









either/or



yaşam şaşmazer







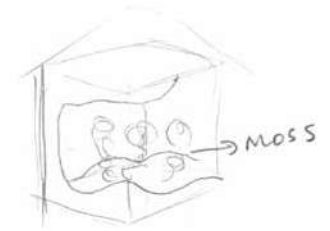
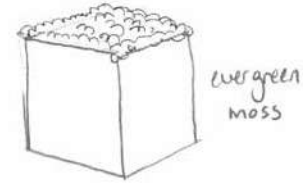
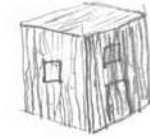








Ahsop Kabule Kullaulsa

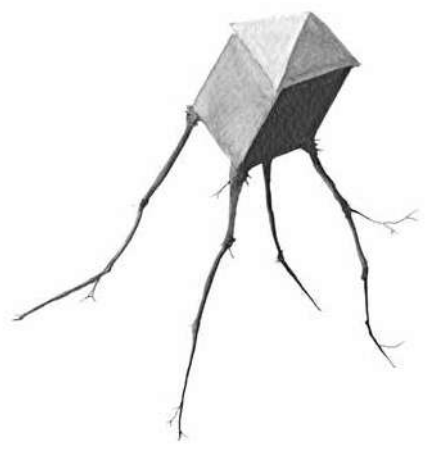


THE PSYCHE  
IS A PLACE,  
AND THE HOUSE IS  
AN EXTENSION  
OF THAT PLACE.



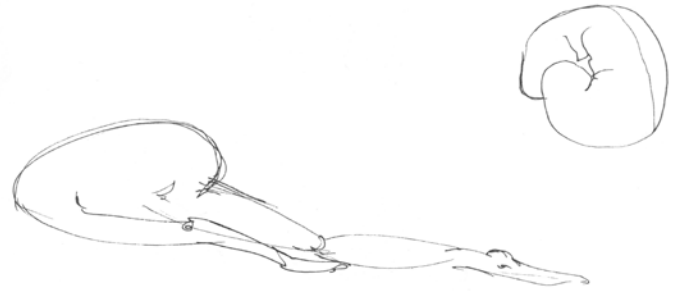
+

+

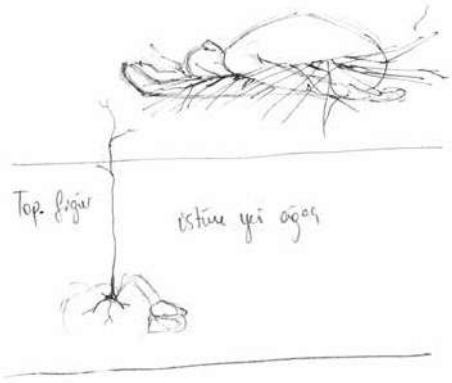




Poslar



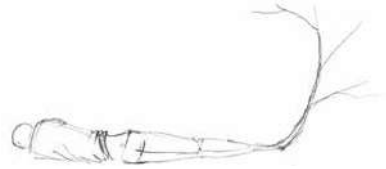




Figür ke Gattaliba moss



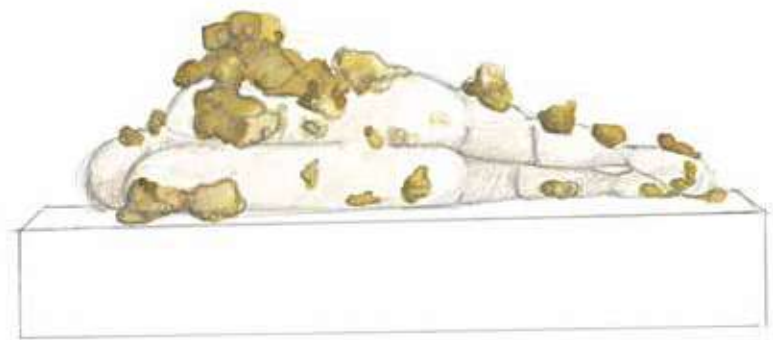
44



walnut chestnut? tahlakusu?



ayrı detay!



