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*Özlem Altın*



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Özlem Altın's research focuses on the articulations between inanimate body parts and the artefact in motion. Her collages and photographic constellations operate like graphic notations towards a dramaturgy of motion in space and time, investigating compatibilities, translations and adaptations between the human body, animal and vegetal parts, cultural artefacts and language. As she cuts, conceals, reproduces and paints over layers of archival imagery, the interplay between receding figures and a protruding background underlines a state of in-betweenness positioning every element in a dynamic tension between potentiality and actuality.

Constituting an archive of her own photographs and found images, including other artists' works and material from museum collections, Özlem Altın selectively activates imagery from this archive through collages, photographs and painting, creating multilayered constellations of arrested motion. Abolishing any hierarchies within the source material, she develops a highly associative visual semantic that focuses on gestures as abstractions. She cuts, collages, mounts, reproduces and paints over these images, so that they are transformed almost theatrically into ensembles engaged in simultaneous action, in discreet constellations of repetitions and alterations.

Altın's contouring of images with ink and paint at once isolates fragments - human arms and hands depicted in photographs and sculptures, plants and herons, monsters and ghostly figures - from their original context, and re-animates them in a new mythological vocabulary that dissolves the border between the organic and the artifact, the spectral and the physical. Distinctly hand painted, these marks enact an encounter between the indexicality of photographic capture and the somatic qualities associated with touch.

Alongside exhibition contexts, the book form is integral to Altın's research as a spatial and temporal medium where her work unfolds. Having founded Orient Press as a publishing platform in Berlin in 2007, she has created and disseminated artist books since early stages of her practice, including *Dance* (Camera Austria, 2017); *Umbra* (2010); *Survival Of An Idea* (2008); *The Primitive Mentality* (2007). Özlem Altın (b. 1977, Goch, Germany) lives and works in Berlin.

Altın studied at the ArtEZ Hogeschool voor de Kunsten in Arnhem from 2000 to 2003 and graduated from the Piet Zwart Institute in Rotterdam with a Master of Fine Arts in 2006. Recent solo exhibitions include *Processing*, Camera Austria, (Graz, 2017); *Untitled* (Touch or Melancholy), Lentos, (Linz, 2016); *No story, no*, Witte de With, (Rotterdam, 2015). Her work has been included in important group shows such as *The Milk of Dreams*, 59th International Art Exhibition of La Biennale di Venezia (2022); *Tongues of Time*, Villa Romana, (Florence, 2021); *Companion Pieces: New Photography 2020*, MoMA online (2020); *Part of the Labyrinth*, Göteborg International Biennial for Contemporary Art (Gothenburg, 2019); *The Seventh Continent*, 16th Istanbul Biennial (2019); *We don't need another hero*, 10th Berlin Biennale (2018); *Beyond Words*, 4th Mardin Biennial (2018). Özlem Altın was the recipient of Stiftung Kunstfonds' Work Grant in 2022 and a Fellow at the Villa Romana, Florence, in 2020. In 2023, she is awarded by the city of Berlin, the Hannah-Höch-Förderpreis 2024 (in photography) and a solo exhibition with accompanying catalogue at Berlinische Galerie in June 2024. She holds professorships at Die Hochschule für Grafik und Buchkunst / Academy of Fine Arts, Leipzig and Academy of Arts Architecture & Design (UMPRUM) in Prague.

## ÖZLEM ALTIN

1977, Goch.

Lives and works in Berlin.

### Professorship

- 2023 Visiting professor, Visiting Artist Studio, UMPRUM Prague, CZ
- 2021 Visiting professor for photography, HGB Art Academy, Leipzig, DE
- 2007 Founding of independent publisher for artist books Orient Press, Berlin, DE

### Education

- 2006 MFA, Piet Zwart Institute, Rotterdam, NL
- 2003 BA Fine Arts, Hogeschool voor de Kunsten, Arnhem, NL

### Solo Exhibitions

- 2024 *Prisma*, cur. Katia Reich, Berlinische Gallery, Berlin, DE
- 2023 *RELEASE*, Page Not Found, The Hague, NL  
*Memory and Desire*, stirring, (with Tereza Zelenkova) cur. Tereza Rudolf, Fotograf Gallery, Prague, CZ
- 2022 *Kismet*, THE PILL, Istanbul, TR
- 2019 *Honey Moon*, Sauvage, Düsseldorf, DE  
*Lens*, Kunst Meran, curated by Christiane Rekade, Merano, IT
- 2017 *Processing*, Camera Austria, steirischer herbst, Graz, AT
- 2016 *Interiore*, SpazioA, Pistoia, IT  
*Hole or screen (her body, a fragment)*, Raum mit Licht, Vienna, AT  
*Untitled (touch or melancholy)*, Sammlungsausstellung, Lentos Kunstmuseum, Linz, AT
- 2015 *Kiria Koula*, cur. Juana Berio (with Patricia L. Boyd), San Francisco, USA  
*No story, no*, Witte de With, cur. Defne Ayas, Samuel Saelemakers, Rotterdam, NL
- 2013 *Cathartic ballet*, Circus, Berlin, DE
- 2012 *Rhythm of Resemblance*, Leopold-Hoesch-Museum, Düren, DE
- 2011 *Several bodies*, Circus, Berlin, DE
- 2010 *Ianus (My memory of what happened is not what happened)*, Fondazione Morra Greco, Naples, IT
- 2009 *Each movement appears like hesitation*, Circus, Berlin, DE
- 2008 *Geometric portrait*, Museum voor Moderne Kunst, Arnhem, NL
- 2007 *Die dritten Personen*, Swingr, Vienna, AT
- 2006 *The Movement Movement*, BRAVO, (with Ruth Buchanan), Rotterdam, NL  
*There are people watching, expecting to hear absolute silence*, TENT, Rotterdam, NL

### Selected Group Exhibitions

- 2024 *The Color Out of Space*, cur. Jean-Charles Vergne, THE PILL, Istanbul, TR

- In the Body of Language*, cur. Margareth Kaserer and Ulrike Buck, Fort Biennale 01, Franzensfeste, IT
- Further Away*, cur. Ali Akay, 6th Mardin Biennial, Mardin, TR
- 2023 *Woods: More-than-Human Curiosity Symposium*, cur. Zuzana Blochová, Edith Jeřábková, and Tereza Porybná, Orlicke Mountains, CZ  
*Ex-Voto*, cur. Lucy Stein and Sarah Hartnett originalprojects; PRIMEYARC, Market Gates, UK  
*touch. Politiken der Berührung*, cur. Maren Lübke-Tidow and Rebecca Wilson, EMOP, Amtsalon, Berlin, DE  
*Scores For Transformation*, cur. Ruth Bucanan, Artspace Aotearoa, Auckland, NZ
- 2022 *The Milk of Dreams*, 59th International Art Exhibition of La Biennale di Venezia, cur. Cecilia Alemani, Venice, IT  
*Omnibus*, Kinderhook & Caracas, curated by Sol Calero und Chris Kline, Berlin, DE  
*Editions*, Kunstverein Braunschweig, Braunschweig, DE
- 2021 *Tongues of Time*, Villa Romana, Florence, IT
- 2020 *Companion Pieces: New Photography 2020*, cur. Lucy Gallun, MoMA (online)  
*The Answer Will Come*, cur. Susanne Weiss, Die Antwort kommt, KV Leipzig, DE  
Exhibition of prize fellows, Villa Romana, Florence, IT
- 2019 *Part of the Labyrinth*, GIBCA 10th Gothenburg Biennial, cur. Lisa Rosendahl, SE  
*The Seventh Continent*, 16th Istanbul Biennial, cur. Nicolas Bourriaud, TR  
50 Jahre neue Gesellschaft, nGbk, Berlin, DE  
*What remains is what the poets found*, PS120, cur. Jesi Khadivi and Justin Polera, Berlin, DE  
*A skin surrounding everything*, Manifold Books, Amsterdam, NL
- 2018 *We don't need another hero*, 10th Berlin Biennial, cur. Gabi Ngcobo et al., DE  
*Beyond Words*, 4th Mardin Biennial, cur. Nazlı Gürlek et al., Mardin, TR
- 2017 *Cosmology of the Boundless*, Museion, Bolzano, IT  
*The surface of shrimp-the gesture of soap*, cur. Zoe Miller, UVE, Berlin, DE
- 2016 *Sparkling like the surface of the ocean*, cur. Hanne Hagenhaars, Garage Rotterdam, NL  
*To Walk A Line*, cur. Katarina Zdjelar, Akademie der Künste der Welt, Köln, DE  
*What we have overlooked*, cur. Mirjam Westen, Museum Arnhem at Framer Framed, Amsterdam, NL  
*Beyond lawn and order*, cur. Rodrigo Ortiz Monasterio, josegarcia, xm, Mexico City, MX
- 2015 *Regarding Spectatorship*, cur. Marianna Liosi and Boaz Levin, Kunstraum Bethanien, Berlin, DE  
OAOA University, cur. Ola Vasiljeva, de Vleeshal Kabinetten, Middelburg, NL  
*I hear your voice reflected...*, curated by Emily Wardill and Jesi Khadivi, Carlier Gebauer, Berlin, DE
- 2014 *The Moving Museum*, Istanbul, TR  
*Trocadero*, cur. Nazlı Gürlek, Nesrin Esirtgen Collection Art Space, Istanbul, TR



- 2013 *Disappear like this word*, Aleksander Bruno, Warsaw, PL  
*Museum Off Museum*, Bielefelder Kunstverein, Bielefeld Das Ende des 20. Jahrhunderts, Hamburger Bahnhof, Berlin, DE  
*Salon der Angst*, cur. Cathérine Hug and Nicolaus Schafhausen, Kunsthalle Wien, Vienna, AT  
*Artists for Tichy*, cur. Zdenek Felix, GASK Central Bohemian Gallery, Kutna Hora, CZ  
*Altin*, cur. Sol Calero and Chris Kline, Kinderhook & Caracas, Berlin, DE  
*Always Yours*, Lost Objects, Monuments, cur. Neil Beloufa, Balice Hertling, Paris, FR
- 2012 *Two hands and a head*, SVIT, Prague, AT  
*Dear Aby Warburg*, What Can Be Done with Images?, cur. by Eva Schmidt, Museum für Gegenwartskunst, Siegen, DE  
*Case Report*, cur. Lorenzo Sandoval, Nogueras Blanchard, Barcelona, SP
- 2011 *the light, the shape & the body*, cur. Philipp Ziegler, Galerie Reinhard Hauff, Stuttgart, DE  
*Figures in Space*, cur. Rita Kersting, Galerie Ute Parduhn, Düsseldorf, DE  
*Malibu Circa 1990*, Contemporary Art Gallery, Malibu, USA  
*Untitled (Evidence): From Alternative Knowledge to Counter Memories*, cur. Vincent Honoré, David Roberts Art Foundation, London, UK  
*based in Berlin*, Atelierhaus Monbijoupark, Berlin, DE  
*Starke Emergenz*, cur. Veit Loers, Kunstraum Innsbruck, Innsbruck, AT
- 2010 *Spirits & Landscapes*, cur. Ada von Hoorebeke, Wiels, Brussels, BE  
*Purpling*, cur. Lucy Stein, Gimpel Fils, London Source Material, TENT, Rotterdam, NL

