

T-B A21

Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary

journey against the current

küba

RENATA POLJAK

LÁSZLÓ CSÁKI & SZABOLCS PÁLFI

ANETTA MONA CHIŞA & LUCIA TKÁČOVÁ

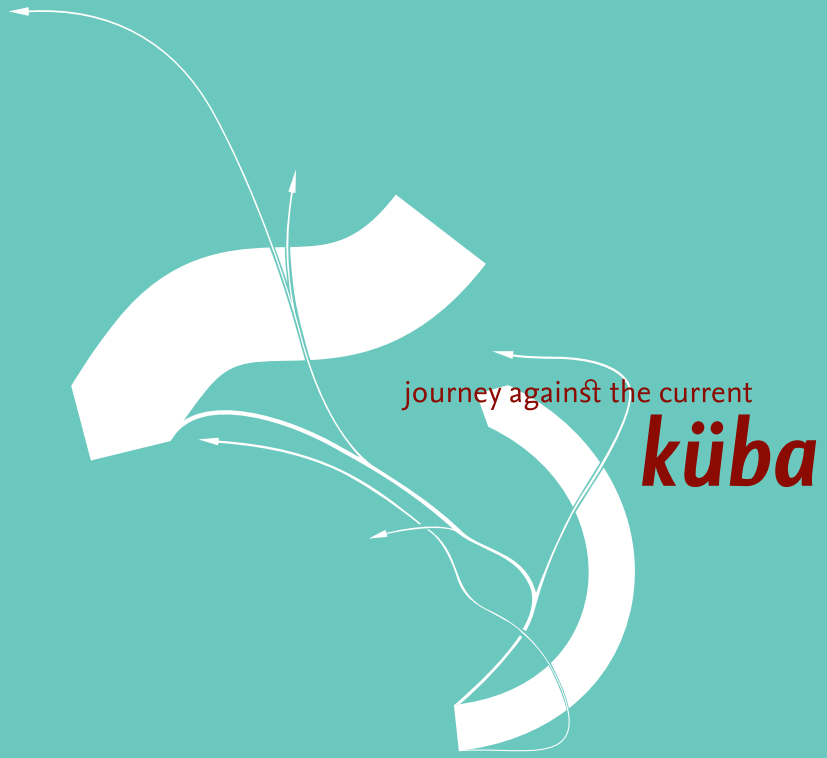
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NEDKO SOLAKOV

