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ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN IMAGES AND WORDS
AND THEIR RELATION TO BODY AND PERCEPTION

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ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN IMAGES AND WORDS
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A Master's Thesis

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ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN IMAGES AND WORDS
AND THEIR RELATION TO BODY AND PERCEPTION

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THE DEPARTMENT OF

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ANKARA

December 2012

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ABSTRACT

ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN IMAGES AND WORDS AND THEIR RELATION TO BODY AND PERCEPTION

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Prehistoric man created a mark and throughout the history this mark evolved and bifurcated into two: a word and an image. While images were cherished, words were set apart from images.

This thesis attempts to look at the relationship between images and words through seeking their connection to perception and body. It investigates how image-word dichotomy occurred and how this dichotomy obscured the connection between writing and body. The thesis also examines different approaches to overcome this phenomenon in the context of Modern Art.

By examining my artwork within this framework, it argues that it is possible to embody the inseparable relationship between images and words through reconnecting with the body's primordial existence.

Keywords: Painting, Image, Word, Writing, Image-Text, Body

ÖZET

İMGELER İLE KELİMELERİN İLİŞKİSİNE BEDEN VE ALGI ÇERÇEVESİNDEN BİR BAKIŞ

İşcan, Candan

Yüksek Lisans, Grafik Tasarım Bölümü

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Tarih öncesi çağlarda duvara işlenen im tarih sürecinde çatallandı. Bu çatallanma sonunda kelime ve imge oluştu. İmgeler el üstünde tutulurken, kelime yavaş yavaş imgeyle bağımlı kopardı.

Bu çalışma imgeler ve kelimeler arasındaki ilişkiyi, algı ve beden ile olan bağlantısı üzerinden araştırmaktadır. İmge ve kelime ayrılığının nasıl oluştuğunu, beden ile yazı yazma arasındaki bağlantıyı araştırmakta ve Modern Sanat'ın bu konuya yaklaşımlarını incelemektedir.

Bu çerçevede tez, yapmış olduğum sanat işi üzerinden, imge ve kelime arasındaki ayrılmaz ilişkinin bedenin temel varoluşuna tekrar bağlanarak somutlaştırılabileceğini tartışmaktadır.

AnahtarKelimeler: Resim, İmge, Kelime, Yazı, Beden

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

... My eyes follow the line on the paper, and from the moment I am caught up in their meaning, I lose sight of them. The paper, the letters on it, my eye and the body are there only as the minimal setting of some invisible operation. Expression fades before what is expressed, and this is why its mediating role may pass unnoticed (Merleau-Ponty as cited in Morley, 2003:13).

Words; letters that are aligned side by side are familiar to the eye and to the mind. When they meet the eye they are welcomed inside. They are absorbed from the skin, travel through the veins, the flesh and body. 'Invisible operation' of the body begins. Words bloom into beauty. Colors, lines, shapes, emotions and senses work altogether to be a part of this beauty. Something emerges and spreads through the body of the first men, the artist, you and me. It spreads so quickly and also so delicately, as if someone drips ink into a puddle and waits for the drop to evolve. And then it fades away to the vast unknown. You forgot the seed that bloomed but you remember the blossom.

How do the senses, the eye, the body take a word and change it into something else? What do words change into? Is it a dream, a hallucination, a picture? Is it an image? Or is it something that is becoming? Might it be the image and word flirting? How do I freeze that play and catch the moment? Should I open up my body and see what is in there? How do I let it out from my body and transfer it to a physical plane?

Images and words are mentally inseparable entities that had been visually set apart through out the history. This separation has its importance in philosophy, Modern Art and in Graphic Design as well. When images and words are on the scene, first thing comes to mind is print media, which is the work of Graphic Design. My work carries influences from both graphic design and modern art but I think it should be mostly considered within the context of modern art and thus in this thesis we will be focusing more on Modern Art. However, image and text dichotomy existed and is a widely challenged issue within the field of Graphic Design¹ especially in typography. I believe that looking at how graphic designers challenged the dichotomy would be beneficiary for the argument of this thesis. Therefore we will begin first looking at a specific approach in graphic design and then move on to Modern Art.

There are two important inventions that are revolutionary to Graphic Design. First one is the invention of the movable type by Gutenberg in the fifteenth-century and the other one is the digital technology and development of software that opens a new phase in

¹ Graphic Design is a forked major, which includes various minor fields such as typography, illustration, animation and so on. Before looking at how the separation of word and image was brought into existence and challenged, just looking at the major itself can tell us about the issue as well. Dichotomy exists in the major itself.

designer's struggle with the printed word. If we look at these revolutionary inventions and developments in the context of image and word relationship, it is possible to see that they are opposing to each other. On one hand we have Gutenberg's movable type², which is seen as an important milestone in history that fastens the process of image and word separation. On the other hand we have computer technology that facilitates easier design process and enable graphic designers to create new visual expressions.

After the computer technology and software were made available for personal use in the 1980's, graphic design has its own creative and technological revolution. This radical change in the technological era was as crucial as the invention of Gutenberg's movable type in the fifteenth-century (Meggs; Purvis, 2012). The typographic movement that was characterized with the works of Emigre, and mostly graduates of Cranbrook School of Art&Design, changed the way we approached to words and images. One of the pioneers of this era shaped by typographic experimentations was David Carson. The way he uses typography (words) opens up a new way of perceiving the world and conveying a message through typography. One sentence that Carson said became like a motto of the movement opposing the idea that in order to convey a message, typography should be as clear and legible as possible:

² We will see how Gutenberg's movable type fastens the process of image and word dichotomy in the next chapter.

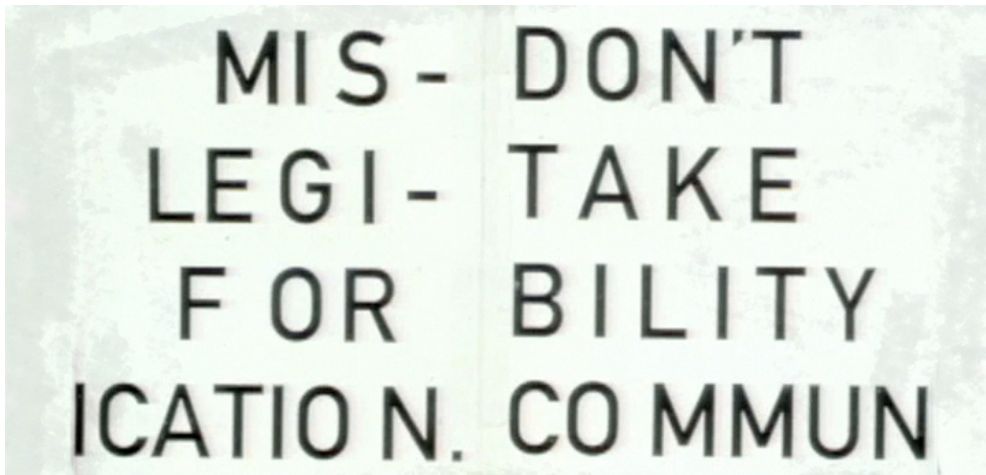


Figure 1. David Carson. *Don't Mistake Legibility for Communication*

Carson emphasizes expression and intuition in his designs, which were abandoned first with the invention of the movable type back in the fifteenth-century. He changes words from something to be read to something to be both read and looked at. Carson's usage of expressive typography is an important example of how graphic designers challenged the separation between images and words.

He describes his way of designing as being intuitive in the TED Talk: "David Carson on design+discovery". According to Carson (2003), intuition is not the only but one of the most important elements of design process. Although everybody has it, he states that especially schools tend to disregard it since it is not possible to quantify and teach it. (Carson, 2003). With Albert Einstein's beautiful words Carson emphasizes the importance of intuition in the design process: "The intellect has little to do on the road to discovery. There comes a leap in consciousness, call it intuition or what you will, the solution comes to you and you don't know how or why" (as quoted in Carson, 2003: 06'28").

Carson has been one of the most important figures in graphic design with his way of thinking and working. He is also one of the best examples that made an impact on the issue of image and word relationship. The way he changes the relationship between image and word provides a fresh perspective to the way we understand the world and communication as Merleau-Ponty did, which I will explain later in this chapter.



Figure 2. David Carson. Cover for the Yale University Art Gallery Program. 2010

I have been saying that words and images were set apart and this has been an issue for different fields of study. But how these two mentally inseparable entities were set apart? This question will be answered in the first chapter.

First chapter will be about the conceptual framework that I have been working through which includes historical and theoretical background. We will start by looking at the history of writing, which begins from the invention of writing and continues with how and when image and word dichotomy occurs. Then we will look at the different approaches to this issue in Modern Art from Cubism to Conceptual Art Movement. We will be using a categorization by Karen Shiff, which she used to categorize artworks from an exhibition named *Art=Text=Art: Works by Contemporary Artists*. Further in the first chapter, we will examine the image and word relationship from W.J.T Mitchell's perspective and continue by defining "perception" in Maurice Merleau-Ponty's terms. With the help of these two scholars, I will explain my approach to the image and word relationship and how I relate this relationship to perception, body and the Palaeolithic era.

The second chapter will consist of the overview of my work. I will start with the development process of the work. I believe that the way an artist works and the obstacles that she encounters have a huge impact on how the final work is embodied. Development process of my work shaped the way I think on the subject of my thesis. Therefore, I will explain my process as detailed as possible. Then, I will continue with different aspects of my work; formal decisions and usage of light that I believe carry my work to another level. At the end of this chapter, we will see how my work functions and what it proposes on the image and word relationship.

CHAPTER 2

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

2.1. Historical Background

2.1.1 History of Writing

Writing, in other words the visible language had its earliest origins in simple drawings and marks. Early human used pictures and marks as a communication tool before the actual letterforms were developed. Many scholars regard cave paintings and drawings as the earliest traces of writing. Besides the idea that these drawings were done by shamans in religious rituals and belonged to the world of spirits, some scholars believe that they are only used for communication so that they are the early traces of visual communication (Meggs, Purvis, 2012).

Prehistoric people left big amount of drawings, signs, scratches and marks on the walls of caves. Animals were depicted, in most of those drawings. However as Philip Meggs

states in his book, sometimes geometric shapes and lines, sometimes dots and sometimes even a perfect rectangular shape³ accompanied those animal drawings. According to Meggs, if we look from the perspective of visual communication, some of those drawings can be regarded as pictographs, ideographs and symbols that represent a concept or an idea (2012). Those pictographs, ideographs and symbols were the origins from which writing and also the pictorial art evolved from. On one hand those pictographs evolved into the basics of pictorial art and on the other hand they evolved into writing.



Figure 3. Philip Meggs. Found carved and sometimes painted on rocks in the western United States, these petroglyphic figures, animals, and signs are similar to those found all over the world.

³ It is impossible not to be bewildered by the mystery that how a Paleolithic man depicts a rectangular shape although he has not seen any shape like that in nature. If the man before history drew only for the sake of recording the history, how he could record it when there is no trace of it around him? (Herzog, 2010)

As Peter Watson states, it is believed that those strict lines and rectangular shapes were depicted in the state of intoxication. Intoxicated shaman actually saw the structure of the neurological system of the brain. (Watson, 2006)

Meggs states that prehistoric people had a tendency towards simplification. This ability of simplification caused writing to become the way it is today. Towards the end of Palaeolithic era, drawings were simplified into pictographs; hieroglyphs are the best examples of this simplification. Then, pictographs were simplified into minimum number of lines almost similar to the letters that we use today. (Meggs, Purvis, 2012).

After people set themselves apart from animals and started to live together, civilization began. They made tools, which help them to hunt, to farm, to make pots and other daily life objects and of course to write. They hunted animals as they did before, but they started to store those. They also stored the goods that they harvest and the daily objects that they produced. The habit of storing brought out the need of keeping track of the things that they possessed. Therefore, they started to record. First written tablets were records of these goods and originated from Mesopotamia. These tablets included the pictographs of the objects that Mesopotamians possessed and a basic numbering system in order to keep track of these objects. With the development of civilization and with the development of tools, writing systems also underwent an evolution.

Due to the change in writing tools, people started using wedge-shaped strokes in writing rather than using continuous lines, which was closer to drawing. This evolution also altered writing into cuneiform, which is a form of abstract sign writing (Meggs, Purvis 2012).

Early Name	Probable Meaning	Greek Name	Cretan pictographs	Phoenician	Early Greek	Classical Greek	Latin	Modern English
Āleph	Ox	Alpha						
Bēth	House	Bēta						
Gimel	Camel	Gamma						
Dāleth	Folding door	Delta						
Hē	Lattice window	Epsilon						
Wāw	Hook, nail							
Zayin	Weapon	Zeta						
Hēth	Fence, Barrier	Ĕta						
Tēth	A winding (?)	Thēta						
Yōd	Hand	lōta						
Kaph	Bent Hand	Kappa						
Lāmed	Ox-goad	Lambda						
Mēm	Water	Mu						
Nūn	Fish	Nu						
Sāmek	Prop (?)	Xei						
' Ayin	Eye	Ou						
Pē	Mouth	Pei						
Sādē	Fish-hook (?)							
Kōph	Eye of needle (?)	Koppa						
Rēsh	Head	Rho						
Shin, sin	Tooth	Sigma, san						
Taw	Mark	Tau						

Figure 4. Philip Meggs. *This diagram displays several evolutionary steps of Western alpha- bets. The controversial theory linking early Cretan pictographs to alphabets is based on similarities in their appearance.*

While the Sumerian's cuneiform was evolving graphically, writings ability to record information was also developing. From the first stage, pictographs represented objects, but with cuneiform signs became ideographs and began to represent abstract ideas.

The symbol for sun, for example, began to represent ideas such as "day" and "light." As early scribes developed their written language to function in the same way as their speech, the need to represent spoken sounds not easily depicted arose. Picture symbols began to represent the sounds of the objects depicted instead of the objects themselves. Cuneiform became rebus writing, which is pictures and/or pictographs representing words and syllables with the same or similar sound as the object depicted. Pictures were used as phonograms, or graphic symbols for sounds. The highest development of cuneiform was its use of abstract signs to represent syllables, which are sounds made by combining more elementary sounds (Meggs, Purvis 2012: 9-11)

After Mesopotamia fell to the Persians, writing passed forward to Egypt and Phoenicians. Egyptians adopted pictographs and developed them into hieroglyphs (Meggs, Purvis 2012). Hieroglyphs preserved both characteristics of a word and an image. Meaning that is depicted by a hieroglyph is related to what it represents. Relationship between the visual sign and the meaning was not arbitrary as it is today. Egyptians used this complex writing system created by pictograms for a long time period as verbal communication tools.

Although the inventors of the alphabet are unknown, Canaanites, Hebrews and Phoenicians are believed to be the source. Both Canaanite proto-alphabet and Phoenician alphabet originated from the Western shore of the Mediterranean sea-Lebanon, parts of Syria and Israel. Therefore the actual source of the alphabet is unknown. However, since the earliest examples of the written alphabet were found in Phoenicia, they often called Phoenician alphabet (Meggs, Purvis 2012).

