

# Unattached To Detachment

## Crossings of Gender, Sexuality and Space in Art in Istanbul

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There has been a striking increase in the number of spaces for the showing of art in Istanbul over the last couple of decades, as many commentators have pointed out. What degree of consensus there might be about the reasons for this is more difficult to estimate. Eighteen gallerists, directors, artist-directors, curators, artists and collectors were interviewed on the subject in *Flash Art* last autumn, mentioning, among other factors, the encouragement to business by post-1980 coup Turkish governments from the mid-1980s, the institution of the Istanbul Biennial in 1987 and the opening of Istanbul Modern in 2004, with the increase in the number of galleries in the city over the last five years bucking the trend of post-credit crunch contraction elsewhere.<sup>1</sup> All of this contributes – despite the want of support from the government or the higher education sector mentioned by some – to an optimistically phrased, but precarious sense, for Dyala Nusseibeh in her last-word promotion for the upcoming ArtInternational Istanbul, that the city is at a ‘tipping point’.<sup>2</sup> This new art fair is to be organized by a co-founder of Art Hong Kong and, styled cautiously by Nusseibeh as having a ‘more international outlook’, will compete with Contemporary Istanbul which held its seventh annual fair last autumn, with 112 galleries showing and trading, forty-nine of them from Istanbul. There were only two galleries from elsewhere in Turkey represented at the event: Görüntü Art Gallery from Adana and Siyah Beyaz from the capital, Ankara. Like New York, Istanbul is of capital importance to a sense of an art scene in Turkey, without being the capital.

Istanbul might be at a ‘tipping point’ and, despite the commentator’s apparent confidence that this is the ‘right moment’, it is difficult to ignore the senses in which this point is something other than an overflow of abundance. The fair is, after all, to be more of an influx of art agents from elsewhere who may attract the interest of local collectors, directors, curators or artists. In what direction, with what force and consequence the tipping takes place, we shall have to wait to learn. There are many

1. Giancarlo Politi and Helena Kontova, ‘The Rise of Turkey’, *Flash Art* 286, October 2012, pp 62–66, [http://www.flashartonline.com/interno.php?pagina=articolo\\_det&cid\\_art=973&det=ok&title=THE-RISE-OF-TURKEY](http://www.flashartonline.com/interno.php?pagina=articolo_det&cid_art=973&det=ok&title=THE-RISE-OF-TURKEY)

2. Politi and Kontova, *op cit*, p 66. ArtInternational Istanbul is scheduled to take place in September 2013 at Haliç Congress Centre in Beyoğlu.

fairly well-established agents and spaces on the art scene in Istanbul that are unlikely to be entirely effaced if the braid of the city art scene is rewoven into a renewed silk road for art from across Asia and the Middle East, circulating art and capital out again – though perhaps also, via more inward investment of those international galleries, on to the more traditional centres of Europe and North America.<sup>3</sup>

As if in acknowledgement of these risks of investment, the article in *Flash Art* quotes answers to its questions by two people currently directing non-profit spaces for art in Istanbul. Nancy Atakan, co-director of 5533 with Volkan Aslan, speaks of their aims partly by citing early involvement with the director of Künstlerhaus Stuttgart, Adnan Yıldız, reminding the readers (and writers) of *Flash Art* of a diaspora of Turkish agents beyond the walls of the old city within which 5533 is situated, a point echoed by artists Ali Kazma and Ahmet Öğüt in response to questions fishing for remarks about Turkish artists in exile. Didem Özbek of PiST/// Interdisciplinary Project Space, however, encourages things to tip over a bit further. She is happy to ‘experience periods of competition and productivity in Istanbul that does not target the Biennial only’. Asked what funds contemporary art, she reaffirms that there is no public money, adding, ‘As an art project it would be interesting for me in the near future to subvert the corner shop of PiST/// into a “private bank” branch’.<sup>4</sup> Acknowledging the precariousness of the venture, Özbek’s remarks may sound like a pained inoculation against the risks of collapse, but they may also recall the days before the negotiation of the economic stability pact with the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) in 2002, before the re-namings of the currency, years of dizzying inflation rates and the occasional early day closing to allow banks to try to muster their funds after some sharp fall in the currency. In the 1990s, in the larger cities, it was not uncommon to find art galleries in the basements of larger branches of some of the more important banks. Indeed, if you were to tour round exhibitions of current interest in Istanbul, you might well drop in at one of the two branches of SALT, sponsored by Garanti Bank,<sup>5</sup> or Akbank’s Aksanat Culture and Arts Center, or even descend to the basement gallery of Millî Reasürans, the national insurance fund founded in 1929, not long after the Wall Street Crash, to seek to secure the value of the currency, and administered by the once monopolistic state bank İşbank (or ‘Workbank’).<sup>6</sup>

Özbek’s wit traverses some of the frameworks I want to reconstruct in this brief questioning history of art in Istanbul in relation to globalizing forces. The evocation of a veiling (for it would not be a wholly successful disguise) of the space for art as it abuts the street, the art space as corner shop or bank branch, recalls the window-front exhibition ‘Shoe Store’ curated by Selda Asal as the inaugural show at the first artist-run project space in Istanbul, Apartment Project/Apartman Projesi, in 1999, and a controversy over art, gender and sexuality, involving threats of sexual violence and censorship that was keenly felt by its participants then and even now. I shall argue that this controversy exposes different modes of resistance to the coercions of dominant modes of globalization as they involve art, gender and sexuality, and that in particular it demonstrates that what Judith Butler has termed the ‘stylistics’ of gendered corporeality need to be understood in relation to different traditions of the social organization of space and the meanings of passages

3. Gallery Krampf of New York may have started a trend by opening a branch in Istanbul in 2012. ‘I believe Istanbul will be the contemporary art hub of the region in the near future’, Regis Krampf, ‘Krampf relocates at Karaköy’, *Hürriyet Daily News*, 15 November 2012, <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/tr.aspx?pageID=238&nID=34647>, accessed April 2013.

