, in which approximately 100 Damascus roses (one of the oldest varieties of rose, but today are threatened with extinction as a result of the civil war) which the artist had transported from Syria to Turin, are grafted and planted in a flowerbed, in the hope that they will take root and grow. They are a metaphor for the dangerous journey and uncertainty of millions of Syrian refugees fleeing the war, whilst referencing notions of belonging and origin.

In the video *Four Ages of Woman: Fall*, the traditional story of the birth of the first man is re-imagined as the creation of the first woman. A female figure in a landscape of red earth frantically hurls stones at an invisible enemy, as though she has decided to re-emerge from hiding after a battle, thus beginning to tell and write her own story.

The themes of memory, exclusion and unspoken narratives are further explored in the audio work *I must say a word about fear*, in the videos *Omne vivum ex ovo: nomologically possible anyhow* and *An empire of the imagination*.

A catalogue will be published to accompany the exhibition.

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EXHIBITION DETAILS

Title: Fatma Bucak
Dates: 6 March – 20 May 2018
Venue: Fondazione Merz, via Limone 24, 10141 Turin, Italy
Private View: 6 March, 7 pm
Opening times: Tuesday to Sunday, 11 am-7 pm

Prices: € 6 full, € 3.50 reduced (visitors aged between 10 and 26, senior citizens over 65, organised groups of at least 10 people, holders of the Pyou Card) - Free (children up to the age of 10, disabled visitors and person accompanying them, holders of the Abbonamento Musei and Torino + Piemonte Cards, Card ContemporaneamentelItalia, ICOM members, journalists with valid badge or if accredited, friends of the Fondazione Merz and every first Sunday of the month)

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