Body as an invaded landscape











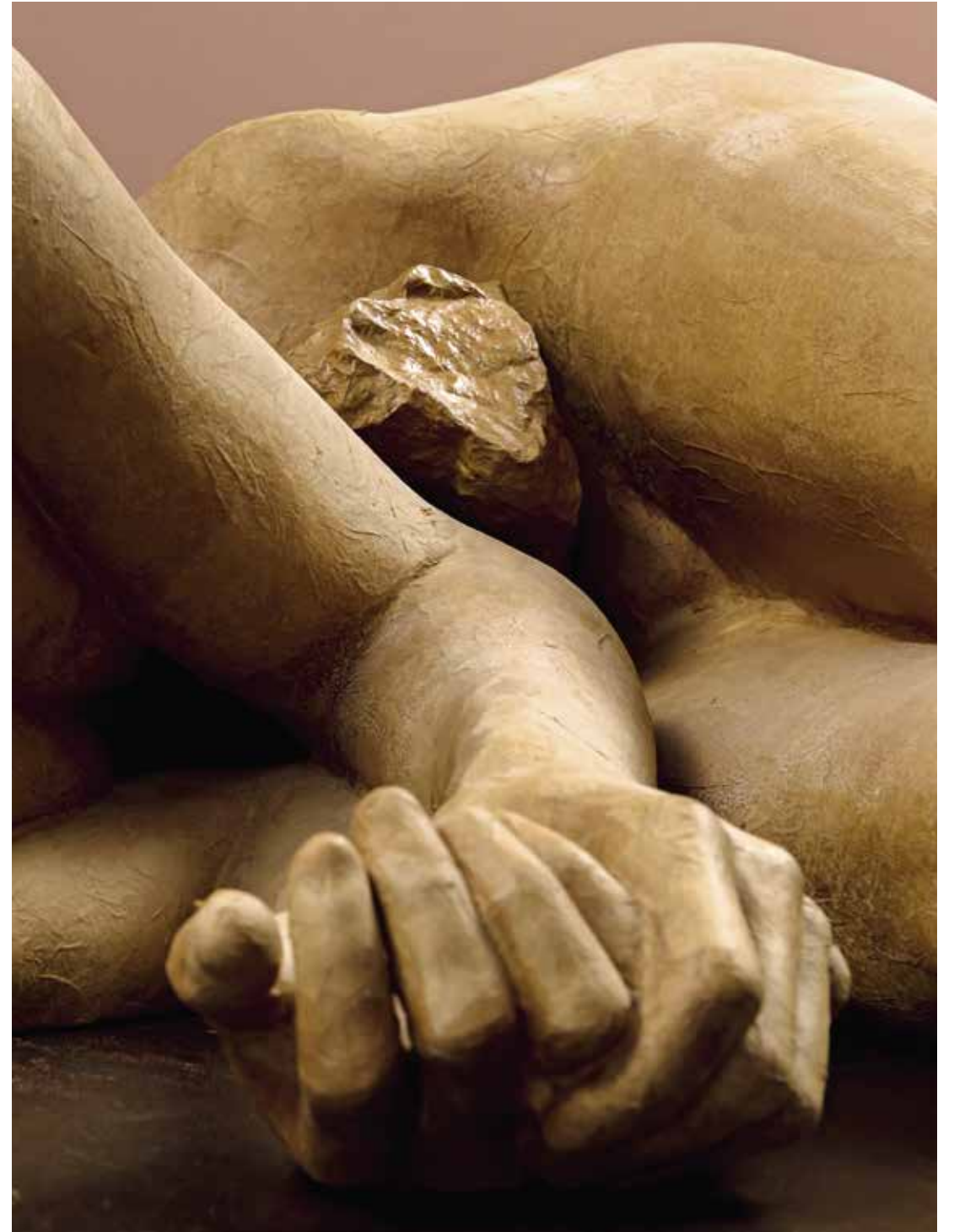


























## in conversation

NAZ KOCADERE

YAŞAM ŞAŞMAZER

**You had a few alternatives for what to call your exhibition while you were working on the project. How does the conceptual framework of the exhibition relate to its title “either/or”? Can you tell its story?**

I have been working on this exhibition for about two years. My thoughts and research focused on our relationship with nature. This is something I have been interested in for a long time; there are traces of it in my work since 2016. In the age of ecological destruction and climate disaster that we live in, Anthropocene studies, post-human studies, current studies on animals and plants, and the idea of entanglement have all informed both my world view and my art production. I am interested in establishing an ethical life that includes non-humans.

Until now, in my artistic practice I have mainly been concerned with the subconscious; fears, shadows and the conflict between “me” and “the other.” I have attempted to examine the various states of being human. For some time now, I have known that these subconscious fears are also what lies at the root of our relationship with nature. Humans have always wanted to tame nature, which is perhaps what human beings think of as the “other” the most. Like all “others” (i.e. female over gender, native over race), there have been attempts to tame it. Therefore, relying on the themes that already existed in my previous

works, I am now looking at the relationship between humans and nature, which is based on ownership and domination, I try to understand the destructiveness of human efforts to invade, conquer and colonize nature, and trace the consequences of this destruction in order to find the possibility of a common life.

As for the title of the exhibition, I have to admit I had a hard time finding one because during the preparation process, I had a feeling about it rather than a clear articulation. I knew that it was not going to be an adjective, or a descriptive statement, but something vague, open-ended, implicit. Eventually I felt that I found such a feeling of ambiguity in this conjunction. “either/or”, which is mostly used to link words or phrases, does not only bridge my past and future work; but also, in the context of the conceptual framework of this exhibition, it connects the present state of humanity and the possibility of a future transformation. On the other hand, “either/or” is also a conjunction that offers a choice between two different situations/things. I think the concept of choice is vital in our current situation. All in all, we will either continue our existence in the world with the anthropocentric view and behavioral models of today and bear the dire consequences of this or we will choose to create a change or a break in life and question our deep seated norms for ethical, fair and non-anthropocentric ways for a common life form.

**Since your very first exhibition, your work has focused on the human figure. Starting with the series entitled “Metanoia” (2013-2015) we see the first hints of nature’s inclusion. In the following series “Busts” (2016-2018) and in the work “Ravage” (2017), I find that your practice has turned towards understanding nature and our relationship with it. Having made these works, what did your research focus on for your new works and which keywords did your readings revolve around?**



My practice has always centered on the human figure, more recently nature has become a significant component of it. The intellectual journey of my new works had already begun with the busts that I started sculpting in 2016, for which I imagined that the roles of the “occupier” human and the “occupied” nature were reversed. These sculptures were disappearing figures whose identities got erased with the passage of time and the effects of nature. Later, I made sculptures where I showed this reversal of roles on bodies. With the invitation of Fulya Erdemci, the curator of the Cappadox Interdisciplinary Culture Festival held in 2017, I made a work entitled “Ravage” for the outdoor exhibition series, to be displayed in the Keyışdere Cave. Influenced by the seclusion practices of monks and saints who retreat from earthly life, I sculpted a female figure and installed it in the cave. My pursuit of ideas such as transforming the world, transforming ourselves, dying symbolically, “killing” the old in order to create the new started with this work. Having read more and more after these works, I found myself avoiding using the words “occupation” and “invasion.” When I look at nature or the relationship between non-human subjects, I think that these terms of power and hierarchy are also highly anthropocentric. My perspective now centers on a form of association that I prefer to describe as the harmony of human and nature, intertwining in a horizontal union. Therefore, I can describe the human bodies in this exhibition as co-subjects who open themselves up to this kind of relationship.

At this point, I should note that I am very much influenced by the works of Rosi Braidotti, a post-humanist, Donna Haraway, who describes herself as a “compostist,” James Lovelock’s Gaia theory, Lynn Margulis and Dorion Sagan, who discuss an inter-species solidarity in a symbiotic relationship with other species, and in general, the theory of post humanism that criticizes

anthropocentrism as if humans were the only living creature. The reason why I find post human theory so important is that it offers an alliance, a symbiosis between species that goes beyond the usual classifications. To quote from Braidotti: "... post-human theory contests the arrogance of anthropocentrism and the 'exceptionalism' of the Human as a transcendental category. It strikes instead an alliance with the productive and immanent force of *zoe*, or life in its non-human aspects."<sup>1</sup>

**Another important characteristic that distinguishes the sculptures in this exhibition from your previous works is that human bodies have lost their heads, ergo their faces, and that they have transformed into amorphous forms, occasionally amputated. I think that the facelessness of the figures can be a suggestion for anonymity and empathy. What is the significance of making bodies without faces for you?**

I decided that these bodies should be without heads or faces right from the start. Regardless of the singularity of individuals and our identities, these bodies tell the story of all of us. So, yes, it was important for me to anonymize the bodies, removing concepts such as self, personalization, name and gender from the story through the absence of the face, which is "the most humane part of the human"<sup>2</sup> as David Le Breton puts it. Le Breton tells us in his book titled "Des Visages - Essai d'anthropologie" [Faces - An Anthropological Essay] that "If the face is the hidden center of existence, and the capita of human identity in a sense, the deformation of the face is experienced as the loss of existence, the destruction of personality."<sup>3</sup> What

1. Rosi Braidotti, *İnsan Sonrası* [The Posthuman], 2014, Kolektif Kitap, p. 78
2. David Le Breton, *Yüz Üzerine Antropolojik Bir Deneme* [Des Visages - Essai d'anthropologie], 2014, Boğaziçi University Press, p. 16
3. David Le Breton, *ibid.*, p. 15

the author describes as “the loss of existence” supports the idea of transformation that I try to bring forth through the exhibition. The bodies in the exhibition lose both their faces and body parts due to this transformation. The state of being headless goes in parallel with loss of limbs or amputation, and as the sculptures lose their limbs, they open themselves up to nature through these absences.