4. Politi and Kontova, op cit, p 64

5. SALT Galata is housed in the building designed for the Ottoman Imperial Bank by Alexandre Vallaury in 1890.

6. See <http://www.millire.com>.

across them. Thinking back before the 2002 deal with the IMF and World Bank brokered by the prominent alterglobalization Turkish economist and politician Kemal Derviş, a deal that coincided with the ascent to power of the Islamist-leaning AK Party government, re-elected for the second time in 2011, will suggest indeed that there has been a normalization of gendered positionalities across a regulation of spaces which, for that governmentality, threatened a greater instability of communicational outcomes in the neoliberal globalization of Turkey.<sup>7</sup> The retrenchment of traditional meanings of the spaces of street and home, work and domesticity, as well as spaces of the juridical suspensions of freedom, and passage through them and their attendant hierarchies, continues to be contested in the work of Turkish artists. Neglect of the idioms of corporeality as they implicate forms of socio-spatial organization in accounts of sexualities, even as a consequence of the terms passed on by Butler's account of gender and performativity – as is perhaps suggested by her estimate of the relative unimportance of questions of gay marriage rights and who gets to make a legally sanctioned and supported home with whom – is discouraged by this art, as I shall seek to show.<sup>8</sup> In order to do so, I want to sketch in certain theoretical problematics concerning art, gender and sexuality that may assist in sustaining criticism of disciplinarian modes of globalization within but also beyond the boundaries of Turkey.

Butler's brilliant and influential account of gender is haunted by the linguisticism of the performative of which she makes such incisive use. Supported by the anti-psychoanalytic rhetoric of Foucauldian positions, along with notions of discourse and positivity that she has herself sought to overcome, Butler's formulations of the stylistics of gendered corporeality have underestimated the exposure to otherness in visibility and in the negotiation with others that preoccupies formations of gendered subjectivity across already defined frameworks of the social organization of space.<sup>9</sup> The significance of the re-imagining of the meanings of identities and activities across reworked frameworks of space and their meaning-effects in art is underestimated by the gestaltist promises of well-known statements such as the following from the 'Subversive Bodily Acts' chapter of *Gender Trouble*:

Gender is a norm that can never be fully internalized; 'the internal' is a surface signification, and gender norms are finally phantasmatic, impossible to embody. If the ground of gender identity is the stylized repetition of acts through time and not a seemingly seamless identity, then the spatial metaphor of a 'ground' will be displaced and *revealed* as a stylized configuration, indeed, a gendered corporealization of time.<sup>10</sup>

Without reversing Butler's challenge to commonsensical norms of physiological bodies or psychological inwardness, it does not follow that the 'spatial metaphor' of ground against which a pose or a gesture as 'stylized configuration' stands out means that this revealing takes place. Poses or gestures 'stand out' not simply as abyssal revelations of the 'facticity' of gender norms of culture from the outside, but as differentiations of the visible and renegotiations of the visual, the meanings, effects or meaning-effects of bodies and their traces that have been inherited, more or less altered from instance to instance, in ways that do not simply reveal the 'time' of gendered corporealizations but potentially – if we can read

7. Derviş's account of the development of his position, its aims, its indebtedness to Habermasian notions of legitimization and his negotiations with the alterglobalization movement from its first meeting in Porto Alegre in 2001 are outlined in Kemal Derviş in cooperation with Ceren Özer, *A Better Globalization: Legitimacy, Governance, and Reform*, Center For Global Development, Brookings Institution Press, Washington DC, 2005. For a suggestion of the dangers here, see his admission of a want of 'philosophical depth' in his relation to the work of Karl Polanyi and Jürgen Habermas in the above publication, 'Introduction', pp xxiv–xxv.

8. See 'Gender is Extramoral', interview by Fina Birulés with Judith Butler, <http://www.egs.edu/faculty/judith-butler/articles/gender-is-extramoral/>, accessed April 2013.

9. On the possibility of a 'convergence' of a Foucauldian and psychoanalytic thought in relation to the 'constraining power by which [sexuality] is enabled', see Judith Butler, 'Revisiting Bodies and Pleasures', *Theory, Culture and Society*, vol 16, no 2, April 1999, pp 11–20, p 20.

10. Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, Routledge, London and New York, 1990, p 179, emphasis added

them – something of their histories. Gendered corporeality is not revealed as ‘facticity’ of time. Rather, sometimes, gendered corporeality gives to be remarked or contests the spatio-temporalities of the frameworks which it has inherited or been assigned.

Once again, this criticism is not meant to discard Butler’s work or the enabling of queer theoretical debate to which she has made such a contribution. Rather, it is to seek to embed more of its positions more securely in conceptualizations of the cultural and particularly in forms of resistance to its norms. To take one example germane to a history of recent art in Turkey, the account of Kutluğ Ataman’s work by Irit Rogoff, published in these pages in 2009, borrows Butler’s account of the subversion by drag of ‘the distinction between inner and outer psychic space’ and the ‘lack’ of soul with which such cross-gendered enactments confront their audiences. Following a section in her article on Ataman’s well-known video work, entitled ‘Sexuality Above All’, Rogoff moves to a conclusion in which the significance of Ataman’s *Women Who Wear Wigs* (1999) is described as a ‘heady mix’ of women, sexuality, Islam, patriarchy, the state, vanity and wigs, together ‘exceeding the boundaries of anything that might actually circulate under the aegis of the proper name of woman’.<sup>11</sup> Rogoff’s reading of this well-known video installation piece *does* suggest the displacement of neo-orientalizing projections of the idealized, sexualized woman of the Orient through Ataman’s simultaneous four-channel video projection piece, but perhaps it missed their very solicitation through the blanked-out screen that does not show the Muslim student ‘who spews forth a great complaint’ about not being allowed to wear a headscarf at her university and who wears a wig instead.<sup>12</sup>

Ataman’s work takes the form of video installations, I would argue, because it is involved in contesting the established meanings of the sites of viewing as well as of bodies and their sites. I first saw the striking *Never My Soul* (2001), involving a series of interviews with transsexual Ceyhan Fırat, with its several monitors and elderly sofas and armchairs installed across two floors of a gallery, in Istanbul in 2001. Its re-showing in his retrospective of 10 November 2010–6 March 2011 at Istanbul Modern had the piece corralled into a room, and lacked the sense that the complacencies of the domestic screen watcher were being exposed to other senses of space as signified by Fırat’s hazardous life between home and street in the spaces of Istanbul, if also of Zürich, to which she moved. Rogoff’s account promotes the importance of cultural geography, but this is here somewhat schematically rendered as ‘the ability of one place to point to or highlight aspects of another’.<sup>13</sup> Rightly picking up on some of the sufferings that caused Ceyhan Fırat and others to escape, Ataman’s work is determined as representation of the country or as a place itself. Its reframings of the dramas of failures to abide by the norms of gendered corporeality that expose the conservative redrawing of boundaries in the accommodation with administered neoliberal globalization is missed, despite the citation of curator Vasif Kortun on ‘home as the site of conspiracy’ among artists, if not others; a refuge, but also a space of a resistance to ‘emancipatory individualism’.<sup>14</sup>