Phoenicians took hieroglyphs from Egyptians and cuneiform from Mesopotamians and with the influence of Canaanite proto-alphabet they created their own sign system, which was devoid of any pictorial meaning. With their writing system Phoenicians reduced the number of characters from thousands to only twenty-two, which were totally abstract characters. After Phoenicians, Ancient Greeks adopted this abstract writing system, which was developed into the Greek alphabet. The Greek alphabet mothered the Etruscan, Latin, and Cyrillic alphabets and, through these ancestors, became the foundation of most alphabet systems used throughout the world today (Meggs, Purvis 2012).

As we can see from the history of writing, the contribution of Phoenicians is not only crucial for the invention of the alphabet, but it is also an important milestone for the separation of image and word. Before them writing was entirely independent from speech and the spoken word. As Morley states, writing was actually a visual mode of communication. However, after Phoenicians, writing transformed into a tool to record the spoken word. It became “subordinate to oral language and increasingly non-pictorial” especially in the West (Morley, 2003:13).

Developments in Renaissance period is as crucial as the invention of the alphabet in terms of image and text relationship. Before moving on examining the developments in writing in Renaissance period, it should be noted that illuminated manuscripts are also crucial in terms of image and text relationship. They are the first surfaces that images and words appear together. They are the early examples of book design. However, since

this thesis is an attempt to examine image and text relationship through its relation to body and perception , I will not get into the details of illuminated manuscripts.

The invention of the printing press and the movable type had an huge impact on the development of writing.

Print technology brought major changes to publishing and knowledge production in Renaissance Europe, including standardized letterforms, new writing styles and page designs, and a broad distribution of reproduced texts. The humanistic sensibility that characterized the Renaissance was intimately connected to the revival of classical learning and art. Print promoted this revival and simulated inquiry through the diffusion of texts and images. As letterpress technology spread throughout Europe, it transformed design and production both conceptually and graphically (Drucker, McVarish 2012).

In the first fifty years after the printing press was invented, illuminated manuscripts and medieval letterforms were reproduced. Gutenberg's Bible is considered the first printed book with movable type and it was reproduced faithful to the medieval illuminated manuscripts. "Letterforms also betray their debt to manuscript models" (Drucker, McVarish, 2012). It was still possible see the traces of human hand.

According to Drucker, printing spread from Germany to all around Europe. Every country built upon the Gutenberg's movable type press and developed it in their own ways. However, the major breakthrough came from Italy with Aldus Manutius. His Aldine Press produced type designs that took advantage of the physical characteristics of the metal. Punched that they cut were no longer resembled to manuscripts. Type became smaller, cleaner, narrower and more elegant. Traces of the human hand in prints started to disappear, and written text standardized and became more structured (Drucker, McVarish, 2012).

In the seventeenth century, type design became specialized skill. Print houses realized the benefits of possessing certain type designs. Type styles created their own fashion. Until nearly the end of seventeenth century Old Style type faces prevailed. Around the eighteenth century, styles began to change. Transitional style faces that are more modern, had higher contrast between thick and thin strokes became prevailed. By the end of eighteenth century, French and Italian designers designed “neoclassical faces with highly constructed letterforms, hairline thin strokes, and unbracketed serifs” (Drucker, McVarish, 2012).

“Modern types emphasized intellectual ideals in forms that marked their distance from the physical act of handwriting. Body and mind were distinguished, trace of the hand was banished, and rationality prevailed over gestures and feelings” (Drucker, McVarish, 2012).

Invention of printing press and movable type and following developments in type design in eighteenth century exaggerated the “trajectory” that Phoenicians started and writing became a uniform, colorless system of codes. Before the invention of the printing press and the movable type, writing and image making shared the common roots. However, after the invention of printing and type design not only the writing system lost its color and the word separated itself from the image, but also connection of writing to the bodily gesture was also “severed” (Morley, 2003).

Although I agree to the idea that connection between writing and body is damaged with the separation of words and images, I do not agree that it is “severed”. Severed means totally separated; head can be severed after a horrible car accident. However writing and body was never totally separated. Handwriting still has its connection to the bodily

gesture. It is obvious that, with the technological developments handwriting left its place to other writing tools such as typewriters and keyboards but it is an another argument. Therefore, I believe that the connection between the two was not “severed” but damaged or obscured.

The developments in writing shaped communication as it is today and in a way communication determines the way we interact with the world. Therefore, it would not be a false argument to say that development of writing also shaped the way we interact with the world. Being sensitive to the world around them, artist were highly interested in this subject. The following section examines artists’ approach to this subject from various perspectives.

2.1.2 Approaches to Image-Text relations in Art

Image and text relationship has been one of the most important issues for a lot of artists during the twentieth century from Cubism, Futurism, Dada and Surrealism to the Conceptual Art movement of the 1960’s and 1970’s and to the Picture Generation during 1970’s and 1980’s, which was the era of the “pictorial turn” in W.J.T Mitchell’s terms. Although using words inside the frame was banned by modernist artists, it is breached by avant-garde artists over and over again. Different groups break the rules in different ways and use words for different reasons with different effects in their works. In order to determine an appropriate approach for my work and cultivate the theoretical background for my thesis it is crucial to examine the issue of image text relations and look in detail at artworks that are related to this subject.

2.1.2.1 Cubism and Collage

Georges Braque was first to introduce cut and paste pieces of text from newspapers, magazines, advertisements, bottle labels and even cigarette boxes on to canvas in 1911. Pablo Picasso followed this new technique straight away. Led by Braque and Picasso, after a short time period, Cubist compositions began to get filled with pieces of text from media and that are sometimes stencilled or rendered with freehand.

In his article David Lomas emphasizes the importance of collage and considers it as a fundamental technical innovation. He says that collage passes the territories of visual and verbal but also preserves each. Now, putting words into the picture frame is as easy as putting images into it. According to Lomas (2010), this situation not only contributes to the issue of image word relationship. This allows writers and poets to get in to the territories of visual art, "...while artists are freer to manipulate textual fragments". In his book Simon Morley says that words in Cubist compositions were not there in order to be read. They were not used to make textual reference but rather for their formal contribution to the composition. Using words for only their formal benefits, Cubists "highlight the visible nature of writing as a graphic mark" and they also criticize the textuality of words (Morley, 2003:39). Although Cubists said that they were using words for only their formal contribution to the composition, their choice of text invited viewers to interpret them "within the discursive frame of language" (Morley, 2003:41).



Figure 5. Pablo Picasso. *Glass and a Bottle of Suze*.1912. “A plethora of newspaper copy report the contemporary war in the Balkans, while a drink’s brand name takes centre stage.” (Morley, 2003:50)

Starting with Picasso, most of the artists used texts that are related to the contemporary political issues in the time of war. They created new meanings from ready texts in form of a collage. They even created wordplays and puns. They dealt with meaning of words as well as using them for their formal characteristics. Therefore, with their attitude they opposed to their own idea criticizing the textuality of words. Besides emphasizing the visuality of written language, they actually used words for their textual reference.

Developments after the invention of Gutenberg’s movable type not only mechanized writing but also it created a mechanized reading process. Cubists, besides emphasizing the visuality of the written language, created a new way of reading with their collage

technique. We mentioned before how Cubists used words in their compositions. With the help of their technique and the choice of text, they were able to invite viewer to interpret the composition. Viewer could look at the canvas, and read the texts that are placed on different parts of the canvas. They did not have to read them in a linear way. They could start reading wherever they wanted to. They could gather scattered meanings from canvas and create their own meaning. That way reading became an active and an expressive process on the contrary to the mechanized reading produced by printing.

With the approach of Cubists the division between verbal and visual and also writing and painting (image making) is narrowed. In the following period painters and writers, especially poets, started to work together and they even started to get into each other's territories. Painters borrowed the medium of the poets and started using words more frequently. Poets started to care more about the formal and structural value of the written text. They started to write in different techniques that depend on visual hierarchy and the use of space. Filippo Tommaso Marinetti's concrete poems and Guillaume Apollinaire's calligrammes are the examples of this new technique. According to Morley, modern literature was also influenced by Cubists' approach that it is possible to see the attention to formal structures in modern writers (2003). Also the cut-up technique that is introduced by the beat writers in 1950's can be traced back to Cubists.

2.2.1.2 Futurism: Words in Freedom

Futurists followed the Cubists' approach. While Braque and Picasso emphasize and reintroduce the graphical and formal value of the alphabet, Jeremy Adler says that

Filippo Tommaso Marinetti and his followers “developed its analytic potential” (Lomas, et al., 2010:191). Led by Marinetti, futurist poets did a revolutionary change in poetic style, which is called “Futurist Linguistic Revolution”. According to Morley, this revolution was not only a reform of poetic style but also a criticism of the hierarchical structure of the society.

Marinetti argued that: “The open, rhythmic sensory experience was suppressed by the strict spacing and separation of intelligible world created by the hold of the alphabetic word over consciousness” (Morley, 2003:47). As it is mentioned before, invention of the alphabet obscured the connection between writing: the visual language and body. While the handwriting was still linked to the bodily gesture, development of the print technology damaged it and pushed language towards the discursive realm permanently. Morley explains this situation metaphorically in these beautiful words: “Ordered ranks of letters, dutifully organized into words and sentences, were like soldiers on parade, marshalled through spacing, interval and linear structure to defend society against the destabilizing forces of human emotion and imagination” (2003:48).

Purpose of the Futurist approach was to break this structure and liberate language. Their task was to give language a new artistic form, transform it back to its primal mode and make it again the medium of the sensory world. With the expressive, self-illustrative and onomatopoeic usage of words, they reimagined words as material instances aimed to reconnect the language to where it belongs, to body.



Figure 6. Filippo Tommaso Marinetti. *Une assemblée tumultueuse. Sensibilité numérique* (*A Tumultuous Assembly. Numerical Sensibility*). 1919

Words were no longer soldiers that organized in a linear structure, but they were at liberty to rove freely across the canvas for the sake of great emotional impact (Morley 2003). Here, it is important to again state that, language and body was not separated. Being an invisible operation of the body as Merleau-Ponty states, language has always been preserved within the body and cannot be separated from it. This connection can only be suppressed or pushed deeper in to the body. However, it will always stay there and wait until it finds a way to come out again.

Soon after, Futurist painters adopted the theory of words-in-freedom. Adopting the concept of Marinetti and using the collage technique that is introduced by Cubists, Futurist painters produced dynamic works confronting different verbal and visual elements, words and images. They were far more inventive in the means of typography. Besides using cut up texts from printed media they often used words that are “conjured up from imagination” (Morley, 2003:50).



Figure 7 Carlo Carra. *Interventionist Demonstration*. 1914.
Tempera and collage on cardboard. 38.5x30 cm

The influence of Marinetti's ideas and Futurist Painters' interactions between images and words, found its way throughout the entire avant-garde. After the Futurist painters started to use words from their imagination, and after the works of Dada, Surrealists continued this tradition and took it to a deeper level.

2.2.1.3 Dada and Surrealism

When the War reaches its peak brutality, the world becomes more materialistic and society becomes bloodthirsty and devoid of moral purpose. For Dadaists the nature of language, words which are arbitrarily fixed to a meaning were the epitomes of this culture. Words were worn out, second handed and decadent entities for Dadaist artists (Morley 2003). What they did with their movement was to deconstruct this worn out language and create their own authentic words. Hugo Ball, when he was declares the Dadaist Manifesto in Zurich in 1916, says:

It's a question of connections, and of loosening them up a bit to start with. I don't want words that other people have invented. All the words are other people's inventions. I want my own stuff, my own rhythm, and vowels and consonants too, matching the rhythm and all my own. If this pulsation is seven yards long, I want words for it that are seven yards long (Lebel, 1996:219)

For Dadaists, words belong to media and were loaded with stereotypes and clichés of everyday life. With their deconstruction, words become meaningless material entities. The important thing was the rhyme, rhythm and senseless rhetoric created by words rather than their meaning and expression (Morley, 2003).

After Cubism and Futurism emphasized the material and formal side of words, Dada was willing to take this to a further level that culminated in the realm of non-sense. Hugo Ball said, “We have developed the plasticity of the word to a point which can hardly be surpassed” (Ball, 1996). Words were liberated from any meaning, they were liberated from any obligation to make sense, and they now belonged to the era of the absurd.

André Breton, who fathered Surrealism, was involved in Dadaist activities. By the time of Dada he was experimenting with automatic writing. Dada influenced him yet he did not plunge in to the realm of nonsense. Andre Breton was highly influenced by Sigmund Freud’s work on psychoanalysis. Led by him, Surrealists’ aim was to speak from the unconscious and carry out the real revolution: “revolution of the mind” (Morley, 2003).

As Morley indicates, Surrealism was focused more on the verbal language than its material value as visual mark. They did not use innovative typographic applications in their work as Futurist Painters did or did not use the ‘plasticity of words’ like Dadaists did. For Breton, words in paintings should only be there for the sake of their meaning and not for their visual contribution. By this idea, surrealist works differentiated themselves from the previous art movements. Their work became more of a research on verbal language and its relation to world and unconscious mind.

Especially in René Magritte’s paintings it is possible to see the research on verbal language unlike other Surrealist artists. David Lomas states his difference as: “More systematically than any other Surrealist Artist, Magritte probes the relation of words to

images, and to the things they purport to represent” (Lomas, et al., 2010). With his work, Magritte somehow teases with viewer’s brain aiming to emphasize the arbitrariness of the linguistic sign and evoke “a quasi-philosophical reflection on the nature of language and representation” (Lomas, et al. 2010). Different scholars state this characteristic of Magritte’s work several times. Just like Lomas, Morley also finds Magritte’s work close and parallel to the philosophy of language and representation, especially the contemporaneous philosophy of Ludwig Wittgenstein; he says: “Magritte’s work actually amounts to a rich store of consciousness of language’s failure to mirror reality...” (Morley, 2003:86). Wittgenstein argues that problems of philosophy is actually the problems of language. Parallel to Wittgenstein, Magritte emphasizes the arbitrary relationship between words and the objects that they represent. He criticizes the language of failing to represent reality.

Besides being parallel to philosophy Magritte also is considered to be a precursor of Conceptual Art (Lomas, et al. 2010). We will remember Magritte, later in this chapter when we talk about 1960’s Conceptual Art movement.

While on one hand surrealists were studying the meaning of words and their relation to world and mind, on the other hand artists like Henri Michaux and André Masson were still interested in the physical aspect of writing (Morley, 2003).