**In your previous works, you preferred using wood, specifically from the linden tree, because of the proximity of its color to the color of human skin, but this time you are using a different material. This is the first time that you employ a mixed technique in your sculptures, mainly using paper. Can you describe the process of producing your sculptures using various organic materials, textures, techniques and accoutrements?**

I’ve been working with wood for a long time. When I first started making figurative sculptures, I was looking for a material that wouldn’t give the work a hyper-realistic effect, but at the same time something that evoked the sensation and the warmth of skin. Wood was a material that I found very suitable in this sense. However, I looked for a different material specifically for this exhibition, something more delicate and volatile. Paper has been in my mind for a while. Paper, which is also a byproduct of wood, is much more fragile, sensitive and light, and well suited to concepts such as transformation, transience, and mortality that these works try to explore.

This new material language, which I have never worked with before, developed while preparing for this exhibition. I used almost transparent papers such as tissue paper, organic paper made from plant fibers, and papier mâché pulp prepared with waste paper, which I created with my own recipe. I built them up either by stuffing the molds of the sculptures I modeled with mud or by adding the paper



layer by layer on top of them. I also used herbal recipes to obtain the skin colors for the palette I was looking for, and applied it on the ready-made papers that I used. Again, I wanted it to be a material decision that speaks to the conceptual framework of the exhibition. I colored the papers with pigments, rust, coffee and ready-made powder paints that I prepared myself. All these experiments, together with the materials I used such as mushrooms, plant fibers, stone, soil, moss and lichens, turned into a playful process for me.

**I read in one of your interviews that you started using wood during your training in sculpture and described it as an “irreversible material that does not accept any faults.” On the other hand, you are exhibiting watercolor works for the first time. This is a very different method of working compared with wood, which leaves little room for coincidence and requires preliminary planning. What led you to this technique, which is much more fluid, flexible, and highly susceptible to chance?**

As I said earlier, the conceptual framework of this exhibition and the thoughts behind it led me to seek new materials. The main material I would use in sculpture was the primary issue. I also had concerns about avoiding environmentally harmful, non-recyclable or toxic materials as much as possible, and a desire to turn to natural recipes. After I decided to use paper, I was able to establish the effect and technique I was looking for after a number of trials and errors. When this was resolved and I finished the last sculpture to be included in the exhibition –the work titled “either/or VII” which can be seen as a seed or fetus that emerged in the first or last stage of the transformation– watercolors followed. Since sculpture is a medium that requires you to know what to do at the very start and for which you need to

be in control, the unpredictability and the happenstance nature of watercolor added a layer of lightness and ephemerality to the works in the exhibition. Although they look very different technically, I actually employed a similar method to the one I used for the sculptures; circular forms created with semi-transparent layers and intertwined colors formed a seed, or new building blocks that evolved from a seed.

**I think that while wandering through the works in the exhibition, many viewers oscillate between concepts such as beginnings and endings, life and death, which was also my own experience. These bodies bring to mind notions of circularity and motion with their forms, and are almost suspended in time as if in purgatory. Can you tell us about the relationship of the exhibition with time?**

For this exhibition, I set out with the following question: How can we change our relationship with the world? Today as human beings, our role on earth has shifted from the role of the occupier and gone further to assume a completely destructive position. How can we begin the necessary transformation, starting with ourselves? In order for this transformation to take place, I think that the dominant views, assumptions and conceptions must be completely overtuned. The place where we position ourselves as the human species, our anthropocentrism, our relationship with the earth, with non-human beings, our priorities; all of these things have to change. If we listen to Foucault, who says “Perhaps the goal today is not to discover what we are, but to deny what we are,”<sup>4</sup> then we can start by rejecting ourselves as we are today.

4. Michel Foucault, *Özne ve İktidar* [Subject and Power], 2016, Ayrıntı Publishing House, p. 68

It seems to me that deconstructing the body in order to transform it can be a good starting point for critiquing the “human,” which currently dominates the world. I point to bodies that are in the midst of a transformation, or are already transformed, circular forms with submissive postures such as curling, extending, and contracting signify a moving away from the progressive and vertical model. These bodies that have lost their heads and in some cases other body parts make us think about our mortality and our place in the world; they evoke the loss of flesh and skin, and decay. In this sense, it is possible to read each figure as a *vanitas* painting or a *memento mori* note. So, yes, the sculptures also deal with the notion of time. But I thought and dealt with this temporality in a cyclical way, not as a linear progression. As a matter of fact, we start the exhibition with watercolors and see the seed-like patterns, which constitute the first (or last) stage of the transformation. When we go inside, we encounter bodies and continue with watercolors. The exhibition itself almost draws a circle, or we could say it curls inwards, which hints at circularity.

» **Naz Kocadere** is a curator and writer. She works as program manager at Zilberman Gallery, Istanbul. Recently, with SAHA Association's support, she attended the Curatorial Program at de Appel Amsterdam, as one of the six selected participants. She curated “Avant Gardener” at PuntWG, Amsterdam and “Meditations on self-togetherness” (2019) at Bilsart, Istanbul in 2020. Naz took part in the teams of exhibition and research programs in SALT (2018), Öktem&Aykut and the 13th Istanbul Biennial (2013). Having her background in visual communication design, she received her masters degree at the Cultural Management Program at Istanbul Bilgi University. A member of AICA Turkey, her writings appeared in Borusan Contemporary Blog and SALT Online Blog among others.



SEPIA 3

Kahve + Pos 2 1/1



PAS 2



KAHVE



SEPIA I

PAS 3



KAHVE



CEVIZ



SEPIA II.

