

Art Production in Turkey from 1980s to Today Interview with Hale Tenger by Isin Önel

Abstract: This interview focuses on the impacts of the political developments in Turkey from the 1980 military coup d'etat up until today on freedom of expression in the field of visual arts. It primarily deals with political expression in contemporary art starting from the personal experiences of Hale Tenger, looks at singular examples.

Keywords: Contemporary art, visual culture, freedom of expression, Osman Kavala

The following interview was first conducted in 2014, two years after the Gezi Protests. It was completed and updated first in July 2015, then in November 2017. However, to be able to compare and contrast the political landscape of today and of two years ago, we deliberately decided to keep some of the responses from 2015.

Işin Önel: We started this interview back in 2014, ended in June 2015 and now in 2017, it is very difficult to update the issues that were discussed here, under the shadow of the events that took place during the past two years. Although we had experienced the Gezi Park Protests and its primary consequences back then, no one would have expected these drastic changes in the country. Over the past years, we have been terrified to see the extent of state violence, bitterly iterating the history from the eighties. You have been an artist since the early nineties and witnessed the obstruction of freedom of expression first-hand. 1980 was the year of the military coup d'état, where thousands of people were killed, detained, or had to flee. Since then, each decade had its own suppression primarily persecuting left-wing thinkers of the country. Now we are back to an era where anyone can be detained unlawfully. I would like to start with your experiences from the earlier years: As an art practitioner, you always had a critical voice and dared using bold and strong political images. You faced some undesired consequences of using these images. Then these experiences became symbolic cases in the recent history of art production in Turkey. Could you elaborate more on these cases? What have you done and what have you encountered?

Hale Tenger: I was taken to court because of the work titled *I Know People Like This II*, which I installed at the 3rd Istanbul Biennial in 1992. The first lawsuit was for insulting the Turkish flag. Since there was no real Turkish flag in the piece, that case was dropped and a new one was opened; this time I was charged with insulting 'Turkishness' by using emblems of the nation. It all began with a right wing columnist's article targeting me directly, causing a reader to call and file a complaint with the Prosecution Office. They filed a legal case against me in a lower Civil Court of Peace. That court dismissed the case on grounds that it lacked jurisdiction, and the case was

re-opened in a Criminal Court of General Jurisdiction. My lawyer and I declared in our plea that the theme of the art piece had nothing to do with Turkey specifically, but was rather about the universal oppression of women by men. Subsequently, I was acquitted. If I had told that it was about the repressive politics of Turkey, the state violence, or in particular about the Kurdish problem, I would have directly ended up in jail. The '90s were years of brutal state violence, political assassinations, unidentified murders, burning of Kurdish villages, forced evacuations of thousands from southeastern Turkey. Overall, the legal case filed against me took almost a year to be resolved.

Isin Öno: In that work, you composed the star and crescent of the Turkish flag together with the Greek deity Priapos, known for his erected penis, and the popular image of 'the three monkeys'. What did the installation include, what were your motivations, and what happened to the work at the end?

Hale Tenger: *I Know People Like This II* was a wall installation composed of the three wise-monkeys (don't see/don't hear/don't speak) and those of Priapos. They were all ready-made figurines, bought from the souvenir shops in the Grand Bazaar of İstanbul. The figurines of the three monkeys formed the background of the composition, and those of Priapos formed several stars and a crescent. Regarding the original Priapos figure exhibited in the Selçuk Archeological Museum of Ephesus, an ancient fertility deity, not only its phallus is bigger than the rest of his body, but also its head is comparably very large. However, in the touristic souvenir versions, the head had shrunk and this was particularly perfect for me to use it as a symbol not only of excessive power but also to underline the feeblemindedness. What had motivated me to create this piece in the first place was the urgency to say something about the atrocities going on in the '90s and the male-dominated politics in Turkey. The Priapos figurines narrated what I wanted to express in that sense and the three monkeys obviously symbolized the repressed and silenced society. The piece was exhibited throughout the Biennial. Then at the end of the Biennial, after a female reader made the complaint over the phone to the prosecutor, the police prohibited the removal of the installation from the wall as part of the procedure of gathering evidence. So it stayed on the wall even after all the artworks were gone and the building was emptied.