Art, it has been argued, would be that which is at odds with any pure privacy of the private, but also with any settled notion of the publicness of

11. Irit Rogoff, ‘De-Regulation: With the Work of Kutluğ Ataman’, *Third Text* 97, vol 23, issue 2, March 2009, pp 165–179, p 179. Her quotes from Butler are from *Gender Trouble*, pp 135–137.

12. Rogoff, *op cit*, p 172

13. *Ibid*, p 169

14. *Ibid*, p 172, quoting Vasif Kortun, ‘Becoming Places’, in *Becoming a Place*, Project 4L, Istanbul Museum of Contemporary Art, 2001, p 47

15. See remarks by Jacques Derrida on there being no 'private work of art', the signature occurring in 'a public and thus in a political space', while 'this concept of "publicness" no longer belongs to a rigorous opposition between the public and the private'. Peter Brunette and David Wills, 'The Spatial Arts: An Interview with Jacques Derrida', *Deconstruction and the Visual Arts: Art, Media, Architecture*, in Peter Brunette and David Wills, eds, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1994, pp 9–32, p 19.

16. The report by Arash Ahmadi, 'Turkey PM Erdogan sparks row over abortion', 1 June 2012, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-18297760>, accessed April 2013, usefully mentions the connection made by Erdoğan to the killing of Kurds at Uludere in December 2011.

17. See Jean Laplanche and Jean-Bertrand Pontalis, 'Anaclysis' and 'Sexuality', in *The Language of Psychoanalysis* (1973), Donald Nicholson-Smith, trans, Karnac, London, 1988, pp 29–32 and pp 418–422.

18. For an extended account of this in relation to the work of Hüseyin Alptekin, Hale Tenger and one piece by Zeren Gökten (see conclusion to this essay), see my 'Traffic in Remains: Identity and Resistance in Recent Work by Turkish Artists', in Jonathan Harris, ed, *Identity Theft: The Cultural Colonization of Contemporary Art*, Liverpool University Press and Tate Gallery, Liverpool, 2008, pp 51–90.

the public. It solicits publicness, but in a way that contests any established notion of the public or the public good as settled.<sup>15</sup> There have been undoubted gains in the period of relative economic stability in Turkey since 2002, and not only narrowly economic ones, but there has also been a retrenchment of conservative and authoritarian tendencies recently, for instance over abortion, linked to limits placed on caesarean births.<sup>16</sup> It is important to be able to acknowledge questions of gender and sexuality, but how is this to be done if Turkey inherits the phantasms of Orientalist projections and introjections, of licence and unenlightened patriarchal legislation? How to expose sexuality without promoting it as foundational qualification or ground of liberation, Foucault's 'sex-as-power'?

I shall try to show in what follows that, across norms or stabilities of sexual orientation, mapped onto or unmapped from normative gender, the sexual can be retraced through art in ways that echo Freudian notions of the retroactivity of the anaclytic, erotogenic zones and the auto-erotic, the component formations that led him to posit infantile sexuality. These do not simply confirm this positing, in the sense either of a biological ground to the sexual drive, or of a common genesis in some inherited primal phantasy of sexual activity, as argued for by Jean Laplanche and Jean-Bertrand Pontalis.<sup>17</sup> Nor is this series one of stable terms exclusive of another or others. The retroactive eroticization of the body is not finished, once and for all, in so far as the body is a site of the potential alteration of the frameworks and terms of stabilization of the meanings of its zoning. The sexual is that which can be dislocated from being 'propped' on organ function, 'leaning' on, as implied by the more literal translation of Freud's *Anlehnung*, some part of the body that has been instrumentalized for some other purpose – though not just for purposes of consuming survival, eating or excreting, but for activities of perception more generally. Marked by the passage of some otherness, organs of sense may be addressed in ways that remake senses of others, in particular through comings and goings of otherness in and across representations. What Freud called the 'component-instincts' – neither simply instinct nor components in some predictably functional machine – come and go across stagings of otherwise apparently comprehensible bodies.

For sedimented historical reasons, then, work out of Turkey has not sought to hold to so impassable a line between art, commerce and finance. Partly for this reason, it has managed to exceed the logics of bodies, labour and return that govern capitalist investment in so far as it has played dead, or at least deadpan, in relation to demands to stand up as detached monument to cultural identity, the spur to the restoration of a re-territorialized Turkishness. It does so by remaining unattached to detachment: unattached to a model of art that appeals to detached modes of viewing, offering detached and generically recognizable objects; unattached to models of medium-specificity, but also to more traditional and distinct non-Western determinations of materiality that sustain different modes of the transcendence of detached modes of viewing; but, perhaps most importantly, or most contentiously, unattached to imaginary detachments that sustain fetishisms of sexual difference.<sup>18</sup> I want to argue, then, that some of the faultlines in the dramatic changes in the art scene of Istanbul over the last couple of decades can best be tracked





Bülent Şangar, *Globalization: State, Violence, Misery*, 1995–2007, Duratrans print on lightbox, 78.5 x 120 cm, photo courtesy the artist and SALT Istanbul

with reference to a politicization of modes of Western-type art that has rediscovered certain aporias of detachment and of associated mixed imaginaries of the active and passive re-inherited through Orientalist problematics. Exposing the incoherence of what has been called sexuality, working with art, with the political-theoretical problems of what is called art, as well as the politics of showing in what remains, or threatens to re-emerge as an apparently conservative culture, this work engages fictions of sexuality and the sexual to re-enable thinking of gendered idioms of corporeality.