PAS 3



KAHVE



CEVIZ





PAS 2

PAS 3

1/1 P.2

Septia 7 1/1 P3

PELLOR

1/1 P2

1/1 P3

1/2 P.2

1/2 P3

S6

1/1 out. J.J

P.2

P3

(Septia 2)

1/1 P2

1/1 P3

fig 01

PAS 2

Septia 0

















# heads, bodies, openness, and response-ability

SİBEL YARDIMCI

The “Unknown Girl” (2016) by the Dardenne brothers starts in a doctor’s practice late night. The working day is over, and Doctor Jenny Davin evaluates the day with her assistant. The doorbell rings. Jenny tells her assistant not to open the door because it is late. She learns the next day that the caller was a young woman who was found dead. The film is about Doctor Davin’s pursuit of this woman’s story, whose identity cannot even be identified. At the end of the film, which revolves around complex questions about how we take responsibility, the doctor confronts the person who caused the young woman’s death:

- I can’t sleep because of the girl, she’s always in my mind. If you had opened the door all this would not have happened.
- She’s always in my mind, too. [...] You should tell the police.
- I will lose everything, I do not want to. [...] I cannot, I cannot. Why would I ruin my life?
- Because she wants it from us.
- Who?
- That girl.
- She doesn’t care, she’s dead.
- We wouldn’t have her in our mind if she were dead.



The unknown girl has no papers. As an immigrant, poor black woman she is vulnerable in many ways. She is neither protected by any form of civil law, nor a family shows up to claim her body. Her death record has no name. But she resists oblivion and demands that people take responsibility for her death. According to Butler, who quotes Lévinas, this ethical demand of the other, which is not always verbal, manifests itself in the face: “The face is the other who asks me not to let [her] die alone, as if to do so were to become an accomplice in [her] death.”<sup>1</sup> We know that what is meant here by face is not exclusively the human face (according to Lévinas, for example, the backs, necks, and shoulders may also be sobbing, screaming).<sup>2</sup> The face or the back calls out to us in a way “we are not free to refuse”<sup>3</sup> and demands an answer: “To respond to the face, to understand its meaning, means to be awake to what is precarious in another life, or, rather, the precariousness of life itself.”<sup>4</sup> Responding to this precariousness is a fundamental responsibility.

Today, new lines of thought such as Science and Technology Studies and post-human debates open this demand to a world that is not only human, while offering the opportunity to question how distinctions such as subject-object, self-other, or nature-culture are established

1. Emmanuel Lévinas and Richard Kearney, “Dialogue with Emmanuel Levinas”, in *Face to Face with Levinas*, Albany: SUNY Press, 1986, pp. 23-24 quoted by Judith Butler, *Kırılğan Hayat*, trans. by Başak Ertür, İstanbul: İmge, 2005, p. 135.
2. Emmanuel Lévinas, “Peace and Proximity”, *Basic Philosophical Writings*, ed. Adriaan T. Peperzak, Simon Critchley and Robert Bernasconi, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996, p. 167 quoted in *ibid*, p. 136. These backs and shoulders Levinas refers to in relation to Vassili Grossman’s *Life and Fate* belong to families waiting to have news of their relatives detained for political reasons. The complete quote can be found in Butler’s text.
3. *ibid*, p. 134.
4. *ibid*, p. 137.

and functioning. Conceptualizing “responsibility” as an ability to respond (“response-ability”), Haraway and Barad not only inherit Lévinas’s intellectual legacy but also transform it with the tools of biology, quantum physics, and science fiction.<sup>5</sup> We now have a new conception of the world in its continuous materialization and a new definition of responsibility/response-ability that cannot be limited to the realm of humans. The world, as understood by Barad, is not shaped through inter-actions between existing units, but within the (intra-)activity that establishes the units themselves; every duality (including the distinction between self and other) is constructed, repeated, or dissolved by the cuts that are enacted in this unfolding.<sup>6</sup> Ethics, here, is not about “right responses to a radically exteriorized

5. For “Response-ability” see Donna Haraway, *When Species Meet*, Minneapolis: University Minnesota Press, 2008; *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2016. Whereas Donna Haraway writes a story of becoming-with based on very different lines of thought such as molecular biology, developmental biology, evolution, and science fiction, Barad draws on what quantum physics has to offer. However, it is possible to say that the two authors are close companions, who refer to each other very often (also, they both follow a feminist-queer line). As a matter of fact, when telling the story of how the world is materialized, Haraway draws upon the Baradian explanation I cite above (for example, *When Species Meet* and *Staying with the Trouble*). Response-ability is one of the concepts that travel back and forth between the two and Barad also points to it in the texts I refer to below. On the other hand, the conflicting relationship Haraway has with Lévinasian ethics should be emphasized, as the “You will not kill!” order which becomes manifest on the face is replaced by living, dying and killing well in Haraway’s thought. For example, although Haraway admits that animals also have a “face”, she does not take a clear stance against the instrumentalization of animals used in experiments (hence the possibility of murdering them) (especially the “Sharing Suffering” section in *When Species Meet*).
6. Karen Barad, “Posthumanist Performativity: Toward an Understanding of How Matter Comes to Matter”, *Signs*, 28 (3), 2003, pp. 213-217.



Untitled (F.H.), 2016, wood, fungus, moss,  
31 x 38 x 26 cm. Photo: Chroma

other [for there is no such externality], but about responsibility and accountability for the lively relationalities of becoming, of which we are a part.”<sup>7</sup> Thus, humans need to account for the position they hold as the center of life, history, and science, and with all the privileges and discriminations established based on this position. While Barad questions the cut that separates humans

from other species, severing it from the becoming of the world,<sup>8</sup> Haraway connects humans to the family of companion species of which they are a part, emphasizing

7. Interview with Karen Barad, “Matter feels, converses, suffers, desires, yearns and remembers”, 2009, <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/o/ohp/11515701.0001.001/1:4.3/--new-materialism-interviews-cartographies?rgn=div2;view=fulltext>. I have already made a similar discussion here: “Hepimiz Likeniz! Feminist Yaşam ve Dünyayla Akrabalık”, <https://www.e-skop.com/skopbulten/hepimiz-likeniz-feminist-yasam-ve-dunyayla-akrabalik/5673>.
8. For Barad, the human is only a specific form whereby the historical materialization of the world is crystallized. Barad discusses this issue by expanding Butler’s analysis of performativity: “All bodies, not merely ‘human’ bodies, come to matter through the world’s iterative intra-activity — its performativity. This is true not only of the surface or contours of the bodies, but also of the body in the fullness of its physicality, including the very ‘atoms’ of its being. Bodies are not objects with inherent boundaries and properties, they material-discursive phenomena. ‘Human’ bodies are not inherently different from ‘non-human’ ones.” (Barad, 2003, pp. 818-824, quote 823).



that the history of the earth is the history of this inter-species becoming-with.<sup>9</sup> In this conceptualization, we cannot talk about self-defined units such as genes, cells, organisms, humans with strict boundaries, and in this new political horizon humanity recedes into distance. “Perhaps” says Haraway “we can learn from our fusions with animals and machines how not to be Man”.<sup>10</sup>