MATEI BEJENARU

KUTLUG ATAMAN



journey against the current

küba

by Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary, Vienna



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SLOVAKIA

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CROATIA

SERBIA AND
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Vienna ★

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★ Budapest

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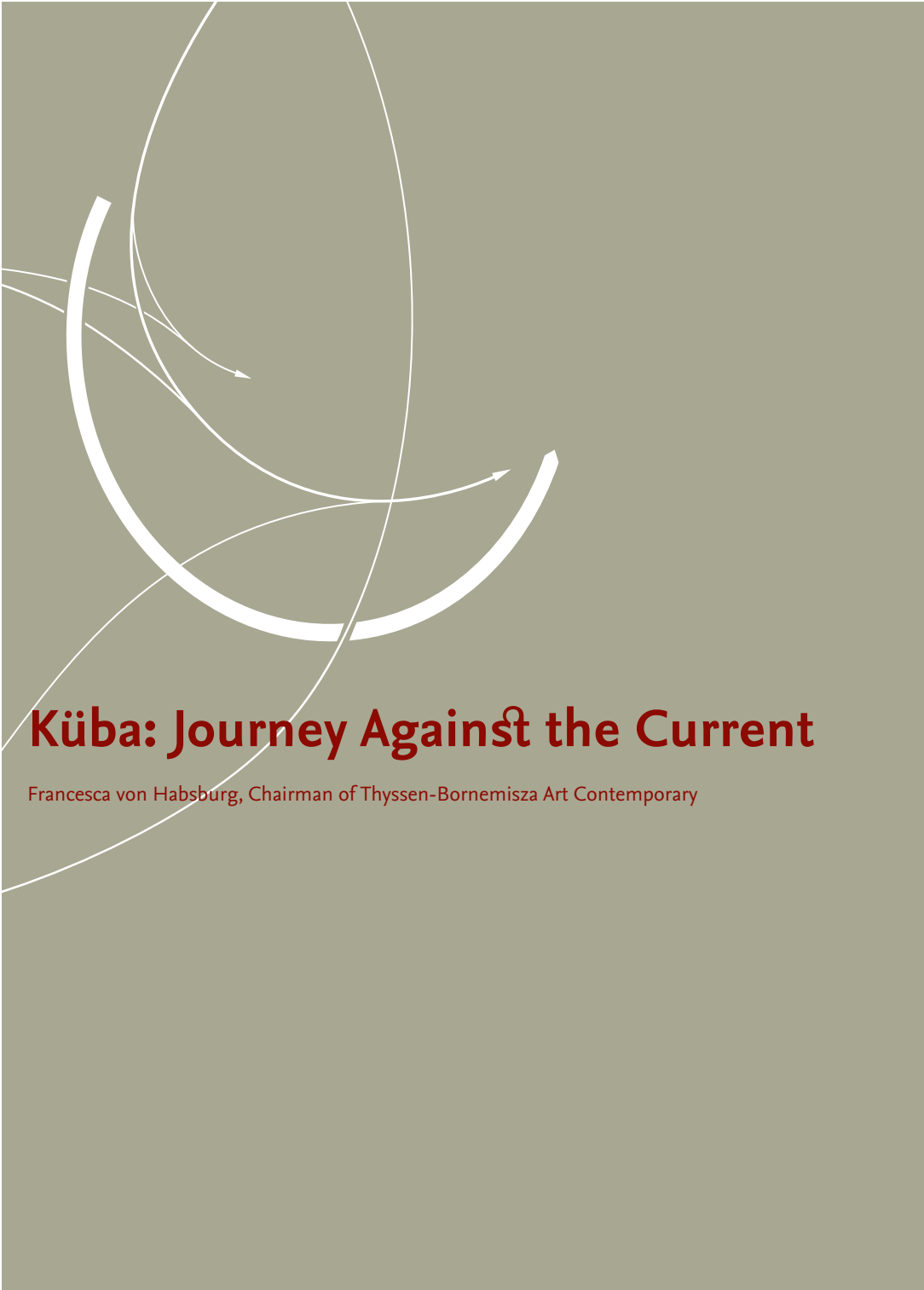
★ Constanta

★ Istanbul

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Küba: Journey Against the Current

Francesca von Habsburg, Chairman of Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary

Küba is many lives, more than a cast of characters. After a while one begins to form a bigger picture of their interconnections, shared difficulties, common struggles and complex betrayals. **Küba** has the richness of a novel: a mosaic of truths and lies, insight and ignorance, anger and humor, lyricism and humanity. It is a babble of intimacies. We are also constantly aware of the bigger picture, stretching away all around us. ★ While each inhabitant defines **Küba** differently, has it become the model or the exception to the way the rest of us live? **Küba** invites each one of us to investigate the level of hypocrisy in our lives. All of us deny to some level or another the violence in societies that we tolerate, whether we live in a free and democratic Europe or not. ★ The **Küba** testimonies reveal a reality that is present in all our societies. They touch on a commonly tolerated mistrust of foreigners, while revealing humanity's depth and ability to cope with and deflect abuse, common violence and the lies of all our societies and religions. They remind us that we live together with the same violence, whether it be in our home or on TV, that we are faced with the same lies, whether from our spouse or our politicians, and that we are faced with the same shame, whether the one generated by our own sense of guilt or the one which we carry on behalf of someone else. The political begins with the personal. The stories that these people share with us, remind us that politics cannot be escaped. For the