To look again at Bülent Şangar's *Globalization: State, Misery, Violence* of 1995 is to court confusion given recent post-credit-crunch austerity politics and rising levels of unemployment in many polities. I shall try not to treat it simply as prophetic. It does, however, invite us to re-imagine the fallout that accompanies processes of globalization. Şangar's more recent photo-work of bodies stranded in car parks, on the street, as if after or in premonition of some disaster, or shown hiding from a look, has moved away from his earlier photo-performance pieces in which he adopts many roles. His work evinces a fluid relation to performance as well as to photography; as, indeed, demonstrated by the work co-authored with Aydan Murtezaoglu, *Unemployed Employees – I found you a new job!* (2009), in which the artists constructed a shop or workshop-like stage on which unemployed university graduates folded and refolded clothes or offered perfume samples to the audience at the 11th Istanbul Biennial. The earlier pieces need to be approached in

ways that are not governed by the apparent obviousness of the genre of self-portraiture. There are no marks internal to the self-portrait that mark it out as belonging to that genre as such. The draughtsman-self is 'ruined' from the outset by the blindness that attends the making of the mark, argued Jacques Derrida, in the sense that the mark recalls the exteriority of that around which, through internalization, senses of self are formed.<sup>19</sup> The photographer has been thought to work – and work best when – blind to what is inscribed in the camera.<sup>20</sup> Despite the digital screen, too, we may still say that the mutability of the digital image, its ease of editing, takes place against a certain pervasive blindness, given that the existence of the image as image depends on matrices of discrete mathematical values of which any showing or representational function as image is some kind of version. Is this essentially any different from analogue prints, however, in so far as they too are versions of their negatives?

It is not that the digital photograph is essentially the object of manipulation: its ease of manipulation is relative to that of the analogue photograph. Furthermore this manipulation operates by means of already encoded parameters of gesture, a haunting of authorship by the co-authorship of software that, if not absent in relation to other tools, does not so obviously promise to convey the rhythms of a body. It is this, indeed, that Şangar's poses double and encourage us to remark, I suggest, with their suspended gestures of violence, exposing each of them as citations, rather than expressions of violence. *The* meaning of this body is unavailable here, at any rate, but then so is *the* meaning of these as citations. Do they quote the behaviour of gangs, of plainclothes police? The outfit recurs in his contemporaneous, multi-shot, Bruce McLean-like *Blue Jeans* piece, suggesting, with its awkward posing, but also its goose-stepper, a satire of the innocence or ease of Americanization of Turkey through the Cold War. The garments veil as well as indicate the meanings of the body. And yet it is not difficult to reconstruct the situation, as Erden Kosova has done, of threat and menace in which this piece – made for a group exhibition of the same title, curated by Ali Akay, that took place in Istanbul in 1995 – made sense as a staging of a scene of punishment for an unspecified transgression, as ascribed by a series of agencies that the reiterative titling echoes.<sup>21</sup>

Şangar's spectacular, edited backlit print insists on the other side of obviousness, however. Working with mixed digital and pre-digital techniques, this piece is not so much photography in emulation of painting, an oft-repeated argument in connection with large, backlit transparencies, as recollection of the temporality of the fascination of photography through its eclipse.<sup>22</sup> Three of the faces of the watch worn by Şangar are visible. One of his faces, moreover, comes to seem to be looking at that same watch. The image tempts us to reconstruct the chronology of posing, with the victim or victim-to-be posing after but also before one of his victimizers. Which ego-position came first? Victimizer or victim? Drawing on the haunting of the digital image through the reserve of its non-event, the event that is not one because it is not legible as such, Şangar's image invites his audience to work through being exposed to events, to violence and to iterations of violence, in a crumbling framework of a streetscape in which exposure to legibility is also exposure to light. Exposing in turn the failure of the promise of photography to

19. See Jacques Derrida, *Mémoires d'aveugle: L'autoportrait et autres ruines*, Editions de la réunion des musées nationaux, Paris, 1990, pp 46–47.

20. For a useful critical account of this version of Edward Weston-type photographic art and the 'gaze', see Roberta McGrath, 'Re-reading Edward Weston: Feminism, Photography and Psychoanalysis', in Liz Wells, ed, *The Photography Reader*, Routledge, London, 2003, pp 327–337.

21. For Erden Kosova on 'the terror dominating public life in Turkey in the mid-nineties', from *In the Gorges of the Balkans*, exhibition catalogue, Kunsthalle Fridericianum, Kassel, 2003, see [http://www.editionblockberlin.de/prev\\_exhibitions\\_en.php](http://www.editionblockberlin.de/prev_exhibitions_en.php), accessed April 2013.

22. For a statement of this misleading position as erasing 'the difference [*sic*] between a painting and a photograph' adopted from the work of W J T Mitchell, see Lev Manovich, *The Language of New Media*, MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 2001, p 304.



control this, the objectless look on the face of the tyrannized victim is also a reminder of this exposure, and the quasi-auto-erotic pleasures of working with it via digital editing. The virtuoso performance of the predictably masculine is a veiled solicitation to re-imagine its yet-to-be-public faces.

Şangar's work neatly exemplifies the obverse of Kortun's argument mentioned above. Retelling the painful history of the eventual withdrawal of Murat Morova's *City* from the street-side window of the opening show of Apartment Project in 1999 might be justified if, in recalling the dark side of Didem Özbek's wit concerning tensions over the exhibition, it helps to support an account of gendered bodies, sexuality and spaces that is flexible enough to allow for the understanding, though not the comprehension, of cultural differences I wish to argue for here. Not that it would be only Turkey, or Islamic polities, that would harbour such tensions. The legal position in Turkey is similar to that in the USA or in the UK. There are laws against obscene display, framed so as to regulate sex shops or the display of pornography. Unlike in the USA and UK, to my knowledge, these laws have not been used to put pressure on art galleries, discouraging the display of work on view to those just passing by. It might be argued that the comparison is skewed because of statistical insignificance, there having been many



Murat Morova, *City*, 1999, shoes, nails, dildos, standard shoe size, photo courtesy the artist and Galeri Nev, Istanbul



more shows of much more risky art in those more established cultures of gallery art. Events around the Apartment Project show suggest that it is because censorship acts more informally than through the authorized agents of the law, and that a masculinist culture has been more consistently and threateningly prevalent in Turkey.