Untitled (U.T.), 2016, wood, fungus, moss,  
28 x 40 x 28.5 cm. Photo: Chroma

\*\*\*

Yaşam Şaşmazer’s artistic production ranging from heads through bodies to body-like shapes can be read in this context.<sup>11</sup> What kind of gaze do these wooden heads,

9. Haraway, 2016, p. 13.

10. Donna Haraway, “Siborg Manifestosu”, *Başka Yer*, trans. by Güçsal Pusar, Istanbul: Metis, 2010, p. 79.

11. I am grateful to Yaşam Şaşmazer for inviting me to be a part of this process. With “head”, I refer to the busts Şaşmazer made between 2016 and 2019. (<https://www.yasamsasmazer.com/busts>). I prefer this word because I believe Şaşmazer’s artistic production moves away from the bust tradition, the focus on the body’s upper parts, and the representation of the body through the head. Bodies are the following: “Devastation” (2016, <https://www.yasamsasmazer.com/devastation>), “Ravage” (2017, <https://www.yasamsasmazer.com/ravage>), “Surrender” (2020, <https://www.yasamsasmazer.com/untitled-surrender>)



**Devastation, 2016**  
Wood, fungus,  
moss  
175 x 54 x 35 cm  
Photo: Bernard  
Borchardt

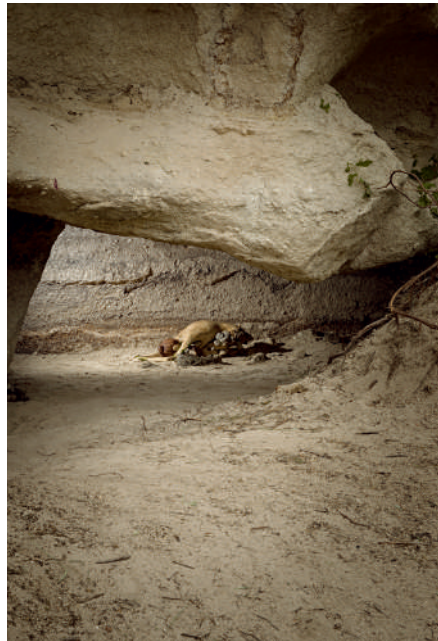
covered with lichen and fungi, invite? These almost shapeless bodily parts whose curves are filled with soil, lichen and fungi - what kind of a responsibility do they impose on us?<sup>12</sup>

I prefer to read these works not as images of the (counter-)occupation of humans by nature, but as those of the becoming-with Haraway proposed. The narrative on occupation and counter-occupation repeats the absolute separation between Human and Nature, as

12. In one of the texts where she also discusses response-ability, Haraway draws attention to the connection between respect and look: The former comes from Latin “re-specere” (to look again). There is also a relationship between “to hold in regard” and “to regard”. *When Species Meet*, p. 19.

sealed-off entities one of which dominates the other. On the contrary, these bodily parts are more like permeable and incomplete sections from the continuous becoming-with of the earth. The series of heads that face us are very different from the busts we are familiar with. They move away from a visual tradition that regards the face as the distinctive image of the human (busts, portraits of course, but also passport photos), placing it back into the inter-species becoming-with of the world. So do the bodies and bodily parts Şaşmazer depicts - the broken, cracked organic materials are dwellings to fungi settling on the eyelids, grasses growing in cracks, lichen spreading over the shoulders, and soil piling up in folds. As such, these heads and bodies, remind us that the face (or the back) is never just the face (or the back), but always also wood, stone, soil, lichen, cork, rust, coffee, walnut, as well as other things. In a continuous becoming-with them, they invite an ethical-political outlook that cannot be limited to the Human (his face, his back). Bodies enfold and enact, wide open to the becoming of the world - continuously because stone, soil, fungus, lichen, and wood are also becoming(-with) over time.

Can we learn “not to be Man”? This is both a potentiality and a responsibility. “either/



**Ravage**, 2017, wood, fungus, moss  
128 x 46 x 54 cm. Photo: Furkan Temir



or” (2021) seems to chase after this potentiality once again, listening to the soil, fungus, and lichen, trying to look at human bodies in order to “learn how not to be Man.” Different from the comparatively well-defined wooden limbs and bodies of “Devastation” (2016) or “Ravage” (2017), the bodies of “either/or” let go of the head (the face), twisting, rolling, and turning into paper silhouettes that dissolve (with time?) into each other. Indeed none has a name. These silhouettes invite us to explore the potentiality of becoming-with, and of life as common, by asking “Whom/what do I become(-with)?”.

- » **Sibel Yardımcı** is a professor in Sociology at Mimar Sinan University of Fine Arts, Istanbul. She completed her PhD in 2004 in Lancaster University, UK, Department of Sociology, with a dissertation titled “Meeting in Istanbul: Cultural Globalisation and Art Festivals”. For her dissertation, she has worked on the aestheticization of everyday life, urban transformation and governance, and cultural and symbolic capital. Her various publications are a book in Turkish drawing upon her PhD thesis, and articles, books, and book chapters reflecting various aspects of her recent research interests, including the city, (urban) citizenship, nationality/nationalism, biopolitics, queer studies, disability and debates on post-humanism.

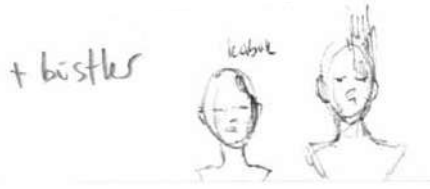






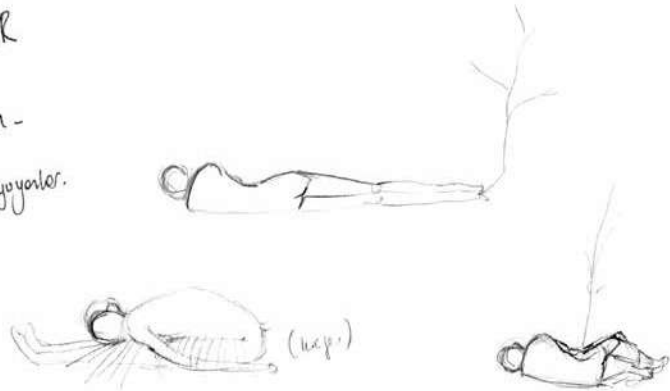






FIGÜRLER

Invasyon -  
Siyah - vuyyonlar.



⑤  
✓



④



② (bacaklar açık)



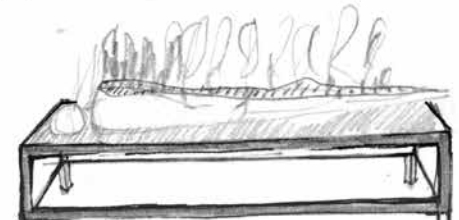
③



♂

beton dikim.