Masson and Michaux approach writing from the perspective of Surrealist automatism. Through the traces and marks that are produced by their bodily gestures, they searched the link between their “psychic interior world” and the “material outer” (Morley,

2003:91). While in that period, hand written scripts and typed text were contrasted and hand writing was “abhorred” by editors of *L’Esprit Nouveau*, with the influence of Eastern culture and the practice of calligraphy, Michaux and Masson placed bodily gesture at the centre of their work. According to Lomas (2010), Michaux’s “calligraphic writings, rooted in a phenomenology of gesture, reference Eastern pictographic scripts. Poised at the boundary of verbal and graphic forms of representation...”

Especially in Henri Michaux’s work: “*Alphabet*”(fig.9), influence of Eastern calligraphy is highly visible.

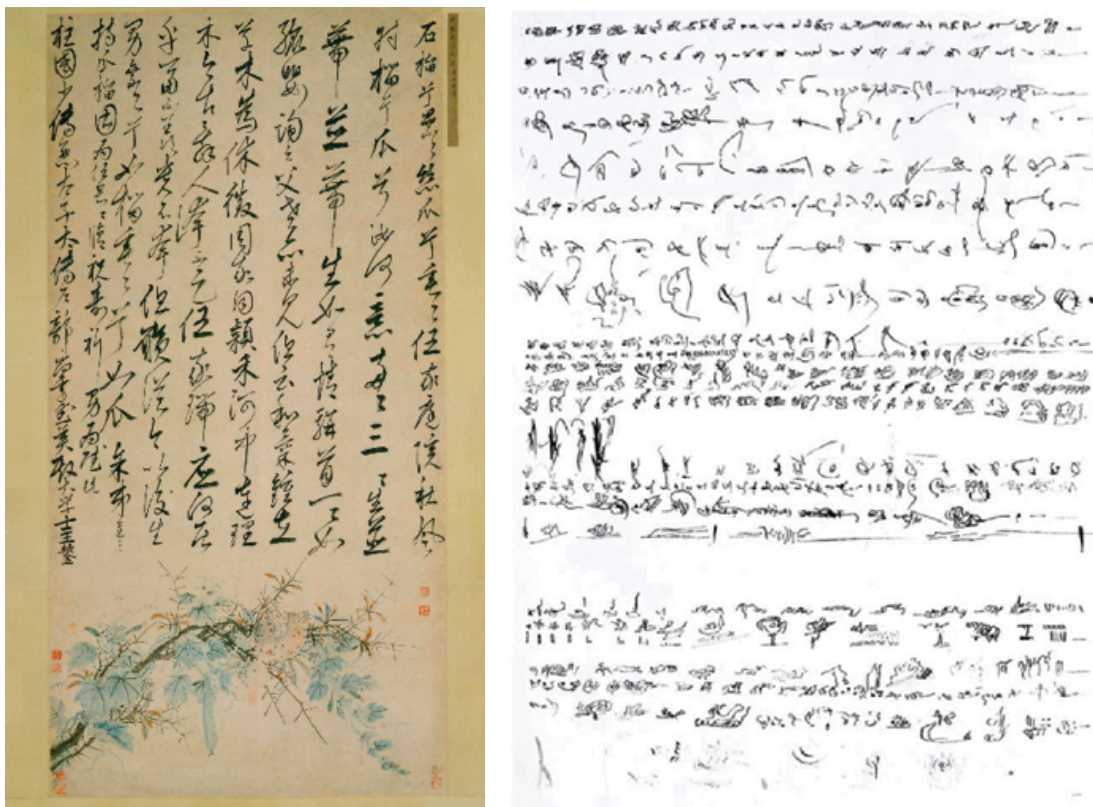


Figure 8 (on the left). Shen Zhou (painter), Wang Ao (poet). *Ode to Pomegranate and Melon Vine*. c.1506/1509 (on the right) Henri Michaux. *Alphabet*. 1925

Michaux aimed to reach the pre-linguistic state of writing, which speaks directly from body and which is free from history, culture and society. With his practice of pseudo-

writing and non-verbal marks, writing became “a non-discursive medium of emotions” (Morley, 2003:90). His practice can also be considered as the early traces of asemic writing.

Today both writers and artists practice asemic writing and they often refer to Michaux. Asemic writing is considered both as writing and also drawing. Tim Gaze, the editor of Internet magazine called Asemic Magazine, is the one who underlines the term: “Asemic Writing” nowadays.

In an interview with Michael Jacobson⁴, Tim Gaze defines asemic writing as a practice that is in the form of writing but cannot be read. It cannot be read but it does not mean that it is meaningless. On the contrary, it communicates us on a deeper level just like writing does. Gaze (2008) believes that human beings do not think in words but think on a deeper level:

There's a deeper level, which only condenses out into words as the final stage. This is my belief. If this is true, then we need something other than words, to illustrate our true thoughts. Some of the asemic writing feels true to me, in ways that words cannot achieve. Language is a tribal influence on humans. If we can find ways to surpass individual languages, humans will feel more included in a unified whole. Sometimes, I entertain the idea that non-verbal writing can stimulate people to develop telepathy.

Similar to Gaze, Tom Venning (2011) describes asemic writing as created by letters that are indiscernible and primal, which has no semantic content or verbal meaning. However, since their structure resembles a document or a coded text, it “hints at

⁴ Micheal Jacobson is a writer and artist who also practices asemic writing. He curates a web gallery called The New Post-Literate: A Gallery of Asemic Writing where he collects works that are considered as asemic writing.

meaning”. This meaning can only be understood “through aesthetic intuition”, “through gut feeling” (Venning, 2011).

This new term, asemic writing, actually is not a new practice, it is only given a name later. We said before that Michaux’s work could be considered as the early traces of asemic writing. Actually, it can be traced back to the first found tablets, or even earlier, to the marks on the walls of caves. Gaze (2008) says that he sometimes imagines prehistoric human scribbling and making marks in the dust with their hand or with a stick, believing that they were the first ones to see and recognize asemic writing that have been manifested by nature since the time began (Gaze 2008).

Today, a lot of people practice asemic writing. As we mentioned before, some of those people are artists like Tom Venning, some of them are writers and poets and some of them both writers and artists like Tim Gaze and Micheal Jacobson. This practice can be considered as one of the most successful attempts to deconstruct the issue of image and word relationship since it does not only combine images and words in one form but it also gathers people who works with words and who works with images under the same roof.

Now we will look at other attempts to this issue after the time of War. It is possible to see the influence of the Surrealist approach among the Post-War artists.

2.2.1.4 Post War Artists

We will examine Post-war artists and their artworks by the help of an exhibition, which was held on September 2011 at the Joel and Lila Harnett Museum of Art, University of Richmond Museums in Virginia. The exhibition was titled *Art=Text=Art: Works by Contemporary Artists*. In an essay derived from one of her gallery talks, Karen Schiff (2011) makes a rough but expository categorization of the works that appear in this exhibition and question the image-word relation from different perspectives.⁵

Schiff has three categories. In the first one there are artworks that use legible words that are either drawn or painted on canvas. In these works, the visual power of drawings or paintings and meaning of the words are both so intense that they made the viewers mind toggle between looking and reading. When you look at them, your mind switches to reading from looking and vice versa at a dizzying rate (Schiff, 2011). Ed Ruscha's paintings and Mel Bochner's "Thesaurus Paintings" series are the ones that fit in this category.

Ed Ruscha's recent paintings exemplify how a work of art engages the viewer in two distinct modes of information gathering: reading and looking. According to Simon Morley, Ruscha's paintings work on two different levels. On one hand, viewer is allowed to interpret and is mentally and sensually free while visually "scanning" the

⁵ She does not categorize artists but categorizes the artworks. Some of these names appear below in the *Art=Text=Art Exhibition* and some of them have been included by me where I thought their artwork belonged to the appropriate category and it is important to examine their work in detail in order to understand their the way of dealing with the issue.

image. On the other hand, viewer is in a "...predetermined route constructed from a horizontal row of letters to be deciphered from left to right and top to bottom" (Morley, 2003:9). Morley says that these two activities happens in two different parts of the brain and by using images and words on the same plane, Ruscha has caused a "collision between two brains" (2003:9).

The artworks in the second group perform a kind of visual research and reveal the subject of their research in the artwork (Schiff, 2011). In this category, the majority of the works belong to the Conceptual Art movement in which art was more and more reoriented towards ideas. In some of these works, words that represent an idea become the artwork itself or they become the material of the work as in Lawrence Weiner, Sol Lewitt and Joseph Kosuth's work. As art reoriented towards ideas, artworks themselves are reoriented towards words, towards language (Dillon, 2002). For example, Weiner's book of *Statements* is only consisting of text: simple statements that describe the recipe for his artworks. He gives instructions that are needed in order to create the artwork. Or he describes the material or how it is done. And these statements themselves become the artwork itself. Although he is a language-based artist, he calls himself a sculptor, claiming language as his material.



Figure 9. Lawrence Weiner. *Drops of Blue Water Forced Over the Rim of a Pot Made of Clay*. 1986

Just as in Weiner's *Statements*, words become the material of the artwork in Kosuth's oeuvre. In addition, artwork itself becomes a critical theory on representation. Different from Weiner, Kosuth's works refer to the theoretical ground of the artwork, the meaning and the theory of the work is imminent (Dillon, 2002). One of the best-known work from Kosuth's oeuvre is "One and Three Chairs" is one of the best examples that illustrates the theoretical background, which the work depends. Is it an artwork or a theoretical text? Line gets very blurry here.



Figure 10. Joseph Kosuth. *One and Three Chairs*. 1965

In order to give another example of how theory become imminent in the artwork, we need to go back and remember Rene Magritte. It is mentioned before that his works become a research on language and representation; it is even said that his works are parallel to Ludwig Wittgensteins's philosophy. Although Magritte does not belong to the Conceptual Art movement like Weiner or Kosuth, his paintings in later 1920's in which he experimented on the subject of images/words are equivalent to what conceptual artists did. As mentioned before, what Magritte did in his paintings was experimenting with images and words in different ways, exploring differences or similarities that they have in their modes of representing the nature by questioning the verbal language. His paintings become a representation of representation theory, which led them to become

the examples given by many scholars in order to underlie the basics of semiotics. This special feature of his paintings made him distinct from other Surrealist painters from 1920's. His work, his way of thinking is much closer to the Conceptual Artist who moved visual arts towards philosophy and language (Dillon, 2002).

In the last category that Schiff (2011) introduced, there are works that include illegible and indiscernible writings that primarily function visually; and/or gestural marks that evoke writing but that is not read as language, inviting us to read them visually: “ These works, which carry a whiff of textuality, are reminders that writing is, after all, a visible system, yet it can also be invisible” (Schiff, 2011). Works belong to this category are from the “post semiotic / post linguistic” pictorial era if we use Mitchell's terms.⁶ We can name Cy Twombly (especially his works from 2005 to 2010), Jose Parla and Antoni Tapiés in this category.

I want to focus on Cy Twombly who inspired me the most during the process of my work. Cy Twombly was in New York when the Abstract Expressionism movement started to emerge but he distanced himself from it. He was regarded as one of the most

⁶ Mitchell states that according to Richard Rorty, history of philosophy comprises a different series of “turns”. In each era, different problems are set and new ones take their place. The last “turn” that has pointed out by Rorty is the “linguistic turn”. Linguistics, semiotics, rhetoric that are various models of textuality have become the vehicle language for critical approaches to arts, media and culture. However according to Mitchell, there is another turn that had its place in the history of philosophy and culture which he calls the “pictorial turn”. (Mitchell, 1984)

It should be clear that the pictorial turn is not a simple return to the likeness, copy or similar theories of representation. It is rather analyzing the picture as interplay between visibility, discourse, bodies and figurality in a postlinguistic, postsemiotic way. It is the realization that the look, the gaze, visual pleasure, perception (spectatorship) can be as problematic as decoding, decipherment, interpretation (reading). It is a new way of understanding the visual experience, which cannot be understood on the model of textuality.

important representatives of the artist group, which include Jasper Johns, Rauschenberg and John Cage, whose members were known for distancing themselves from Abstract Expressionism. Despite the fact that Twombly distanced himself from this movement, it is possible to see the influence of Abstract Expressionism in his oeuvre in the form of abstractions, purged figurations and the way he handles paint, drips, and smudges. Moreover, Twombly's reticent attitude about his work is a reminder of Abstract Expressionists' attitude towards talking about their work, or explaining it. According to As Ann Gibson states in her article on Abstract Expressionism and their attitude toward language, there was a strong resistance among them to the idea that language resided in every mode of representation. They were resistant to the idea that their works could be put into words. For this reason they refused to talk about their work, they refused to interpret what they meant by their work. This is not because their work lacked meaning or subject but because "...they are deeply involved with subject matter or content [yet], as a matter of principle, do nothing in their work to make communication easy" for the viewer (Gibson, 1988:208). Their cool stance towards written/spoken language did not show itself in only their aversion to talk about their work, but also in their reluctance to put titles to their work or label them or relate any kind of words with their work. They wanted their work to remain silent; they wanted to create 'mute images' (Gibson, 1988).

Although Abstract Expressionists wanted to escape all kinds of verbal formations, according to W.J.T Mitchell (1994), abstract art is actually where verbal and visual forms are blended inextricably. He says, " 'theory' is the 'word' (or words) that stands in the same relations to abstract art that traditional literary forms had to representational painting" (Mitchell, 1994:220). In traditional painting, viewers create the narrative that

is outside the painting by the help of figures or symbols, yet in abstract painting there are no figures to help them reveal the subject or content of what is there. We see here a turn from showing words in the frame like Cubists, Futurists and some Surrealist artists did, to hiding them but be fully in cooperation with them.

Being distant to Abstract Expressionists, Cy Twombly always used words in his paintings, it can be said that his special medium is writing. His way of using words in his paintings is radically different than other artists that I mentioned before. Actually, it is also possible to see the changes in his way of handling writing within his oeuvre. In his earlier works his writings look more fragile but at the same time more aggressive, they look like they are scratched on painted surface and some of them actually are. It is possible to see the resemblance to Henri Michaux. We should remember that Michaux were interested in physical aspect of writing as a mark like Cy Twombly did. We will mention the term “pseudo-writing” while we are talking about Twombly, like we did when we were mentioning Michaux.

