

Apricots from

"Cities, like dreams, are made of desires and fears, even if the thread of their discourse is secret, their rules are absurd, their perspectives deceitful, and everything conceals something else."

Italo Calvino, *Invisible Cities*

The last movie of Kiarostami's "Koker Trilogy" *Through the Olive Trees*, produced in 1994, focuses on the impact of the 1990 Iran Earthquake on the daily lives of the affected villagers. The leading character of the movie Hüseyin, a construction worker, is in love with Tahire. His proposals are constantly turned down on the grounds that he is uneducated and does not own a house. On the night of an ordinary day in which his insistent proposals keep being turned down, an earthquake hits the village tumbling everything down. In the movie intertwining reality with fiction, Hüseyin and Tahire have to work on the same movie set (Kiarostami frequently works with unprofessional actors and actresses and writes his scripts after getting to know them). In the famous road sequence in which Hüseyin talks with the director, he says that his lack of a house was thrown into his face so many times that his very sadness might have led to the earthquake. After the earthquake Tahire does not have a house any more nor does the rest of the village. Now Hüseyin thinks that everybody is all equal.

When I went back one evening to Van, the city where I grew up, after the earthquake, all I did was to try to find my sister and her family. They had been living in a decently comfortable apartment downtown, but everything changed suddenly with the earthquake. Now they were living in a small and dim tent on the coast of Lake Van with tens of strangers. I cannot forget that night we spent in the tent under heavy rain. A month later, they took refuge in a container and spent the rest of the year here including the whole winter. They had to send away the children to Izmir to my mother's house because they could not endure the living conditions in the container. However, this did not really protect them from dealing with many physical and psychological problems for months. Disasters such as earthquakes and wars equate the lives of everyone in the negative sense. Having lost their house, their belongings, and the worst of all, their dreams about the future, millions of people share the same destiny. Syrians who had to leave their countries after the war are now dispersed over many countries.

In this essay, I will talk about a specific group among those immigrants whom we tend to reduce to their desperate existence on the streets: Syrian artists.

Damascus

Issue

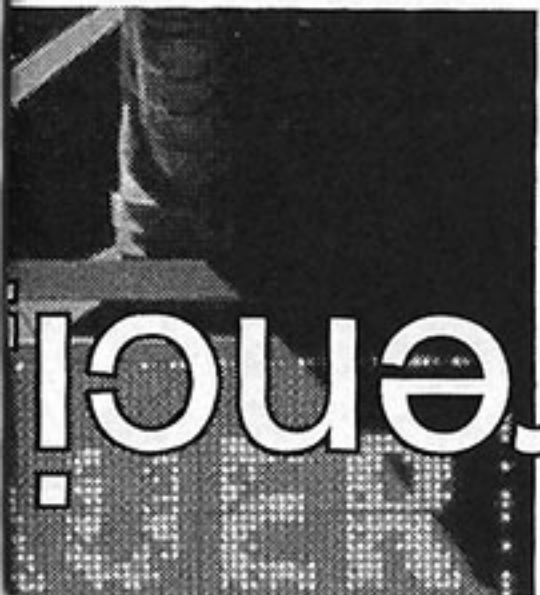
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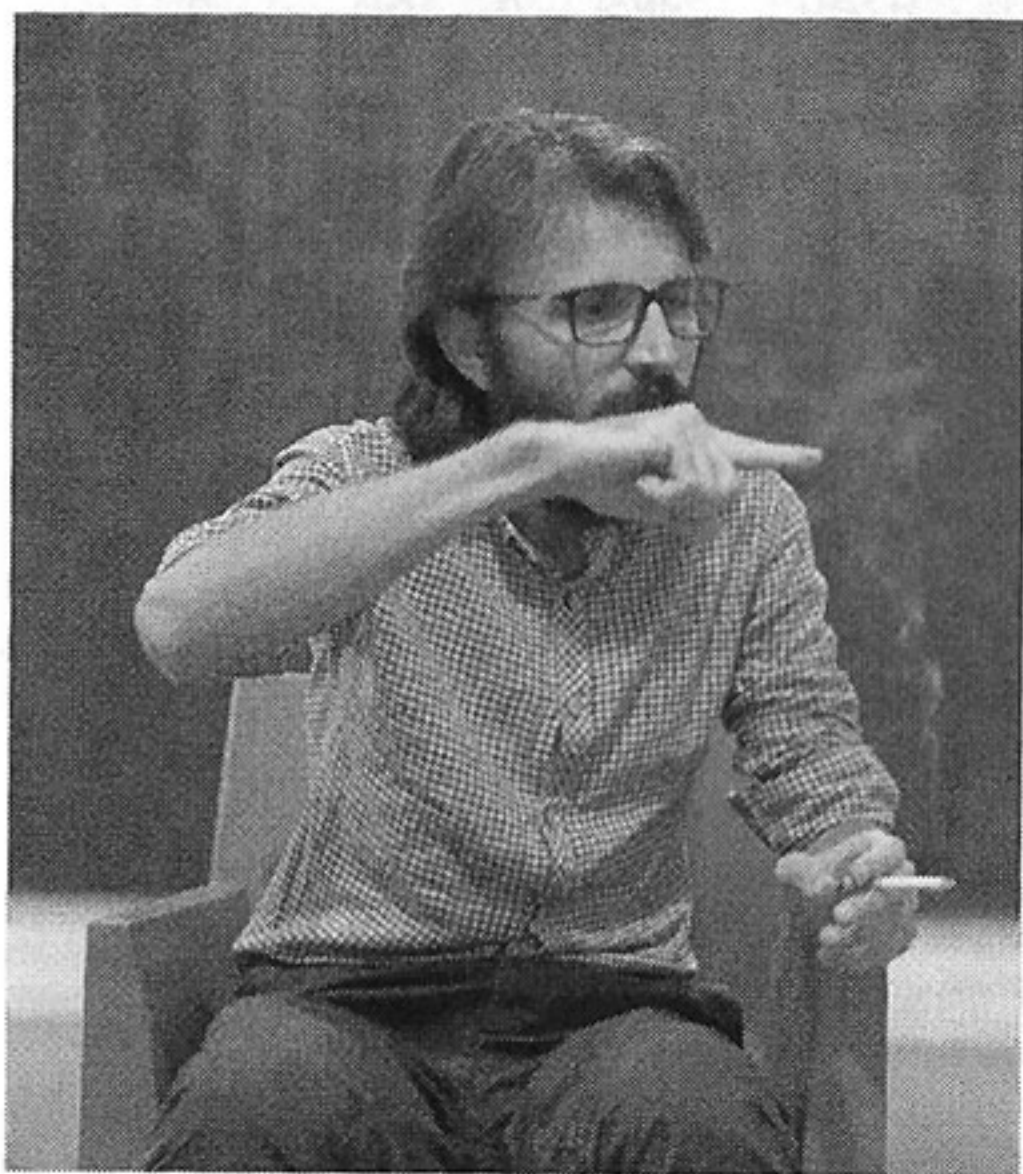
Pinar Ögür

