



- 1- *This area is under 23 hour video and audio surveillance*, print on aluminum plate, 2009
- 2- *Stones to throw*, installation, 2011
- 3- *Short circuit*, Single channel DVD 3' 32", 2006
- 4- *Somebody Else's Car*, Slide projection, 20 pieces photo series, 2005

AHMET ÖĞÜT

STONES TO THROW

02.04.2011 | 14.05.2011

Ahmet Ögüt was born in Diyarbakir, Turkey in 1981, lives and works in Amsterdam. He works with a broad range of media including video, photography, installation, drawing and printed media. He received his BA in painting from Hacettepe University, Ankara, Turkey in 2003, his MA from the Art and Design Faculty at Yildiz Teknik University in Istanbul in 2006 and he completed a two year residency at Rijksakademie van beeldende kunsten, Amsterdam, The Netherlands, from 2007 – 2008. Solo exhibitions included Museum Villa Stuck in Munich, 2010; Laumeier Sculpture Park, St. Louis, 2010; Stedelijk Museum Bureau Amsterdam (SMBA), 2010; Artspace Visual Arts Centre in Sydney, 2010; MATRIX Program, Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive BAM/PFA, 2010; Künstlerhaus Bremen, 2009; Kunsthalle Basel, 2008; Group exhibitions include Trickster Makes This World, Nam June Paik Art Center, 2010; Performa 09, The third biennial of visual art performance, 2009; 5th Berlin Biennial, Berlin, 2008; Stalking with Stories, Apexart, New York, 2007; Normalization, Rooseum Center for Contemporary Art, Malmö, 2006 and 9th International Istanbul Biennial, Istanbul, 2005. In 2009 Ahmet Ögüt co-represented Turkey at 53rd Venice Biennale together with Banu Cennetoglu. In 2010 he received the "Europas Zukunft" prize from Museum of Contemporary Art (GfZK) Leipzig, 2010.

Kunsthalle Lissabon is pleased to present *Stones to throw*, Ahmet Ögüt's first solo show in Portugal. In *Stones to throw*, an installation specifically developed for Kunsthalle Lissabon, Ögüt departs from nose art, the decorative paintings or designs on the fuselage of military aircrafts, which can be seen as a form of aircraft graffiti, to present a series of 10 painted stones that feature the same kind of designs seen in airplanes. Throughout the exhibition, and gradually, all of the stones, except the last one, will be removed from Kunsthalle Lissabon's exhibition space and sent to Diyarbakir, Ögüt's hometown. The stones will then be received by a friend of the artist and left abandoned on the streets. All the process of removing the stones from the exhibition and abandoning them on the city will be documented and presented in Kunsthalle Lissabon as part of the artist's installation. Diyarbakir, located in southeast Turkey has been witnessing an increase of children arrested on charges of stone throwing. The exhibition will also include *Somebody else's car* (2005), *Short circuit* (2006) and *This area is under 23 hour video and audio surveillance* (2009).

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WORDS DON'T COME EASY

CONVERSATION BETWEEN AHMET ÖGÜT, JOÃO MOURÃO AND LUÍS SILVA, ON THE OCCASION OF THE EXHIBITION STONES TO THROW.

KUNSTHALLE LISSABON: IN STONES TO THROW, THE NEW PIECE YOU ARE SHOWING IN KUNSTHALLE LISSABON, YOU DEPART FROM NOSE ART, THE DECORATIVE PAINTINGS OR DESIGNS ON THE FUSELAGE OF MILITARY AIRCRAFTS, WHICH CAN BE SEEN AS A FORM OF AIRCRAFT GRAFFITI, TO PRESENT A SERIES OF 10 PAINTED STONES THAT FEATURE THE SAME KIND OF DESIGNS SEEN IN AIRPLANES. IF THE ACT OF PAINTING STONES, AS A FORM OF EMBELLISHMENT, IS A COMMON ONE, THE USE OF THIS SPECIFIC KIND OF MOTIFS IS UNUSUAL. WHAT LED YOU TO EXPLORE NOSE ART, AND MORE SPECIFICALLY, TO USE IT IN STONES?