#### Awards & Grants

- 2024 Hannah-Hösch-Förderpreis, Berlin, DE  
2023 Publication grant, Berliner Senatsverwaltung für Kultur, Berlin, DE  
2022 Arbeitsstipendium, Stiftung Kunstfonds, Bonn, DE  
2020 Villa Romana Prize, Florence, IT  
2012 Scholarship of Günther-Peill-Stiftung, Düren, DE  
2009 Work grant, Fonds BKVB, Amsterdam, NL  
2008 Publication grant, Fonds BKVB, Amsterdam, NL  
2007 Work grant, Fonds BKVB, Amsterdam, NL  
2006 Scholarship of Dullertstichting Hey KonijnFonds, Arnhem, NL

#### Residencies

- 2018 Residency CCA Andratx, Mallorca, SP  
2014 Residency Goethe-Institut, IMMA, Dublin, IE  
Residency The Moving Museum, Istanbul, TR  
2010 Residency Fondazione Morra Greco, Naples, IT  
2006 Residency Schloss Ringenberg, Hamminkeln, DE

#### Artist Books and Book Projects

- 2021 *Serpentine Alphabet*, published by Villa Romana, Florence, IT  
2017 *Dance*, Edition Camera Austria, Graz, AU  
2015 *Notes on Notes*, published by Orient Press, Berlin and Witte de With, Rotterdam, NL  
2014 *Museum Off Museum*, Bielefelder Kunstverein, published by Sternberg Press, Berlin, DE  
2013 *Invisible mountains*, published by Orient Press, Berlin, DE  
2012 *One Question-Nine Possible Answers-Three rooms*, issue one, edited by Melanie Bonajo, published by Künstlerhaus Bethanien, Berlin, DE  
*Confusion between the animate and inanimate*, artist book published by Leopold Hoesch Museum, Dueren, Nicolai Verlag, Berlin, DE
- 2010 *De motu*, artist book, published by Orient Press, Berlin, DE  
*Umbra*, artist book, published by Orient Press, Berlin, DE  
*24 Advertisements*, curated and edited by Jacob Fabricius, Malmö, SE  
*Who wants to Act Now, or Even See Acting*, edited by Nazli Gurlek, DEPO, Istanbul, TR  
*Katarina Zdjelar, Parapoetics*, published by TENT, Rotterdam, NL
- 2009 *Fragmentation of perception / Perception of fragmentation*, edited by Marjolein Kok, Rotterdam, NL  
*Erstarnte Unruhe*, artist book, published by Orient Press, Berlin, DE
- 2008 *Resonant bodies, voices, memories*, edited by Anke Bangma, Deirdre Donoghue, Katarina Zdjelar, published by Piet Zwart Institute, Rotterdam and Revolver, Frankfurt, DE  
*Survival of an idea*, artist book, published by Orient Press, Berlin, DE  
*The fall occurs inside*, artist book, published by Orient Press, Berlin, DE  
*Freunde und Futter*, artist book, published by Orient Press, Berlin, DE
- 2007 *Zig Zag lady*, artist book, published by Orient Press, Berlin, DE  
*India Song*, artist book, published by Orient Press, Berlin, DE  
*De Integratie Suite*, artist book, published by Orient Press, Berlin, DE  
*The Primitive Mentality*, artist book, published by Orient Press, Berlin, DE
- 2006 *After Rouge*, edited by Navid Nuur and Lisa Vieten, published by Piet Zwart Institute, Rotterdam and Revolver Books, Frankfurt, DE  
*No Description Mentioned*, published by Knust, Nijmegen, NL
- 2005 *Black Friday*, edited by Christoph Keller, published by Piet Zwart Institute, Rotterdam and Revolver Books, Frankfurt, DE

THE PILL®

*Works and exhibitions*

# Özlem Altın

Prisma

Hannah-Höch-Förderpreis 2024

## Zur Ausstellung

*Prisma* ist eine raumspezifische Installation von Özlem Altın.

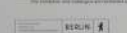
Themen wie Geburt, Tod und Wiedergeburt spielen eine bedeutende Rolle in den Collagen, großformatigen Malereien und skulpturalen Werken der Künstlerin. Die Zyklen des Lebens werden als Metaphern für das Prozesshafte und die Veränderung. Der Körper versteht Altın als Austauschmittel und Wissensspeicher oder wie sie es formuliert, als „eine Schnittfläche von Austausch, Verfindung und Übertragung von Wissen durch Berührung und Kontakt“.

Die Künstlerin schöpft aus einem über zwei Jahrzehnte gewachsenen Archiv eigenen und gefundenen Aufnahmen. Dabei ist die Fotografie künstlerisches Material aber auch Ausgangs- und Bezugspunkt ihrer gestalterischen Praxis. Gesten und Körpersprache stehen im Fokus bei der Auswahl der Bildmotive. Abbildungen von Händen werden mit Fragmenten anderer Bilder kombiniert und farbige Übermalungen lassen neue Sinnzusammenhänge entstehen.

Özlem Altın (\*1977 in Goch) lebt und arbeitet in Berlin. 2020 zeigte sie ihre Werke in der Gruppenausstellung „Companion Pieces: New Photography 2020“ des Museum of Modern Art in New York und 2023 in der „The Milk of Dreams“-Ausstellung der 58. Biennale in Venedig.

Galerie Berlin  
Königsplatz 100, 10178 Berlin

Berlinische Galerie  
Königsplatz 100, 10178 Berlin



## About this exhibition

*Prisma* is a site-specific installation by Özlem Altın.

Themes like birth, death, and reincarnation play a significant role in the artist's collages, large-format paintings, and sculptural works. The cycles of life become metaphors for process and change. For Altın, the body is a means of expression and a reservoir of knowledge – or, in her own words, an “interface for communicating, connecting, and transmitting knowledge through touch and contact”.

The artist draws from a compilation of her own and found photographs—an archive that has been growing for over two decades. Here, photography is both artistic material and point of departure and reference for her practice. A focus is placed on gestures and body language when selecting pictorial motifs. Images of hands are combined with fragments of other pictures and, together with colorful overpainting, give rise to new contexts of meaning.

Özlem Altın (b. 1977 in Goch) lives and works in Berlin. In 2020, she participated in the group exhibition “Companion Pieces: New Photography 2020” at The Museum of Modern Art in New York and, in 2023, in the exhibition “The Milk of Dreams” at the 58th Venice Biennale.