Öğrenci

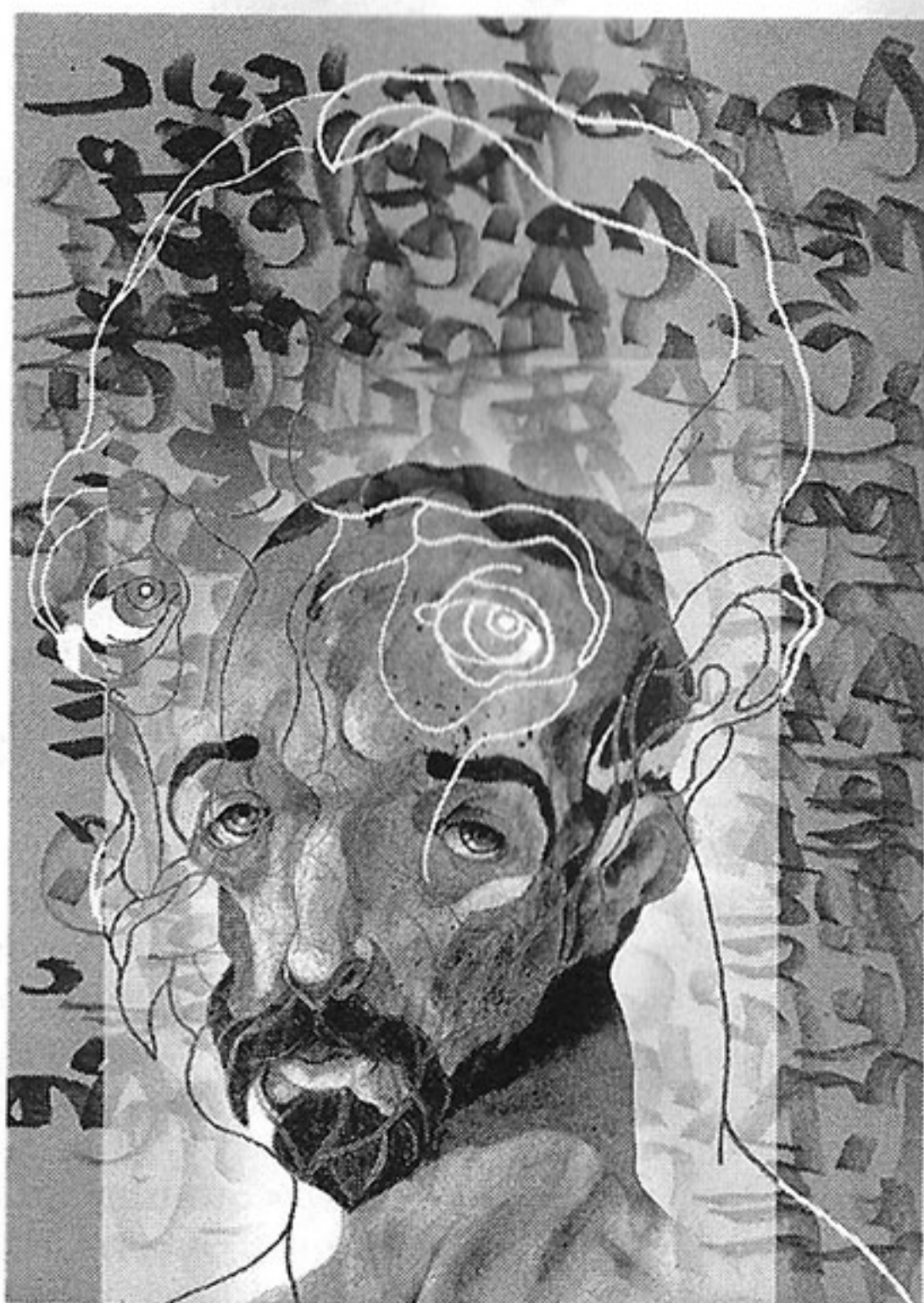
Öğrenci



Mohammad Zaza (Riyadh, 1987), of Kurdish origin, had grown up in Saudi Arabia and moved to Syria at the age of 18. Zaza came to İstanbul one and half year ago and now lives in an apartment in Siraselviler. The day I went to his atelier was really cold, and his heating system was not working. Zaza had set up a stove in the middle of his atelier and piled a tack of firewood before the wall. When I asked about what changed the most in his paintings after moving to İstanbul, his response was "colors". He told me that he was fascinated by the light coming through the clouds constantly moving in the sky and the subsequently changing colors, and that he found İstanbul quite inspiring. Nowadays Zaza is preparing for his upcoming solo exhibition in İstanbul.



Zaza: As I was working on a text, I got stuck with the Arabic word "hawa" which means "razed to the ground", and it provoked and inspired me. Later I kept going on with my work, but my mind kept revolving around this word. As I turned back to my text, I was hearing the "music" of this word that goes beyond its literal meaning. This made me rethink the notion of poetry, identity and names. Then over time I have come to believe more strongly that this word was inert and that it was opposed to the idea of change altogether. And now... I am painting. "Love is still growing, but the humanity could not yet see it."



Toufic: First of all, what this process means for me is that I am going through myself through art. I am feeling the war on a different level. This is what happens when I look at the world coming from there after I left there. How can I present what I myself have?" About the impression about everything we used to have, both positive and negative consequences, and the language problems are some of the day everything is up to the artist. The war made everything more transparent and my family because of the warfare and

Toufic Hamidi (Aleppo, 1988) came to İstanbul in March, 2014. His family still lives in Aleppo, but Toufic found a flat for himself in Aynalıçeşme. Toufic had been studying lithography and was still a student when the war broke out. He came to İstanbul immediately after graduating and still lives here.