Isin Öno: Could you tell us more about the court decision and your experiences after that? For example, did you feel unsafe during that period? Did you have any support from the art community?

Hale Tenger: Facing a criminal charge was a great source of stress for me, and it was my first such experience. Before producing the work, I had consulted some acquaintances about the possible legal outcomes. I was warned by most of them that I would be directly taken to the State Security Court. Under the 1982 Constitution State Security Courts (*Devlet Güvenlik Mahkemeleri*, DGM) were established by the then military government. The panel of three judges included a military judge in each State Security Court. In 1999 military judges were removed from the bench and in 2004

State Security Courts were formally abolished. Since I trusted the opinions of the people I spoke with, I decided to change the composition of the piece and added more stars. It helped me in the end; if it were only one star and one crescent, who knows which court I would have ended up at. It was not possible for me to stand before the court and say that it was a work criticising the state politics, especially against left wing people and Kurds unless I wanted to be jailed. In terms of solidarity, I got legal support from the IKSVA (Istanbul Foundation for Culture and Arts), especially from the late committee member Onat Kutlar. They helped a lot in issues such as finding a lawyer suitable for this specific case and determining a strategy during the court process. I was advised by them not to go public, which I already had by giving interviews to the media during the Biennial. Their idea was to keep it as quiet as possible, not to draw further media interest. Some rightwing newspapers had reported the court case and I was receiving threatening phone calls at my house. Apart from legal support, my family proudly stood by my side, my father even came with me to the courthouse when the prosecutor wanted to take my statement. Vasif Kortun, the curator of the exhibition came to the courthouse on the first day of trial. I still felt lonely though; during that year only my close friends supported me. But then there was no social media, no mobile phones etc. and my feeling of being isolated was perhaps related to my semi-distant personality in social surroundings.

Isin Öno: How did this judicial process affect your subsequent artistic production? How did your critical use of language and symbolism evolve after that? Could you tell us about your strategy on censorship and threats regarding your art production?

Hale Tenger: When I was invited to the 4th Istanbul Biennale in 1995, I directly came up with a reactionary piece. It was sort of my response to the court case. René Block the curator of the biennial, took me and some other artists to see the exhibition space, and I came across an old wooden guardhouse. Its windows and walls from inside were all covered with printed images from the nature as if whoever used this guardhouse didn't want to see the outside, although it was on the second floor of the abandoned old customs building overlooking the Bosphorus. I made my decision at that moment and told René I was going to use it in my installation. I surrounded it with barbed wire fence and added a few objects inside and installed a radio playing Turkish folk songs. The title of the piece was *We didn't go outside; we were always on the outside/We didn't go inside; we were always on the inside* a quotation from a poem by Edip Cansever. Once again, I said whatever I wanted to say but I used a strategy so that a court case was not triggered. I even used the star and crescent in the form of a brooch inside the guardhouse. It was a work questioning the boundaries between being in the inside/in jail and being on the outside/not being in jail, when there is no freedom of speech to begin with. In short, I developed a method, which enabled me to express whatever I wanted to express through different means.

In 2013, I made a new work for the exhibition *Envy, Enmity, Embarrassment* at Arter, Istanbul. It was an installation titled *I Know People Like This III*, consisting of a labyrinth of hundreds of images of political violence, mostly state violence, which I gathered from media photo archives. The images transformed to look like radiograms

were printed on x-ray films and were presented on giant negatoscopes. The display started at the storefront of Arter building in Beyoglu with the images of the most recent street clashes in the southeast towns of Turkey, which were not covered in the main stream media. About nine hundred images ended with the *Events of September of 1955 (the Istanbul Pogrom)*. We were in a way concerned about whether showing such images would cause a negative reaction or not, but nothing happened.