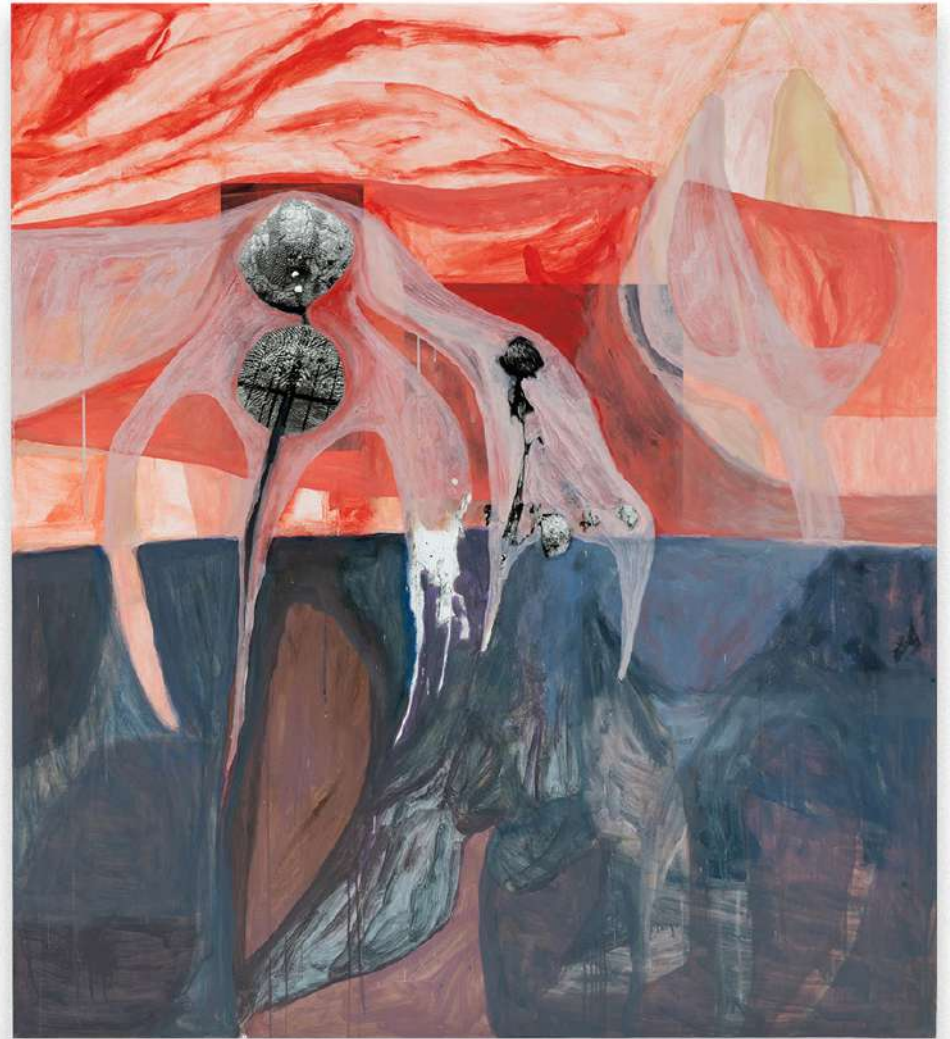
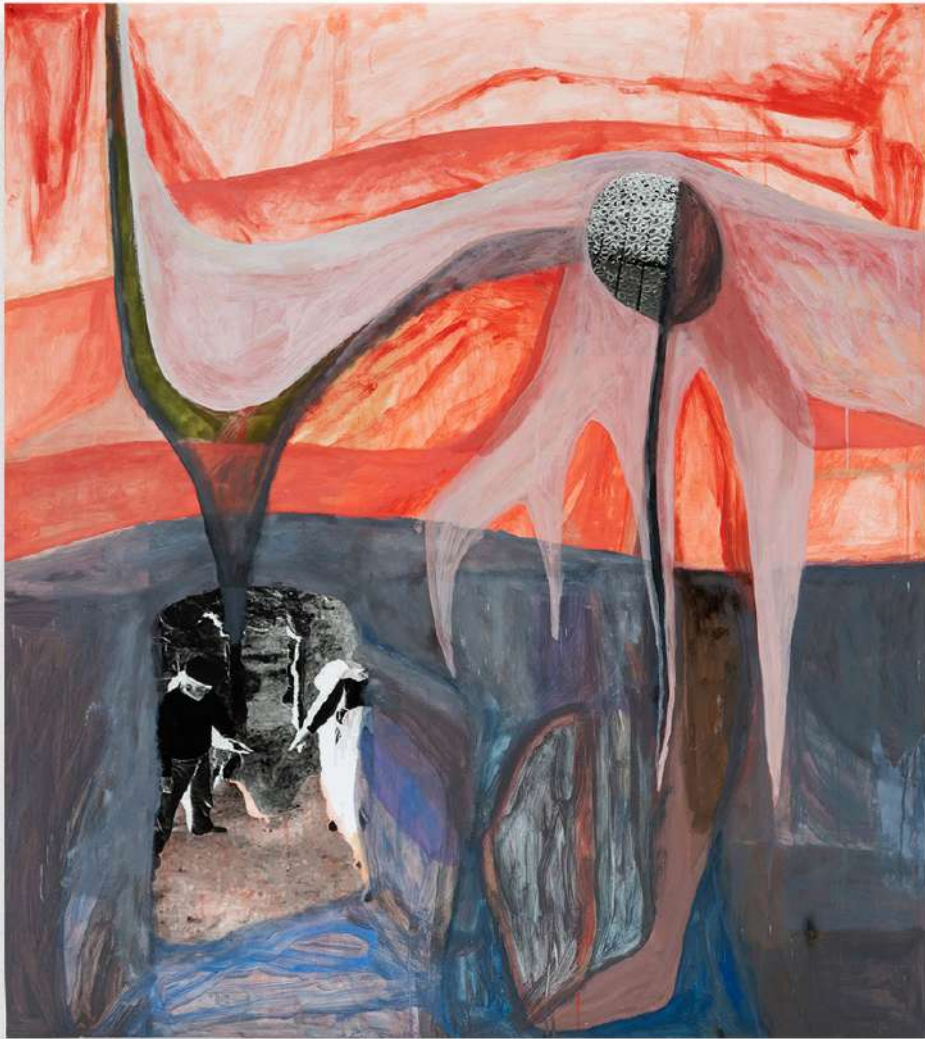
Galerie Berlin  
Königsplatz 100, 10178 Berlin











Özlem Altın  
*Teeth, Jaw, Anchor*, 2024  
Ink and oil on canvas  
150 x 300 cm

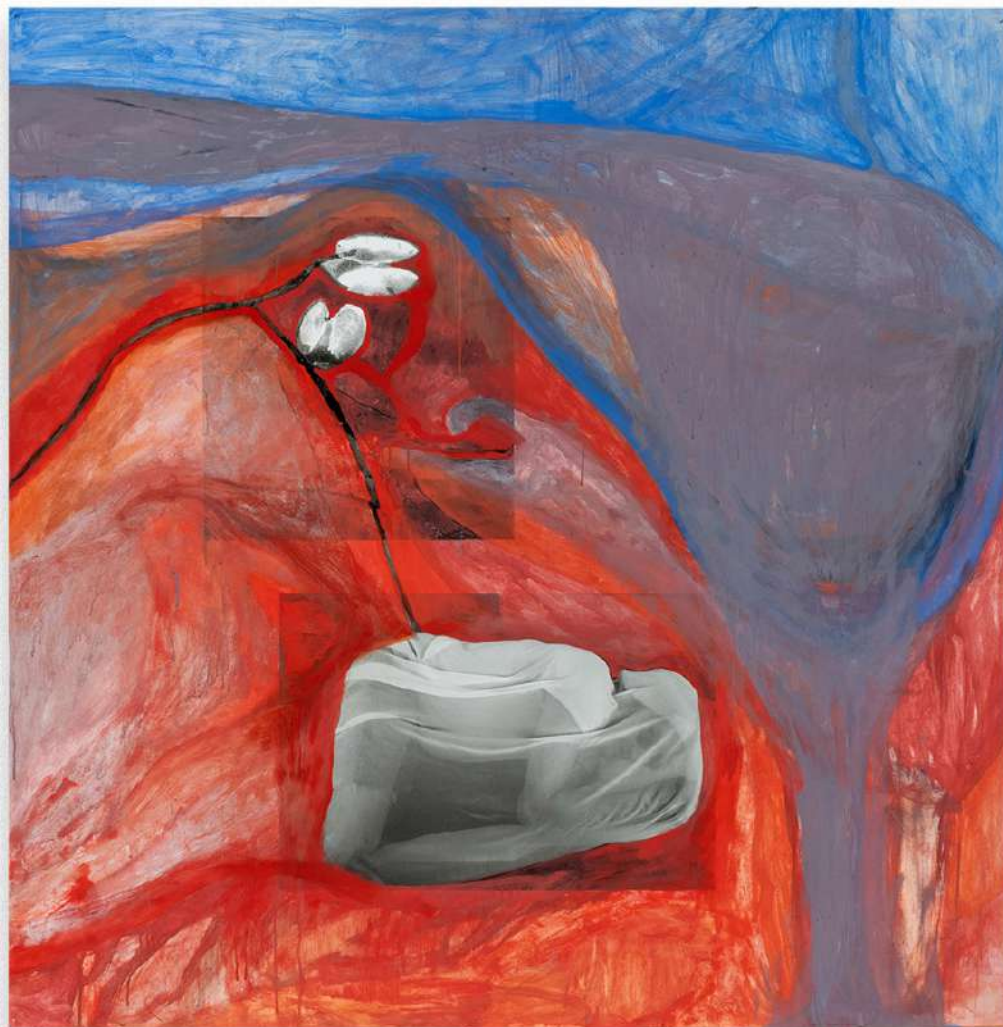












Özlem Altın  
*Grief*, 2024  
Ink and oil on canvas  
150 x 300 cm





*Further Away*, cur. Ali Akay, 6th Mardin Biennial, Mardin, 2024





Özlem Altın  
*Naked eye (lateral masking)*, 2022  
 Photo print on canvas with ink and oil; diptych  
 160 x 130 cm each



Over the past couple of years, Altin has developed a technique of painting upon assembled photographs. The surface texture of ink and oil surrounds and outlines discrete objects in a range of images putting them in contact with one another. These marks are distinctly hand painted, at odds with the visual mechanics of the photographic medium.

Yet in her work, this schism, or sensory gap between touch and vision is complicated by a fragmentary use of pictures of bodies, and most symbolically, of hands. In a few of her new pieces, many of these hands already existing in anterior works reappear almost ritualistically, as reminding the viewer of the plasticity of time.

Here, the tangible is felt through the received knowledge of a holy relic. It is synonymous with being touched throughout time. What is at stake, is the intangible metaphysicality of time and its representation, at times vertical, at times horizontal, at times bent.









Özlem Altın  
*Naked Eye (Landscape)*, 2023  
Ink, oil and photo print on canvas (diptych)  
170 x 145 cm (each)





*Release, Page Not Found, The Hague, 2023*





Özlem Altın  
*They are coming, they are calling*, 2023  
Ink and oil on canvas  
100 x 250 cm





*The Milk of Dreams*, The 59th International Art Exhibition, cur. Cecilia Alemani, Arsenale, Venice, 2022.



Özlem Altın  
*Translucent shield (calling)*, 2022  
Archival print and ink on canvas  
111,7 x 600 cm





Detail from *Translucent shield (calling)*, 2020.







Altın's work displayed at the 59th Venice Biennale titled *Translucent shield (calling)* (2022) is a collage of black-and-white photographs, both found and taken by the artist, printed on white canvas. The collaged imagery includes photographs that Altın took while accompanying her friend in labor and relates either directly or metaphorically to birth, death, and the force and violence of transitions between states of being. Layered with transparent white ink that creates the impression of an over-exposed photograph or an image seen through a porcelain screen, the work confuses inside and outside, creating a visual diagram of the liminal space between life and death.

While Altın references visual strategies of appropriation and recombination of mass media images and text used throughout 20th century-art history, her own works underscore the narratives and interconnections that occur when disparate pictures are brought into proximity. In these narratives, the body is made central, presented, as the artist has said, "as means for the diffusion of knowledge, experience, communication, and exchange."