Karin Amber
1 Eylül · 23

A beautiful documentary shedding light on the experience of Syrian artists currently living in İstanbul. While I was in Turkey I had a beautiful time getting to know and learn from the creator Bilal Alinza and artist Mohammad Zaza featured in this documentary. So much hard work was put into this film and they are truly incredible and innovative people! I highly recommend this short documentary. Please watch its only 20 minutes and will open your eyes to the beautiful and challenging unique experience of Syrian artists living in İstanbul.

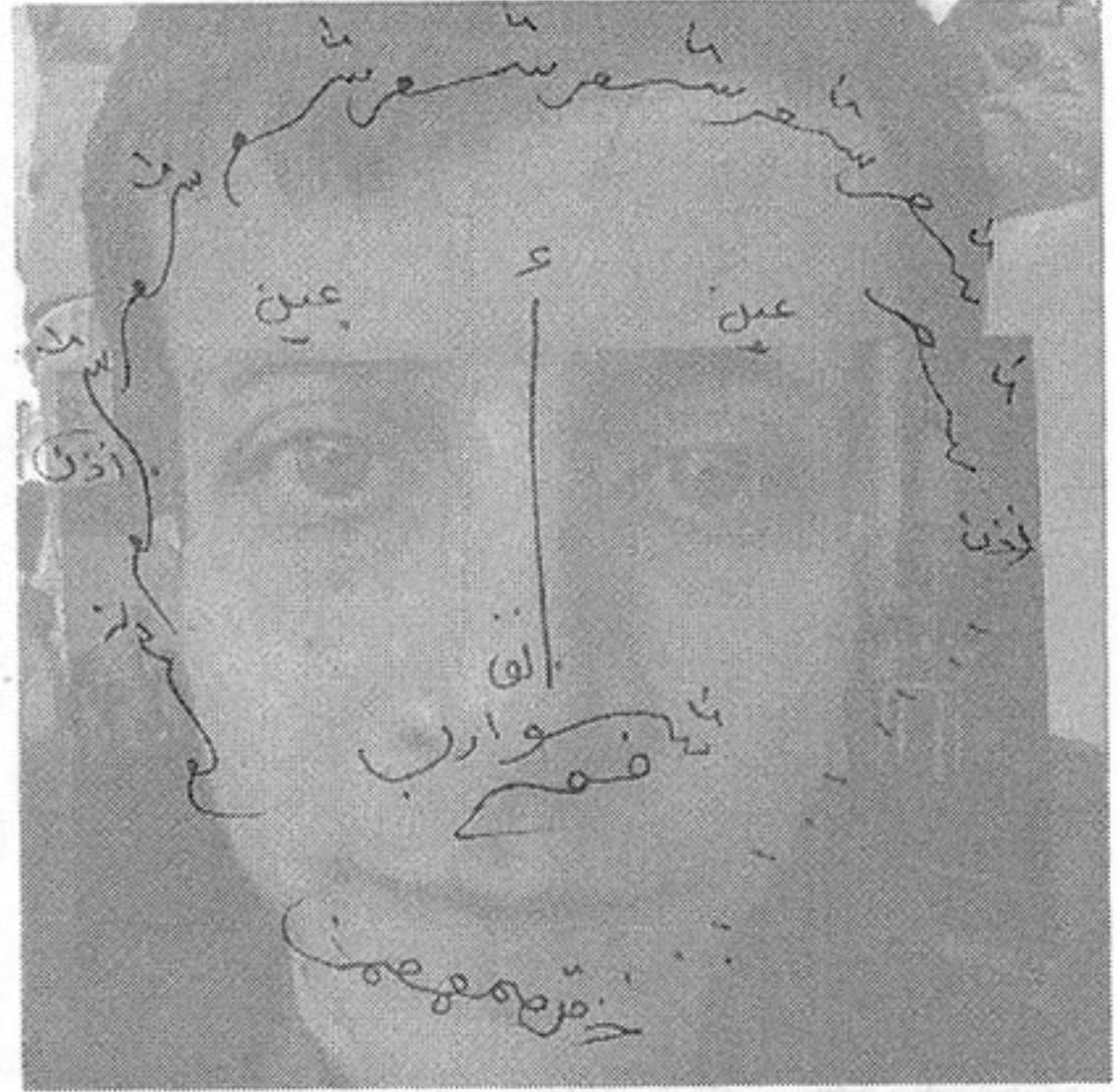
"Selam" | Syrian artist Mohammad Zaza (documentary EN:subtitles / belgesel TR:altyazılı)
Türkçe altyazı seçeneği için videonun alt kısmındaki altyazı simgesinden Türkçe'yi veya mobil için (CC)'i..
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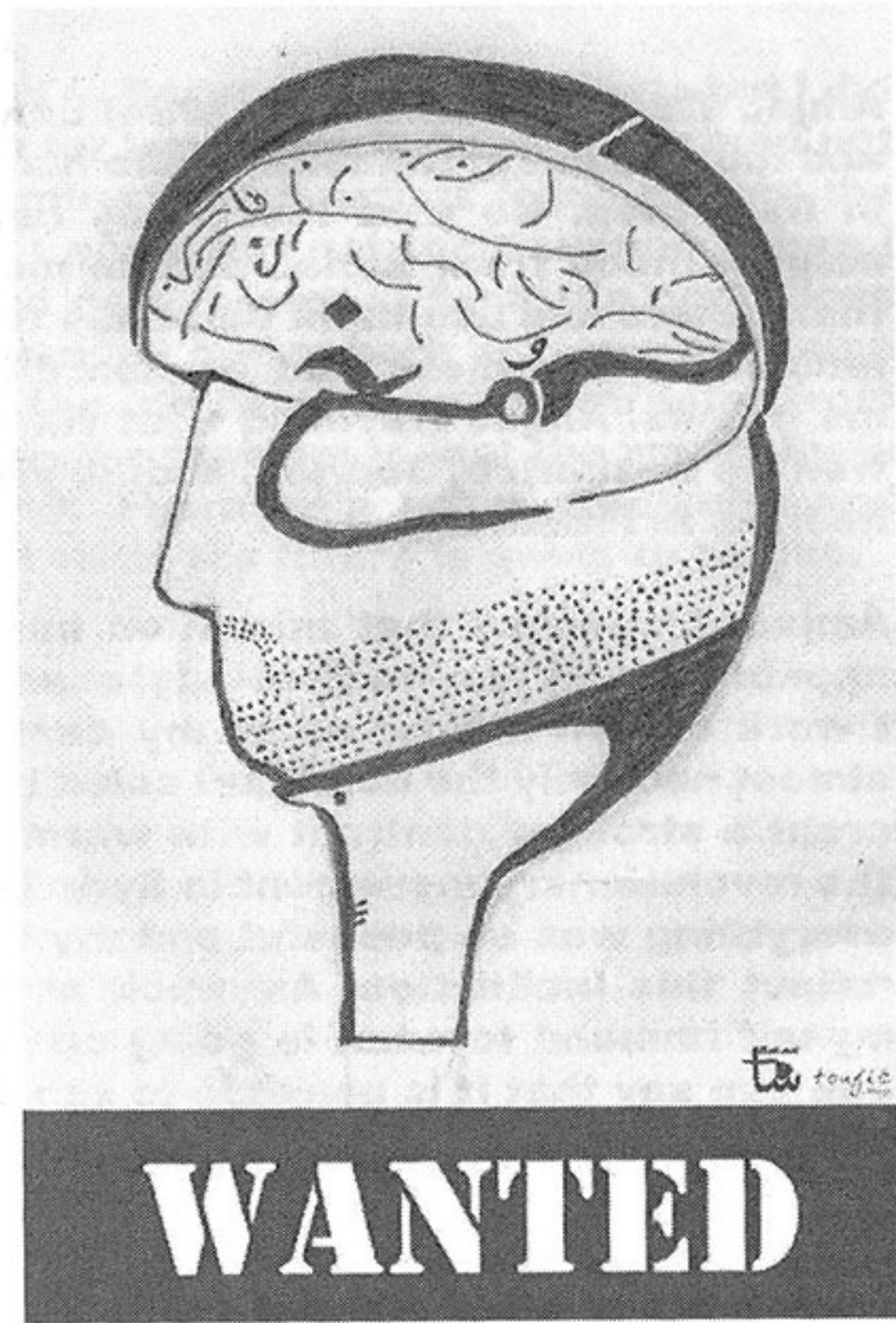
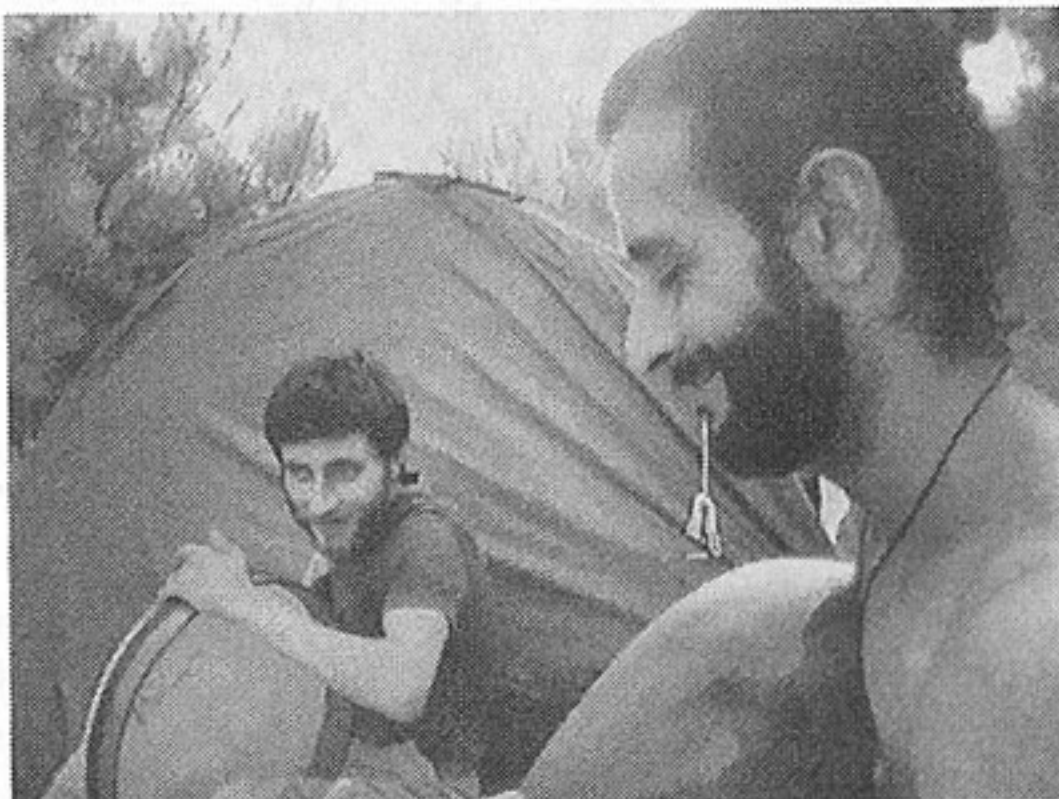
Mohammad Zaza, Bilal Alinza ve 17 kişi daha bunu beğendi.