Isin Öno1: Looking from today's perspective in 2017, I see that some kind of legal system existed back then, that you could dance around it a little. Today, after all these incidents, we lost our trust in the judicial system completely. Academics, artists, human right activists, journalists, writers are imprisoned one by one. The circle is becoming smaller; any critical voice is under a great danger, and the country itself has become an "empire of fear". Today, I am not supposed to ask any of these questions to you, and you are not supposed to respond to them. May be we are not taken aback for the current atrocities and unlawfulness, because we have already experienced the '80s, but how can we trust and have faith in law in today? Were we too naïve?

Hale Tenger: I don't claim that we ever had a democratic, libertarian government in the past and we don't have one now either. Turkey has always been a country ruled by a central state power, whether governmental or military. There have been restraints on the media before as well, but the level and the means of oppression is unprecedented. The oppression is not only on the media, it's everywhere, on social life itself, on individuals, on institutions, associations, businesses etc. We have also seen unlawfulness previously but, at the present time the judiciary is directly controlled by one man and it is carried out in the open. Most court cases are initiated after the president's accusations are made live through the media and I think this is deliberately and systematically done. Most of these practices are against the law but we're living under an eviscerated system of law and order. It's not going to be easy if there'll ever be a chance to fix things up.

*Isin Öno1: You had been contending with taboos long before all those incidents. For example, your work named *The School of "Sikimden Aşşa Kasımpaşa"* (not to give a fuck) is one that might be much riskier to display today: A cauldron filled with blood, that would overflow as soon as the ablution taps are opened or when one of the over-hanging swords drops. What reactions did that work receive? What reactions would it receive today in 2017 as Ottomanism is very popular?*

Hale Tenger: That work was first put together and exhibited in 1990 and faced no intervention or reaction whatsoever. When it was displayed in 2011 at Istanbul Modern, there was again no hindrance. A columnist in a pro-government newspaper published an article that tried to target the work, claiming that it was insulting Islam, which was of course baseless and nothing happened. But I was a bit nervous for a while wondering if I would find myself in a legal battle again. The piece actually came out as a consequence of two tragic events in 1990 that distressed me immensely. First, was an article I read in the Cumhuriyet newspaper, reporting the horrific case of an

accountant who died after being imprisoned for 70 days, when one of his clients filed a claim against him in court. Although he was in an unconscious state for a long time, his family was informed only four days prior to his release. When his family could finally take him to the hospital he had bloodstain on his pants and his last words were “enough, don’t you see I cracked.” He then stopped talking and eating. There was no physical diagnosis of a sickness. He died shortly afterwards. His family thought he was raped, tortured. On the same day I read that article, Bahriye Üçok was assassinated by a mail bomb at her house (a female Turkish professor of theology, women’s rights activist, left-wing politician). I deliberately used three types of swords, Western type, Ottoman type and a toy sized type for children. Along with political connotations gender issues are also involved in it. I’d prefer not to show it in Turkey nowadays because we’re going through a hysterical period and no one can guess what is going to happen about anything.

Isin Önel: And then comes your work Down Up, through which you displace Ankara and move it into the Southeast Anatolia. If you had expressed your views therein within a written text rather than in the form of an artwork, that publication would, without a doubt, have been banned and pulled off the shelves. We are talking about 1992, a time where it required immense courage for one to talk about “the responsibility of Ankara”—i.e. the Turkish State, in the Kurdish struggle. Nothing has changed as of today.¹ Ankara still uses the same force around the region. And still, the “Aşağı Tükürsem Sakal, Yukarı Tükürsem Bıyık” (Between the devil and deep sea) perspective, which you referred to in your work, is alive. The next election is coming up very soon. We do not know whether the only party to represent Kurds would pass the 10% barrier or not, needless to say that the said barrier was put in action during the ‘90s against Kurdish parties. What is your take on this today (in June 2015)?

Hale Tenger: We moved from “Kurds do not exist” of the ‘90s to “Kurds do exist”; however, repression of Kurds in the region still continues. “Peace process” is on the table; but I have doubts about its progression when the government that leads the peace talks declares, just before the elections, that HDP (the party representing Kurds) would create great problems if it passes the barrier and enters the parliament. I at least believe that the process would not go backwards, and I think that the debates would continue eventually, although there is now a pause due to the approaching elections. Majority does want any clashes anymore.

