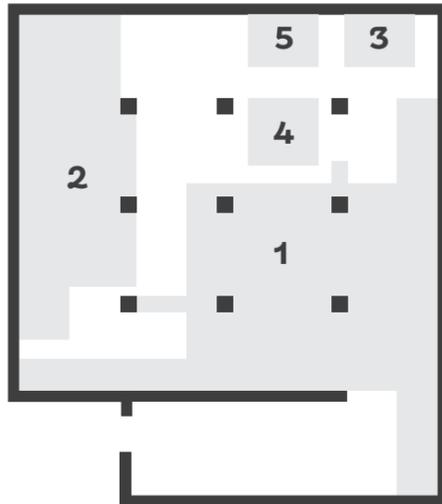


endişeli kalbim  
my anxious heart

## Balca Ergener

2 May - 13 July 2024



1

*My Anxious Heart*, 2023-2024

Site-specific installation, photographic collage series  
11 archival pigment prints on 308 gr Hahnemühle Photo Rag paper, each 70x50 cm (framed)  
Digital inkjet prints applied on the wall, 89x210 cm and 152,5x89 cm

*My Anxious Heart* includes collages Balca Ergener produced by bringing together fragments of photographs she took in Istanbul and Zurich, where she lives. The series is intended to become a tactile exploration of what she sees in public space and where she sets foot on through photography. In this way she desires to investigate the relationships between her memory, her feelings of rootedness/uprootedness and memories that have accumulated in her surroundings. Concrete stones that have been displaced because of urban transformation in Istanbul are dispersed around the exhibition, along with other, older stones. Large format photographs of a rock reminding the geological formation of the city, and the inside of a decorative pool at Gezi Park are applied on the wall in the background. Pieces of a broken sidewalk in Zurich are placed on a frozen lake nearby; in the only collage made of photographs taken outside the two cities, yellow algae have taken years to grow on rocks by Lake Geneva.

2

*Rhythm of Transience, Rhythm of Happiness*, 2014

Photo segment prints on 200 gr Hahnemühle Mat Fibre paper, 4 100x100 cm  
Digital inkjet print applied on the wall, 100x100 cm  
Screen printed archival pigment print on Hahnemühle 310 gr German Etching paper, 3 100x67 cm  
6 boxes with text, each 25x25 cm

Texts: Meltem Ahıska  
Screenprinting: Esther Schena

*Rhythm of Transience, Rhythm of Happiness*, 2014 is an artist book Balca Ergener produced in collaboration with Meltem Ahıska upon an invitation from Selda Asal for the exhibition "Stay with me" at Depo. The photographs in the exhibition describe the violent impact on the city's inhabitants of the continuous demolition and construction that preceded and followed the year 2013 and what became visible and possible during the Gezi Protests -when the process of transformation came to a halt- and the city's inhabitants dreamed of a better life among the ruins and the trees that remained. Meltem Ahıska's text is inspired by Walter Benjamin's conception of the relationship between happiness and transience, progress, destruction and ruins.

3

*Wild Olive Game*, 2019

Digital inkjet prints applied on the wall, 100x56.5 cm and 56.5x56.5 cm  
Sound 23'18''

Players / authors: Asena Günel, Ayşe Boren, Balca Ergener, Banu Karaca, Dilek Winchester, Eda Gecikmez, Eda Sezgin, Evrim Kavcar, Ferhan Özenen, Gülcan Deniz, Gülin Ekinci, İmre Tezel, Melek Aksoy, Meltem Ahıska, Nalan Özsoy, Nalan Yırtmaç, Özden Demir, Sibel Horada, Tilbe Saran, Zeynep Ekmekçi  
Voice: Tilbe Saran  
Photographs: Merve Elveren

*Wild Olive* [*Elaeagnus angustifolia*] is a deciduous tree with silver-green leaves that produces small, but abundant pale yellow flowers in early summer. According to some sources going back to the 12th century, the strong smell of these flowers have the power to increase women's libidos. *Wild Olive Game* is a work wishing to spread this speculative information to facilitate provocative encounters between women and Wild Olive trees-especially those in Istanbul. It does not wish to emphasize that this smell affects only one gender, but to subvert the myths about the uncontrollable sexuality of women. It is based on the idea that the scent of the flowers, collectivity and writing with random words can possibly enable us to talk about our desires and other things evading dominant patriarchal formulations we fall back into involuntarily. In May 2019, twenty women played the game under the Wild Olive tree in the garden of the Women's Library and Archive in Istanbul, upon an invitation from K.E.K.sevenler, an independent initiative working to promote the library. The photographs in the exhibition document this collective performance. In the audio recording, Tilbe Saran, who was among the players, reads the texts that were produced during the game.