Katie Cashman soooo beautiful!
Beğen · Yanıtla · 2 · 2 Eylül, 01:51

Yorum yaz

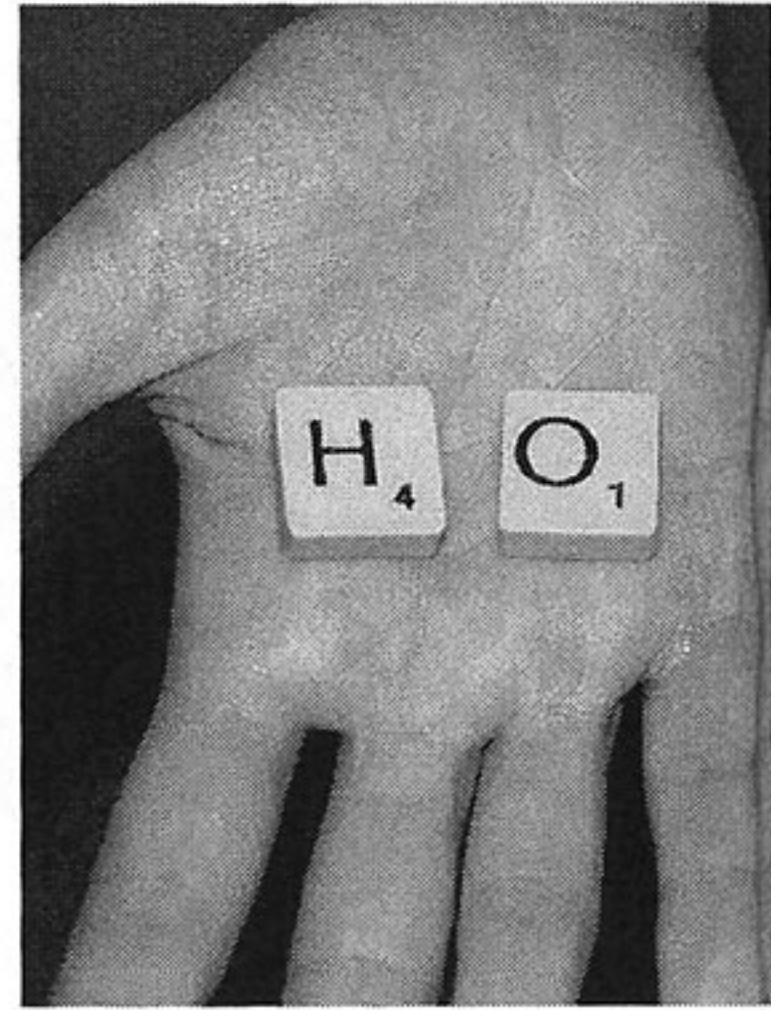
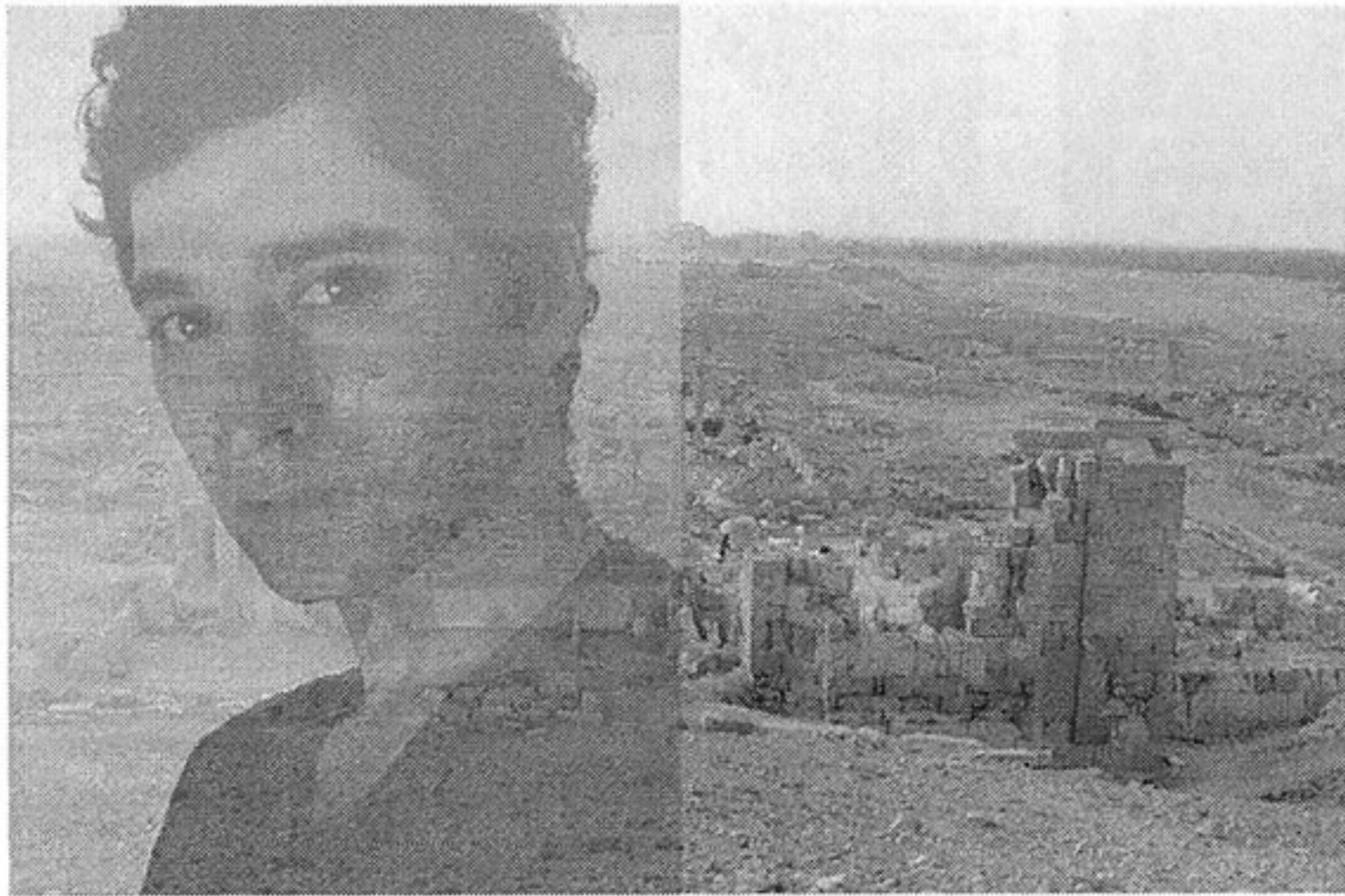


means to me is my constant discovery of artime and its aftermath on a personal look back at my country and the images. At the same time, when I see what is of truth, I can't help ask myself "How do I love all, I would like to give a positive message to have back there. Displacement has its own spirit. The spirit of the city one moves to is different. Examples I can mention. But at the end of the day, it's all about his or her personal effort. After all, it's real. I know more about myself and its daily details.



WANTED

Maher Abdo (Idlib, 1984) first studied sculpture and then drama. He worked as a painter and sculptor. He had stayed in Egypt for a while after the war broke out and his family migrated to Hatay. I visited him at his atelier on the basement floor of a building that was once an atelier. In our conversation he underlined the significance of "place" and the impact of their character and that these faces of deprivation increasingly resemble each other as they are leaving. His eyes were full of life and he was hopeful about Istanbul. Maheer is now planning to move to Munich after getting his residence permit and is nowadays



Amjad Wardeh (Damascus, 1984) came to Istanbul and found a flat in Bomonti, while his family settled in Gaziantep. He said that many landlords in his neighborhood treat Syrian people more cautiously than others and ask them twice the regular deposit amount, a treatment that he heard from many of his friends. Amjad travelled a lot since we met. He went to Gaziantep, Bodrum, Midilli, Viyana, but now he lives in Frankfurt.