To ask what made Morova's piece the occasion for censorious threats would not necessarily lead us to the operative terms of those threats.<sup>23</sup> It was known to the curator Selda Asal that a woman called Emine, who had been working as a secretary for a company in the same street as the location of Apartman Projesi near Tünel in Beyoğlu, had recently crossed one of the district gangs. Having been forced to perform fellatio, she had left the district. Living as well as working in that same district, once Asal heard from someone in the corner shop that there were those who objected to Morova's piece being on show, she sought to mitigate the offence. Unable to contact the artist who, back in 1999, had no mobile phone and was, it turned out, visiting a sick relative in hospital, as the time of the show approached the curator tried various solutions. Could she keep the piece on show by veiling it? Was this not the operative norm of the terms of sexual difference that the threats sought to reinstate? If women's hair should be covered because it arouses, then would veiling the dildos not serve a similar end? What would cover these phallic-penile heels? Having tried condoms, then coloured condoms, and finally cut-off fingers from surgical gloves, and still unable to reach the artist, understandably enough Asal withdrew the piece from the show.

Tyrannized and driven to a series of attempts to veil that which seemed to local gangs too unattached, crossing over out of the street-front windows of 'Shoe Store', exposing the fiction of detachment of masculine power as sustained by fetishistic reattachment, this show marks a moment in an engagement with the forces of capitalizing globalization – socio-economic, -spatial, -sexual forces – in which the re-emergence of a threatened masculinist power reasserted itself over the communication of local idioms of space and even regional Sufist traditions of thought and imagination. Trapped by a certain view of art from a street no longer in their command, the anonymous gang agent or agents insisted on the withdrawal of *City* from view and, in so doing, censored (if not wholly successfully) not only a destabilizing instance of the citation of notional norms of Western female dress and sexuality, but the citation of an idiom of hospitality. As Selda Asal puts it, in text transcribed from the exhibition publicity, on the Apartment Project website:

... the saying 'one's foot bringing good luck to the place' [Turkish idiom for visitors in a new place: 'Ayagı uğurlu gelmek'] has inspired this first project... it is also a kind of wish that this shop brings good luck to the space.<sup>24</sup>

Exposed to the vicissitudes of fortune, with little money behind it, such a space for art, once part of the curator's living space, sought to 'get off the ground' (to use a telling idiom of capitalist de-territorialization) by opening for business as 'Shoe Store', but in such a way that had one pass into a space, perhaps to buy, but also to recall or learn this idiom. It is a widespread custom to remove one's shoes when entering a dwelling or sacred space in Turkish and many regionally proximate, and distant, Islamic cultures. The visitor to 'Shoe Store' was thus invited to imagine

23. My account of the events surrounding 'Shoe Store' are indebted to conversations with curator Selda Asal prior to the conference 'Gender Trouble in Modern/Postmodern Literature and Art', Haliç University, Istanbul, 17–18 April 2008, at which a version of the argument of this article was given. I am indebted to the responses of participants and, in particular, to Trevor Hope of Ankara University, who read an earlier revised draft.

24. See [http://istanbul.apartmentproject.com/projects.asp?PROJE\\_ID=59](http://istanbul.apartmentproject.com/projects.asp?PROJE_ID=59), accessed April 2013.

donating some shoes, as the many exhibiting artists from the city had done, but was also invited to imagine the history and future of the change of function from domestic to exhibiting art space.

The exposure to the instabilities of fortune that marked the rhetoric of the promotion of the exhibition, but also the reactions of local masculinist power, exceeded a predictable accommodation with the forces of inter-, multi- or transnational capital that had started to buy up and buy into the history and traditions of the district of Beyoğlu, around İstiklal Caddesi, for some time the most popular area of the city for time out in cafés, bars, shops, clubs, cinemas, restaurants, and indeed galleries. The government has since 2011 damaged this reputation by banning tables on the street, restricting the drinking of alcohol, leading to debate over whether these measures are Islamist in inspiration or intended to gentrify and render the district more 'upscale'.<sup>25</sup> The point seems to me to be that it is not clearly or separably either, but both, in a way that perpetuates disciplinary governmental tactics of accommodation with globalization according to available terms of a recognizable morality of bodies and behaviour.

Exceeding the moralities of neoliberal disciplinary globalization, the masculinist reaction of the gangs was also sadly complicit with the dynamics of undermining legality in favour of conservative reaction. Refusing the experiment with communication of the regional idiom of hospitality, it also blocked access to what has been commented on as Morova's Sufist inspiration.<sup>26</sup> If traditional Islamic design often solicits thoughts of beauty and order through binocular-addressed symmetries, then we may be inclined to take Morova's re-paired shoes in this way. Such modes of viewing are, I would argue, traditional because reactivated by the characteristics of visual objects in relation to prevalent discourse – rather than reactivated because traditional, the typical modern/postmodern argument. Morova's piece suggests a stalling of discourse by echoing the name of the style of shoes as its title, as if the artist were drawing attention back towards morphological and stylistic matters, away from their provocative meanings. This would be in keeping with a detached mode of viewing, transcending approval or disapproval of the objects. Yet this strategy failed, and it did so because the piece also calls up the ways in which sexuality is inscribed. Morova's careful and clever play with detachment and reattachment, re-pairing what he may or may not have detached, fictionalizes male fetishism of female anatomy, as diagnosed by Freud, but it also suggests a sort of obscene auto-eroticism. The play of similarity and difference in the colour and texture of the dildo and that of the interior of the shoe, framed by the defensively arrayed lines of nails, offers up a sort of imaginary passage between these zones, recalling the passage between what become stabilized as erotogenic zones through auto-erotic psychic investment in the surface of the body.

It is these senses of surfaces calling up an erotogenic, auto-erotic mapping of the body that flew across the space of the window of 'Shoe Store', in the face of the masculine power of the gang. Attached to norms of imaginary fetishistic reattachment, among which I would count veiling, the attachment of dildos called up further imaginary reattachments of bodies and prostheses in scenarios of obscene auto-hetero-eroticism. Hyperbole of female narcissism, or fantasy of a

25. 'The real motive in these plans is the desire to make a profit', argues urban scholar Yaşar Adanalı, quoted in Carrie Dossick, Liz Dunn, Ian Fishburn, Natalie Gualy, Kathryn Merlino and Jason Twill, *The Conflicted City: Hypergrowth, Urban Renewal and Mass Urbanization in Istanbul*, University of Washington, Runstad Center for Real Estate Studies, 2012, p 21.