Sorra matlar ve mosslara geç.



üsti kabuklu ağaçla..

Siyah metal  
Karde -













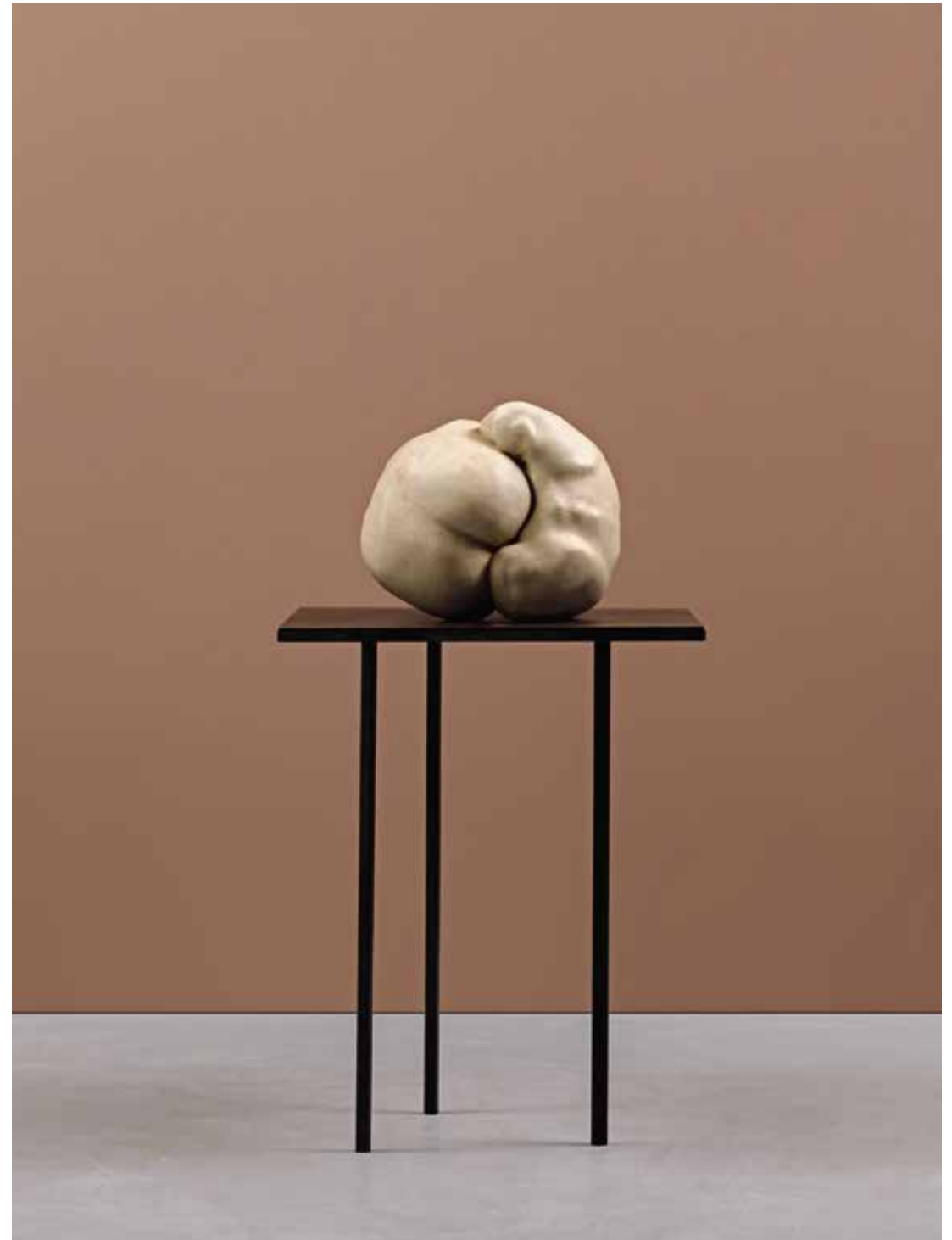






















## us, already

DENİZ KIRKALI

The deterioration of the form, structure, and texture of the stone as a result of some natural events and mostly climatic conditions, and the dissolution of the soil and minerals is called weathering. Lichens, symbiotic composite organisms that arise from photosynthetic algae and fungi, play a major role in the weathering of stones. Lichens first physically break surfaces with their growth power, then dissolve and digest stones with strong acids and other compounds that break minerals. In other words, lichen communities weather stones that they colonize through both mechanical and chemical processes. Lichens, like viruses, exist somewhere between the living and the non-living and have the potential to interfere with the living. Through weathering, the minerals inside the stone become a part of the living cycle. For this reason, every person can be said to be partially lichen, due to minerals they take into their body from nature or through water and food.

For me, lichens are quite interesting composite organisms because of their tolerance and durability. Astrobiology attaches great importance to the structure and functioning of lichens for their durability in researching the future of life in the universe. With their metabolic capacity and radiation tolerance, fungi and lichens have the power to protect astronauts in the space

we are trying to explore, and to ensure the continuation of humanity in the long term.<sup>1</sup>

After the nuclear explosion in Chernobyl, there emerged fungi communities and lichens growing uncontrollably in the region. These communities have been using radiation as an energy source for years, cleaning up nuclear waste to a certain extent. *Cryptococcus neoformans*, which is an invasive fungus species and is especially common in bird turd, causes a fatal lung disease called *Cryptococcosis* (“crypto” in abbreviation) in humans when inhaled. However, *Cryptococcus neoformans* also contains high levels of melanin, because of which it is used in technologies developed to protect astronauts from radiation in space by absorbing radiation and converting it into chemical energy.

The power of fungal and lichen communities to continue to exist in other worlds, under different conditions, and in other forms interests me not only as a metaphor but as a method and an alternative to imagine other possible ways of being. More in terms of “either/or” than “likewise.”

My approach to these communities is more about noticing them. We,<sup>2</sup> partially made up of human cells, already have such potential because of our relationality with these non-human species, and our coexistence in the same body from time to time. How can we begin to realize these entanglements, potentialities “or” other dispersed ways of being that we have not yet noticed? How does this present us with other narratives about being human?

Just as we cannot think of a plant or a tree in the forest independently of the mycorrhizal networks that connect

1. Merlin Sheldrake, “Entangled Life: How Fungi Make Our Worlds, Change Our Minds & Shape Our Futures”, Random House, 2020.
2. Only a small part of the human body, which contains trillions of microorganisms, consists of human cells.

its roots to the soil and other networks in that soil to coexistence, and to other trees that appear separate from it, we cannot think of a body independent of other bodies and communities outside its supposed boundaries. In the pursuit of the continuity and sustainability of life, how can we recognize the potential of cooperation, coexistence, the possibilities of corporeality and being lichen, despite narratives where individualism, uniqueness and subjectivity consist the center? In this context, lichens propose an alternative narrative for resistance and survival against all odds.