Ahmet Ögüt: First few examples of nose art appeared in World War I, however the true nose art appeared during World War II. It is basically the practice of personalized decorations on military aircrafts. These decorations contain destructive messages combined with childish cartoon characters. The messages are only visible to their makers. This seems to be a way to normalize their destructive actions. In order to highlight the bizarre function of these messages, I decided to transfer them from powerful weapons to stones that are potential powerless weapons in certain geographies. Particularly I wanted focus on Diyarbakir,

my hometown, where there is an increase of children being arrested on charges of stone throwing. During the exhibition, periodically, all of the stones, except the last one, will be removed from Kunsthalle Lissabon's exhibition space and sent to Diyarbakir. The stones will be received by Aşkın Ercan, a friend of mine, and left abandoned on the streets. Afterwards I have no control of what happens next. Most likely I will never discover what happened to the stones and where they ended up.

IT IS INTERESTING THAT YOU MENTION THAT NOSE ART NORMALIZED, IN A WAY, THE DESTRUCTIVE ACTIONS OF THE AIRPLANES. WE WOULD GO A BIT FURTHER AND SAY THAT NOT ONLY IT NORMALIZES, IT NATURALIZES THOSE ACTIONS... THE SHARK TEETH, FOR INSTANCE, AND ONE OF THE MOST CHARACTERISTIC MOTIFS OF NOSE ART, WHICH YOU ALSO USE IN YOUR PIECE, SEEM TO POINT TOWARDS THE INTRINSIC VIOLENCE WITHIN THE ANIMAL WORLD... THE NATURAL DIALECTICS OF PREDATOR AND PREY. BY PAINTING THE STONES WITH NOSE ART MOTIFS, YOU SEEM TO BE TRANSFERRING THIS SAME LINE OF REASONING INTO THE STONES THEMSELVES. THE DIFFERENCE, HOWEVER, IS THAT BEFORE YOU NORMALIZE (OR NATURALIZE) THEIR ACTIONS,



it in the park, took a photo of it and posted it on that blog as an example of a security failure. They think it is a careless security mistake and they don't know it is actually one of the sculptures of the park. I think such misunderstanding is what makes the whole situation interesting.

THE MISUNDERSTANDING, BUT ALSO THE IRONY AND THE HUMOR OF SUCH A PARADOXICAL SITUATION, WHICH ARE TOOLS YOU USE FREQUENTLY, AREN'T THEY? DO YOU THINK BOTH IRONY AND HUMOR ARE IMPORTANT WAYS OF MAKING PEOPLE THINK ABOUT THE FACTS SURROUNDING THEM?

Yes, I do use humor as a tool frequently. Facing factual reality can often be brutal thus people often choose to avoid it, instead of questioning it. We can call this attitude as voluntary amnesia. I believe humor can actually bring people closer to factual reality. Therefore I do admire historical pranksters and tricksters such as Nasreddin Hodja, Till Eulenspiegel and their more recent colleagues Buster Keaton and Jacques Tati. There is something intergenerational about them. Perhaps we should all become pranksters and tricksters in order to survive contemporary daily life and its "social protocols".

the stones operate as a metaphor to give the message that resistance does exist.