26. Murat Morova has an extensive collection of 'mystical' Ottoman images and objects. See Ekrem Işın and Selahattin Özpalarbıyıklar, *Hoş gör ya bu: Osmamlı kültüründe mistik semboller, nesneler: Murat Morova koleksiyonu*, Yapı Kredi, Istanbul, 1999.

passive-receptive male, they were to be prevented from being imagined, and this shoe-piece to be withdrawn from view. The calling to mind of the spaces of gendered identities of Morova's piece, unlike the kitchen, dining room and bedroom spaces of its imaginable predecessor, Meret Oppenheim's *Ma gouvernante*, *My Nurse*, *mein Kindermädchen* (1936, Moderna Museet, Stockholm), was violently refused.

In recalling this drama of 1999 now as part of my argument about gender, sexuality and the forces of globalization, particularly in connection with the recent governmental drive to normalize that district of Istanbul, I mean to enable rather than disable resistance and the release of energies. If my argument about visual art in Turkey and beyond is correct, however, then the unbinding of libidinal investments needs not to underestimate the investments in the fetishisms of normality. It can best avoid this, I shall argue in conclusion, by inviting involvement in the unstable series I have taken from Freud, the auto-erotic, the erotogenic and the anaclitic, across which certainties over the sites and meanings of the sexual are unbound. To believe that there is only intolerance of this would be to misunderstand my argument, as it is here in Turkey that resistance to the ascription of sexualized identities is also crossed with an involving dispersal of any one mode of involvement in the sexual.

Perhaps it is this that the paintings of Taner Ceylan – which have made his career in Istanbul so difficult – do not encourage. The meanings of looking in his early paintings, smaller and less photo-realistic than recent work, with their smaller male figures engaged in homosexual acts, provoked his dismissal from Yeditepe University. However, they did not unleash the anger that has been directed at his more recent *Lost Painting* series, with its highly convincing male and female figures, clad in Ottoman-era dress and usually adopting suggestively sexualized poses, each painting titled with a date from the centuries of Ottoman rule. Suggestively, rather than more obviously as in much of his earlier work it is perhaps the allusions to heterosexuality in the black-and-white photo-like painting *1879* (2011), in which a veiled Ottoman woman looks off to the left with *L'Origine du monde* (1866) by Gustave Courbet apparently hanging on the wall behind her to the right, that have disturbed the terms of toleration, such as they have been, of Ceylan's work. Acquired by Ottoman diplomat Khalil or Halil Şerif Paşa in Paris, who also owned *Le Bain turc* (1862) by J A D Ingres, the painting by Courbet was sold in 1868 to pay off gambling debts.<sup>27</sup> Reproductions of Ceylan's work are viewable on his website, which invites users under eighteen not to enter, and where the alteration in scale of his work, from smaller to larger paintings around 2006, can be tracked.<sup>28</sup> It is as if the smaller paintings call up a domestic space of viewing, something that is called up and yet transgressed in his *Taner Taner* painting of 2003, in which one figure resembling the artist sodomizes another. The whiteness of the walls in this, but also in many of his paintings, acts as if to quote the white walls of gallery hanging space, anaclitic pleasure displaced across the auto-erotic framing of art and of gender.

Other recent work by Turkish artists has, it seems to me, more powerfully contested the norms of the spatio-temporalities of gender that, according to my argument, are tied up with senses of gendered identity and necessarily implicated in globalization, across its dystopic and

27. Francis Haskell, 'A Turk and His Pictures in Nineteenth-Century Paris', *Oxford Art Journal*, vol 5, no 1, 1982, pp 40–47

28. See <http://www.tanerceylan.com>.



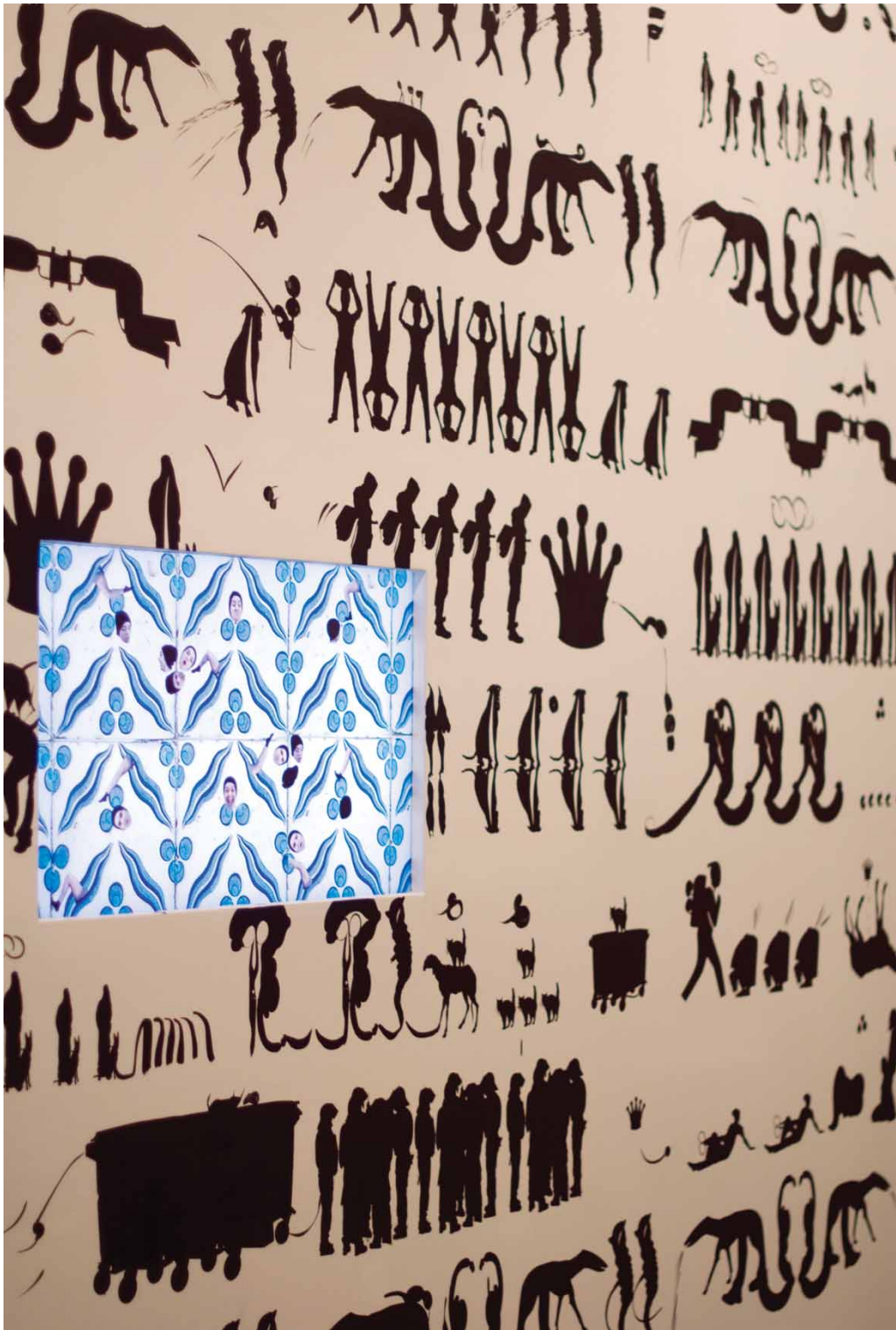
Selim Bırsel, *Tanşak Tarlası* (*Testis-Ear-Tank-Field*), 2007–2008, stamp ink on paper, 96 x 180 cm, Dr Nejat F Eczacıbaşı Foundation Collection, photo courtesy the artist