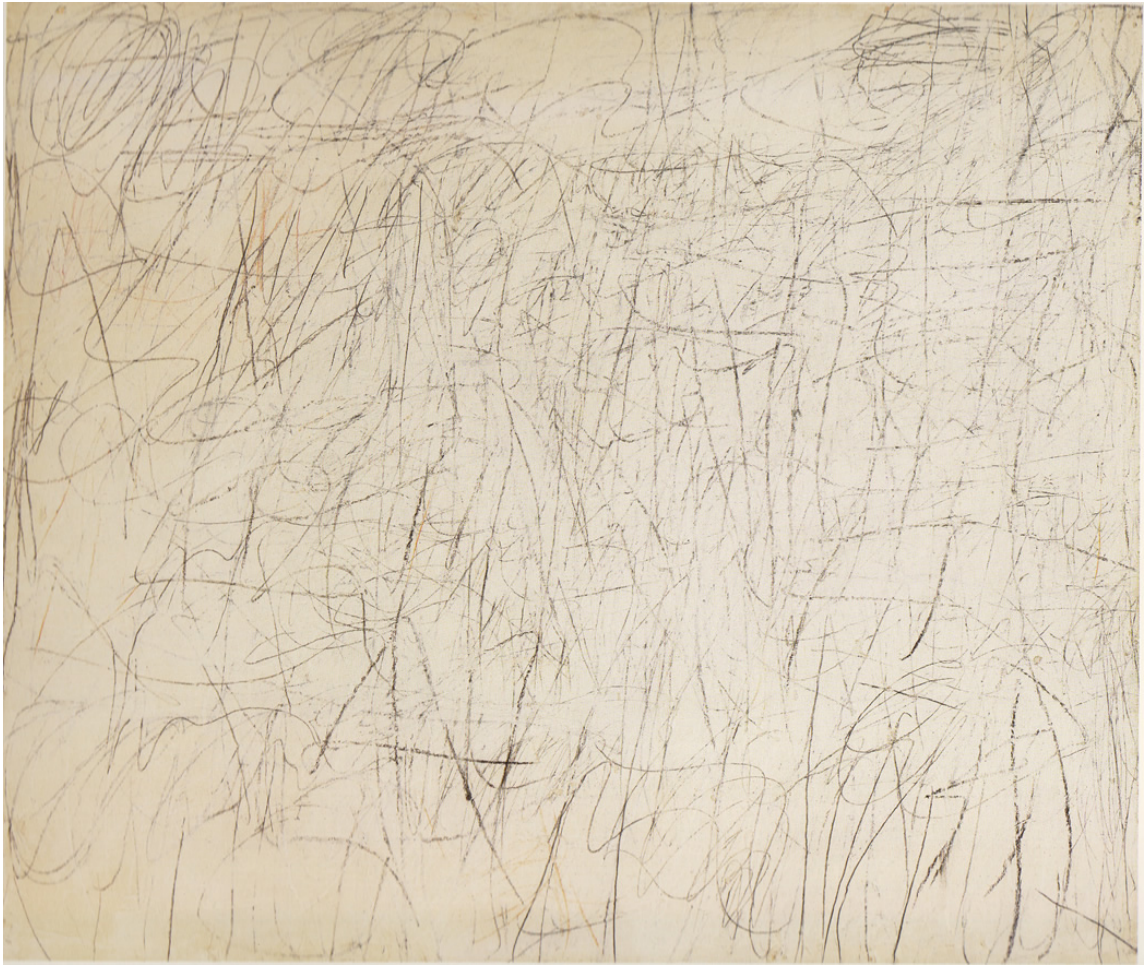


Figure 11. Cy Twombly. *The Geeks*. 1955. House paint, crayon and graphite on canvas, 180x128cm

In later works of Twombly, we see more smooth and fluent yet still aggressive writings. His way of writing changes with the materials he employed. When he started to use brushes, his tone also changed. The focus here will be on his latest works *Notes From Salalah*, *Untitled 2006* and *Bacchus* series, since they have the visual impact that I wanted to achieve in my work.

In *Notes from Salalah* the main element of the paintings are, in Twombly's words "pseudo-writing" (Twombly, et al. 1957). The reason why he uses the phrase "pseudo-writing" is that he certainly writes something, however it is not possible to understand

what is written. It is possible to recognize that there is some kind of writing however it is not possible to read or derive meaning from it. One of the points that make him different from all artists who use writing in their work is that he does not care about the meaning that is derived from writing. When Twombly writes, it is as if he is not writing for the sake of constructing a meaning, stating something or even exploring the relationship between image and words or relating his work to language. However, as Dayle Wood (2011) writes on Twombly's work, for the viewer it is almost impossible not to search for the letters that are recognizable among other markings. As soon as a mark is seen that seems like an identifiable character, immediately these markings are read as signifiers and a particular meaning is assigned to the image. It is almost impossible to assign any meaning to the image; his marks stop you from reading, from deciphering. They seem to say "there is nothing for you, they are only for me" (Wood, 2011). This contradiction is what makes Twombly's work mysterious, inexplicable and almost impossible to be analysed by critics and sometimes even to be scorned at. In order to understand Twombly's work another way of looking should be developed apart from linguistic/semiotic framework. As John Berger writes of Twombly's work:

Cy Twombly's paintings are for me landscapes of this foreign and yet familiar terrain. Some of them appear to be laid out under a blinding noon sun, others have been found by touch at night. In neither case can any dictionary of words be referred to, for the light does not allow it. Here in these mysterious paintings we have to rely on upon other accuracies: accuracies of tact, of longing, of loss, of expectation. (Berger, 2002a)

If it is inevitable for us to make a connection to language when we see a recognizable letter, then it can only be said that Twombly's work is related to language in terms of the physical act of writing; mark making. He was writing as if he was painting which amounts to the same thing if we take both of them as a gesture, as an act. Previously I

have mentioned that image making and writing share common roots in the course of bodily gesture. He just writes with the instinct that makes him write, like the urge that make people from primordial ages draw on walls of a cave. Looking at Twombly's paintings you feel as if you have travelled through time and ended up as a witness to the scribbling of a primordial man who makes marks with a stick on a rock. He writes as if he tries to rediscover writing by going back to the origins of writing: the primal mode of writing.

In his *Untitled 2006* and *Bacchus* series this impression is much more visible. The movement and the aggressive colour of the lines in *Bacchus* and *Untitled 2006* series serve to awaken the remembrance of the Red Dots which is the first thing that you see when you enter the Chauvet Cave in France. John Berger writes about the Red Dots, which are at the entrance of the cave that:

On a rock in front of me a cluster of red squarish dots. The freshness of the red is startling. As present and immediate as a smell, or as the colour of flowers on a June evening when the sun is going down (Berger, 2002b)

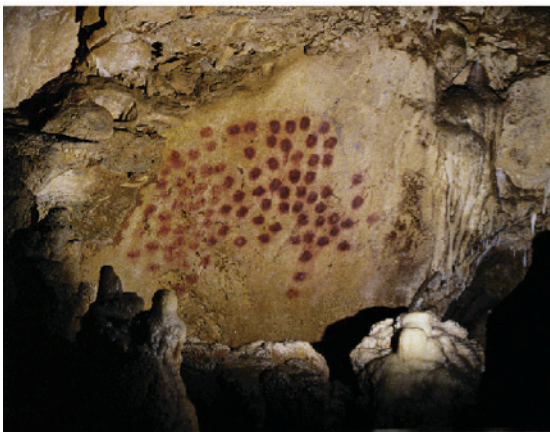


Figure 12 Red Dots at the Entrance of Chauvet Cave, France

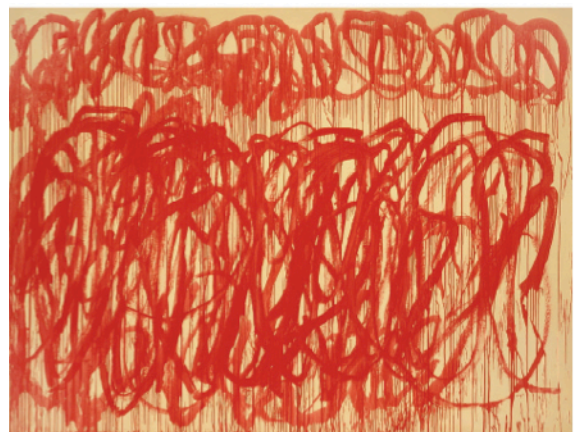


Figure 13 Cy Twombly. *Untitled VIII (Bacchus)*. 2005. Acrylic on canvas. 317.5x417.8 cm

In *The Cave of Forgotten Dreams*, which is a documentary about the paintings in Chauvet Cave, Werner Herzog delves into the mystery of the primordial man. Dominique Baffier (archaeologist, curator of the Chauvet Cave) and Valérie Feruglio (archaeologist) have been studying the Red Dots that had been made with the palm of the hand. In the film it says, “in the blurring of time and the anonymity of the artists, there is one individual artist who can be singled out” (Herzog, 2010). The prehistoric man who made those Red Dots is the only man that can be identified. They can recognize every mark he made with the help of his crooked little finger. It is possible to trace him further in the cave. It is also possible for them to understand the movements of this primordial man and follow his path as he travels further in the cave. Twombly’s path, his movements are also traceable in his paintings. It is inevitable to recognize the presence of his body in the painting. In one of his rare interviews with an Italian art journal, *L’Esperienza Moderna*, Twombly said that his artistic intention is “elementally human” (1957). He said “It’s more like I’m having an experience than making a picture” (Twombly, et al. 1957). With every line he makes he shows us the “actual experience” of making a line (Twombly, et al. 1957). Although we did not hear this from Cy Twombly, it would not be wrong to say that he tried to reach the times of primordial man and search for the connection between his body and writing that is obscured by the Western technological development. He tried to go back to where image making and writing were one.

2.2. Philosophical Reflections on the Issue

2.2.1 Relationship Between Images and Words

According to Mitchell, neither images nor words exist on their own. They always exist in relation to each other. There is no image that is pure, or mute and there is no text that does not have a relationship to imagery. W.J.T Mitchell says that all media is heterogeneous meaning that images are hidden in words and words are also hidden in images (1994). From this, we can conclude, that images and words are entwined, blended.

What is meant by entwined can be best exemplified with the process of reading. When you read a passage from a book page, although the only thing that can actually be seen are the words on the paper, the reading involves an imagining process and images start to appear in one's mind. This experience is common to all people, no one would object to the idea that images occur to them when they read. At least we can say assuredly that people experience and report images in their mind while they read or dream. Therefore, it can be said that images and words are not separate entities and it is possible to find one lurking in the other.

In order to further explain this relationship we can look at what happens mentally during reading. During reading, signs (letters) that are aligned after one another on a plain surface are the only physical images that we can see. Those signs get together and create

words that are meaningful to us. When these words are read, images that correspond to those words start to occur momentarily to us. These temporary images are called “mental images” in Mitchell’s (1984) terms. They occur at the same time you read. Therefore, it can be said that mental images and words work simultaneously and that they are inseparable.

Given this situation, it can be concluded that words and images are entwined. However, there can be an objection to this that images formed in our brain are not as real as the images that we perceive around us. Before we come to a conclusion that images and words are entwined, we should first acknowledge that images that appear in mind and physical images around us could be regarded as they are same. In order to acknowledge that, we should first answer these questions: What is an image? Is there a difference between mental images that appear in our mind and the ones that we experience physically? If there is, what is the difference? These questions can be answered by looking in detail at what W.J.T Mitchell calls an *image*.

What Mitchell (1984) explains in his essay called “*What is an image?*” is not a new definition for the concept of image. His goal is to look in detail at how we use the word “image” in different discourses in order to show that physical images may not have the privileged position on representing things. He aims to explain that there may not be any distinction between physical images that forms the basis of visual experience and the images that appear in one’s brain i.e. pictorial and imaginary images.

Mitchell (1984) starts with drawing a diagram that includes all the things that we refer with the word *image*, e.g. pictures, photographs, sculptures, maps, optical illusions, simulations, memories and even ideas. There is a wide variety between the things that we call an image so that it is impossible to come to a unified understanding. However, according to Mitchell with the help of this diagram, it is possible to talk about them on a common ground. The diagram shows us how images differ from each other on the basis of different discourses:

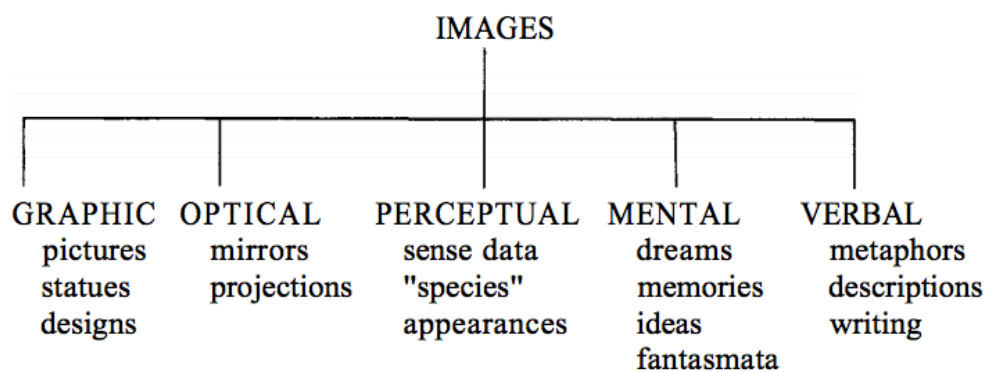


Figure 14. W.J.T Mitchell. *Family of Images*. 1984

Mitchell says that in common sense this diagram is read from left to right as we read everything from left to right. On the left side of the diagram, there are the images that are used in the most literal and common sense of the word image; graphic and optical images which we have been referring as the physical images before. As we go towards the right side of the diagram we find uncommon and figurative usages of the word image, namely mental and verbal images. Mental and verbal images would seem to be abstract and metaphoric compared to “real” images. As it has been said before, it is certain that images are experienced during the process of reading or dreaming, however it is impossible to open up someone’s head and look at those images objectively. We

only have someone's words to describe those images. Even if the descriptions those images are trustworthy it is clear that the way they are experienced is different than the graphic images according to the above chart. They seem unstable and temporal in terms of visual experience since they vary from one person to another. Also they seem to involve other senses. Although "real" images seem to be static and permanent in contrast to mental images, it is possible to say that not all people perceive them in the same way. They are open to interpretation and also they involve senses as mental images do. In order to be clear on this statement, mental images (images in mind) should be examined further (Mitchell, 1984).

Mitchell (1984) uses Wittgenstein to question the privileged position of the graphic image in certain discourses since Wittgenstein's way of attacking the mental imagery is different than the other modern theorists. Wittgenstein's way of attacking is not simply expelling the notion of mental imagery and denying its existence. However, he claims that mental imagery should not be assumed as metaphysical and corporeal entities more than real images are. His strategy is not to dump them in darkness but to bring them to light where we can see them. He says that: "Mental images of colours, shapes, sounds, etc., which play a role in communication by means of language we put in the same category with patches of colour actually seen, sounds heard" (Wittgenstein, 1958:4).

It may seem difficult to understand them in the same way we understand real images since it is not possible to compare them as we can compare two paintings that are hung on the wall. According to Mitchell (1984), in order to understand them examining the

ways we put those images in our heads would be appropriate and he gives us another diagram that illustrates the way mental images appear.