Isin Önel: Coming to another ‘today’, to November 2017, number of improbable incidents happened that we wouldn’t be able to imagine at the time we conducted the interview in 2015. If I try to summarise: The pro-Kurdish party HDP entered the Parliament, passing the %10 barrier, but a coalition government could not be founded. A snap election took place in November 2015. Between the two elections, there were bomb explosions at many peace demonstrations. You were very right

¹ The question of “today” and the answer here dates back to June 2015, before the elections that first generated a lot of hope for a change in Kurdish issue. We have decided to keep it as it is to be able to contrast the political landscape of two years ago from today.

about your doubts in relation to the government's declaration that HDP entering into parliament would create great problems, it truly did. However, you also believed that the peace process would not go backwards. Today, we are not able to talk about peace anymore. During the conflicts between Kurdish forces and Turkish military forces many people died or were injured. Last summer, we had another military coup attempt. The leaders and the majority of the members of the HDP are in prison. As of last week, Osman Kavala a left-wing businessman, human rights activist and founder of Anadolu Kültür, an active non-profit institution that runs art and culture projects and fights against fascism and discrimination, is in prison. We are back to the days where "Kurds do not –or must not- exist". From today's perspective what can you say about the Kurdish issue and its place in the field of art?

Hale Tenger: As you say, I was right about my doubts and concerns on the government side but unfortunately thinking that things won't go backwards as of clashes and violence was a naive and wishful thinking on my part. So many catastrophic things happened since we talked back in June 2015. We are now living under the rule of State of Emergency since July 2016, consecutively for 16 months. When HDP won 13% of the votes, AKP remained at 41% and could not form a government by itself as a single party, and this lit the fuse. After 15 July 2016 coup attempt came the extensive arrests and purges that turned into a counter-coup, a crackdown on whatever dissent is left in Turkey. With each new step the government takes, we think the unthinkable is happening. It is beyond our limits of comprehension. After the arrest of human rights advocates holding an open door training workshop at a hotel in Büyükdada (they were released last week but charges and court case continues), now Osman Kavala is arrested. The charges that they are accused of are simply absurd. It is not a judicial process we are witnessing, it is a pathetic parody. In almost all court cases now, it became a standard issue that the indictment accuses defendants of being member of all terror organizations at once (FETÖ/PDY – PKK/KCK – DHKPC, MLKP). On top of that Kavala is also accused of being an organizer and overseer of the Gezi incidents. As Prof. Ayşe Buğra commented on Anadolu Kultur's public release after Kavala's arrest, "Moreover this also means that Osman Kavala was involved in the attempted coup along with the members of the organization who collected the evidence which led to Kavala's arrest, which is tragicomic beyond being unlawful." Coming to your question, not only the Kurdish issue, everything is at a halt right now, nothing is normal. We all try to carry on with our lives, continue working, doing the best of what we can do, but it is like living in an aquarium, loaded with unhappiness, tension, guilt feelings for not being able to be of much help in defending democratic rights. Arts and all are in this aquarium, in a state of limbo.

Isin Önel: Could you compare the participation of the artists in political resistance during the Gezi protests and today? How does the politics of fear affect the field of visual arts? Do you see any form of unification, alliance, collectiveness among the people working in the field of art and culture?

Hale Tenger: I would prefer to talk about it not only by focusing on arts and artists since the crackdowns are massive, in every field, everywhere. A professor, a civil servant, a student or a housewife is amongst all in an endless list of citizens being targeted, either by signing a petition as in the case of "Academicians for Peace" or by a social media post. Gezi events came out as a reaction, there were people from various backgrounds; the common ground was that everyone was fed up with the way things have been going on politically. Huge crowds gathered in Taksim Square for many days and just as well in many other cities all around Turkey. Masses were out on the streets simply as exasperated citizens. Gezi opened up new forms of getting together, standing together, public discussion platforms for people from non-homogeneous backgrounds. It was a truly peaceful and inspiring experience and brought optimism that was not in our reach for a long time. Nowadays it is just the opposite, there is extreme pressure from the government for silencing every aspect of our lives. Even delivering a message on social media makes one think of whether you might be targeted next. I have seen the '80s, '90s but what we are experiencing now is different, wondering whether your family members can also be targeted, witnessing a wife or husband being taken into custody or arrested as a retaliation to their partner, that a whole family's assets can and are being seized. This is the end of law. Only a very small minority is still vocal and the rest is in a vacuum.