utopic moments. As suggested by this work, the anacletic – the leaning-on organ function of pleasure that Freud places in a series with erotogenic zonal pleasure and with auto-eroticism, in which one's body would become one's object of pleasure – involves a form of dispersal across materials and surfaces that dislocates ascriptions of sexualized identity, while allowing for understandings of the politics of the spaces of gender.

Selim Bırsel writes of the 'heterographic and homographic' play in the meanings of the titles of his wall-stamp drawings, a series that has stretched across papered walls in Istanbul, but also in Vienna.<sup>29</sup> Bırsel's *Tanşak Tarlası*, like his *Tanşak Tarlası Viyana* video also in the same collection, or his *Tanşak Omurgası* (2010, IKSİV Istanbul), involves the use of a rubber stamp used repeatedly across a surface on or of the wall. 'Tarla' means field, and 'omurga' spine, and these pieces, in their variety of expansive figuring, call up scenes and objects both external and internal to human bodies. 'Tanşak' is a neologism, conjoining suggestions of tank, 'başak' or ear (as in 'ear of wheat' or 'spike') and 'taşak' or testis. Nouns in Turkish are often used in the singular but understood in the plural. Bırsel works with this understanding to provoke others. Through the exercise of careful pleasure in the turning of the stamp, a viewing is offered in which any one of the figures of the tank may turn across the space of orientation that affords it legibility and, overlaying or promixate to others, a rhythm flows out into and back from fields of wheat or the twistings of a spine. The delicate, sometimes broken lines of the guns and armour of the tank solicit the movement of the eye to go too far, across the unbounded space of the wall, just as the title solicits the ear to hear too much. Playing on meanings blocked together in masculinity, of instrumentalized aggression, Bırsel's work operates a zonal restaging, dispersing and reinventing the terms of reinvestment in

29. Email to the author, 23 April 2013





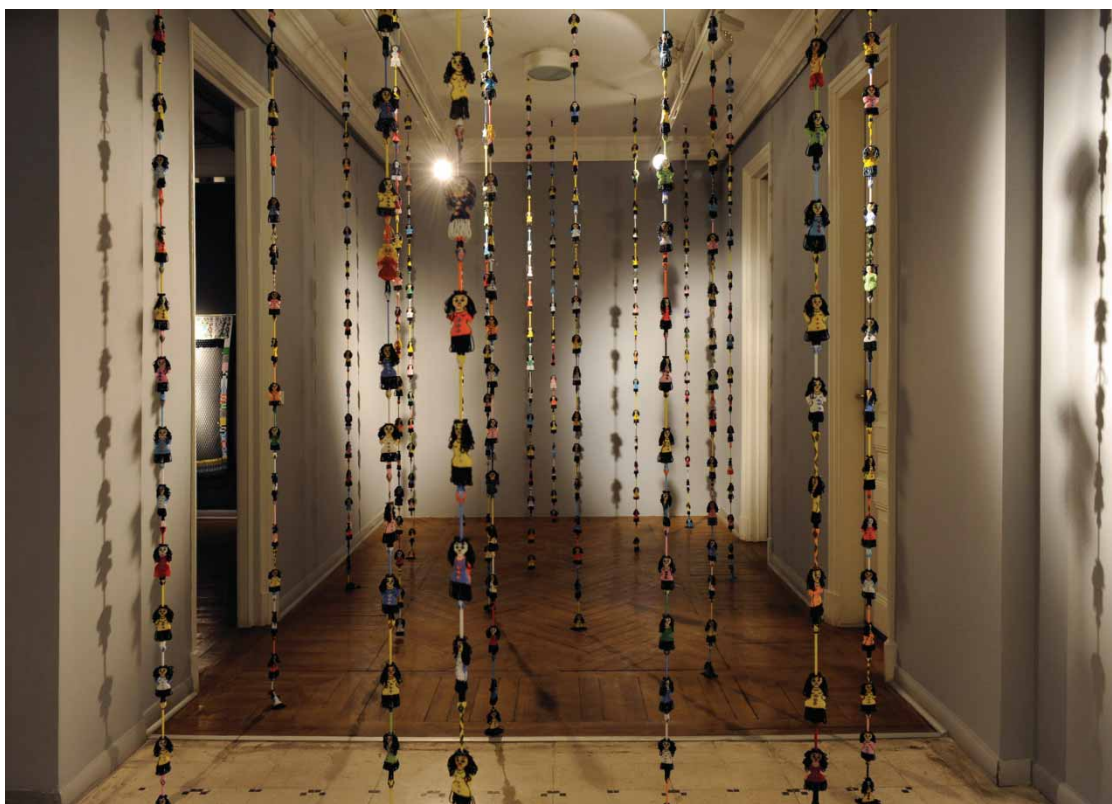
İnci Eviner, Detail of *New Citizen I, II and III*, 2009, three digital video animations of three-minute loops on LCD screens, digital prints, 400 x 5000 cm, Dr Nejat F Eczacıbaşı Foundation Collection, photo courtesy the artist

the phallic tank, implicating the space of viewing in other spaces, of cultivation or fecundity, remaking defensive ego-formation and the spaces of its aggressive exercise through ecstatic contiguities.