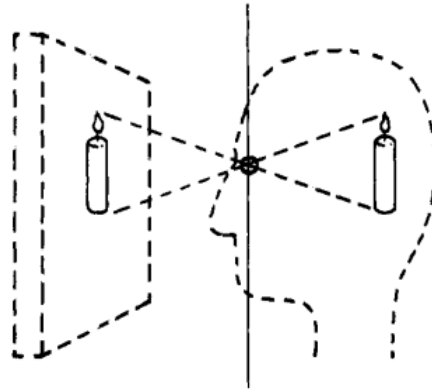


Figure 15 W.J.T Mitchell. *Second Diagram from “What is an Image?”*. 1984

Mitchell says that this diagram can be read in three different ways: first the relationship between an object and the image of that object that is projected or reflected; second is the relationship between an object and a mental image conceived in mind as a mirror or camera obscura; and finally between a physical image and a mental one.

In order to benefit from this diagram and to state clearly the issue that has been explained so far, the diagram should be read as the relationship between a physical image and a mental one. This model might be found problematic. It shows an absolute symmetry between the world and mind and discount perception⁷ (Mitchell, 1984). However, Mitchell uses this model only graphically to show the Wittgensteinian way of putting physical and mental images in the same category. According to Mitchell (1984),

⁷ It clearly neglects perception especially when perception is understood as an expressive and a creative act and inwardly linked with artistic practice (Quinn, 2009:9). How perception is regarded as a creative and an expressive act will be explained in the next section thoroughly.

diagram is beneficial to show the interdependence of these two notions: mental images and physical images.

If we take the diagram as a way of talking about the relationship between physical and mental images it lead us to what Mitchell calls “a paradoxical consciousness”. If we omit the illustration of the man, it can be concluded that if there were no minds than there would be no images. This is not because images need human hands to be created but it is because if there were no human beings then there would be no one to recognize an image as an image. This is “a paradoxical trick of consciousness and ability to see something as ‘there’ and ‘not there’ at the same time” (Mitchell, 1984). Rene Magritte’s *The Treachery of Images* painting is one of the best examples of this issue.



Figure 16 Rene Magritte. *The Treachery of Images*. 1928-29.
Oil on canvas 63.5x93.98 cm

What Magritte⁸ shows us is exactly what Mitchell calls as paradoxical trick of consciousness. He uses image and words in a way to question the way we talk about images. There is a realistic rendering of a pipe and words that say, 'This is not a pipe'. When we point to the painting and say that: 'this is a pipe', Magritte immediately answers: 'This is not a pipe'.

When we see an image of a tree, we recognize it as 'there' and 'not there' at the same time. We do not say that there is a tree there, but we recognize that it is a tree. However, when a bird tries to fly through the mirror as if it would meet with its own reflection, or when it pecks at the grapes in a still life painting on the wall, what it does see is not the image of itself or the image of grapes but another bird or the real grapes. This is because a bird cannot recognize an image as an image (Mitchell, 1984).

When we try to point to a mental image and say there is a mental image we are unable to recognize it as an image because it is obvious that we cannot point to it. However, we can express it with words to anyone and they will know since mental images occur as a result of a shared experience like dreaming, reading or hallucinating (Mitchell, 1984). Is this the only difference between mental and physical images that we cannot point out mental ones?

We derive the argument from the diagram that shows the family of images going towards left to right, however it can be derived by going towards right to left. Wittgenstein (1958:4) says: "We could just easily replace what we call 'the physical

⁸ Here again we see the parallelism of Magritte's work to philosophy.

manipulation of signs' (painting, writing, speaking) with locutions such as 'thinking on paper, out loud, in images' and so forth". This replacement makes it easier for us to put mental and physical images in the same category.

Neither physical images nor mental images can take a privileged position over representation just as words and images cannot. The reason why interdependence of mental and physical images is important is that mental images are directly related with the entwinement of words and images, which is the subject of my work. When a mental image is considered as real as a physical image, it is easier to accept the coexistence of words and images since they are blended mentally. What I aimed with my work was to embody this relationship of images and words that occur to us mentally; to physicalize a mental image. In other words, I aimed to project the emergence of the mental image that appear in mind while reading which actually includes both words and images. During a reading process, words and images work simultaneously. It is impossible for a reader to separate them. This impossibility of a separation is what I tried to achieve visually.

2.2.2 Perception and Body

What happens in the act of making art that changes from one form into the other? My work is the final product that is 'translated' or 'extended' from a poem into its final form. From that point of view, I see my body as a translator who mediates between two different forms of expressions. On the one hand, I have a poem and on the other, I have my work as the final product of my art-making process. I embodied this inseparable relationship between image and words, which we exemplified with the reading process,

through my medium onto a unified physical surface. In other words, my aim was to make mental images permanent which occur to us momentarily. These momentary instances that we called as mental images are named as “scattered meanings” that are found in the midst of our perception, by Maurice Merleau-Ponty. If we change the terms to Merleau-Ponty’s, it can be said that what I embody through my work is my perception of the poem.

According to Merleau-Ponty, what changes the poem into its final form is “...the specific, important changes that occur in the ‘translation’ and ‘extension’ of perception into the physical process of art making” (Quinn, 2009). What ‘perception’ does is that it operates expressively in a way that amplifies the least perception into painting and art (M. Merleau-Ponty, 2007). Merleau-Ponty uses the term expression in two different ways related to perception: primary and secondary expression. A secondary expression consists of the perceptions, which are routine and familiar to us. On the contrary, primary expression is the instance where we take a creative position and express the world in a new way as artists do.

Merleau-Ponty takes this expressive operation as a bodily experience. He rejects the body and mind dualism and does not assume a separation between the physical and the mental just as we acknowledge that there is no difference between mental and physical images in their modes of representation. Therefore, what perceives is the body. Derived from that idea, the world is not something that we are excluded from but it is something that we “primarily inhabit”. Therefore, the meaning is not pre-found and already exists in the world but it comes to existence by the act of the body in the world (Quinn, 2009).

Language is one of the instances that is preserved within the body and comes to existence by its act.

Merleau-Ponty links perception and art, especially painting, in his thought. He gives a specific importance to the artist in terms of her ability to perceive. It is not an ability to be fully aware and to be conscious about the way she conveys meaning but it is the ability to embody her perception into a physical form. Artist may want to convey meaning or not; it is up to her. He states that what is specific about the artist is that she is able to express her bodily experience (perception) through a medium onto a physical surface such as paper, canvas, and metal. What makes this experience a bodily encounter is the process of art making which is a "...physical re-creation in a medium that takes the creativity of perception to completion" (Quinn, 2009). The artist turns something temporal and momentary into something permanent. She gathers the "scattered meanings" that are found in her perception into a unified physical surface by the help of her medium of choice. In other words, it might be said that artist takes *secondary expression* and turns it into a *primary* one. The meaning that is derived from a work of art is a novel way of seeing the world for the viewer according to Merleau-Ponty. The reason why it is a new way is linked with the "...aforementioned distinction between the primary and the secondary modes of expression" (Quinn, 2009). Therefore, according to Merleau-Ponty, the rich meanings that are evoked by a painting cannot be fully explained by words. He states, "The voices of painting are the voices of silence". Painting reaches the viewer through a pre-linguistic and primordial way. It evokes viewer's bodily engagements with the world. In other words, languages of art that

originate from bodily engagements are more primordial and more “silent” than the language of the secondary expression.

Besides being a translator between two modes of expression, mentioned previously as *primary* and *secondary* expressions, body of the artist has another important role. It receives at the same time it gives. It is the reversible experience of our body’s existence in the world. According to Merleau-Ponty:

...A sort of dehiscence opens my body in two, and because between my body looked and my body looking, my body touched and my body touching, there is overlapping or encroachment, to that we may say that the things pass into us as well as we into things (1969:123).

In the act of painting, the boundary between the surface and your body becomes blurry. While you are painting you express yourself through your medium. You pass things from your body to the surface. However, during the process, you are not the only one who pass things as Merleau-Ponty states, also the surface pass things to you and participate in the process.

Francis Bacon (1989) says in an interview with Michael Peppiatt that before he starts working, he has an idea of what he would like to do; however when he starts doing it, that idea “completely evaporates”. Something other than his idea emerges and it crystallizes on the surface. In his paintings, Bacon (1989) says he lets “chance” in the process to determine what he is going to do. According to him, without letting chance in the process, it is impossible to reach a unique “...reality. Reality, that is, that comes about in the actual way the painting has been put down, which is a reality...” (Bacon, 1989) Letting ‘chance’ in the process and letting things pass to the body of the artist are

similar. When Bacon lets 'chance' to come out and play while he is painting, he actually lets the canvas, the paint talk to him. He lets things pass to him. Berger (2002b) describes a similar experience while he imagines Palaeolithic man painting on the walls of the cave:

What the rock told him was that the animals - like everything else that existed - were inside the rock, and that he, with his red pigment on his finger, could persuade them to come to the rock's surface...

Peter Watson (2006:51) states David Lewis Williams' thoughts on this same phenomenon with these words:

The art, he suggests, was designed to 'release' the forms, which were 'imprisoned' in the rock. By the same token, the 'finger flutings', marks made on the soft rock, and the same famous hand prints, were a kind of primitive 'laying on of hands', designed again to release the forms locked in the rock.

Experiencing this reversible existence of the body is similar to the experience that you have in woods, in a cave or in the darkness. You feel like you are being looked at. There is something that gazes at you. This is an experience that Paul Klee puts in words when he says that he felt over many times that he was not the one who is looking at the forest. Trees were the ones who were looking at him, who spoke to him (Quinn, 2009). It is the same experience that was put in words by Herzog (2010), in his documentary *The Cave of Forgotten Dreams*, when he was leaving the Chauvet Cave:

Dwarfed by these large chambers illuminated by our wandering lights, sometimes we were overcome by a strong, irrational sensation as if we were disturbing the Palaeolithic people in their work. It felt like eyes upon us.

A question that should be asked here is how this "reversible existence" of the body is related to the image-word relationship that I aimed to embody through my work? How letting chance and letting the surface pass things to you contribute to the embodiment of

the inseparable relationship between a word and an image? Firstly, it is necessary to state that perception; therefore the body is where we find images and words are entwined. However, as we mentioned before while we were stating Mitchell's ideas, it is not possible to experience mental images as physically as graphic images. But we also stated that there is no difference between an image that occurs in the brain or mind and an image that is hanging on our walls. The only difference is that we cannot point to a mental image.

The only way to experience a mental image is to describe it in words. This situation is one of the obvious proofs that images and words are inseparable. What I found problematic here is when we write something on a piece of paper and draw what the writing depicts they seem like they are two different entities. We know that images are inseparable from words. But in their form and the way that they are produced are totally different. As other artists challenged this issue in the past, with my work, I also challenged myself to show this inseparability of images and words.

What I envisioned for my work was to be a projector that projects the phenomenon of reading. In order to do this, I went back to the traditional way and try to create a piece that works in the same way as the projector that I vision. I will give a detailed explanation of my process in the next chapter. Now I would like to go back to the question that we asked before: How letting chance and letting the surface pass things to you contribute to embody the inseparable relationship between a word and an image?

First thing that we need to accept is that this situation is a game that our perception plays with us. But it is real. I see images and words as they are trapped in my perception and they cling to each other in fear. They want to go out together but it seems like there is no way that they can go out hand in hand. They belong to different domains and will be perceived separately as soon as they get out, which was not the case in prehistoric era. Before man separated himself from nature, and started living together and communicate, the way they make sense of the world and express themselves are changed. Before the invention of the alphabet, the abstract sign system, language was related directly to nature in terms of visual representation. There was not any difference between writing and a drawing in the means of representing nature. If that would be the case today, there would be a way for images and words to stay together and walk out hand in hand from where they are trapped. After the invention of the alphabet, writing became something that consist of abstract signs and is differentiated from drawings in the way they represent. One door is closed. After printing technology is developed writing is also differentiated from drawing in terms of production. Writing became colourless, linear and structured. The other door is closed as well. As a result, words have been differentiated from images and they set apart. Iconoclasts even accused images as false pretentions while they believe that words belong to God.

The only way that I found to release images and words together was to let the chance in as Francis Bacon does. In other words accepting the reversible existence of my body in the world and act accordingly. Merleau-Ponty's way of relating the body to the world actually offers us a new way of understanding and construing the world.

We understand the world in the way that we communicate. Therefore, we only can describe the images that occur in our heads in words. However, if we go through Merleau-Ponty's path and understand the reversible existence of our body that roots us to our primordial existence, we can change the way we understand the world and the way we communicate. That way it is possible for us not to read but to look at the letters that are aligned to create a meaning, or it is possible to derive meaning from indiscernible writings. We can stop the urge to read when we see a letter, a word. We can also allow our body to write not for the sake of creating a meaning and communicating by it. If we change the way we understand the world today like David Carson did in the 1990's and do things intuitively for just one second, maybe we can go back in time when an image and a word were still together and let them emerge from our bodies and show them to each other.

CHAPTER 3

OVERVIEW OF THE WORK

In this chapter, I will examine my work in the light of what has been discussed in previous chapters. Since the working process is what determines the completed work, it is also important to look at it thoroughly. This chapter would seem to be the precise description of the work. However, no matter how hard I try and how long and in detail I describe it, it will not be enough. There will always be something that remains unexplained. The words that I use would never match completely with the actual work, which is solid, standing by itself and does not need someone to speak for it. As Robert M. Pirsig (1974:163) writes in *The Zen and the Art of Motorcycle*: “One does it and others talk about how it’s done and talk about how it’s done never seems to match how one does it”.

Although I think that words would never match completely with the work itself, I will try to explain it as clearly as I can. In order to have a grasp of my work and understand

my artistic intentions, it is important to look at the process that led me to create the final work and particular decisions that were crucial to the completion of the work.

3.1. Development Process of the Work

In the creative act, the artist goes from intention to realization through a chain of totally subjective reactions. His struggle toward the realization is a series of efforts, pains, satisfaction, refusals, decisions, which also cannot and must not be fully self-conscious, at least on the aesthetic plane (Duchamp, cited in Lebel 1959:78).

Starting from the very beginning, I would like to explain which paths and turns I took and how they let my work to come out as it is now. In other words, this will be the story of how I developed my work from scratch.

The development process that led to the final work included several problems that needed to be solved. The first problem that I came across after I decided on my thesis subject was to find the text (words) that I could use as a part of my work, since my subject was about the relationship between images and words. I chose *About the Forest and the Lost Children* (Appendix A), by Baran Akkuş.

After I decided on the written element of my work, I started doing sketches and exploring possible setups to exhibit it. The very first sketch that I did was a collage piece. I used different kinds of paper, pieces from magazines, handwritten words and also watercolour paints.



Figure 17. Candan İşcan. *First sketch.2012*. Collage on paper 21x29.7cm

I planned to work on big canvases and as detailed as possible. I wanted my work to function on two levels: as a whole and in detail. After I decided on the medium, I started to brainstorm on how to exhibit it. The one who talks us through the poem walks a path in the woods, which leads him to reflect on his thoughts and feelings. He scrutinizes himself through his journey. I wanted to create the same pattern in the way I exhibit my work. I imagined viewers wandering through my work.