While emphasizing resilience and durability, I never aim to underestimate vulnerability and seek ways to prevent it. I believe in the political possibilities of seeing fragility and vulnerability as a social phenomenon rather than a personal trait or attribute of subjectivity. It is indisputable that vulnerability is distributed unequally and we live under conditions that make it necessary to defend and protect some lives. However, we need to realize the power of continuing to exist by embracing vulnerability, not despite it, as an unchangeable condition of inter-subjectivity. Applauding the prevention of vulnerability or defining the vulnerability as a weakness for “those whose vulnerability is not deemed equally important” ignores this power. However, being vulnerable also brings with it a continuation of existence with vulnerability and resistance against the conditions that threaten it.

Yaşam’s amorphous body forms make this vulnerability and plurality noticeable. These multiple bodies, in-between certain boundaries, make an effort to reveal different narratives. These bodies, which are displayed in unusual forms with an unusual clarity for various others that they contain, invite us to rethink not only about human life but also many concepts such as agency, coexistence, compassion, and responsibility. As



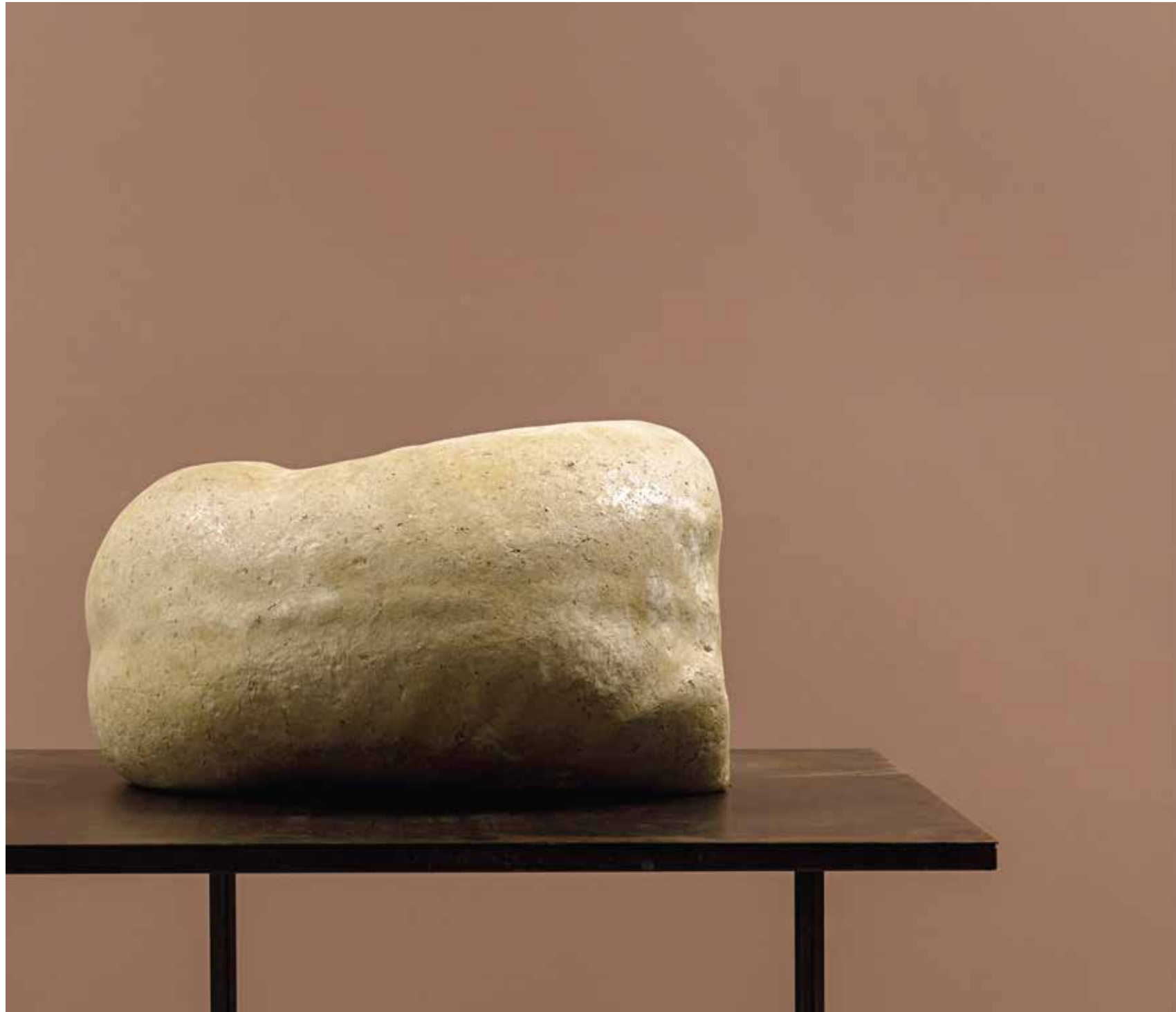
the body forms in the exhibition surrender or fidget, they transform, become plural, gain new possibilities.

These bodies that are fragile, resilient, submissive, accommodating, embracing, hosting, productive, and destructive at the same time exist far beyond the usual limits and narratives. They are able to turn into a cell as we get closer, and into a universe as we get farther away. Thus, they enable us to think of other ways of living, different possibilities of life from the micro to the macro level. The phenomenon that we call nature is based on such balance of cooperation, solidarity, resistance, and survival effort for centuries. Lichens, which can transform destructive radiation into energy that sustains life, also constitute the community we categorize as human. We share the same durability as well as the power of vulnerability. That power constitutes us.

It is not me or you. It is not either me or you.

It is us, already.

- » **Deniz Kırkali** is a curator and writer based in Istanbul and London. She has co-founded Garp Sessions, a summer residency programme in Babakale, Turkey. She has started a transnational curatorial and research collective called topsoil with Sofia Villena Araya and Amelie Wedel in 2017. Her writings have been published in international magazines and platforms such as Cogito, Flash Art, this is tomorrow, AQNB, Orta Format and Art Unlimited. She is currently doing her PhD in Curatorial Knowledge at Goldsmiths, University of London where she has completed her MA in Contemporary Art Theory.