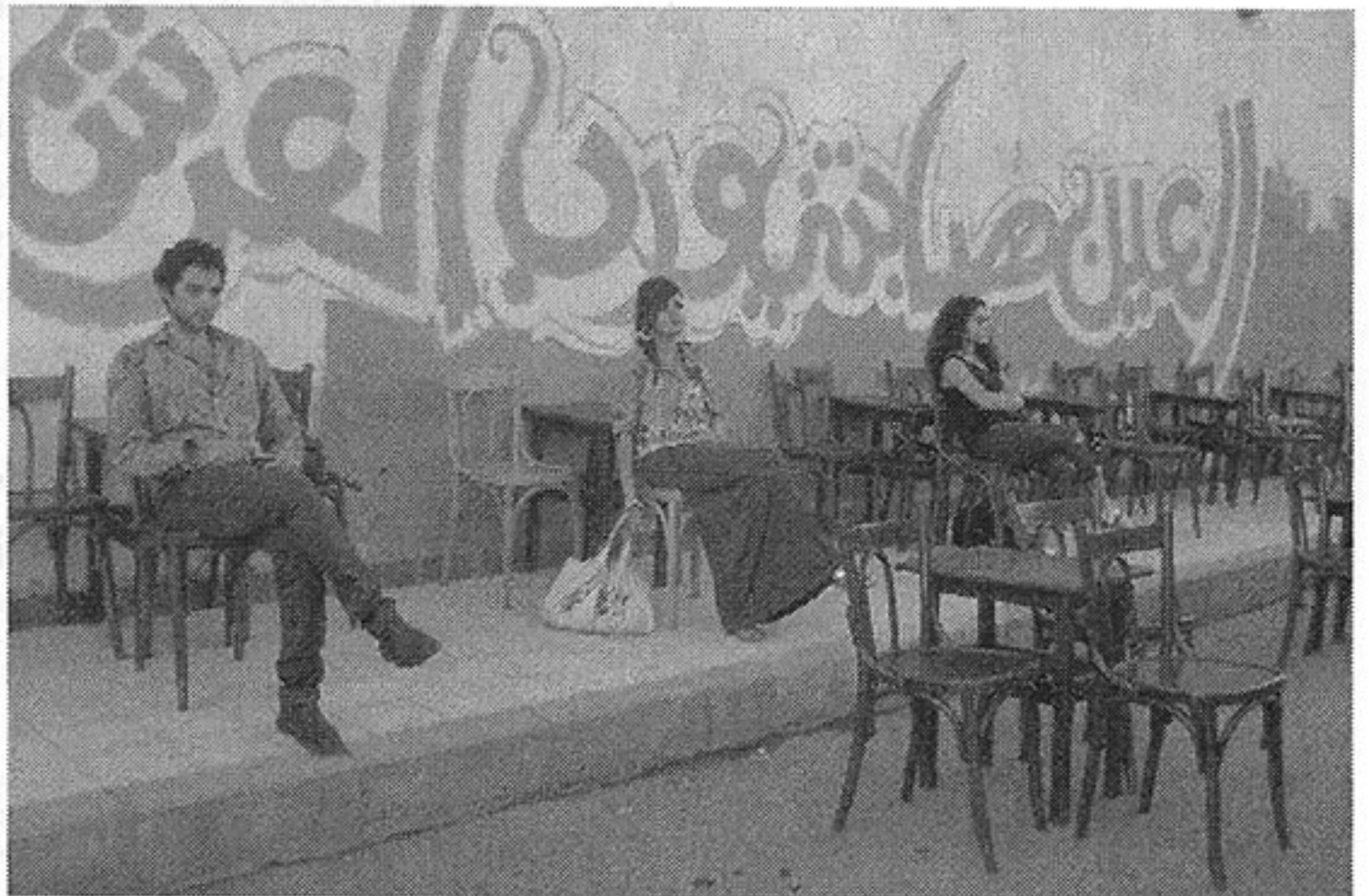
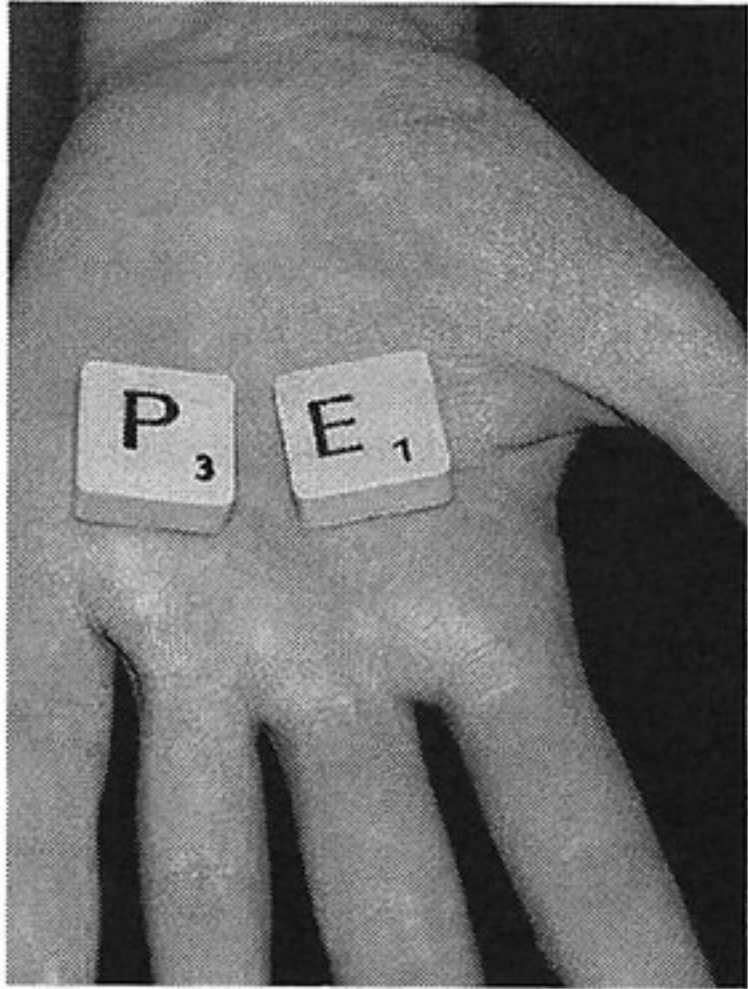
Istanbul has a magic Mid
Istanbul is love

But i do

Amjad: I can say that migration has had a great impact on my production style and the issues I work on. On almost all of my canvases, grey is almost naturally the dominant color, but I started to create a stronger contrast with warm colors. When the revolutionary movement in Syria began in 2013, everything was so peaceful and my works used to reflect this inclination. As much as I try to keep myself immune to what is going on in my country, one can say that it is possible to see all that on my canvas.