Figure 18. Candan İşcan. *First exhibition setting*.2012

Before I started to work on the actual pieces, what I had in mind was a mixed media work. I wanted to try different techniques and use various materials in order to achieve different visual effects. I let myself use every material that I can imagine to work with. The only limitation for me was to work manually, from beginning to end. This does not seem to be a strict limitation. But actually it was. In order to achieve the visual effect that I wanted to achieve, which should have been organic, textural, elaborate, I needed to learn a lot of new techniques.

Deriving from the very first sketch, I began working on small pieces, which would be composed in a bigger collage. I thought I could first create small pieces and then combine them on a bigger surface. That way, I would have achieved the elaborate look that I wanted to achieve and make my piece work on two levels. During this process, which I dealt with comparatively small pieces, I started to question the exhibition format that I had in mind. Why would I use a rectangular format if I wanted to achieve an

organic look? Why would I not make it in a way to give the sense of journey in the poem? With these questions in my mind, I started to think about altering the exhibition format. I thought about converting it to a mural. That way, I would be able to achieve the visual effect that I wanted and also give the sense of a journey.

Meanwhile, a blessing coincidence happened. I had a chance to see *Mesopotamian Dramaturgies*; documentary about Kutluğ Ataman, at the International Ankara Film Festival. Among his excellent oeuvre, one particular work impressed and inspired me the most: *semiha b. unplugged*. Besides the impressive context of the work, there was a particular scene that inspired me visually about my exhibition format. It is the scene where we see a part of the room, which is called “*The Hallucination Wall*” (Çavuş, 2011). The arrangement of the wall is done by Kutluğ Ataman. On the wall we see Semiha Berksoy’s paintings that are nailed among semi painted fabrics and we see the things that she collected throughout her life, “memory objects” in Ataman terms, scattered around the room.



Figure 19. Kutluğ Ataman. *The Hallucination Wall*. Screenshot from *Mesopotamian Dramaturgies*.

I was captured by the overwhelming sensation that the place disseminated. I realized that actually it was a similar sensation that I got from the poem. Making the exhibition in a room would enable me to create the world in the poem, enable the viewer move around and intensify the experience of my work. The more I thought about the setting and the poem, the more I was absorbed by the idea. Eventually, it became irresistible for me to change my exhibition format. My work would still be a collage, yet my surface would change into the walls of a room.

Next thing that I needed to do was to find a suitable room. Searching for the room that I had in mind was frustrating. The rooms that I found were either too big or too occupied with fixtures and furniture. I thought about finding a corner and construct the other two walls myself. Unfortunately this also was problematic. Therefore, I decided to construct my own room.

3.2.Room



Figure 20. Candan İşcan .  . 2012

After I constructed the room, I concentrated on the pieces that I would assemble on the walls of the room. I was working on a 30*60 cm paper. I was doing a piece for every sentence in the poem. I was also working on the transitional pieces that would combine the sentence pieces. I was using different techniques that I learned in the beginning. I was playing with textures, colours and materials in order to create different sensations.



Figure 21. Candan İşcan. *Biraz sonra gelecek sandım atalarımın hayaleti, buz gibi öfke çökecek üstüme.* 2012 (see. Appendix B)

Results were satisfying on their own. Every piece had a different mood that reflected the sentence that belonged to. Transitions seemed to be working. I even added real branches to make the work semi-three-dimensional. However, when I assembled them in the room I was not satisfied with it as a whole. It did not have the impact necessary to capture the one who is experiencing it. It did not welcome to join in it. It felt like I was looking at a

painting in a glass box. I was not allowed to touch it. I was not even allowed to get closer to it. Words and images still served within their borders and failed to dissolve into each other. It seemed like they were just put on the same surface. Their combination seemed fake and shallow. What I sought was a deeper connection between images and words as it was before the invention of writing. I wanted to show how images and words are one as they are in my mind. In order to show their tenacious connection to each other, I needed to have a stronger connection with my work; a connection that is preserved within my body such as the connection between images and words.

Then I realized the actual problem was not fulfilling the goals that I set for myself for this thesis. I actually was not able to reflect my perception of the poem onto the surface. I could not physicalize the mental image that occurred in my head as I was reading the poem. I failed to change a temporal, momentary image into a permanent one. The problem still persisted. In order to solve the problem, I started questioning the way I assembled them, size of the room, the size of every separate piece and the techniques that I was using. I thought that the problem was a visual one. Then I realized that the source of the problem was in the way I was working and that actually related to all things that I questioned, except the room.

In order to create the texture, the visual look that I wanted to achieve, I needed to wait for the pieces to dry before I added another thing. I needed to repeat that process a couple of times. Dealing with these techniques forced me to work really slowly. It was not a question about the amount of time it took to finish the pieces. The medium I chose hindered my gestures and muddled my movements. I was unable to inhabit the pieces

that I was working on. Moving slowly severed my connection with the piece. It interfered with the flow from my head to my hand. I was not able to work expressively. The text that I was working with was not a prose. It was not a story. It included a lot of abstract concepts. Most of these concepts do not form a correspondent image in one's mind that can be reproduced by working accurately. They work with all your senses, which make them even more temporary. They occur in less than a second and suddenly they disappear. In order to catch, stay on and reflect those instant sensations, you need the flow, which in my case hampered the way I performed.

When you are into something, it is always hard to think out of the box. Probably that is why I was stuck with the idea of making my work as a big collage and did not even consider changing it. I really felt that I was stuck and realized that I could not go any further. That realization and the courage that came with it actually made my work the way it is now. I took brushes, paints and the poem with me and I got into the room. I started to work directly on the walls of the room. The room became my canvas. As soon as I started to work, I realized that I should have done this long time ago. Working on small sizes, limited my movements. I was not able to be expressive with my gestures. As being slow interfered with the flow in my body, moving in a limited space also did. The way I worked before did not only cut my connection with my work but it also did not let the 'chance' in. I did not let anything pass on from me. Changes that I did in the way I worked also changed my work completely. I was satisfied with the process, with the aesthetic value of the work. I was able to fulfil the goals that I set for myself for this thesis. I was able to catch those temporary moments and pass them onto the surface.

More importantly, I started to feel that I was incorporated into my work. I wasn't a stranger who passes by but I was in it.

Painting and writing directly on the walls also helped me to see my work from a different perspective that I did not even think about before. Actually, this new perspective was provided to me by the work itself. Painting and writing was only related to the issue of image and word relationship in the beginning of the process. However, the more I worked in the room, the more I related my work to other issues which are perception, body, gesture, experience, intuition, chance and primordially. I actually was able to reach the primordial state that where image and word existed together by the help of reconnecting my practice to my body. I was able to lift the curtain that covers and obscured the connection between writing and bodily gesture and that way I was able to show the inseparability of images and words.

Sometimes you have an idea before you start to work and you stick with it. However sometimes you start to work in a blank state and the work gives you the idea. I think here the most important thing is to have the courage to throw everything away and start from a scratch again. Sometimes you need to go with the flow. You need to listen to what the work tells you and let it lead you to the path you desire.

3.3. Darkness and Light

In addition to the decisions that I mentioned above, there is one last decision that changed my work and took it to another level: the use of darkness in other words the use

of light. There is not a permanent source of light inside the space of my work. Top of it is covered with a black fabric so it is light proof. There is total darkness inside the room. There is a torch attached outside the room for the ones who go inside to use.

The torch illuminates a limited space so that it is not possible to see the work entirely. What you see are the fragments. These fragments work similarly as the “scattered meanings” in one’s perception or the temporary instances that are called as mental images. Reading is a continuous act, when you read a word, a corresponding image occurs in your mind. If you read another word, another image occurs and the previous one disappears. Although the border between these two images is blurry and there is not an absolute border, it can be said that the previous one starts to fade out when the new one starts to emerge. Looking through the light of a torch makes my work function in the same way. It helps the viewer to experience, what I experience during the process. It helps my work to function in the same way a projector does.

In addition to contributing to the way the image and word relationship is perceived, using a torch contributes to the work in another way. I mentioned before about the reversible existence of the body in the world. It sees and is seen, touches and is touched. At all moments, the boundary between your body and the world is blurry. When you are painting, there is no distinction between you and a brush that you are holding just as there is no distinction between your hand and a pen. It becomes a limb, an extension of your hand. It is not something that is separate from your body. You and the brush are a whole. And this wholeness increases in intensity during the process of painting. While you are passing things through your body onto the surface, the surface also passes things

to you. This reciprocal experience that an artist has when she is painting is similar to the experience of a viewer who looks at the work with a torch. Torch becomes a limb for the viewer. They become whole. And this wholeness increases when the work starts to pass things on the viewer.

There is a similar experience while reading. When you are reading there is no distinction between you and the book; what is written disappears and you are in it. Merleau-Ponty states this with these beautiful words, which are worth repeating:

... My eyes follow the line on the paper, and from the moment I am caught up in their meaning, I lose sight of them. The paper, the letters on it, my eye and the body are there only as the minimal setting of some invisible operation. Expression fades before what is expressed, and this is why its mediating role may pass unnoticed (as cited in Morley, 2003:13)

While I was examining this reversible experience of the body in the previous section, I mentioned that it was similar to the experience that you had in the woods, in a cave or in darkness. When you are in darkness, the only thing that you see is where your torch illuminates. You cannot even clearly see your hand holding the torch. The boundary between your body and the work becomes ambiguous. You are in the work. You are captured by it. Not being able to see your body but to see the work instead gives you the sensation that your body somehow dissolves in the work.

Darkness has always been associated with mystery, the unknown. When darkness falls, it is time to roam for the creatures that have been hiding beyond the shield of light. These creatures are sometimes wild animals, sometimes supernatural-beings, spirits and even demons of darkness. As stated by David Lewis Williams, Cro-Magnons believed

that there was another world, separated from the real world, in which spirits lived. They saw the caves as an entrance leading to this mysterious “spirit world” (Watson, 2006). Think about standing at the mouth of a cave and looking in. What you see is a big hole of darkness opening to a mystery. What is in there? Bears? Some anonymous paintings? Spirits?

Inside, you are not exposed to any light as you are used to in daily life, but you are the one who illuminates the space with a torch in your hand. Temperature is different and airflow also is. It is a different world. Darkness explodes your imagination. You are full of desire to march in to the unknown, to discover what is hidden in darkness, the magical.

You are looking at it and it is looking at you. It is similar to Werner Herzog’s experience that he felt like eyes upon him when he was in Chauvet Cave, when his light illuminates the cave (Herzog, 2010). You get the sensation of something’s presence. Is it the presence of early human, the spirit or the magical? Or, it is your presence that you sense? There is something in that experience that roots you to your primordial existence. What cannot be told or explained but hidden in pure intuition, just like looking at a Twombly painting does.



Figure 22. Candan İşcan.  . 2012 (photograph 1)



Figure 23. Candan İşcan.  . 2012 (photograph 2)



Figure 24. Candan İşcan.  . 2012 (photograph 3)



Figure 25. Candan İşcan.  . 2012 (photograph 4)

3.4. What The Work Proposes On The Image And Text Relationship

As we said before, what I envisioned for my work was to project the state of reading. Projecting the state of reading is important, since it is one of the most obvious evidence that lead us to find where the image and word exist together. In the previous chapters, we acknowledge that words and images, writing and the image making shared the common roots before the invention of the alphabet and the printing technology after that. Image making and writing were both considered as bodily productions. They were both fruits of bodily gesture. However after the developments in Western technology, writing's domain has shifted. It became the element of discursive language.

Language is the invisible operation of the body as Merleau-Ponty states, just like perception is the creative operation of the body. Therefore, we cannot say that language and body is separated. However, it would not be a false argument to say that the connection between the language and the body is obscured. Language became an abstract, external structure that people needed to fit into rather than something that is preserved within the body.

It is not surprising that lots of art movements dealt with this issue. As it is mentioned before, Merleau-Ponty says that artists have the ability to reach and show what human "primarily inhabit". Language is one of the entities that are inhabited primarily. Although its connection with the body is obscured throughout the history, language is still preserved within just as a consciousness of the history of writing is retained. And

artists, with their ability, are able to reach that pre-linguistic domain, by functioning creatively in the realm of perception where we find images and words together.

As other artists in the past, I was also drawn to this issue maybe because of my background in graphic design or maybe because of the urge to reconnect with the primordial. Whatever the reason is, I was highly able to experience what has been said in the previous paragraphs. As the connection gets stronger, my work evolved from it.



Figure 26. Candan İşcan.  . 2012 (photograph 5)

I see my work as an embodiment of my experience during reading the poem “*Ormana ve Kayıp Çocuklara Dair (About the Forest and Lost Children)*”. What I did was trying to reach where images and words were one, when there is no difference between reading and looking, writing and image making. I painted as I was writing and wrote as I was

painting. In my work, words do not accompany images, or images do not illustrate words but they exist together on the same plane at the same time as they exist in perception. What I did was to read the poem, grasp the sense and the meaning of it and rewrite it in my own way, in the way that I perceive it. I was not concerned that it would be legible since as I mentioned before it is possible to derive meaning from an indiscernible writing, as it is possible not to read but to look at something written, when we change the way we communicate and the way we make sense of the world.



Figure 27. Candan İşcan.  . 2012 (photograph 6)

As you can remember, while we were examining the post war art movements, we followed up the way of Karen Schiff and categorize the artworks in three groups. We stated that this categorization seems like a rough one but it is quite expository. Artworks that we examined within this categorization were the ones that I have been mostly influenced. Therefore, I believe it would be better look at my work through the same method in order to understand what my work proposes on the issue.

In the first category that Schiff introduced, there are works that make you switch from reading to looking and vice versa by combining the visual power of images and powerful meanings that words depict. I cannot say that my work belongs to this category. Because what I aimed with my work was to unify those two activities into one activity: perception. As I said before, I believe it is possible to look at a written word and not to read. It just acquires a different way of interacting with the world around us. And I think usage of light and darkness, helps the viewer to gain this different way of interaction. However, it is not impossible to make a strong distinction between my work and other works in this category. Some words in my work are readable, but we cannot say that my work is dependent on the meaning of those words. As well as readable words, there are lots of parts that include indiscernible writings. So that we can say that although my work has some characteristics of this category, it cannot be placed within it.

In the second category we have works that perform a kind of visual research and reveal the subject of their research in the artwork. Theory of the work is imminent in the artwork. When my work is seen, it is possible to grasp that it is related to the inseparability of images and words. In this sense, it can be said that my work reveals the

subject of my research. It is parallel to the theoretical groundings that it is dependent on. On the other hand, if it is not possible to grasp what the work proposes, then my thesis would fail. So actually all artworks somehow reveal their subject of interest. In this case, my work could be placed in this category. However, it is obvious that there is a difference between my work and the works that are mentioned before in this category. Therefore, it is not possible to put my work in this category as well.



