

Vahit Tuna has been exhibiting his recent works exclusively in the framework of solo exhibitions. This choice seems to allow him to create time and mental space to reflect upon his practice and to conceive his production as a set of ideas, transcending a mere juxtaposition of singular art pieces, and to develop motifs and figures to be stitched together. In that respect, his current exhibition at DEPO can be assumed to be a continuation of his pursuit of certain ideas that were initiated in his previous show "Exercise", held at Hafriyat in 2008.

The most striking piece of the current exhibition, I believe, is the bust located in the courtyard between the two buildings of DEPO. The visitor who heads towards the annex building and faces the bust can easily get the impression, also imposed by the surrounding architectural atmosphere, that s/he stands at the gate of a typical public school. Having a rough knowledge about how the sector of sculpture is being dominated by the demand for Atatürk busts, one attributes an automatic identification to the bust in the courtyard. Yet, when the visitor approaches the bust, s/he realises that it belongs not to Atatürk as expected, but to someone else. We find the name of Anthony Hopkins scripted on the surface of the pedestal. The facial features of the bust belong unmistakably to the famous actor. This is not a coincidental choice aiming to disrupt the senses, of course. Hopkins is a master of acting, switching smoothly from one identity to the other; and besides that, he has been occasionally named as a candidate to play the main role in the never ending saga about the prospect of a Hollywood film on Atatürk. The image of the moving flags on the windows of the annex building and the accompanying 20th Century Fox fanfare are supportive elements in constructing the trap set between Atatürk and Hopkins.

This piece addresses clearly the specificity of the history of the Turkish Republic and the ongoing polarisation of the political field. Tackling with the foundations of imposed modernism and interrupting the sacrality attributed to the icons mobilised along the call for full identification with the nation-state have been basic components of Tuna's practice from early years onwards. Desacralisation, bending and ironic re-productions of these nationalistic icons and exposures of their absurd uses, have been a shared interest within the contemporary art practice in Turkey and Vahit Tuna had an important contribution to this criticality. Yet, what we see in his exhibition "We were always spectators..." is the folding of

a reflection, in addition to the humorous character of singular pieces. Our experience of displacement in relation to our perception of the bust in the courtyard also has a technical dimension relating to visibility and senses. In his exhibition project, Tuna underlines the permeability, overlapping and divergences between our mind and senses. The exhibition also includes a caricature he drew for a cartoon magazine in his late teenager years (1987); the drawing shows a loafer guy with empty eye-sockets kicking his eyeballs on the street like a football. It gives us a hint about the momentous or periodic suspension of perception and introversion into constraints of the mind. Those moments also produce significations that deform what we receive from our senses. At this point, traces of ideological impositions in our minds surface and our behavioral patterns manipulate our perception. The photographic image entitled "Choose Your Neighbour Not Your House" (a Turkish idiom stressing the importance of the social over the architectural) has a similar agenda: the flag that is placed over the windows of the flat across the street transforms into a tiny object squeezed between the fingers of the male figure (the artist himself) sitting in the foreground.

How come the dominating visual regime conditions even our most spontaneous perceptions; how does it exploit our urge for resemblance so swiftly; why do we remain so deeply seated in our mental patterns and surrender to simple traps even if the perceptual fact stands in front of us? The second solo exhibition of Vahit Tuna gives us glimpses of the ways in which personal senses are hooked up with collective illusions.

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