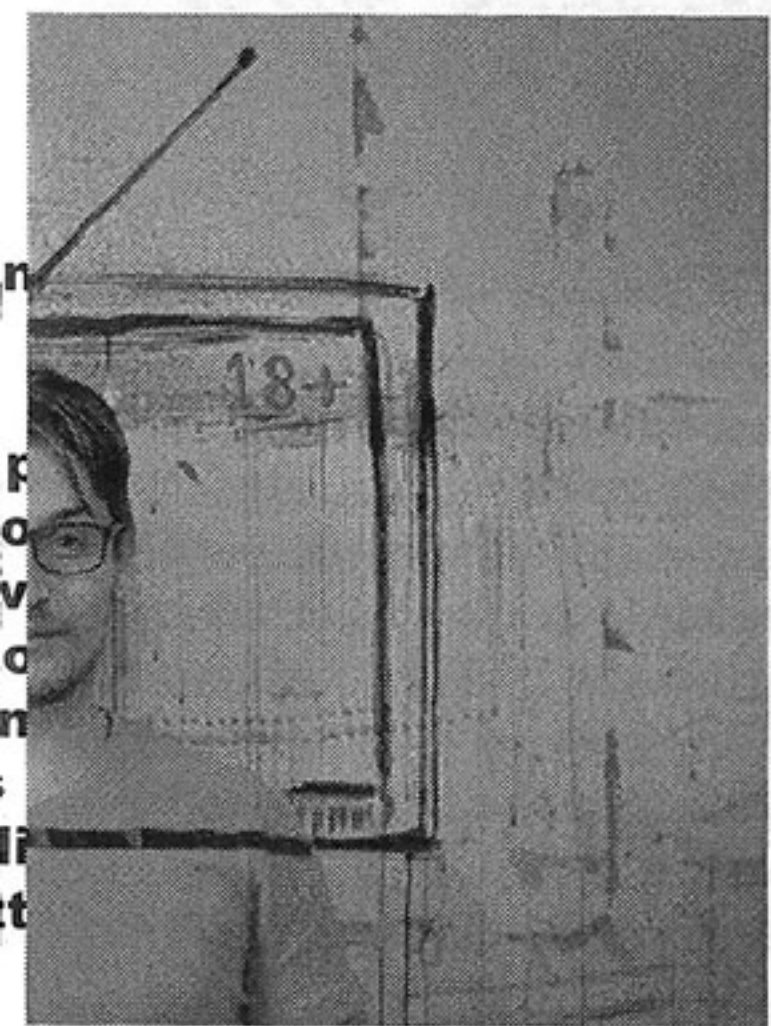
ya set and stage designer for movies and TV for some time but later turned back
ke out and worked for a movie project there before coming to İstanbul. Maher's
a well-preserved building in Kurtuluş. He was so happy that he eventually had
pointed that those who were displaced gets deprived of an important part of
s other over time. He thrustured into my hands a jar of honey with ginger as I was
lw lives in a small town called Sulzbach Rozenberg in southern Germany. He is
s working on his German.



dle est

Mybe here Im save more
n't have good live and job

Maher: I moved to Egypt after leaving Syria but I did not stay there for long. This is because I could not get a hold of other Syrian artists living around the Egypt border. I could not get their support. Then I came here and as a matter of fact, the conditions here has been much better both in terms of human relations and the atmosphere in the streets. From my perspective the problem is that the war in Syria is not yet over. There is a great ambiguity and mystery about what the future is going to be like.



I first met with Arabic culture when I was learning to read and write in the same time. All I was learning was merely according to the established rules for artists raising and lowering my voice and emphasizing our closest family friend was an Arabic family from Van from Siirt. They could speak Turkish very well in their conversations. My mother brought to our kitchen Arabic dishes she had learned from our Arabic friends and we used to know a lot of Arabic poetry of the Mevlid I cannot forget. My father would invite customers for dinner and ask my mother to cook and she would sometimes get upset with these sudden guests. People at the dinner table would sometimes not share a common language. Now I understand that traveling was not my father a certain merchant ethics. He used to use their religion and ethnicity.



When I set to prepare an issue focusing on the war, I decided how and where we would get together without a second thought was to meet around a dinner table. Gathering people around the same dinner table and I suppose everybody enjoyed it. Thinking about dining together with these five artists lived with the risk of finding themselves in the middle of the war was a quite a problem for them to communicate in Istanbul. The musical tone of Arabic was broken and I had to talk about the war as much as possible, but I had to break our conversation into pieces.

ning to read Quran during my primary school
Turkish and to read Quran in Arabic at the
now to read the Quran but I had to read it
ic reading, that is, to read with emotion by
g certain sounds when needed. Incidentally,
selling fabrics for a living, who had moved to
y well, but they would prefer Arabic for daily
tchen different spices and many traditional
c neighbors. My father had a lot of merchant
people like Nazife whose fascinating recitals
sometimes invite his Iranian, Arabic, Israeli
cook something special for them. My mother
en requests but she also loved meeting new
mehow communicate despite the lack of a
lling all round Anatolia as a merchant earned
d to love meeting new people regardless of



Syrian artists living in İstanbul, we had to
with the participants. My immediate solution
d a dinner table at the atelier in Osmanbey.
e was a reflex that I inherited from my father,
more about it later I felt even more justified
s who were dispersed all over İstanbul and
otally new conditions overnight, because it
ate and get involved with the artist circles in
aking the ice between us. We were trying not
t the war, with its grave reality, was ripping

Naser Nassan Agha (Idlib, 1961) lives in Be and has two children. He represents a dif artists, all of whom belong to the 80's. In works of younger artists. Naser employs e in his works. He finds the urban tissue of he has been avoiding historical references project a while ago, and he is planning to c



Naser: "For how long are you goi

Naser: What needs to be done now is to communication before politics and to empl The war and its social consequences pre destruction inflicted by the dark forces ign as a small group of friends, are trying to co had an exhibition showcasing the beauties the majority of these people are no longer friends. Our dream is still living on the sha wanted was a little bit of warmth.

ikdüzü. He moved to Turkey with his family
rent generation from the other four Syrian
our conversation he shared his views of the
ments of architecture and urban materials
stanbul as a historical city very familiar but
tely. He went to Germany for an exhibition
ne back to Istanbul in spring.