Figure 28. Candan İşcan.  . 2012 (photograph 7)

In the third category, we mostly talked about Abstract Expressionists and Cy Twombly whose work mostly consists of indiscernible writings, markings that carry a “whiff of textuality” and remainder of that writing is physical after all. I believe this category is the closest one to my work. Most of the words that my work includes are not written for the sake of their depicting meaning and they also are not to be read. They can be

regarded as marks rather than being meaningful words. On the other hand, there are some words that are legible although they are not intentionally used to invite viewer to read, they can be read. Therefore, although I said that my work is closer to this category it is not possible to say that it belongs here either.

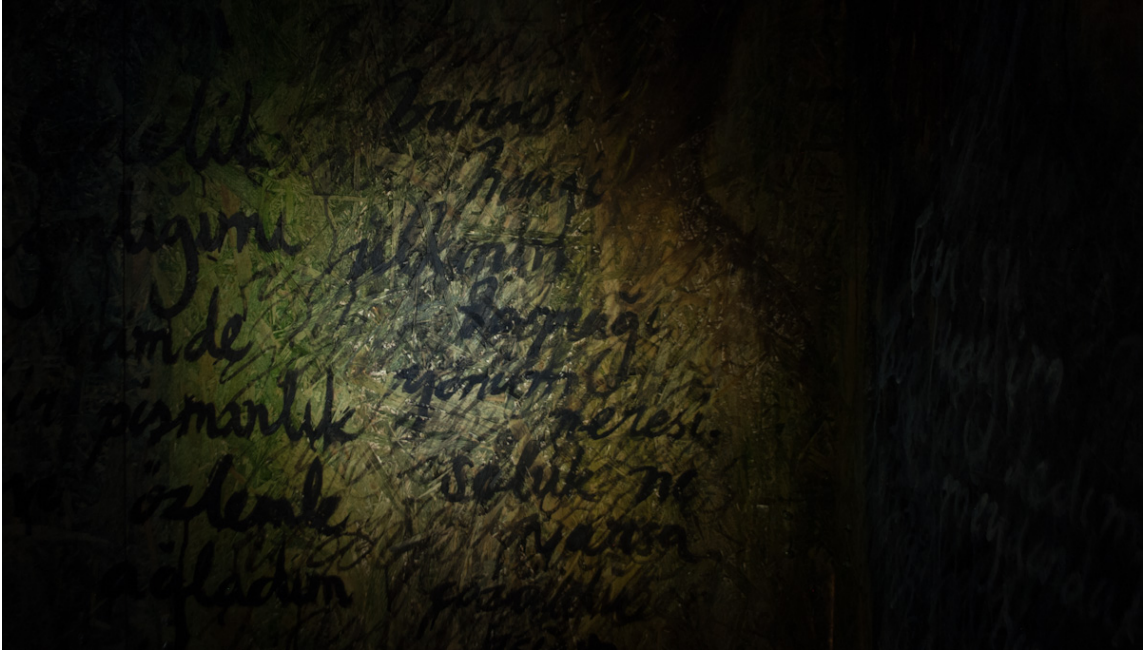


Figure 29. Candan İşcan.  . 2012 (photograph 8)

When the visual impact of my work is examined, it is not possible to put it in one of the categories that Karen Schiff had introduced. It is more convenient to say that my work does not settle in one category but rather traverses between all categories underlined in *Art=Text=Art: Works by Contemporary Artists*. I have tried to reflect different approaches to writing and words in my work. Sometimes words dissolve in colours and sometimes they suddenly come out from where they had been hiding and catch the attention, like when the sun appears behind the clouds on a rainy day.

CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSION

As to the form a sign should have, you say it's no problem because, whatever form it may be given, a sign only has to serve as a sign, that is, be different or else the same as other signs: here again it's easy for you young ones to talk, but in that period I didn't have any examples to follow, I couldn't say I'll make it the same or I'll make it different, there were no things to copy, nobody knew what a line was, straight or curved, or even a dot, or a protuberance or a cavity. I conceived the idea of making a sign, that's true enough, or rather, I conceived the idea of considering a sign a something that I felt like making, so when, at that point in space and not in another, I made something, meaning to make a sign, it turned out that I really had made a sign, after all (Calvino, 1968:31).

The above words by Calvino (1968:31) perfectly posit the urge to make a mark, a drawing, a sign; to leave a trace in anyway you choose. It brought us back to where all has started. Before him, before his mark there was nothing. He was the first man, and his mark was the first one. There was nothing to copy, nothing similar. There was only he, his body and nature. He did not know why he made it, he just felt like making it and it emerged from his body.

Calvino, Herzog, Cy Twombly, Merleau-Ponty and many other names that we mentioned before brought us back to our roots, to our bodies' primal existence. What we find there was the connection between our body and some kind of a mark, name it writing, name it drawing. We saw how this connection was obscured through time, but was still hidden deep inside. We acknowledge that writing was after all was only a mark that is produced by bodily gesture and how it shared the common roots with image making. We encountered various artists who responded to this fundamental issue in different ways. They all sought to find this obscured connection preserved within which I have also been searching.



Figure 30. Candan İşcan.  . 2012 (photograph 9)

Relationship between images and words has been laid on the table again and again throughout the history. However, this constant examination did not make the subject

mundane but rather it shows us how it is fundamental and essential and therefore how it is important and worth to be examined again. Being so fundamental yet still not being settled completely, this subject also drew me in. In the early stages of my thesis, I did not know what exactly I was dealing with; I did not realize how deep the water was. However, after a short period I find myself in the middle of a whirlpool, pulled down to the heart of the sea.

This subject's deep relation to life and to the roots of our existence, made me realize how it is a prolific subject. The more you think about it, the more you make new connections. If you have a short period of time, it can also frustrate you since it is possible to approach this subject from several perspectives with different ways of doing.

After I look back and see what I did in my work, I can say that I am quite satisfied. But of course, there are things that I could have done differently. Automatism: widely used technique by Surrealist artists is one of the things that I wish I tried. As I mentioned before, I was using a poem that is written by someone else. During working, sometimes I found myself only scribbling or writing something that was not in the poem. Those moments were the times that I felt the strongest connection with the work. It is possible to trace those moments in different parts of the work; parts where images and words intertwined the most. The poem was a great source of inspiration for me. It gave me a starting point that leads to this work. With my work, I was trying to reach a point where images and words are intertwined; was trying to go back in time when the first mark has not been done yet. Doing this within the borders of the alphabet and trying to break the habitual usage of letters was challenging. My input was letters and words but I expect

the output to be something else, which was challenging. Although I wish that I tried automatism, I think challenging myself with this poem was one of the things that made my work distinct and made it traverse between categories that we mentioned before. Eventually we can say that with my work, I took one kind of expression and turn it into another kind.



Figure 31. Candan İşcan.  . 2012 (photograph 10) (see. APPENDIX C)

As I said earlier, this subject is fertile and it enables you to make new connections. I mentioned this because while I was thinking about this subject it led me to a new area that has a strong connection to our culture that is worth examining. Further in my studies, I would like to continue on the same subject by looking at the mysteries of Anatolian Spells with the help of the book called “*Anadolu Büyüleri*” by İsmet Zeki Eyüboğlu in which he compiled and studied all the spells of Anatolian culture. What I

find interesting in Anatolian Spells is their relation to body and also to language. Performer of those magical rituals and the people they performed on believe that sometimes just saying the words, sometimes writing them on a piece of paper and swallowing it would affect their body's well being or their mental health.

This new connection that I found is just one out of many possible ones that had evolved from this subject. I believe the relationship between image and word, writing and image making and their relation to bodily existence would continue to be further examined by many researchers from different disciplines in the future.

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APPENDICES

A. APPENDIX A

Ormana ve Kayıp Çocuklara Dair

Küçük tepe yollarında sıkılmış bir gezgin gibi, kendi düşüncelerime dalmış dolaştım.

Ağaçların ve gece korularının arasında, sırtımda doğmadan öldürdüğüm aşklar, yürüdüm.

Bir ruh bile yoktu doğanın en mahrem anını utandıracak, orman geçmişi düşlüyordu.

Yorgun vücudumu sürükleyerek daldım derinlere, düşünmemeye karar verdim.

Bir ülkeye ait değildi geldiğim yer, insanlar için yapılmış değildi.

Korku sardı içimi, yıldızlar dikti gözlerini gözüme, çalmak ister gibi aklımı.

Bugün ben yanlış bir şey yapamazdım, saatler ahlakımı çalmış cebimden.

Yine de yaktım koskoca bir ateş çalı çırpıdan, ayaklarım ormanın tabanında gömülü,

Ellerim kanamaya hevesli, yüzümden yansıyan çürümüş çalılıarın yüzü.

Etrafında dolaştım bir süre alevin, bir küfürdü bu kendime, soyuma bir hakaret.

Birazdan gelecek diye düşündüm atalarımın hayaleti, buz gibi öfke çökecek üstüme.

Saklayamazdım günahlarımı ne bu yerden ne geçmişten, gece kuşlarından bile.

Ki onları duyuyordum, daldan dala bir öykü anlatılıyordu, karanlığın çaldığı çocuklara,

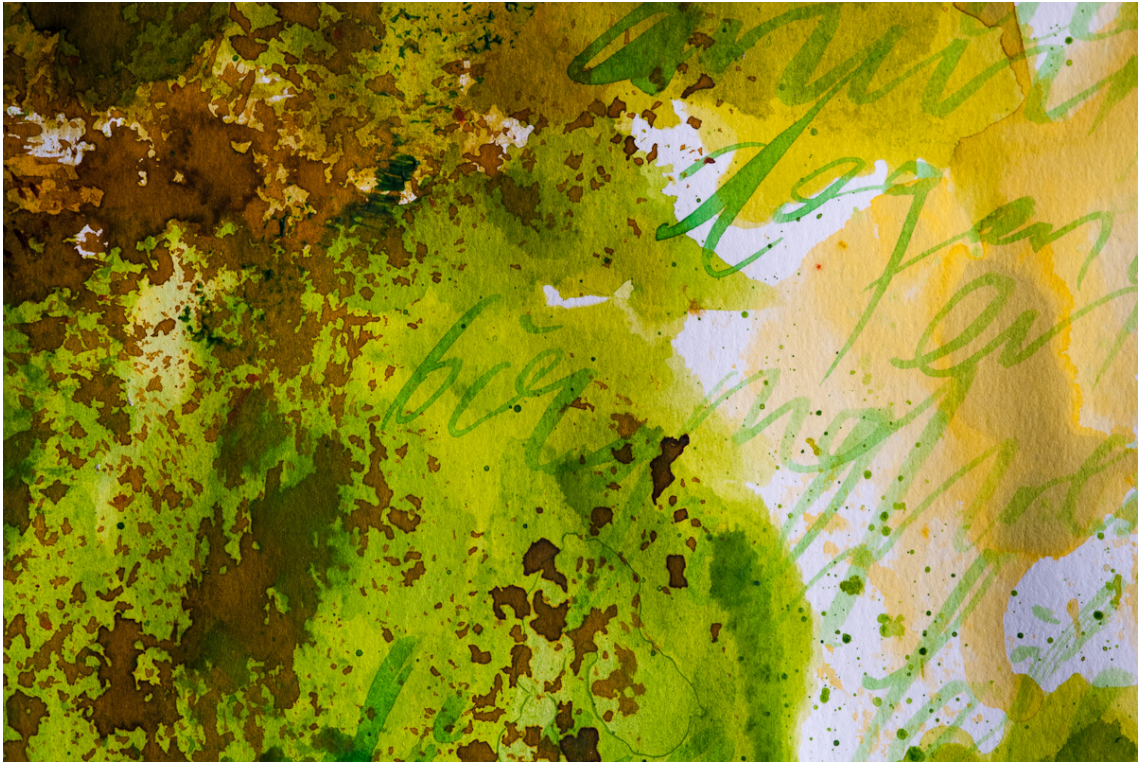
Onları arayan kasaba halkına, kendini çocuğu için kurban eden bir anneye
Ve hayatı boyunca konuşamayacak olan bir kıza ait bir öykü, ağaçlar arasında.
Ateş büyümeden söndü, geride küller ve çıplak toprak kaldı, örttüm üstünü ormanın,
Sanki birazdan titremeye başlayacağını hissettim, o kadar içindeydim ağaçların.
Aklımın içinde yanmaya devam etti ateş, yolumun dışında ne bulmuştum ben?
Düşüncelerimi kurban etmeye kim ayarttı beni, neden böyle bir sis çöktü şimdi?
Ay anlatacak bir şey olmadığını farketmiş olacak, çekti gitti gökyüzünden.
Ayrılıp bu karaderin örtüden insanın geçtiği yerlere yürüdüm, yavaşça, uyandırmaya
korkarak uyuyan neyse bu gözsüz yerde, sessizce ayrıldım,
Geride bıraktım bir gecelik çılgınlığımı ve içimde bir pişmanlık ve özlemle ağladım.
Döndüm küçük tepelerin güvenli patikalarına, güneş doğdu o sıra,
Sapsarı kavurdu gözlerimi, yalnız kalmışım, ellerim kesilmiş kanıyor, sis çekilmiş
üstümden, sırtımda aynı cesetler,
Ağzım yüzüm bana ait değilmiş, bir öykü bile kalmamış aklımda,
Burası hangi ülkenin toprağı, yönüm neresi, üstümdeki bu ağırlığa bir de yolların kiri
eklenmiş, soluk ne varsa çözülmüş ışığın içinde,
Bir kayıp için geldim buralara, bir güzellik için çekip gitmiş olanlara dair, kayboldum,
uykusuzdum, dağlardan aşağı şehre indim, herkesin gözü üstümde.
Bir su içeyim dedim meydanadaki havuzdan, bir de baktım yüzüme,
Ben bir ayı olmuşum.