Isin Öno: Back in 1997 Halil Altındere constructed a work with national ID cards within the Dance with Taboos series for the İstanbul Biennial. The work, which was tackling identity, faced a similar interrogation process as yours. Altındere covered the face of Atatürk on the 1.000.000 banknote with his own "Kurdish" hands. The court questioned whether a crime of "insulting Atatürk and the Turkish Lira" was committed. Then in 2005, the catalogue of the exhibition Free Kick within the 2005 Biennial was puled off for violating the Turkish Criminal Code Nr. 301. One could argue that the visibility of the biennials renders them more susceptible to censorship than regular contemporary art activities. Do you think that things have changed in this regard in today's Turkey (2015-2017) compared to the '80s and the '90s? What are the taboos today?

Hale Tenger: (2015) Nothing has changed for example regarding exhibiting my work *I Know People Like This II*. Although the peace talks are in progress and the ban on the Kurdish language has ended, it could still be said that the sensitivities about national symbols has not lessened, if not increased. We see this clearly, considering the countless lawsuits filed by even the most senior government officials against ordinary people, based on claims of insult where there is none. Yes, there have been some changes, but it is a pretty discretionary system that determines when, where, and for whom these changes would create an area of freedom. This discretion blurs everything. One of the biggest problems of Turkey is the uncertainty created by this discretion in the practice of law.

(2017) I now would say that sensitivities about national symbols of Turkishness are much more prevalent with the support of governmental policies. The civil servants are under extreme pressure if they are not pro-government. Taboos are widespread and

differ depending on where you stand. Even conversations with a taxi driver, or a shopkeeper are constrained these days, as political cleavages are even sharper.

Isin Öno: Do you think that, in spite of all that discretion, freedom of speech in artistic production has improved or conserved in Turkey since the '80s? (2015)

Hale Tenger: Visual arts scene is still a rather obscure field in Turkey and therefore accommodates more freedom. On the other hand, more popular exhibitions like biennials or art fairs can attract attention in a negative sense, and reactionary interventions might occur leading to censorship. So, we never know what will happen, if an artwork might face censorship or backlash. The imprudence in the practice of law also plays its role in arts. There is a constant repression caused by uncertainty. For example back in 2007 there was going to be a group exhibition presenting highlights from the previous Istanbul Biennials at Istanbul Modern, and although I was acquitted from the previous lawsuit, the lawyers I consulted informed me that a similar lawsuit can be filed if the work will be exhibited again. Therefore I prefer not to exhibit *I Know People Like This II* in Turkey. Despite progress on the political front, and improvements since the oppression of Kurds in the '90s to peace debates of today, lack of freedom of speech still persists.

Isin Öno: How would you answer this question today, in 2017?

Hale Tenger: It is much more rigid nowadays. First because of State of Emergency and second because of the atmosphere created by so-called protests at exhibitions, which look pretty organized. Recently an organized attack occurred at the exhibition of Ömer Koç's collection at Abdülmecit Efendi Palace, twice in one day. The groups attacked the guards and shouted, "Is this secularism? This country is in this condition because of you. These works cannot be exhibited". Also last year, at the opening of Istanbul Contemporary art fair a group attacked and claimed a sculpture to be removed as they found it offensive. People involved in such incidents are set free immediately after being taken to the police station and are usually not charged.

Isin Öno: Although artists actively participated in the Gezi resistance, a lot of them declared their concerns about displaying works about it. You have displayed only one piece, in Germany, that tackled this process. Could you elaborate on that?

