

Actually, that's not the case

Mario Rizzi

September 11th, 17.00

SALT Beyoğlu

The theater play “*Actually, that's not the case*”, which will be staged for the first time in SALT Beyoğlu, is written and performed for the production of the video piece “Kazın Ayağı” (The Goose's Foot). The final piece will be a two-channel video: one will be an editing of the Istanbul performances in September 2011, while the other will reflect the process of thinking and production of the work.

The screenplay is structured around a new Karagöz shadow theater script, although it draws on different performative languages. The original script was adapted to the conventions of a Karagöz play, working closely with a master puppeteer, Emin Şenyer. It is inspired by histories and memories of displaced people, living in İstanbul neighbourhoods - namely Ayvansaray, Balat, Fener and Tarlabaşı - going through top-down urban transformation. In the first phase of the project, these personal narratives were recorded with the aim of voicing less noticed situations of social distress, with the language and the idioms used by the protagonists. This process allowed a deeper insight into the population dynamics of these neighbourhood and the ways in which displacement affects the lives of single individuals, the urban texture and the interrelationship between gender, ethnicity and class.

The choice of centering the play on Karagöz shadow theater derived from a few different reflections. The use of figures on an illuminated background to create the illusion of moving image was considered in the context of the video format the artist focuses on in his practice. The possibilities offered by a bidimensional theatrical form were reflected upon in relation to a contemporary social issue and to an adult audience, flooded by overwhelming new media.

Karagöz theater was chosen as - through the conflictual dynamics and the equilibrated coexistence between the two main characters, Karagöz and Hacivat, two different ways of common sense - it allowed to elaborate on the notions of power, authority and submission, based on the humorous possibilities of rudimentary situations, characters and costumes.

Turkish shadow theater was explored as a popular form of culture and as a platform which has historically enacted the political potentiality of performativity, which was adapted with a series of visual and textual registers, including film and the classical text of Plato, the allegory of the cave.

More than thirty puppets - made of camel or calf leather and natural dyes - and a stage (2.20 x 2.00 m) - made of wood, metal and fabric - were handmade by Emin Şenyer from original drawings inspired by the content of the play. Four screens were also designed and crafted, mixing embroidery and leather.

The translation between English and Turkish were done by İz Öztat. Together with the puppeteer Emin Şenyer and his son Mehmet Emir, the actresses Yasemin Karadağ and Hatice Eren, the hip hop singer Yener Çevik and the bağlama musician Ümit Uçar perform in the play. Selçuk Artut is the sound designer. The cameramen are Mario Rizzi and Üzeyir Yanar. The postproduction will be finalized by Mario Rizzi in Berlin.

The project wouldn't have been possible without the kind support of Tansa Mermerci Ekşioğlu, Vasıf Kortun and Erden Kosova.