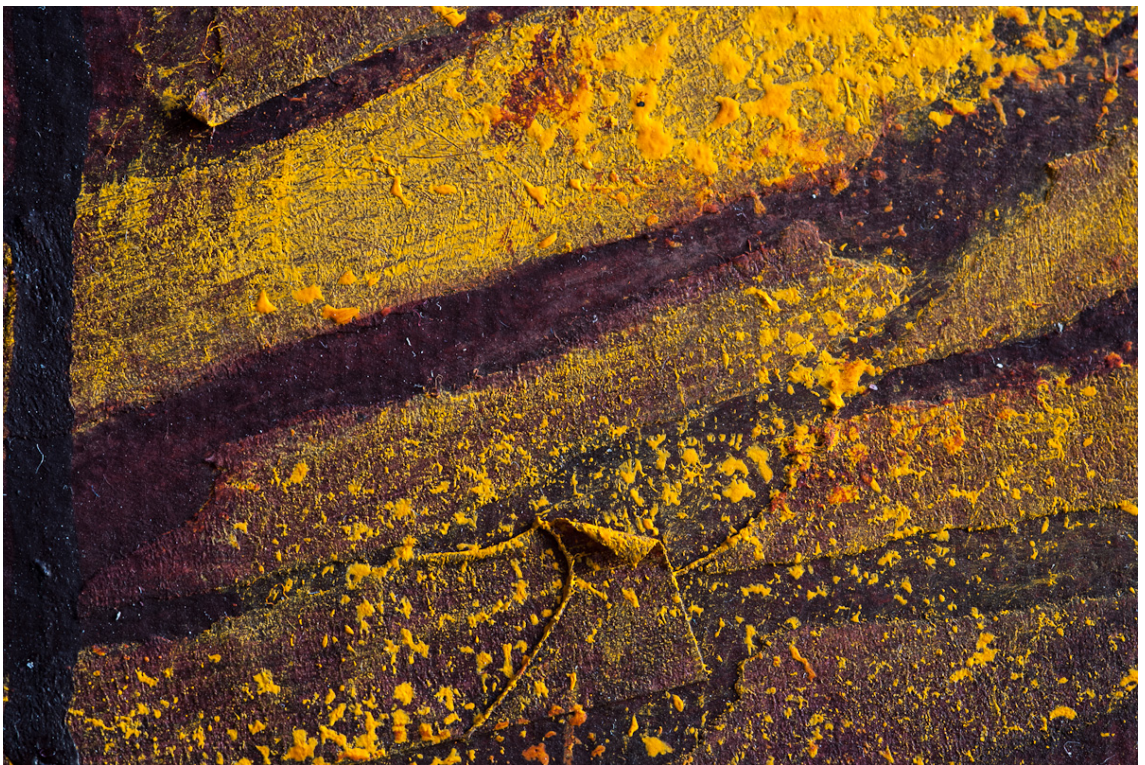
Baran Akkuş

B. APPENDIX B



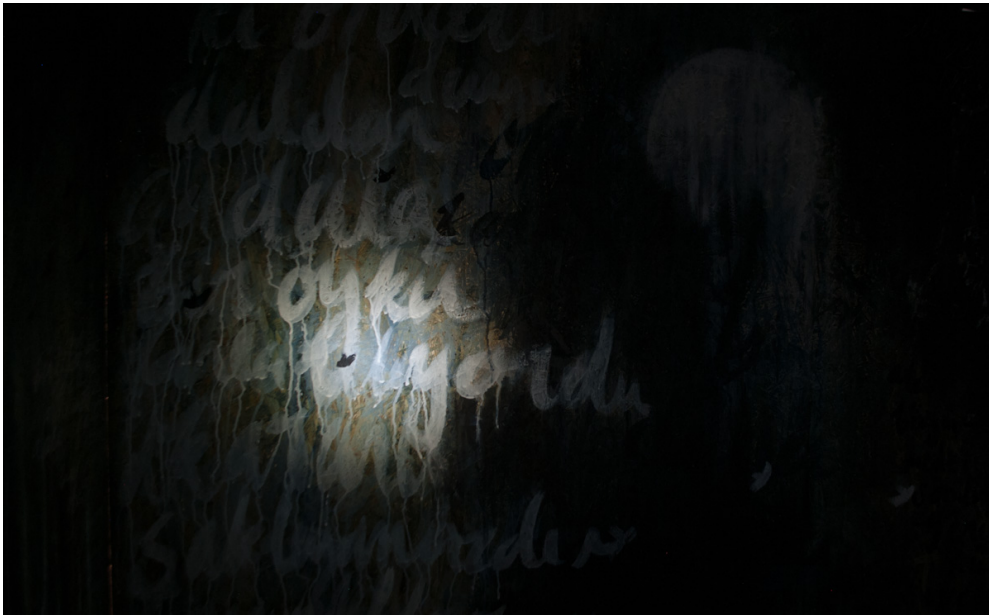




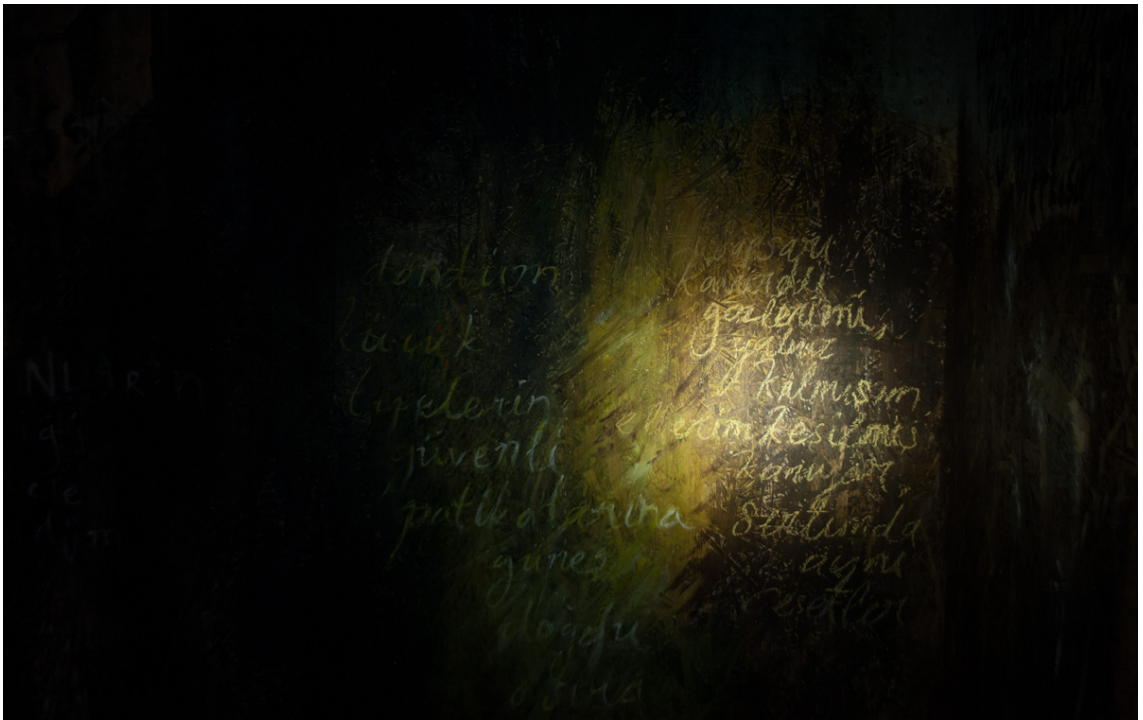


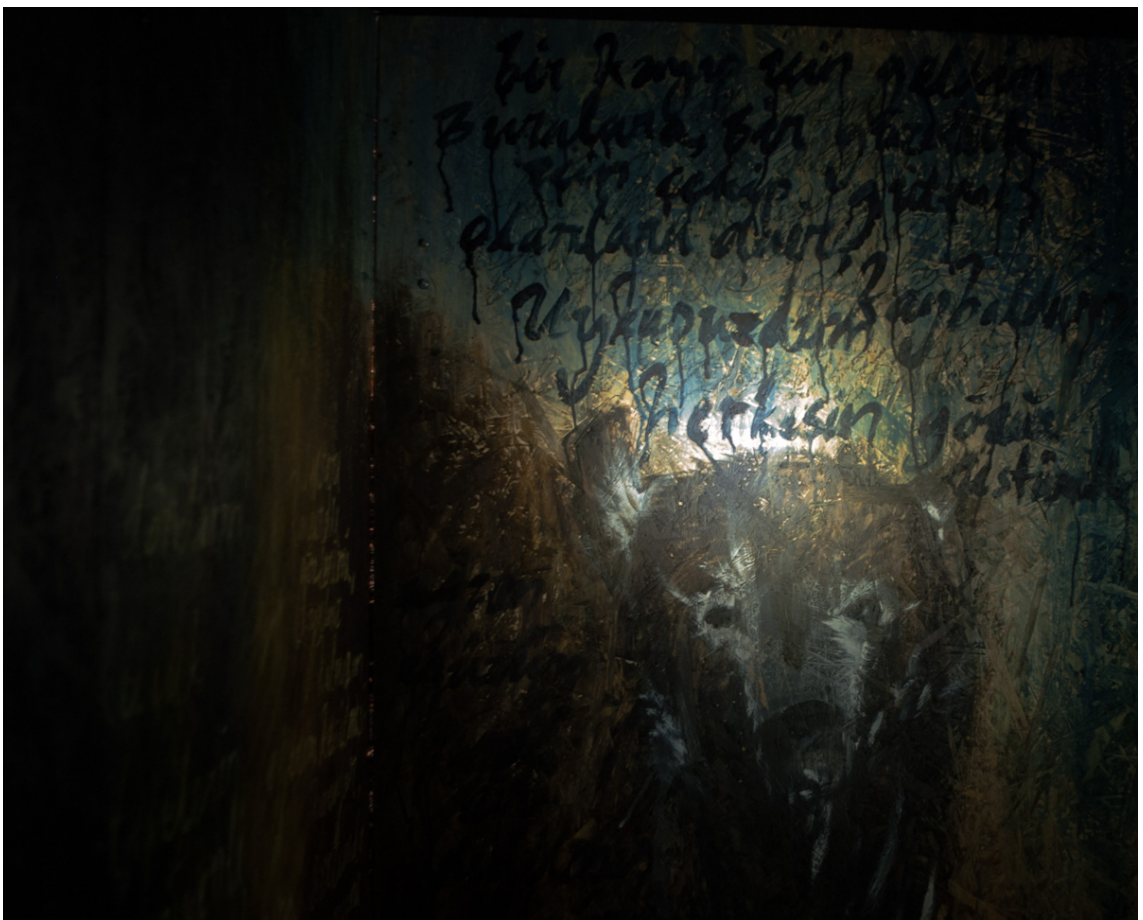
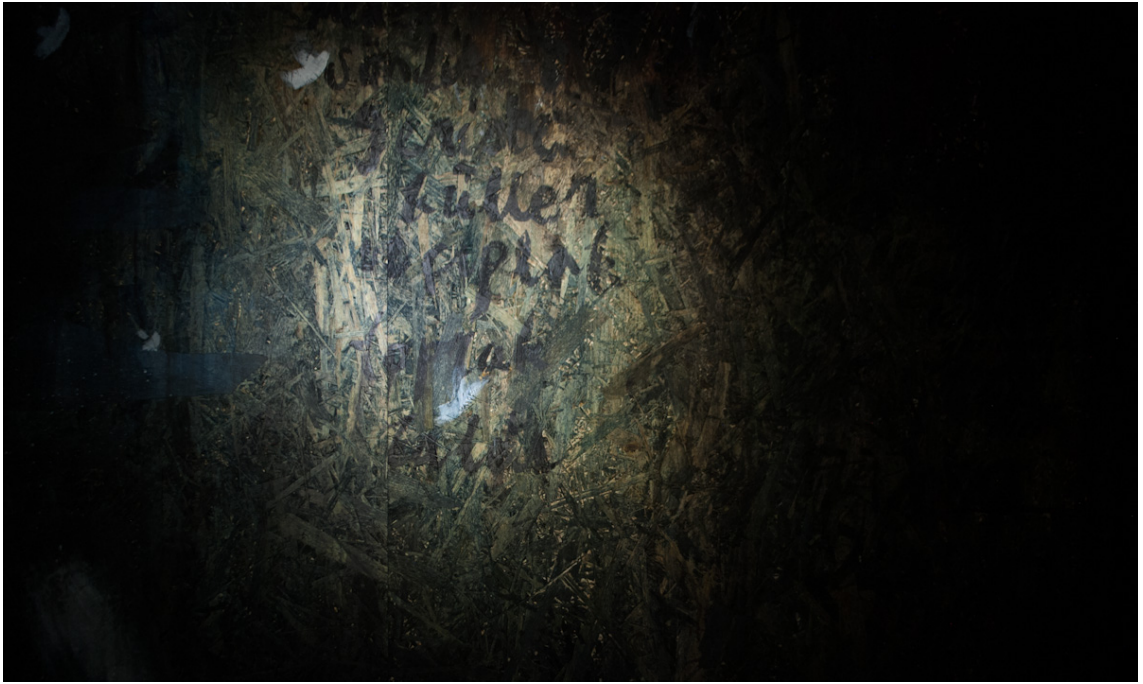
C. APPENDIX C

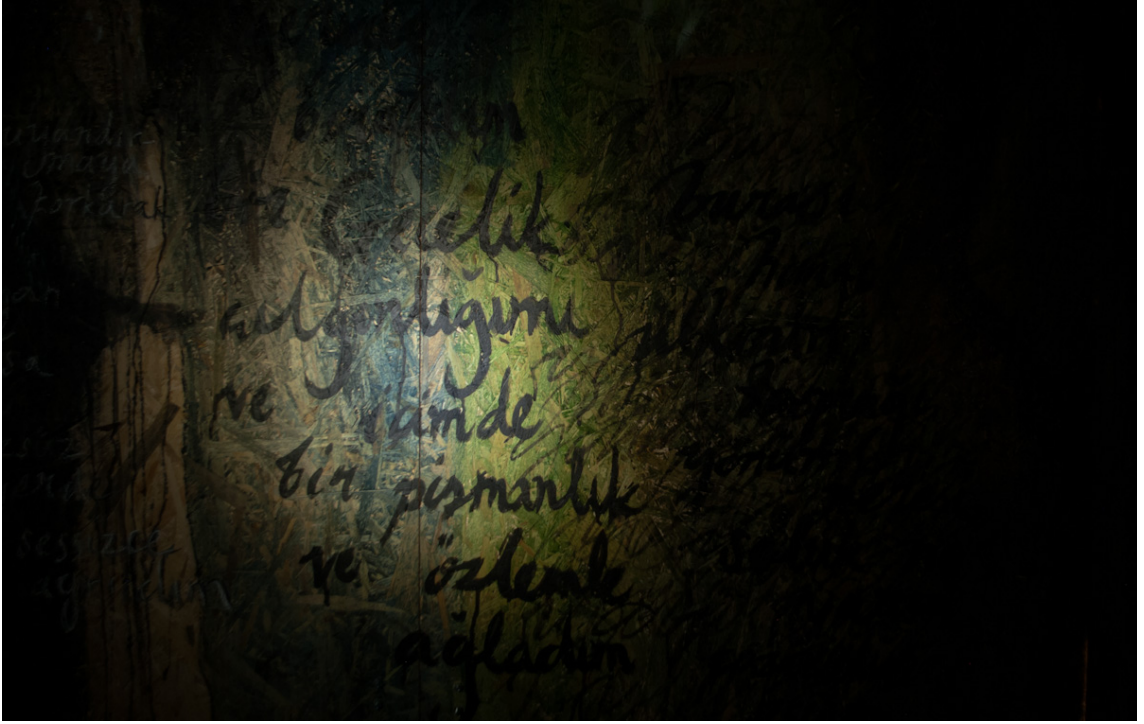












Light Painting by Serdar Bilici



Light Painting by Serdar Bilici





(Panoramic view- First four plates of the room) (Mural arrangement)



(Panoramic view- 5th-7th plates of the room) (Mural arrangement)



(Panoramic view- Last four plates of the room) (Mural Arrangement)