IT'S TRUE, YOU ARE ABSOLUTELY RIGHT, YOU DEPART FROM AND USE EXISTING "SOCIAL PROTOCOLS", IF YOU CAN CALL THEM THAT, AND SHIFT THE CONTEXT OF THEIR OCCURRENCE. IN THAT SENSE, THE CONCEPT OF "SOCIAL READYMADE" IS CENTRAL NOT ONLY TO STONES TO THROW, BUT TO THE UNDERSTANDING OF MOST OF YOUR WORK. THE SHIFT IN CONTEXT YOU CAUSE IN THOSE "SOCIAL PROTOCOLS" SEEM TO TRANSFORM THE OBJECTS YOU ATTACH THEM TO. FOR INSTANCE THE STONES BECOME SOMETHING DIFFERENT AS DO THE CARS YOU TRANSFORM IN SOMEBODY ELSE'S CAR (2005). THE OBJECTS REMAIN THE SAME, THE STONES ARE STILL STONES, AND THE CARS ARE STILL CARS, BUT THEY BECOME SOMETHING ELSE, THEIR RELATION TO POWER AND CONTROL (AND THEIR INSTITUTIONS) ARE DRAMATICALLY DIFFERENT. AND IF THE OBJECTS' RELATIONS TO SUCH INSTITUTIONS SHIFT, THE VIEWERS' RELATIONS TO THOSE INSTITUTIONS ARE LIKELY TO CHANGE AS WELL... AND THIS IS WHERE THE SPACE OF RESISTANCE SEEM TO EXIST. ONE COULD SAY RESISTANCE IS MAKING VISIBLE THE INVISIBLE.

I wouldn't use the word invisible. Things are actually visible to us, but we easily lose the ability to see what is right in front of us. There is a term used for a certain kind of blindness: legally blind. A legally blind person would have to stand about 6 meters from an object to see it, when a normally sighted person

could see it from 60 meters. I would say we are all legally blinded in terms of understanding the facts that surround us. In order to avoid this, we need to create short moments of illusion that can shift reality's temporarily. Somebody Else's Car was about this kind of short moment of illusion. It is not so much about discovering new facts, but rather about frequently remembering what we already know.

A MOMENT OF ILLUSION BUT ALSO A MOMENT OF DOUBT. NOT ONLY IN SOMEBODY ELSE'S CAR, BUT THROUGHOUT YOUR WORK, FOR INSTANCE IN THIS AREA IS UNDER 23 HOUR VIDEO AND AUDIO SURVEILLANCE (2009), YOU OFTEN INVITE THE VIEWERS TO DOUBT, TO ASK QUESTIONS, TO REFLECT UPON THE CONSEQUENCES OF WHAT YOU PRESENT TO THEM.

Yes, I agree, after the encounter, first it is a moment of doubt, then it turns into speculation and later it travels as a rumor. This area is under 23 hour video and audio surveillance is a clear example of that. As soon as I put it in public space, people don't know it is a work of art. Even in a sculpture park. Recently one of the two artist copies of this work was acquired by Laumeier Sculpture Park in St. Louis. We simply installed it on a tree. I also installed 3 other copies in different locations of the city. Few months later a friend of mine sent me a link of a blog that is collecting all sorts of failures seen in public space. Obviously someone saw



YOU FIRST ACKNOWLEDGE THEM AS WEAPONS. WHEN YOU PAINT THEM, YOU SOMEHOW DEFINE THE STONES AS SOMETHING (WEAPONS) TO THROW, WHILE SIMULTANEOUSLY NATURALIZING THE VIOLENCE OF THE ACT OF THROWING THEM, AND ALL THIS WITHOUT KNOWING IF THEY WILL EVER BE USED OR NOT. IN THE END THE STONES OPERATE MAINLY AS A METAPHOR, DON'T YOU THINK?

I think there is a misunderstanding here. I don't define anything myself. I observe facts and I relocate them. For this project I collected the stones in Stockholm, Copenhagen, Amsterdam and Lisbon, and relocated them in

Diyarbakir, where they spontaneously might get a new function or meaning within that social and political urban space. I also didn't come up with my own interpretation of Nose Art, I just used existing Nose Art examples without changing them or adding anything. That is why I would say this work is a Social Readymade. It is not about my own interpretation or how I define it myself. Only by relocating existing facts, I create a new situation where others, who might get involved, could interpret it themselves. It is not realistic to compare the stones with armored vehicles or guns. As you said in the end