Yaşam Şaşmazer was born in Istanbul in 1980. She lives and works in Istanbul. Graduated from Sculpture Department of Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University in 2003, she then completed her master degree at the same university in 2006. Her solo exhibitions include “Dark Matter”, Kunstverein Ingolstadt, Ingolstadt, Germany, 2017; “Metanoia”, Halsingsland Museum, Hudiksvall, Sweden, 2017; “Metanoia”, Torrance Art Museum, Los Angeles, USA, 2016; “Metanoia”, Berlinartprojects, Berlin, Germany, 2015; “Metanoia”, Tophane-i Amire Culture and Art Center, Istanbul, Turkey, 2014; “Doppelgänger”, Künstlerhaus Marktobendorf, Germany, 2012; “Illuminated Darkness”, Aubin Gallery, London, United Kingdom, 2011; “Strangely Familiar”, Çağla Cabaoğlu Gallery, Istanbul, Turkey, 2009.

Selected group exhibitions she participated in are “Unlock”, Zilberman Istanbul, Turkey, 2020; “At the End of the Day”, Odunpazarı Modern Museum, Eskişehir, Turkey, 2020; “Unbreakable: Women In Glass”, Fondazione Berengo, Venice, Italy, 2020; “The Child Within Me (A Selection from the Ömer Koç Collection)”, The Abdulmecid Efendi Mansion, Istanbul, Turkey, 2019; “The Clandestine Life of Objects”, Evliyagil Dolapdere, Istanbul, Turkey, 2019; “Sorrowful and Restless (A selection of the Papko Art Collection)”, Istanbul, Turkey, 2018; “Home is Where The He(art) Is”, Galerie Paris-Beijing, Paris, France, 2018; “Pulsanti Aperietur”, The Abdulmecid Efendi Mansion, Istanbul, Turkey, 2017; Cappadox Interdisciplinary Culture Festival, Nevşehir, Turkey, 2017; “Replacement”, Rampa Istanbul, Istanbul, Turkey, 2016; “Glasstress Gotika” (collateral event of the 56th Biennale Arte), Venice, Italy, 2015; “Autonomous and Beautiful”, Akbank Sanat, Istanbul, Turkey, 2014; “It’s not my story”, Gdańska Galeria Miejska, Gdansk, Poland, 2014; “Encounters: Contemporary art from Turkey in Korea”, ARA Art Square, Seoul, South Korea, 2012; “Heroes & Villains”, Lawrie Shabibi Gallery, Dubai, UAE, 2011; “Confessions of Dangerous Minds”, Saatchi Gallery, London, United Kingdom, 2011.

Her works are in private and institutional collections in Europe, North America, Middle East, Asia and in Turkey, including Koç Holding, Elgiz Museum and Papko Collections.

#### Publications

“Metanoia”, Kerber Verlag, 2014

“Doppelgänger”, Kerber Verlag, 2014

“Yaşam Şaşmazer 2006-2011”, Kerber Verlag, 2013

“Rising: Young artists to keep an eye on”, by: Olaf Salié, Daab Media, 2011

“Unleashed, Contemporary Art from Turkey”, Thames & Hudson, 2010

## List of works



**either/or VI, 2021**  
hand patinated mulberry  
paper, moss, plant fibers, resin  
68 x 42 x 39 cm



**either/or III, 2021**  
hand patinated paper,  
stone, resin  
104 x 69 x 31 cm



**either/or II, 2020**  
hand patinated paper,  
fungus, hardened gypsum  
38 x 68 x 38,5 cm



**either/or IV, 2020-2021**  
hand patinated paper, fungus,  
tree branches, resin  
172 x 60 x 132 cm



**either/or VII, 2021**  
hand patinated paper, resin  
42 x 40 x 34,5 cm



**either/or V, 2021**  
Paper mache pulp, clay,  
soil, stones, plant fibers,  
hardened gypsum  
55 x 32 x 30,5 cm



**seed iii, 2021**  
watercolor on paper  
39 x 40 x 4 cm  
(framed)



**seed viii, 2021**  
watercolor on paper  
32 x 30,5 x 4 cm  
(framed)



**seed x, 2021**  
watercolor on paper  
30 x 25 x 4 cm  
(framed)



**seed i, 2021**  
watercolor on paper  
40,5 x 47 x 4 cm  
(framed)



**seed ii, 2021**  
watercolor on paper  
47,5 x 40 x 4 cm  
(framed)



**seed ix, 2021**  
watercolor on paper  
47,5 x 45,5 x 4 cm  
(framed)



**seed iv, 2021**  
watercolor on paper  
60,5 x 45,5 x 4 cm  
(framed)



**seed xiii, 2021**  
watercolor on paper  
43,5 x 40 x 4 cm  
(framed)



**seed v, 2021**  
watercolor on paper  
52,5 x 40,5 x 4 cm  
(framed)



**seed xii, 2021**  
watercolor on paper  
32 x 30,5 x 4 cm  
(framed)



**seed ivx, 2021**  
watercolor on paper  
66,5 x 48,5 x 4 cm  
(framed)



**seed xi, 2021**  
watercolor on paper  
48,5 x 48,5 x 4 cm  
(framed)



**seed vii, 2021**  
watercolor on paper  
57,5 x 45,5 x 4 cm  
(framed)



**seed vi, 2021**  
watercolor on paper  
53 x 45,5 x 4 cm  
(framed)

either/or

yaşam şaşmazer

**Texts**

Deniz Kırkalı  
Naz Kocadere  
Sibel Yardımcı

**Design**

Ayşe Bozkurt

**Translation**

Zeynep Nur Ayanoğlu

**Proofreading**

Duygu Demir  
Nilüfer Şaşmazer

**Photography**

Kayhan Kaygusuz (exhibition photos)  
Yusuf Sevinçli (studio photos)

**Printing and binding**

MAS Matbaacılık San. ve Tic. AŞ  
Hamidiye Mah. Soğuksu Cad.  
No: 3 Kağıthane, 34408  
İstanbul, Türkiye  
T: +90 212 294 10 00  
book@masmat.com.tr  
Certificate no: 44686

**Thanks**

Károly Aliotti  
Selen Ansen  
Sami Baruh  
Ahmet Doğu İpek  
Yusuf Sevinçli  
Ufuk Şahin  
Nilüfer Şaşmazer  
Moiz Zilberman

This catalogue is published in conjunction  
with Yaşam Şaşmazer's solo exhibition  
either/or in Zilberman Gallery, Istanbul  
between 02.04.-30.06.2021

400 copies

This catalogue is published by Zilberman Gallery.  
All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced,  
translated, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted  
in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical,  
photocopying or recording or otherwise, without the  
prior written permission of Zilberman Gallery.

© 2021, Zilberman

ISBN: 978-625-00-9889-9

**ZILBERMAN**  
İSTANBUL BERLİN