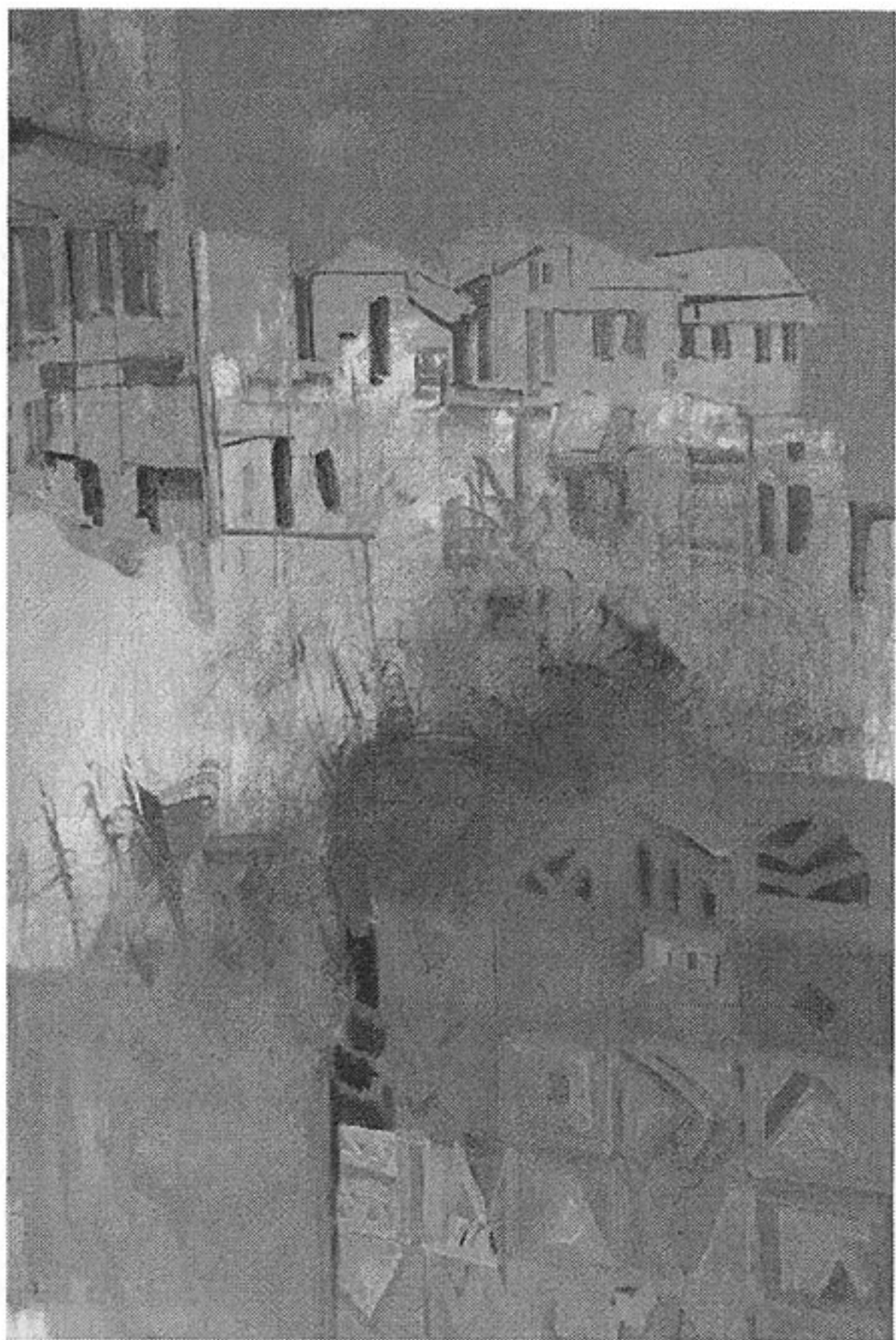
My dear friend Pınar

Im in Germany now

You are in the heart

to put up with us, the Syrians?"

at art as an honest and honorable way of
it as a means of bringing people together.
nt people from leading a decent life. The
es event the most basic human rights. We,
inue art despite all the difficulties. We even
f the Syrian culture and history. However,
ing and we are waiting here as a couple of
red sidewalks of cold cities. In fact, all we



For all the artists, İstanbul, Damascus, and Aleppo all resemble one another that they are not unfamiliar with the architectural elements and the urban İstanbul. The oriental, unplanned development under the influence of communism and the process of modernization in the 20th century are common characteristics of oriental centers of culture and commerce such as İstanbul, Baghdad, Damascus, and Cairo. Residential areas organized around mosques and public areas such as bazaar, bedesten, and hammam are only some of the common historical elements between them. The artists indicated that the social life in İstanbul resembled that in Syria very much and that they felt home when shopping, ordering food, or walking on the streets although they could not speak Turkish.



Bilal Alirıza, who shot a documentary about the similarity between the cities made it difficult for them to integrate themselves into the new environment and to communicate only with one another.



İstanbul is a big market. As Bilal Alirıza, an arranger in Beylikdüzü, Karagün, and distributed in Nase Na different Gaziantep a much stay close

Istanbul, November

apexart - istanbul

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Translated by: Douaa Sheet

still growing...

Like Zaza said, despite the houses tumbling down on us, love is

denominations and realize its true richness?

more than the citizens of any of the Arab countries. And we, how unfamiliar we are with this culture at our elbow! Is not it about time that we take a more careful look at this culture that we have been increasingly approaching only from the perspective of Syrians think that they resemble Turks the cultural diversity it used to have. an opportunity for Istanbul to reach from the region heal. This might be artists, scientists, and intellectuals to host all the refugees and help the which is still a safe center, is bound these circumstances, Istanbul, under fire until very recently. Given is in the throes of despair. Gaza was is almost destroyed, and Damascus has not yet fully recovered. Aleppo reconstructed after the war, but it live in Tehran... Baghdad is being for a Saudi Arabian or Egyptian to Iranian to go and live in Jerusalem, countries affect people's freedom of live together. The tense and unstable East, Istanbul has become almost the only center where different people can



This article, published in Art Unlimited and Radikal in February 2015, revised for Apricots from Damascus.

Images are acquired from the facebook pages of the artists with their permission.

Apricots from Damascus is an apexart Franchise Exhibition organized by

Atif Akin and Dilek Winchester. For more information, visit us at

<http://apexart.org/exhibitions/akin-winchester.php>

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