Özlem Altın

*The Guardian*, 2022

Photo print on canvas with ink and pigment

159 x 130 cm



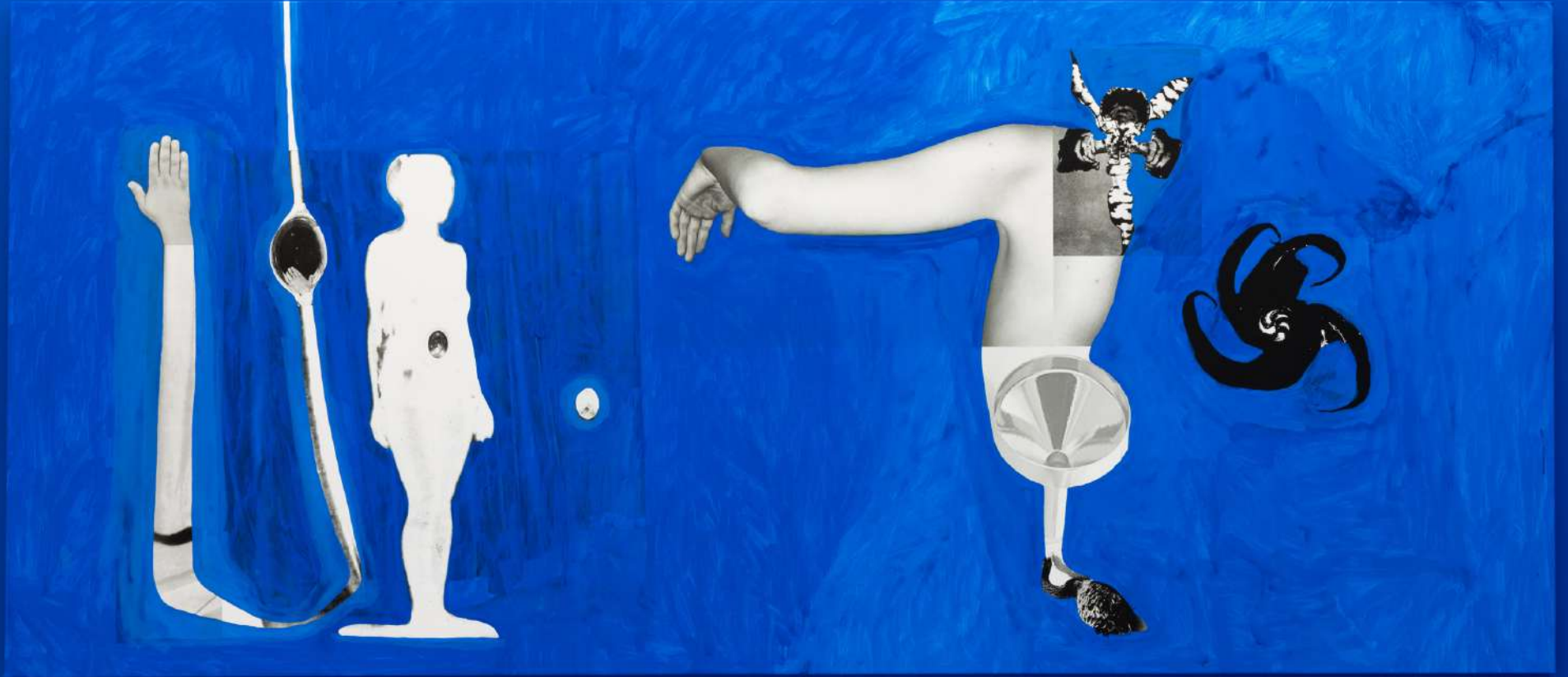


*Kismet, THE PILL, Istanbul, 2022.*





*Kismet, THE PILL, Istanbul, 2022.*



Özlem Altın  
*Wheel or cycle (when time flies out the window)*, 2022  
Photo print on canvas with ink and oil  
135 x 310 cm



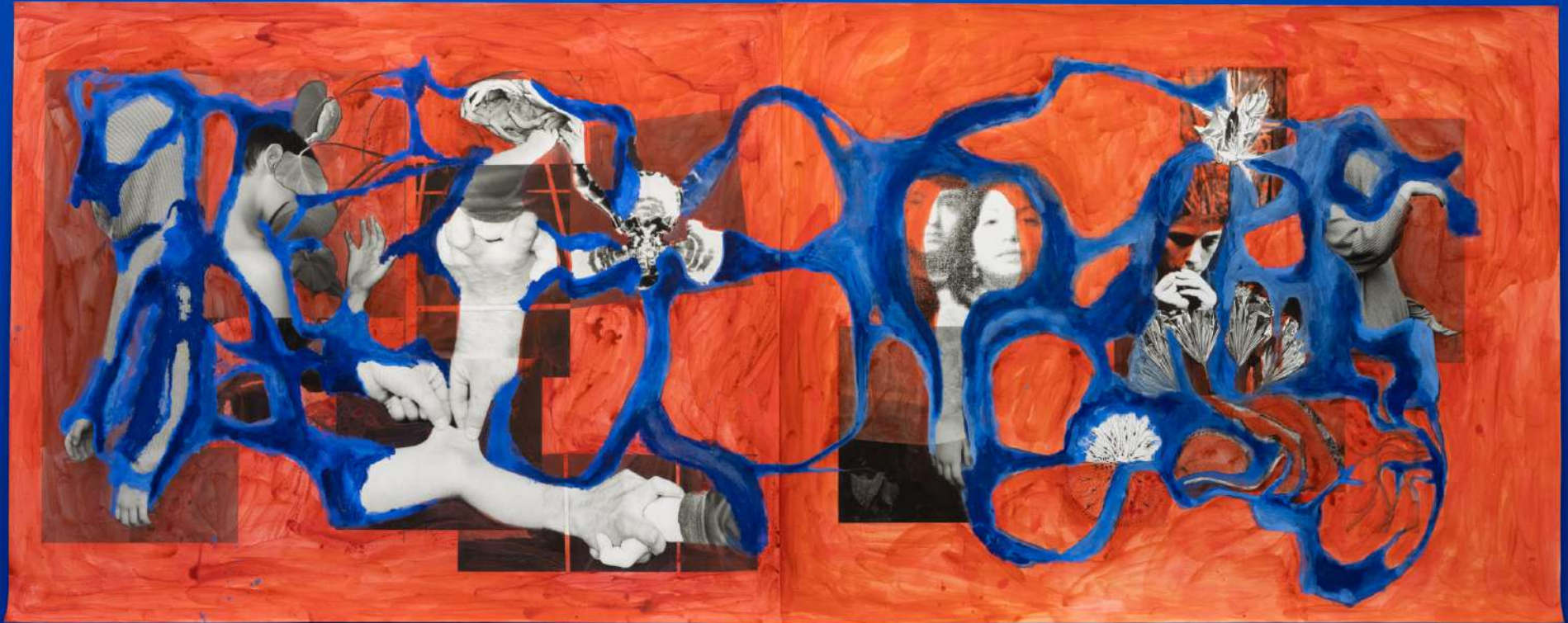


Altın's contouring of images dissolve the border between the animate and the artifact. In several works that have been treated with blue oil paint, the arrangement of isolated images – often taken from black-and-white and inverted photographs – shares more in common with physical forms of language, or perhaps Susan Sontag's description of photography as 'a grammar'.

In this sense, Altın reinscribes the photographic image as a writing system. The outlines of hands and a figure in for instance, are rendered in such a way that they resemble script, or the shape of a hieroglyph.

Altın's invented visual language is secretive and, at times, riddling. Yet their specificity is less important than the associations implied by the objects, which call to mind other cyclical entities, such as chakras or the swirling mass of people that circle the Ka'bah, and that from a distance, reminds of a spiral galaxy. It's no stretch of the imagination to then equate the centripetal with the revolution of planets in a solar system – one celestial body orbiting a greater one.

Özlem Altın  
*Recomposition (elevate)*, 2022  
Photo print on fine art archival paper with ink and oil  
100 x 91,4 cm



Özlem Altın  
*Pulse and grief (encapsulated, reactivated)*, 2022  
Photo print on canvas with ink and oil  
112 x 280 cm





The body, its gestures and postures are a central theme in Altın's works. For the artist, it is a vehicle for the transfer of knowledge, experience, a vehicle for communication and exchange.

The flowing movements, the ever-changing, underlies the artistic practice of Özlem Altın: the basis is her personal archive, which consists of found and created images, photographs, drawings and paintings. Altın prints out the images in various formats, reworks them, paints over them, cuts them up, rearranges them. Following an intuitive narrative, she ultimately assembles the images in the exhibition space.

Özlem Altın

*Shapeshifting (desire)*, 2019

Photo print on fine art archival paper with ink and oil  
91,4 x 100 cm

The works finally coalesce into a kind of concentrated three-dimensional collage: themes and images (bodies, postures, gestures, water) are condensed into overpaintings that only reveal fragments of the images hidden underneath: body parts combine with flowing brushstrokes to form ornaments, new figures or elements.

They are like hidden ideas, almost forgotten memories and dream images.



Özlem Altın  
*Incarnation (soul revolve)*, 2022  
Photo print on fine art archival paper with ink and oil  
91,4 x 100 cm





*Part of the Labyrinth*, Göteborg International Biennial for Contemporary Art, cur. Lisa Rosendahl, 2019.





Özlem Altın  
*Topography (of time, of body)*, 2019  
Ink on photoprint on canvas  
112 x 505 cm





The mural-scaled *Topography (of time, of body)* (2019) is a map of similarly disparate images that have been linked together, like distant towns connected by roads. The overall pink hue of the work also resembles fleshy tissue, with veins flowing through it, bringing life from one organ to another.

The physicality of Altın's materials — the unframed canvas, layered with ink — under- scores that reading. To create the work, Altın printed her montage of images as one photo- graphic print, and then painted directly onto it, covering over much of the imagery to isolate certain elements.

Though she highlights particular components, she is also interested in the spaces between them, a relationship made visible in the emblem of hands at work, knitting together strands of material. Altın feels that *Topography (of time, of body)* invites viewers to enter in, drawn not only to the figures but to their change and growth — the “process of becoming.”





In her site-specific installations Özlem Altın repurposes narratives and rearranges them into new narratives. Many of these stories, are concerned with the human body, which she sees as a site of transfer, communication, resonance, reflection and feedback.

Our bodies, she notes, are constantly informing us and signifying to us, and the sense of touch is a crucial aspect of communication. Her new work, which emphasises moments of 'passage', also takes up the notion of portals: sites that open up to other sites.

She has said that the body is itself a portal, and that one aspect of portals is that they require an element of surrender.

Özlem Altın  
*Each Moment is a Portal*, 2019  
Site specific installation



Özlem Altın  
*Portal (Highpriestess)*, 2019  
Installed on photoprint on mesh  
350 x 550 cm





*We Don't Need Another Hero*, 10th Berlin Biennale, Akademie der Künste Berlin, 2018.





*We Don't Need Another Hero*, 10th Berlin Biennale, Akademie der Künste Berlin, 2018.







1981: 801,  
Plastik becken.



Richard Brauer: "From 'Between Life and Death' (1980)." (1980)

Özlem Altın  
*Container (corporeality, objects and affects)*, 2017  
collage  
160 x 222 cm





Özlem Altın  
*Untitled (container, leaking)*, 2016  
Photo print on lithographic paper  
68 x 100 cm each



*In Light of 25 Years*, Witte de With, cur. Defne Ayas & Samuel Saelemakers, Rotterdam, 2015.