Hale Tenger: A day before the Gezi events, on May 30th, I had a meeting with René Block to discuss which work to present at an exhibition he was curating in Berlin. At that time *Swinging on the Stars*, a video installation of mine was being presented at Galeri Nev in Istanbul. The video consists of many three wise-monkeys, a re-occurring motif in my works, dancing in outer space, depicted in a slightly ghostly way similar to that of x-ray images. The lyrics of the popular song (titled *Swinging on a Star*) featured in the video includes parts such as "if you don't do your homework, you will turn into a mule, if you don't do this and that you will turn into a fish, pig" etc. The monkeys only opened their eyes, ears and mouth when such threats in lyrics were heard. We agreed to show this video in Berlin and René went back next morning. The next day the Gezi

events started and I had my first experience of being pepper sprayed. That day it occurred to me that it would be unfair to show the video we had agreed upon, after all I had witnessed huge crowds on the streets. Afterwards I wrote to René explaining that I could not show that work, asking him to forgive me. He proposed to include my long letter as a manifesto in the exhibition and I replied that I would think about it. As time passed by, the turmoil cooled down; I had the idea of making a new version of the video and presenting both in a loop during the exhibition. In the new version, the three monkeys were wearing a gas mask each, with eyes and ears open, raising their fists in the air and singing along the famous song "Fire! We'll see!" (a popular political chant based on police spraying pepper or tear gas). This video was titled *¿HOPE?* and was my first work right after the Gezi events. In 2014, I made an artist's book with the same title. It was composed of selection of photographs and stills from videos I had taken during Gezi. The book was presented at Gezi-themed exhibition *Stay With Me* at the Apartment Project in Berlin, together with many other artists' books.

Isin Öno: We observe in that particular work that by placing question marks before and after the title, you question whether the Gezi period could be a source of hope, or at least you hoped that it would. Two years forward, what do you think of hope today? (2015)

Hale Tenger: Gezi events and the forums surrounding them were platforms of claiming and defending rights, with a measure of extent and attendance we've never seen before. This course of events gave hope to those who had lived under coups d'états and oppressive regimes for decades. Unfortunately, neither the laws of security that followed, nor the government's continuing oppressive politics promise any hope. However, if there will be a weakening of this oppressive authority it might be because of the corruption they are surrounded with and the conflicts within the ruling party. Hope appears only at this point. This party who had come into power ten years ago with promises of more freedom and less military tutelage became a tool of a centrist and oppressive regime itself. And that is the irony.

Isin Öno: In September 2013, after Gezi, while the streets were still full of pepper gas and upside down with the protests, the Istanbul Biennial took place. Its conceptual frame had been built on public space, tackling urban issues that also lead to the start of Gezi events. However, that time the biennial could not take place on public space due to the ongoing violence on the streets. This was probably the most realistic and safe option due to high number of participants. However, it was criticized by various communities. For some, the biennial should have stayed in the public domain and should have continued as part of the battle for using public spaces freely. For others, the withdrawal of the biennial from public space in and of itself was a political statement. At the end of the day, it was not ethical to enable the use of public space by collaborating with local authorities who had been invading the public space in an oppressive manner, and it was not safe to use it unauthorized. What was your view and stance about this issue?

Hale Tenger: I think it was the correct decision; it would not have been reasonable for the Biennial organizers to request permission from local authorities that were in accord with the government's position.

Isin Önoł: We are getting near to April 2015, where the hundredth year commemoration of the genocide will take place. When this piece is published, the related activities will be long over. One of them is a Wish Tree Project of yours; could you tell us about that one?

Hale Tenger: It was mentioned that the members of the Armenian diaspora who will join the hundredth year commemoration of the genocide would like to experience a ritual of tying up pieces of clothes with wishes on a tree in Taksim. The idea was of Nancy Kricorian and the *Wish Tree* proposal was from Osman Kavala. I accepted the proposal with pleasure as it is a ritual practiced in Anatolia as well and I had an earlier work titled *Wishing Tree* dating back to 1990. The metal tree sculpture that I built, reflecting this worldwide popular tradition formed a symbolic yet intensely sentimental space for the Armenians who came to Istanbul to commemorate their lost ones. In a short time, the branches of the tree were covered with pieces of clothes and ribbons with the names of the lost ones and wishes written on them. The *Wish Tree* will be displayed at Depo for some time after the Commemoration.