Work by İnci Eviner may also be thought according to a significance of a sense of compositional spreading, though it is rather in the mode of conducting the look laterally from one figure to another, or drawing it into other familiar spaces, pictorial as well as of the order of the word, or the diagrammatic, in order to surprise it with what turns out to conceal as well as to show on view. Work since her first wallpaper piece, made for Kasa Galeri, Istanbul in 2001, has played with remaking the meanings of the geometries of gallery space.<sup>30</sup> *New Citizen I-II-III* (2009) stretches out, ascending and descending the wall as a series of black silhouettes in isotype-like statistical arrays that mix rats with modular men, functional rubbish skips with youths, and these with djinn- or animal-like sequences. This aid to the counting of the countable and uncountable is interrupted by video animations of scenes deriving from postcards from museums in France, other home of the republican citizen. To the left, a pastoral landscape tapestry has its repose interrupted by female figures twisting partly out of and back into elastic grey, with a Chinoiserie-like design in which others are similarly clothed, one pulsing with what looks like a concealed erection coming and going. In the centrally placed animation of *New Citizen II*, the black circles of the çintemani design, popular at the Ottoman court through its heyday in the sixteenth century, flip into winking, round-faced female faces, while the odd leg pokes through the unclosed lip- or cloud-like pairings of undulating asymmetrical linear designs. Invoking the masculine look of Western, if not Far Eastern powers, the work also offers its fetish-legs to an Ottoman imperial gaze, while the faces of the woman oscillate into and out of view. The repeating Ottoman design is altered by the repeating animation, turning into a zone in which the face of the woman offers its disturbingly reassuring look back, dislocating identification with a territorializing gaze that would assign this as a model-space of the Turkish, insisting on a gendering of that space.

Lastly, Zeren Göktan's *Ultrasonic* (2013), on show at CDA Projects in the exhibition 'Counter' this year (15 March–27 April), works less with the lateral and more with the contiguity that this sort of regular spacing calls up in Eviner's eroticized work, if also, of course, more generally. An orchestrated, carefully planned and non-autographic authoring of many beadwork pieces, made by male prisoners in Ümraniye Prison, Istanbul at Göktan's instigation, a quantity of for-the-hand, multi-coloured figures of women on cords are strung together in a series of cables from ceiling to floor in one room of the exhibition, and separately titled designs patterned after ancient Egyptian shroud covers hang in the others. The meanings of the contiguity of the beads are preoccupied by many hands as well as by questions of the meanings of styles, the genres of beadwork and digital structures and techniques. There was also a website, <http://www.anitsayac.com>, or 'monumentcounter', shown on a monitor in the exhibition space; this records the names of the women who have been murdered in Turkey since 2008 when records began to be kept by the Ministry of Family and Social Policies, and has been and can be updated. Several digital spaces cross through the work, therefore, including the spaces of the designs of the shroud

30. *An Explosive Heart* was made for the 'Skin and Surface' exhibition, curated by me at the Kasa Galeri, 2002. My essay on this work, 'Skin and Surface: Animals, Clothes, Phantoms', was published in part in Aslı Çetinkaya, ed, *Kasa Galeri'da 10 yıl*, Sabancı University Press, Istanbul, 2010, after being effectively censored by a vote of the gallery committee, of which I was a member, shortly before the opening in 2002. I draw on the argument of that essay here.



Zeren Göktan, *Ultrasonic*, 2013, beadwork, keyrings, dimensions variable (with part of *No One is Like You*, 2013, beadwork, 75 x 150 cm, off to left), photo courtesy the artist and CDA Projects Istanbul

covers by Göktan, made to order by male prisoners, designs which, though structured like ancient Egyptian models she saw in the Louvre with an open weave in the middle surrounded by different abstract and figurative panels, also include quick-response patterns for scanning access to the [anitsayac.com](http://anitsayac.com) website.

How does this piece respond to the analytic of sexuality I have proposed? Ambitious and determined as a work of negotiation with institutions of the state and those charged to administer them as well as those detained by them, Göktan's work, like the recent video work of Selda Asal made in women's refuges and mental asylums showing the making of drawings by women under threat and by mental patients, delegates making in part to other hands. Treating each doll, she says, as a readymade, the dolls are nevertheless made to a pattern given to the inmates by her.<sup>31</sup> For me, this is more an exercise in co-authorship, and, with the shrouds and website, even a sort of imaginary co-authoring by the dead, as well as a chance to mourn them. The readymade would be something that already existed apparently outside the institutions of authorship. Asal and Göktan have drawn those confined in institutions into authorship, into questions of the possibility of the redistribution of sensation, memory and affect through the activities of making. That they are both female, ordering the process, already reverses the gender-bias of the structures of institutions, not excluding the family or those

31. See remark by the artist in Irmak Canevi and Zeren Göktan, 'There is Another Possibility: A Conversation', *Sayaç/Counter*, exhibition catalogue, CDA Projects, Istanbul, unpaginated.

of art. The audience for 'Counter' is addressed not simply to acknowledge this, however, but to see if it can sense this redistribution. Prison beadwork is a permitted leisure-time activity in Turkish prisons, and some of it is sold on the outside. Giving the inmates the power of selection of colours for the dolls of *Ultrasonic*, Göktan has ordered a repetitive representation of the figure of a woman who stands for a variation on the problem of the same: the sameness of the woman missed, by all these makers, and whomsoever else, for whatever reason, who has not been addressed by a desire mobile enough to be conducted across the hand, out across the skin and its zones of pleasure, away from fixation on the outcomes of communication between gendered bodies, their senses of pleasure, and towards a responsiveness to the stylistics of their movement across the spaces of their communication.



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