THE PILL®

*Selected texts and publications*

“Come, come down to the river, to the place where the psyche is bottomless and images flow forth from underground, images belonging neither to you nor me but saying much about what connects us through time—and what, come time, may tear us apart again.”

This is how the voice might sound with which Özlem Altın’s work addresses you: open, direct, but truly mysterious. Her photo collages and installations speak of secrets, yet she hides nothing. Her use of images is often laconic. She takes images, reworks them briefly, casts them into constellations, or separates them again, making them stand alone.

She allows images to be like stones. Each has its own weight that determines how it will fall in with the others and roll to the place where it will then lie. That is the secret of Altın’s images and image combinations. In their peculiar way they live the existence of minerals, in silence, on their own, yet still profoundly and energetically connected. Altın’s images come from everywhere, from the outside, from the net, books, as well as from her own archives and albums. She collages, montages, and cuts up the material. Nothing is sacred. Yet nothing is random. The images Altın chooses relay a particular power. They touch something quite deep inside, even, or especially, when they look like they just fluttered in through an open browser window. In this way they are like omens. Right away, almost physically, you grasp that they are meaningful. What they mean can only be intuited, at best. Altın does not solve the riddle. She directs the gaze towards constellations of images, like an augur pointing to shapes formed by a flock of birds in flight: Look! Do you see?

But Altın also has an eye for the grotesque. A sense of absurd humor shines through in her take on the omen, as does an undeniable intuition for the things that propel life.

Of course, some may dismiss intuition as “superstition.” Modern reason defends its empire with harsh words. In answer to this, I am happy to whistle the chorus of Buffalo Springfield’s “For What It’s Worth” from 1967: “There’s something happening here. What it is ain’t exactly clear .... Stop, hey, what’s that sound, everybody look what’s going down...” This mother of protest songs still conveys an uncanny clairvoyance regarding the forces at play in one’s surroundings. This kind of alertness has little to do with belief. Intuition is a channel of communication, a frequency on which one dares to send and receive. With minimal means, Altın allows for a maximum density of transmissions on this wavelength. Her art is on air.

In silence it transmits an appeal:  
Do you catch the signals? See the sign?

In her laconic way Altın escapes the false bonds (and bindings) of religion. Her images don’t want to be holy icons, and don’t need to be. Their strength lies in that they owe no proof of their powers. They’re far too boldly composed. Why would birds give a damn about their interpreters’ beliefs? Birds feel the weather and know when change arrives.

— Jan Verwoert  
10th Berlin Biennale Exhibition Catalogue, 2018



## Still Moving

In her collages, photographs, artist books and paintings, Özlem Altın explores the body at rest and the inanimate in action

by Sara Stern (frieze d/e, issue 11, September/October 2013)



Özlem Altın, *Hand auf Körper*, 2009 (photograph: Hans-Georg Gaul)

Recently I took a walk around Kreuzberg with German, Berlin-based artist Özlem Altın's latest publication, *Invisible mountains* (2013). I wanted to see what it would be like to flip through the pages in a different context from the one in which I originally picked it up – at Circus gallery in Berlin this spring, where this booklet was displayed on a semi-circular plinth in Altın's most recent exhibition, *Cathartic ballet* (2013). There, the plinth also functioned as seating from which to view the main room of the exhibition, as though *Invisible mountains* were the programme to a theatrical production.

Pictures from the show are reproduced hand-sized across its pages, with fragments of text that subtly alter the meaning of each image. In the gallery, this created a footnote effect to the exhibition, but outside, the pamphlet began to read as an experimental film. One of the strongest works in the show, the striking photographic diptych *Untitled (Mädchen im Baum)* (girl in tree, 2013) is split across the first page turn. Overlaid with the text 'slow silence', and 'slow lost figures', the pages are like snippets from a Chris Marker film. Other phrases are at once so melodramatic and descriptive that I almost hear them in Werner Herzog's voice: 'emptiness enveloped in endless silence', 'the present never ends', 'close by, the sound of water disappears'.



Özlem Altın, *Untitled (Mädchen im Baum)*, 2013, photo prints (photograph: Nick Ash)

The pamphlet manufactures a sense of recollection or *déjà vu*. The 'having been there' of photography transforms into the more elusive 'having seen this before' – in Altın's show, perhaps, or even out in the world years earlier. This is how it feels to follow the non-linear progression of Altın's practice, in which similar images reappear, cycling across collage, assemblage, photographic

diptychs, artist books and paintings, the meaning shifting in each new context, but often focusing on the human body at rest and the inanimate in action.

Over the last ten years, Altın has been working with a large collection of images and texts selected intuitively from a wide variety of sources ranging from books and the Internet to her own drawings and photographs. For her exhibitions she chooses elements from this collection, arranging them specifically to how her body relates to the gallery space, choreographing a path viewers might follow around the positioned work. In *Each movement appears like hesitation*, Altın's first solo exhibition at Circus in 2009, self-contained constellations of images stretched across walls and plinths, sometimes framed by MDF boards or covered by a sheet of glass, blending the aesthetics of minimalist sculpture with that of Warburgian research display. The conflation of aesthetics is familiar, perhaps from artistic research projects, or the art academy, where plinths are often used as a quick fix. But here each element is carefully considered towards Altın's own ends, and the work evades easy categorization.

The largest wall in the main room contained four collages. Even from a distance, the motion studies of Étienne-Jules Marey and Eadweard Muybridge were recognizable. You had to move closer to study the lesser-known pictures and to begin to understand Altın's appropriative gestures. In the rightmost collage, *Hand auf Körper* (Hand on body, 2009) five disparate images formed a dialogue on touch. A hand reaches in with a pair of scissors to cut a piece of clothing from Yoko Ono in her seminal 1964 *Cut Piece* performance; another rests on a woman's shoulder as she stares blankly into the lens; in what appears to be a physical therapy session, a woman cradles a man's arm as she works on his body; in another medical image, a hand presses a man's neck, as though checking his pulse; a miniature watercolour of a face reveals a small handprint on its cheek. The simple gesture of a hand moving towards another figure reframes the body as a thing that can be touched. Other images focus on the absolute stillness of a hand that has found a place to rest. It takes a high level of engagement to follow Altın's contextual choreography and move past the surface of references (Marey? Ono? On the same wall?). But if you do, you experience a perceptual shift in which identification with a specific reference (in my case, Ono's *Cut Piece*) fades away into Altın's somatic narrative (here, the disembodied hand, the 'object-like' body). Recently, Altın told me that she would never discriminate against an image 'for being specific'. In a time when art audiences are often expected to read 'specificity' into every aspect of a work, Altın's approach is a subtle, yet poignant deflection. Re-contextualizing images so that they can be read in new ways becomes a form of animation in Altın's work. The same pictures from *Hand auf Körper* are also featured in two artist books – *Survival of an Idea* (2008) and *Confusion between the animate and inanimate* (2012) – and in a more recent collage triptych, *Hand, Hand auf Körper* (2011), in Altın's *Several Bodies* show at Circus in 2011. Each time they appear in a slightly different format and correlation, whether sequentially or freshly framed, producing that 'having seen this before' effect.

Altın often blocks identification altogether, obscuring heads by painting over appropriated images. Sometimes her paintings look like they have been splashed with photo chemicals or have a decomposing, Jean Fautrier-like quality. Paint becomes the only trace of movement in an image that is otherwise static. In her 2012 solo exhibition, *Rhythm of Resemblance*, at the Leopold Hoesch Museum in Düren, she took identical copies of the same portrait by August Sander and painted over it two different ways, undoing its documentation of a fixed identity; erasing its seriality while doubling it (*Untitled (Sander)*, 2012). She repeated the process with a portrait of Piet Mondrian in the same room (*Untitled (Mondriaan)*, 2012). As its title suggests, *Rhythm of Resemblance* was a show in which doubling took on a movement of its own around a recurring theme: the head, or its absence. This was the first time that Altın explicitly played with diptychs and with mirroring objects (such as a broken stone head of Bismarck and a cannonball, both from the institution's archaeological collection) across rooms of the museum to create associative meanings.



Özlem Altın, *Standing or left standing*, 2009, MDF boards, photocopies, prints, glass and publication (photograph: Hans-Georg Gaul)

Circling back, it is the nearly filmic sequencing in the work of Altın's most recent exhibition and the corresponding publication which draws me in the most. *Untitled (Mädchen im Baum)* greeted visitors at the entrance of *Cathartic ballet* and framed and prefaced the show. Hung frameless directly on the wall, the black and white photographs portray the same limp female body balanced on a tree branch from two slightly different vantage points. The images initially appear grainy and investigative, as though taken from a newspaper article in which they might have served as evidence from a crime scene, or two stills from a film only

seconds apart. Upon closer inspection, grain gives way to blurred pixilation. The piece could be a contemporary version of a stereograph without the stereoscope viewer. But the angles are too far apart to be a stereo image, and so the doubling is only a suggestion of that subtle, pre-cinematic movement involved in experiencing two photographs – two moments in time brought together – super-imposed in semblance of a three-dimensional whole.

Altin spontaneously took the *Untitled (Mädchen im Baum)* photographs herself on her phone when she came across the scene in front of her studio building. Despite the disconcerting connotations of a still body in a tree, according to Altin, it was actually a joyful moment of children playing in a courtyard. Stripped of that lighthearted context, the diptych remains a suspenseful, open and ambivalent meditation on the sequencing of stillness. I found myself identifying more with the movement of the camera than with the motionlessness of the girl, turning slightly to mimic its subtle rotation around the tree.



Özlem Altin, *Whispering Hands*, 2013, photo prints on litho paper (photograph: Nick Ash)

In the main room was another photographic diptych, *Whispering Hands* (2013), in which Altin superimposed images of the famous chess player, Bobby Fischer, from different games at different ages, resulting in a cross-fade effect in which Fischer seems to almost fold into himself. It looks as if the player is caught midway between frames, but these shots were never sequential. Instead, this is a flattening of time and a removal of his context – the chessboard, an epitome of conceptualism – stripping Fischer down to a ghostly series of poses. Unlike in *Mädchen im Baum*, in which the still body is balancing, the static body here is thinking, plotting all of its past and future moves.

In conversation with the artist, Altin spoke about her desire to create 'openings for viewers', inviting us into her works so that we can form our own narratives. In my case, walking around Kreuzberg with *Invisible mountains*, my head bent over the image of Fischer head in hands, his body frozen, I could not help but think about the divide that many of us question in the careful balance between making and thinking: the pressure to be conceptual and the desire to be intuitive.