Isin Önoł: It is very ironic that two years ago, we finished this interview with Depo, and its founder Osman Kavala. He was shockingly detained ten days ago, and although we all thought he would be released immediately, he was arrested after a quick court case. We don't know how long he will be imprisoned for. He is one of the strongest voices in arts and culture in Turkey, creating platforms for discussions about untouchable subjects such as Kurdistan, forced disappearances, Armenian Genocide... Now, together with him, all our hope for freedom of expression is imprisoned. Now it is November 2017. Where do we go from here?

Hale Tenger: I had a dream in which Özlem (Dalkıran, from Citizenship Association, former Helsinki Citizens Association, Istanbul, one of the arrested human rights advocates in Istanbul) was approaching me with a big smile on her face, and I was asking her how come she was there, the trial was due next week and with a cute hush gesture she was saying they released her early. I woke up so happy. On that same day I learned of Osman Kavala's detention, and was shocked that it had come to this. The following week all human rights advocates were released, but then Kavala was arrested. I am sure Kavala will be released as well, but they are stealing days from peoples' lives. It has become too absurd and I'm worried about how this unlawfulness will be remedied. Besides Turkey, the whole Middle East is again on the verge of new developments. While Syria is still unresolved, now hot news are coming from Saudi Arabia and Lebanon. We had thought the cold war had ended, but it actually never did. Turkey is in the middle of it too just like the rest of the Middle East.

BIOGRAPHIES

HALE TENGER

In her wide range of production Hale Tenger creates three dimensional narratives inspired by diverse historical, political and psychosocial references. Built by an unconventional use of materials, audio and video, her installations focus on presence and experience, a pivotal element in her practice.

By operating with the qualities of mood, sound, texture and affect, her installations, whether creating an uncanny atmosphere or a meditative one, trace out the relationship between presence and absence, material and intelligible. Tenger's narratives often oscillate between sameness and alterity, between fragility and persistence. The signs of oppression and repression therefore are recuperated by the signs of resistance and transition for healing and change.

Selected recent solo exhibitions include: Protocinema, NY (2015); Galeri Nev, Istanbul (2013); Smithsonian Institute, Washington (2011); Green Art Gallery, Dubai (2011). She has participated in numerous biennials including: Venice (2017), Kwangju (2000), São Paulo (1994), Manifesta (1996), Istanbul (1992 and 1995), Havana (2003), Johannesburg (1998). Her work has been featured in institutions including: Centre Pompidou, Espace Culturel Louis Vuitton, Paris; ARTER, SALT, Istanbul Modern, Istanbul; Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam; NBK, Martin-Gropius-Bau, Berlin; tba21, Vienna; Palais des Beaux Arts de Lille; Carré d'Art Museum, Nîmes; Museum Arnhem; The New Museum, New York.

IŞIN ÖNOL

Isin Önol (1977, Turkey) is a writer and curator based in Vienna and New York. She is a member of Center for the Study of Social Difference at Columbia University, New York. She works as a guest critic at the Arts & Design MFA program at Montclair University, New Jersey and as a visiting curator at the Social Design – Art as Urban Innovation MA Program at University of Applied Arts, Vienna. Since 2009, she has been working as an independent curator in Vienna and abroad. Before that, she led the Elgiz Museum of Contemporary Art as its director and curator in Istanbul for three years.

Önol is a PhD Candidate at the Department of Cultural Studies, University of Applied Arts, Vienna, Austria. She has completed her Master of Advance Studies on Curating at ZHdK, Zürcher Hochschule der Kunst, Zürich, Switzerland (2009-2011). She participated to Ecole du Magasin, International Curatorial Training Programme, Centre National d'Art Contemporain, Grenoble, France and Gwangju Biennale International Curator Course, Gwangju, South Korea (2009). She received her MFA in Visual Arts and Visual Communication Design from Sabanci University (2003), and her BA in Art Education from Marmara University (2000), Istanbul, Turkey.