4

*Forgetting Oneself*, 2020

Excerpts from the artist book with the same name and word cards

The laid-out pages of the book contain methods and inspirations for and examples of writing exercises. They aim to break habits in the use of language, to make it possible to forget oneself and thus escape from sameness and open towards the unknown. The methods include references to writers and artists who have explored creative ways of using language and/or criticized its standardization, from Walter Benjamin's game "Fantasy Sentences" (1927) to Oulipo member Raymond Queneau's book *Exercises in Style* (1958) and Fluxus artist Alison Knowles' work *House of Dust* (1968). The exhibition also includes word cards that viewers can take away to play their own games.

5

*How would you rate your weakness on a scale of 0-10?*, 2020

Cut-out text on layers of newspaper pages, 95x65 cm (framed)

A sentence that was the product of a writing exercise in Ergener's book *Forgetting Oneself* is incised on layered pages of the newspaper *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* published between 15 April and 15 May 2020, during the first months of the Covid-19 pandemic. It references pain scales used in medicine.

Thanks to

Merve Elveren, Dilek Winchester, Meltem Ahıska, Sibel Horada, Esther Schena, Banu Karaca, Tilbe Saran, all players in the *Wild Olive Game*, Orton Akıncı, Lamarts and Depo  
(Asena Günel, Aslı Çetinkaya, Kadir Çelik, Marina Papazyan, Mert Sarısu, Selahattin Çolak, Turan Tayar)

FFAI

## On My Anxious Heart

Meltem Ahiska

When I look at these works of art again and again, many things come to my mind. Perhaps this is what the artist wants, to let free a new life out of what is sensible, beyond the standardized patterns. But doing this not with individual willpower and authority, instead allowing a different life to emerge through associations, coincidences, and encounters. It is difficult to immediately grasp the difference between the two, because both involve an intention to transform the existing. If in the former there is the relentless desire to annihilate the existing, in the latter the existing is challenged so the life within what exists is enhanced. The latter attitude corresponds to “non-persuasive politics,” in Adam Phillips’s (2021) words, at the social level. It does not attempt to convince and transform the audience; instead, it invites the audience to act and play together, it offers a capacity of surprise (Winnicott, cited in Phillips, 2021) as an alternative to the need to be believed.

Gezi was also a call for acting together. It was a resistance to the urban transformation plans that were informed by power and economic interests. These plans promise a more developed, modern city by demolishing the old and building the new in its place. The old is destroyed and replaced by the new, the lives that have been knocked down by destruction seem irrelevant, what is deemed important is the normative ideal that will rise in place of the old. But when people discover the life that lingers in the destruction and resist the displacement/replacement, a new movement begins, a new time opens up. The images of *Rhythm of Transience*, *Rhythm of Happiness* (2014), shadow forth this opening. Not by documenting the moment but by revealing the formation within the moment and capturing the emerging. And by animating the memory of thinking.

There is a belief that the scent of the blossoms of the Wild Olive seduces and turns on women, which can be deemed dangerous. We can find some historical records of these “wild” and “unruly” women pictured in revolutions, demonstrations, court chambers, or within homes. These women are marked as disorderly by patriarchal history. But what happens when “unruly” women start playing a game using the existing words? The peace is disturbed and something different emerges.

Who would have foreseen that language would ride at such a full speed, travel into different times and spaces, and create another geography with the smell of Wild Olive blossoms? We were not expecting the memory, sensitivity, anger, and desire that emerged within the text of the *Wild Olive Game* (2019). A pleasurable surprise!

*Forgetting Oneself* (2020) brings a more conceptual perspective to the element of unpredictability in the artist’s work. But this attitude too avoids the authority position, and attempts to open up repetition, multiplication, and creation in different ways. Instead of making do with what exists, this worldview opts for montage. It is not simply a call for “let us play together and have fun”; instead, it challenges the danger of “normalcy” imposed on the world and encourages us to “become more able and willing to consider and discuss and create the kind of change we would like, the kind of change that we realize we need in order to get the lives we want” (Phillips, 2021).

*My Anxious Heart* (2023-2024) enacts the wish to find the traces of the artist’s own migration and longing within the ruined world. “The act of cognition is a form of collage” (Hiller, 2008: 85). Photographing the unintentional remains leads to unintentional monuments; photography approaches painting and sculpture. The blurring colors, textures, and forms provoke our imagination, and by elfishly winking at the abstractness of the statement, “another world is possible”, issue an invitation for creating another life in this world, and also for the wish to talk about it. The invitation is for an adventure at the crossroads of inside and outside of daydreams. This does not give an immediate relief to our anxious hearts but sharing the daydreams can relay anxiety onto other feelings, leading to a new condition.

“When it works, art shatters the viewer’s expectations so that new critical criteria become inevitable” (Hiller, 2008:124).

### References:

Hiller, Susan (2008) *The Provisional Texture of Reality: Selected Talks and Texts, 1977-2007*, ed. Alexandra Kokoli, JRP/Ringier, Zurich, and Les Presses du réel, Dijon.  
Phillips, Adam (2021) *On Wanting to Change*, e-book ed., Penguin. Kindle.



Detail from the series *My Anxious Heart*, 2023-2024