# Özlem Altın Processing



## Developing, Handling, Processing, Preparing

In her work, Özlem Altın draws especially from the comprehensive collection of images and texts that she has intuitively compiled from various sources and, moreover, from her own drawings and photographs. In recent years, Altın has also started to integrate works from other artists into her sequences, narratives, and stories — which she culls from this material as the occasion warrants and which usually represent a kind of non-linear, associative movement along bodies, gestures, and identities — and to work with artistic material from museum collections. Tentative and precise at the same time, her work reminds of artistic research and preliminary drafts of presentations, such as viewing material and structuring it for an upcoming project. Various meanings flow through these arrangements, evoking different associations, before stopping and being superimposed or replaced, then once again revived, duplicated, or newly questioned. The format of these sequences does not follow any kind of linear order or chronology, but rather seems cyclical and processual, distinguished by repetition, resembling attempts to engender meaning, to establish significance, which, however, is not initially certain, not countered along the way, but rather is meant to develop during the arrangement of the images.

Indeed, the artist prevents the subject matter from initially being identified with certain meaning or content; at times she covers or paints over parts of the images, heads, or bodies. Sometimes it seems as if chemicals had damaged the photographs, as if they had been rescued from an archive, the identity of which remains unknown. Now and again she uses a visual source more than once and overpaints them each differently in order to intervene in the fixed meaning of an image, to interfere with the documentation or representation of a seemingly fixed identity. But the intention may also be to work against that which conserves, which is motionless, against the “death” of photography, once again renegotiating the yet immobilized and immortalized into something preliminary that changes, that can be retold in a new and different way, that never fully disappears into a history but rather remains part of a contemporary narra-

tive, or that has been salvaged for the present day, an actualization, a drafting-anew, a starting-over-again-and-again.

For her projects, Altın transforms the exhibition space into a kind of stage, into a site for performing a visual programme, the elements of which emerge, surface, and then disappear again, similar to a clue or trail. The focus of this programme rests with the body, the languages of bodies, the gestures, the suggested movements and changes in posture. The body, for Altın, is a vehicle for transferring knowledge, experience, a vehicle of communication and exchange. In a certain sense, her exhibitions and exhibition contributions chart this communication (a communion?) of bodies, an occurrence that the bodies put in motion, leading to a biography or identity marked by moments of recognition or being-recognized. Kaja Silverman has emphasized that the subject / the body always also appears as an image or is being revealed somehow, that these pictures stabilize the self and make it possible to engender an enduring image of this self. The concurrence of image and body, according to Silverman, illustrates how real bodies can be transformed into photographic representations, how the photographic rendering can capture the actual body/bodies. The pose, the gestures, the expression can thus also be understood as a photographic imprint of the body. Each subject must first be seen in order to exist — we attain an awareness of our own positioning in the field of the visible in that very moment when we perceive ourselves in the gestalt of a phantasmatic photograph.

Altın, in turn, intervenes in this desire for a sustainable image, for being-recognized; she imbues this notion with a sense of disquiet and generates disruptions in the languages and stories of the bodies that reciprocally affect one another, that don't permit a sense of calm, that touch each other and then move apart again. Overpaintings on the photographs mark such moments, where the bodies drift into the unknown, into the approximate, the vague, and also into the uncanny and sometimes even the violent, which challenges the integrity of the bodies. The certainty of having the body at one's disposal is subjected to uncertainty, the hidden shifts into the uncanny. Altın points to this possible (or impossible?) transformation, precipitates it, marks the wounds on the battered bodies, pays reference to the threat and fragility, to the ambivalent and transient, a menacing not-at-home in one's body. In this respect, these bodies are also a kind of archive, in which experience, memory, and events have become inscribed; they store a history and perpetually engage in enacting and repeating, in order to affirm this history, occurrences and events, often without leaving behind visible traces, yet sometimes wounds remain that change the body and lend it a different appearance. What are the powers that change us, that compel us to rewrite the history of our identity? The not-at-home, the decentration, the cracks in the narrative, its hidden core — none of this has anything to do with hiding the work in front of us. Quite the contrary: the indeterminate and



open facets of the visual narrative are what actually first unveils to us as beholders, readers, as bodies among the body images, a place of presence. It is from this place that the meaning of this narrative might be reconstructed, or where an empathy between the images and the bodies, between the bodies and the bodies, may find its point of departure. If the meaning was already always present, concluded, concrete, readable, then why would it need a stage to perform on? If the artist knows ever since, if even we already know instantly, then why this serious play with imagery?

Camera Austria has opened the archive to Özlem Altin for her exhibition as co-production with steirischer herbst, as part of a reprocessing of this archive, resulting in two exhibition projects, respectively preceding and following Altin's exhibition: "Un-Curating the Archive", an attempt at publishing the archive in its entirety, not as the yield of a selection and evaluation, but as the beginning of continual work on and with this archive.

One of the starting points for the exhibition project "Processing" by Özlem Altin—next to a continuation of her specific practice focused on the photographic image—is thus an exploration of the archive of Camera Austria, which will be made available to the artist as a kind of extension to her own collection. Books, invitations, press images, manuscripts, posters, postcards, printed documents, scripts, reproductions, and of course also the magazine *Camera Austria International* will potentially flow into the visual material produced for this project. During several stays in Graz, Altin has examined this material—not systematically, but rather selectively, according to her interests—and has taken pictures of some things in order to allow it to become part of her own work, as a starting point for a montage or painterly reworking. This representation of representations introduces another plane, which is added here and expands the focus of her work and possibly moves it further off-centre.

So the archive of an institution encounters intuitive, subjective, non-rule-governed collecting and provisional, revisable structuring as artistic practice, ever situated proximately to dissolution, or at least to constant reorganization. The archive encounters the attempt to simultaneously respect and revoke the images of bodies or gestures that the artist has perhaps found by chance along with the meaning ascribed to them. Another archive arises, an archive constantly in flux, constantly being reworked, which may possibly counter the existing archive and its claim to documentation. That which already happened is transformed by Altin into something that is happening right now. Does the image as event that is currently taking place—that in its manifestation threatens to withdraw at the same time, that ever moves along the margins of its visibility, that designs a stage on which its performance time is limited—encounter the archive as concept of safekeeping, conservation, fixation, which

in this way establishes its form, but also exposes itself to the danger of being forgotten?

Foucault already noted that police archives not only produce delinquents, meaning that power "functions" not only in repressive ways, but that it also defines law-abiding citizens. What the archive also always produces is its Other, or the Others who are not found in the archive, that are not supposed to be recorded there. Does Özlem Altin, with her project, navigate the zone of these Others, who perhaps indwell the archive like spectres, never truly visible, never fully tangible? Ariella Azoulay writes that "Intervention, imagination and transmission are the main practices through which researchers and artists today exercise their right to (the) archive". Altin's project seems to be a perfect example of this, of how the faculty of imagination—which, if I may emphasize this again, highly respects the archival material and yet still reworks it, assembles it, combines it with other materials and images, thus orchestrating a transfer—literally carries the material, the image, somewhere else. This transfer is often firm, but also often hesitant, without a junction, without any elegant, formal intervention, but rather an interruption. Starting to reflect on photographic images using her method, or to write this text with her method in mind, thus also means not ignoring the violence inherent to this method. The brutality that has gripped some of the bodies shown by Altin in this exhibition is found echoed in the violence that she applies to some of the pictures, no longer recognizable, fragmented or overpainted in such a way that they almost go beyond recognition. But violence is always at play when dealing with representation, when Others are shown, when recognition captures the Others. "I don't believe that I expressed /exprimer/ great things in this film, however, in my opinion, I didn't do a poor job of impressing the things /imprimer/" (Jean-Luc Godard). So must one exert force on things like pictures in order for them to speak? How might it be to not read the images, but to enter them, to give the images space, to let the images impress, to establish empathy between the images and the subjects, or even to engage in resonance and harmony with the images and to follow their rhythm? How does the text become expressed and the images impressed? At any rate, this text tries to revolve around the work of the artist, like the artist's visual narratives revolve around a centre; the text as a motion of writing, which approximates the images and then moves away again; an act of writing that does not always already know what meaning these images hold, and that will possibly never reach the images but rather merely encircle them and resonate with them. Unless, of course, it touches them and impresses them in a certain place ...

In any case, the meeting of different—opposing?—approaches to collecting and arranging artistic material, as staged by Altin, indicates that the archives are always exposed to a subjective selection,

referencing a specific cultural and visual milieu that may actually not permit reconstruction from the archive itself, that archives are also contradictory, cannot disclose everything, that they also conceal and hide. What has ultimately happened to all the things, texts, and images that have not made their way into any archive at all? Is not the archive, like photography itself, permeated by zones of visibility and zones of invisibility? Which bodies, which languages of bodies, does the artist find in this archive? Which disquiets of being-seen, of recognition or being-recognized, does the artist discover (or invent) in her analysis? Is it possible for Altin to add something to the Camera Austria archive that is missing, that has not been covered, to point out its gaps and to show something that the archive would rather not expose? Will perhaps those images be produced for the exhibition that are missing in the archive?

Reinhard Braun





## SURVIVAL OF AN IDEA

BY CHRISTIANE REKADE

Christiane Rekaade meets up with Özlem Altın (b. 1977). The artist, who lives and works between Berlin and the Netherlands, has created an enormous collection of images that focus on the body, reduced to its most abstract form. From this collection she selects and combines images for her installations, which are precise yet densely complex. Through them, she manages to lift the central theme from the two-dimensional image into a three-dimensional space.

Above – *Springen*, 2009.  
Courtesy: Galerie Circus,  
Berlin.

Opposite – top: *Untitled*  
(*Erstarrte Unruhe*), 2009.  
Courtesy: Galerie Circus,  
Berlin. Courtesy: Galerie  
Circus, Berlin.  
Photo: Hans-Georg Gaul.

Middle – *Geometric Portrait*,  
2008. Installation view, Museum  
voor Moderne Kunst, Arnhem.  
Photo: Carina Hesper.

Bottom – *Die dritten Personen*,  
2007. Installation view, Swinger,  
Vienna.

*christiane rekaade:* You create your work by selecting images from your enormous archive – pictures from books and magazines, copies, prints, found photographs, your own paintings, sometimes even works appropriated from other artists – composing, installing, collaging, and combining them. Which criteria do you follow in selecting your material?



*özlem altın:* I prefer to use the term "collection" rather than "archive". I like to think that I "collect" material rather than "archiving" it. "Archiving" seems to be an activity that is conclusive, that serves a specific function with a certain destination. My method of collecting, however, is spontaneous and intuitive, and I have a great interest in particular motifs that constantly recur. The fact that my work manifests itself in the form of an assemblage is basically a consequence that results from the content of the work itself. My research in the past few years has dealt with the representation of a person and has resulted in work where a person appears without expression or a character, almost stripped of any subjectivity. The depiction of the human body fascinates me from the very moment where representation transforms and abstracts it: we therefore no longer see a person, but more a type, an object – a person without personal characteristics, almost flat in appearance, with a "minimum presence". I am interested in staging the human body in a zero condition, in a state of exhaustion and passivity.

I generally work very actively with the images; it is not about conserving them. I like to uncover the hidden potential of found imagery. It may at first convey an unambiguous meaning, but through my intervention, by modifying or combining it, it reveals new layers of meaning and an associative power that might have been inherent but invisible.



*CR:* I'm fascinated by your ability to bring ideas of physicality and volume into the exhibition space. In *Each Movement Appears Like Hesitation*, for example, you chose to hang the pictures relatively low. Some were pasted on to cardboard, others stood on the floor, leaning against the wall, or were laid flat on tables or displays. The photograph of a young man, squatting on the ground and playing the flute, was placed leaning against the leg of a table – just as if someone were literally sitting there on the floor.

*Öa:* The exhibition makes gravity perceptible and conveys the feeling of a reposing or bending body. Even the two oversized plinths in the exhibition – one lying horizontally, the other standing upright – suddenly take on a human dimension. Without an explicitly practical function, the plinths translate the

stumbling implied in the exhibition's title into physical form – a stumbling that results in a final fall. Objects and sculptures in the space suggest movement, whereas the human body depicted in the numerous images is often object-like, motionless, or limp. This paradox leads to a strange convergence – perhaps even a close affinity – between the two.

The observer navigates his own way through the room, but his path is orchestrated by the arrangement of the work, which defines a certain rhythm. The viewer's experience is almost filmic: he zooms in and out as if using a camera lens – he perceives a corner or an entire wall, a detail or several images next to each other, and follows his own associations. The installation, on the other hand, formulates suggestions (or directions) in a performative sense, creating possibilities or the potential for the observer to mimic what he sees.

*CR:* In the reader that you published, titled *The Fall Occurs Inside*, I came across a passage from Kenneth Goldsmith that I liked very much. Goldsmith writes: "The simple act of moving information from one place to another today constitutes a significant cultural act in and of itself. I think it's fair to say that most of us spend hours each day shifting content into different containers. Some of us call this writing". I believe this applies not only to writers but to the methods of many contemporary artists. How do you collect or store your images? Does your collection have a particular system or structure?

*Öa:* I am often asked whether I systemize images before storing them. But I don't. In the process of preparing an installation, there is a certain arrangement of images taking place. But there is no systematic method; to me, the combi-



nations of images that are contradictory and unexpected are usually the most interesting. My method of arrangement is intuitive rather than rationally explainable. Images are juxtaposed against or superimposed on each other in combinations that take even me by surprise. The aspects of openness and flexibility are very important to me and represent the essence of my work, which is all about "opening" images up to interpretation and meaning through new contexts.

*CR:* Does that mean that your installations actually come into being in the exhibition space? Or do you create smaller groups in your studio and then transfer them to the exhibition space later on?

*Öa:* The installations emerge in their exhibition space. I often spend a lot of time in the empty space before I actually begin the installation. Through simple "architectonic" means, I approach and adopt the space, create displays for me to work with and dramatize its structure, suggesting a route and choreography for the viewer to follow. I try to translate thoughts and ideas into spatial terms, giving the installation a theatrical or performative dimension.

*CR:* A very distinctive feature of your artistic approach is its process-oriented nature. Some images and motifs reappear in various formats and contexts. Your work therefore implies something very temporary... Are there individual groups that can be considered complete and autonomous? In general, would you say there is an absolute moment in your work?

*Öa:* Yes, in a way I do want to reach a conclusive form, one that conveys an absoluteness in this particular moment and context. The installations are conclusive in that they are conceived for a defined space and describe a moment in which the individual images take their assigned places. At the same time, the very next moment they can occur in another context and thus appear completely different. This is their very nature.

The collages form groups and constellations. Together, they produce a cer-



*A minor catastrophe*, 2009.  
Courtesy: Galerie Circus, Berlin.  
Photo: Hans-Georg Gaul.



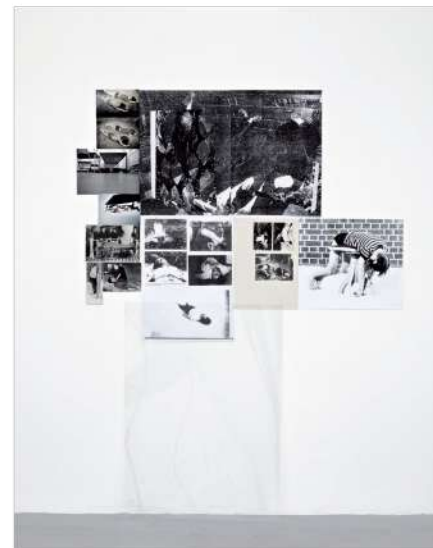
*They are not resisting our gaze II*,  
2009. Courtesy: Galerie Circus, Berlin.  
Photo: Hans-Georg Gaul.



*Each movement appears like hesitation*,  
installation view, Circus, Berlin, 2009.  
Courtesy: Galerie Circus, Berlin.  
Photo: Hans-Georg Gaul.



*Rolling Horizon*, 2008.  
installation view Schloss Ringenberg, Hamminkeln.  
Photo: Achim Kukulies.



*Lying*, 2009. Courtesy: Galerie Circus, Berlin.  
Photo: Hans-Georg Gaul.



*Top – Erstarre Unruhe (detail)*, 2009.  
Courtesy: Galerie Circus, Berlin.  
Photo: Hans-Georg Gaul.



*Above – Rolling Horizon (detail)*, 2008.  
Photo: Anneke Ingwersen.



tain rhythm, continue each other's stories, develop narratives and analogies, and create a particular atmosphere. At the same time, each individual group has its own distinct dynamic and can be powerful in a self-sustaining way.

**CR:** What significance does the origin or the different quality of the images have for you? How do you deal or work with found material in relation to the originals that you include in your collages and installations?

**Öa:** I work with very different materials: my own photographs, paintings, drawings, and texts, as well as photographs, copies from books, and images found in a wide range of sources. Within the collages and installations I make no distinction between my work and, for instance, cuttings from magazines, all of which exist outside the realm of "authorship". I would say I am positively indifferent towards any hierarchy regarding source or origin. My intention is to work in a radical manner, showing no respect for the images in themselves, but constantly providing new ways of encountering them.

**CR:** Your many books, published by your self-publishing company Orient Press, function in a similar way to your exhibitions. What is the difference between working two-dimensionally in a book and presenting your work in an exhibition space?

**Öa:** The books are a fundamental part of my work. A book has a different structure; it requires a theme to be developed in a chronological or linear way. There is always a very direct dialogue taking place between two opposing pages. This is fundamentally different from an exhibition, which is determined by the physical presence of one's own body within the space and by individual perception. A publication, by its very nature, has stricter dictates, which offers me a different way of interacting with images and developing contingent narratives.

Bottom - *Each movement appears like hesitation*, installation view, Circus, Berlin, 2009. Courtesy: Galerie Circus, Berlin. Photo: Hans-Georg Gaul.

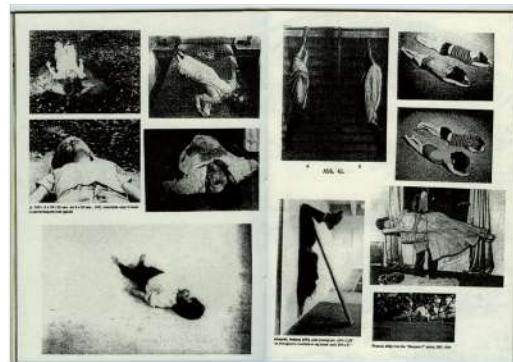
Top - *Survival of an Idea*, 2008. Published by Orient Press, Berlin.

Opposite - Özlem Altin, *Geometric Portrait*, 2008, installation view Museum voor Moderne Kunst, Arnhem. Photo: Carina Hesper.



DI CHRISTIANE REKADE

**Christiane Rekade incontra Özlem Altin (\*1977). L'artista, che vive e lavora a Berlino e nei Paesi Bassi, ha creato un'enorme raccolta d'immagini sul corpo, ridotto alla sua forma più essenziale. Ha selezionato, poi, alcune immagini di questa collezione e le ha combinate per realizzare le proprie installazioni che sono contemporaneamente precise e complesse, e riescono a traslare il tema centrale dell'immagine dalla bidimensionalità allo spazio tridimensionale.**



**christiane rekade:** Crei le tue opere selezionando delle immagini dal tuo enorme archivio – immagini da libri e riviste, fotocopie, stampe, fotografie trovate, i tuoi stessi dipinti, talvolta perfino le opere di altri artisti, di cui ti appropri – componendole, installandole, creando dei collage e combinandole. Quali criteri segui quando selezioni i materiali?

**Özlem altin:** Preferisco usare il termine "collezione" piuttosto che "archivio". Mi piace pensare che "colleziono" materiali piuttosto che "archiviare". "Archiviare" sembra essere un'attività conclusiva, che serve a una funzione specifica, con una destinazione precisa. Il mio metodo di raccolta delle immagini, al contrario, è spontaneo e intuitivo, basato, per esempio, sull'interesse verso alcuni motivi particolari, che ricorrono costantemente. Il fatto che il mio lavoro si manifesti sotto forma di *assemblage* deriva, sostanzialmente, dai suoi stessi contenuti. La ricerca che ho condotto negli ultimi anni si è focalizzata sulla rappresentazione della persona e, come risultato, ha prodotto delle opere in cui compare una persona priva d'espressione o un personaggio quasi completamente spogliato della propria identità. La raffigurazione del corpo umano mi affascina nel momento in cui la rappresentazione lo trasforma e lo rende astratto: perciò non vediamo più una persona, ma qualcosa di simile a un tipo, a un oggetto – un individuo senza caratteristiche personali, quasi piatto nel suo aspetto, con un "minimo di presenza". Mi interessa mettere in scena il corpo umano in una condizione zero, in uno stato di esaurimento e passività.

Generalmente il mio lavoro con le immagini è attivo non si tratta semplicemente di conservarle. Mi piace scoprire il potenziale nascosto delle immagini trovate. A un primo sguardo può darsi che veicolino un significato privo di ambiguità, ma attraverso il mio intervento, modificandole o combinandole, rivelano nuovi strati di significato e un potere associativo che magari era insito in esse, ma invisibile.

**CR:** Mi affascina la tua abilità nel trasferire le tue idee di fisicità e di volume nello spazio espositivo. In *Each Movement Appears Like Hesitation*, per esempio, hai scelto di posizionare le immagini relativamente in basso. Alcune erano incollate su cartone, altre erano installate sul pavimento e appoggiavano contro il muro, oppure erano messe in piano su tavoli o espositori. La fotografia di un giovane che suona il flauto, accucciato a terra, era appoggiata alla gamba di un tavolo, proprio come se vi fosse realmente qualcuno seduto sul pavimento.

**Öa:** La mostra rende percepibile la gravità e veicola la sensazione di un corpo che riposa o che si piega. Anche i due giganteschi plinti presenti nella mostra – uno adagiato orizzontalmente e l'altro posto in verticale – assumono improvvisamente una dimensione umana. Senza una funzione esplicitamente pragmatica, i plinti rappresentano materialmente l'inscapeare implicito nel titolo della mostra – un'instabilità che si traduce nella caduta finale. Gli oggetti e le sculture nello spazio suggeriscono il movimento, laddove il corpo umano, raffigurato nelle numerose immagini, somiglia spesso a un oggetto, immobile o flaccido. Questo paradosso conduce ad una strana convergenza – forse perfino a una stretta affinità – tra i due.



L'osservatore va alla ricerca del proprio percorso nella stanza, ma il cammino è influenzato dalla disposizione delle opere, che impone un certo ritmo. L'esperienza dello spettatore è quasi filmica: ingrandisce e rimpicciolisce le cose, come se usasse uno zoom fotografico – percepisce un angolo o un intero muro, un dettaglio o diverse immagini una accanto all'altra, e segue le proprie associazioni. L'installazione, d'altro canto, dà dei suggerimenti (o delle istruzioni) in senso performativo, creando le possibilità o il potenziale affinché l'osservatore simuli ciò che vede.

**CR:** Nel compendio da te pubblicato, intitolato *The Fall Occurs Inside*, mi sono imbattuta in un passo di Kenneth Goldsmith, che mi è piaciuto molto. Goldsmith scrive: "Il semplice spostamento d'informazioni da un luogo all'altro costituisce oggi un atto culturalmente significativo in sé e per sé. Penso che sia giusto dire che la maggior parte di noi ogni giorno trascorre ore a spostare contenuti in diversi contenitori. Alcuni di noi chiamano tutto questo scrittura". Penso che ciò si applichi non solo agli scrittori, ma alle metodologie adottate da molti artisti contemporanei. In che modo raccogli o archivi le tue immagini? La tua collezione si serve di un sistema o di una struttura particolare?

**Öa:** Mi viene spesso chiesto se io classifichi le immagini in modo sistematico prima di archiviarle. Non lo faccio. Durante il processo preparatorio di un'installazione, le immagini vengono disposte in un certo modo. Ma ciò non avviene in maniera sistematica; di solito le combinazioni di immagini per me più interessanti sono quelle più inaspettate. Il mio modo di disporle è intuitivo più che spiegabile razionalmente. Le immagini sono giustapposte o sovrapposte secondo combinazioni che colgono di sorpresa anche me. Gli aspetti di apertura e flessibilità sono molto importanti e rappresentano l'essenza del mio lavoro, che ruota tutto intorno all'"aprire" le immagini all'interpretazione e alla

significazione attraverso l'inserimento in un nuovo contesto.

**CR:** Questo significa che le tue installazioni cominciano a vivere realmente solo nello spazio espositivo? Oppure crei gruppi più piccoli in studio e successivamente li trasferisci nello spazio espositivo?

**Öa:** Le installazioni nascono nel loro spazio espositivo. Spesso trascorro molto tempo nello spazio vuoto prima di cominciare veramente a installare. Attraverso semplici mezzi "architettonici", avvicino lo spazio e lo faccio mio, creo sistemi espositivi per lavorare con la struttura del luogo e drammatizzarla, suggerendo un percorso e una coreografia che lo spettatore dovrà seguire. Cerco di tradurre i pensieri e le idee in termini spaziali, dando all'installazione una dimensione teatrale o performativa.

**CR:** Una caratteristica distintiva del tuo approccio artistico è l'attenzione al processo. Alcune immagini e alcuni motivi riappaiono in vari formati e contesti. Per questo motivo il tuo lavoro ha in sé un elemento d'estrema provvisorietà... Esistono dei gruppi singoli che possano essere considerati completi e autonomi? In generale, diresti che esiste un momento assoluto nel tuo lavoro?

**Öa:** Sì, in un certo senso voglio arrivare a una forma conclusiva, che abbia in sé un'assolutezza in quel particolare momento e contesto. Le installazioni sono conclusive nel loro essere concepite per uno spazio determinato e nel loro descrivere un momento in cui le singole immagini vanno ad occupare il posto loro assegnato. Allo stesso tempo, nel momento immediatamente successivo, possono ritrovarsi in un contesto completamente differente e perciò apparire del tutto diverse. Questa è la loro vera natura. I collage formano gruppi e costellazioni. Insieme producono un certo ritmo, continuano la storia l'uno dell'altro, sviluppano narrazioni e analogie e creano una particolare at-

mosfera. Al contempo ciascun singolo gruppo ha la propria dinamica distintiva e può essere dotato di forza e autosufficienza.

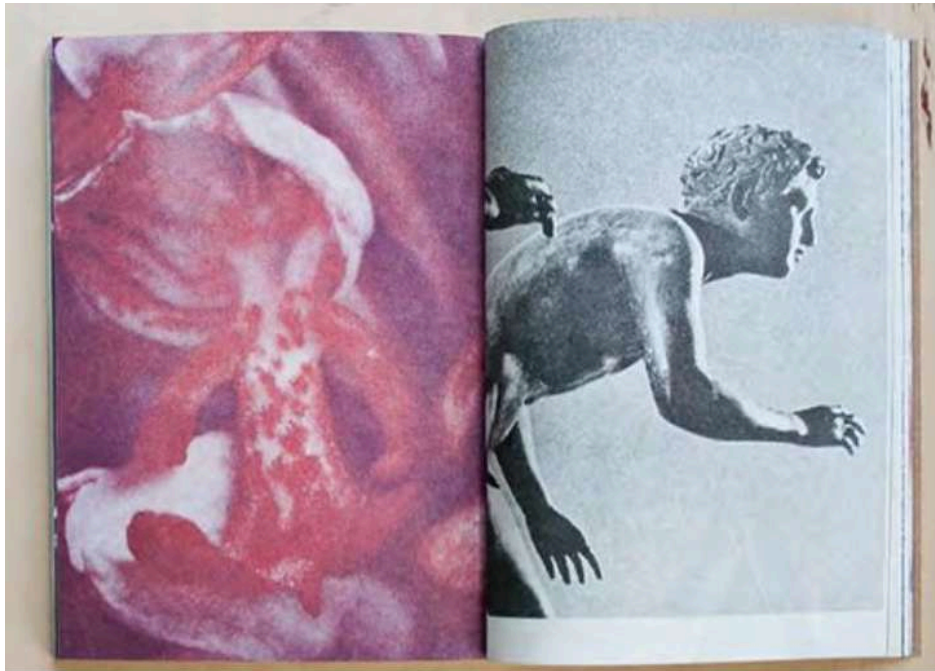
**CR:** Che significato ha per te l'origine o la diversa qualità delle immagini; in che modo tratti i materiali trovati, o interagisci con loro, in rapporto agli originali che includi nei tuoi collage e installazioni?

**Öa:** Lavoro con materiali molto diversi: fotografie mie, dipinti, disegni e testi, ma anche fotografie altrui, fotocopie di libri e immagini provenienti dalle fonti più disparate. Dentro i collage e le installazioni non faccio distinzioni tra le mie opere e, per esempio, i ritagli provenienti da riviste, che esistono tutti al di fuori dell'idea di "autorialità". Posso dire di essere positivamente indifferente a qualsiasi gerarchia riguardante le fonti o l'origine. La mia intenzione è quella di lavorare in maniera radicale, non mostrando alcun rispetto per le immagini in sé, ma offrendo costantemente dei nuovi modi per affrontarle.

**CR:** I tuoi numerosi libri, pubblicati dalla tua casa editrice personale "Orient Press", funzionano secondo modalità simili a quelle delle tue mostre. Qual è la differenza tra progettare in maniera bidimensionale per un libro e presentare un lavoro in uno spazio espositivo?

**Öa:** I libri sono una parte importante e fondamentale del mio lavoro. Un libro ha una struttura diversa, che richiede lo sviluppo di un tema in modo cronologico o lineare. Vi è sempre un dialogo molto diretto tra due pagine affiancate. È un aspetto che rende il libro sostanzialmente diverso da una mostra, nella quale hanno un grande peso nello spazio, la presenza fisica del corpo di una persona e la percezione dell'individuo. La pubblicazione, per sua stessa natura, segue un ordine più rigoroso, che mi permette d'interagire in modo diverso con le immagini e di sviluppare delle narrazioni contingenti.





## *Dance*

This publication was edited by Reinhard Braun on occasion of the exhibition *Processing* at Camera Austria, Graz between September 24 – November 19, 2017.

Altin's books are organized like a stage where a play is being performed, which is established through the very performance itself.

Some of the image material was found by the artist in the archive of Camera Austria, added to her own collection, reworked, newly assembled, and then integrated into her specific visual choreography—a pictorial space full of vibrancy, associations, and also full of disquiet. At once open and precise, visual constellations arise that dispel any resemblances among the images, while simultaneously provoking new ones in other places that have not yet been evident.

72 pages, risograph, 15.4 × 21 cm, numerous b/w and colour illustrations.





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