people of **Küba**, that is not an option. Kutlug Ataman rejects any opposition between the center and the margins of society. For him, there are “as many centers as there are individuals.” ★ There is a lot of specious talk in contemporary art about “breaking boundaries.” Mostly, this is inconsequential blather. Installing the 40 television sets which represent 40 lives of **Küba** residents, on board a 68-meter barge traveling up the Danube from the Black sea to Vienna, actively “breaks boundaries, as it does tradition.” However, **Küba: Journey Against the Current** has itself overcome the categorization of “breaking boundaries” with the resonance of its honesty, the infinite richness and lyricism which is Kutlug’s signature. It is **Küba** itself that led to the enlargement of this project from being a simple one-way journey, to it becoming a catalyst of parallel positions within the whole Danube region, as well as a gesture of bringing hope and relief to many thousands of people that are affected by the recent tragic floods. As the proposed EU enlargement is the subject of great debate amongst member nations, it is all the more relevant that we now remind ourselves of our common humanity. The language that we at the T-B A21 foundation have chosen to use has a great deal in common with an effort to change things for the better. ★ I believe that there is room for a greater respect and understanding for all people who make the effort to give a clear and honest picture of themselves. I feel compelled to support a rich combination of artists, musicians, performers, photographers, writers, directors of film, video and documentaries, in raising their voices in response to the stories told in the process. The question remains, will we really change anything, and if so, how much? Will we set the records straight and give renewed hope to thousands? Will we convince our governments to be more generous with policies and support allowing indigenous cultures to be protected and encouraged to flourish? Will we live in increasing fear of terrorism, immigration, and the globalization that will eventually kill the human spirit? Will we help to heal old wounds created by despots, and rebuild societies having confronted ourselves with our own past, or shall we just leave war torn landscapes to rebuild themselves, letting time heal old wounds, whilst we all look the other way? Or should we create a dialog in the arts to galvanize talent, knowledge, courage and great spirit, which together might generate an awareness of the kind that moves people, rather than informs them? All the artists and curators that have agreed to participate in the journey have offered their own views of the distortions of the world we live in, and I am proud to be looking at the truth as seen by them, without whom we would certainly remain blinded by the darkness of what we can’t or won’t see. ★ **Küba** is Ataman’s finest work to date, and T-B A21 is proud to have co-produced this masterpiece commissioned by Artangel (London) as well as of the new T-B A21 commissions that give this project genuine

significance in our lives, as well as offering the residents of **Küba** a symbolic presence in all places where lives are treated in the same way as theirs: with contempt and ignorance. I hope that the **Journey Against the Current** will move enough people closer to a more honest approach towards the quest for identity. We cannot shelter ourselves from the humanity of the individual forever, any more than we can distance ourselves from the poor souls who have watched generations of savings be washed downstream as our extreme winter morphs into a flood of despair. This year, under the auspices of Austria's presidency of the EU, T-B A21 designated the Danube as the life force of Kutlug Ataman's **Küba** project, and we hope that this dedication will bring hope to all those it touches. ★ I am extremely grateful to all the

artists that have donated a work to our Phillips charity auction, which kindly Simon de Pury has accepted to hold in the Múcsarnok Museum in Budapest on the 3rd of June. I am also grateful to our friends and colleagues who have also donated funds to the Disaster Relief foundation, that I set up years ago with Bianca Jagger to raise funds for the Nicaraguan survivors of hurricane Mitch. With these new funds, in collaboration with the attaché of social affairs of the Austrian Embassy in Bucharest, we are now building replacement homes in Romania, and hopefully also soon in Bulgaria and Serbia. This means a lot to me. ★ I am particularly grateful to the Secretary of

State for the Arts and Media Franz Morak for his unyielding support of this project. Without his faith in **Küba** and its respective projects from Romania, Bulgaria, Serbia, Croatia, Hungary, Slovakia and Austria, this project would not have been possible. I would also like to thank Mr. Manfred Seitz from via donau for making the *Negrelli* vessel available for this 2-month epic journey, as well as Andreas Treichl from Erste Bank and Boris Marte from Transit for collaborating with us on this project. My thanks also extend wholeheartedly to Mr. Fink from the Wiener Städtische, who has showed courageous and unwavering support to the work of the T-B A21 foundation. Also, my thanks extend to Julius Meinl and Boris Nemšić, who both heroically stepped in at the 11th hour with some crucial support as well. ★ Again, I am over-

whelmed with the dedication and talent of the T-B A21 team itself. We have grown into a force to be reckoned with in the art world, thanks to the talents of Daniela Zyman, Gabrielle Cram, Jasper Sharp, Eva Eversberger, Barbara Horvath, and Alexandra Henning. Thank you for all the heart that you all put into this extraordinary project. ★ Special thanks to Kutlug Ataman,

Matei Bejenaru, Nedko Solakov, Želimir Žilnik, Renata Poljak, Szabolcs Pálfi, László Csáki, Anetta Mona Chisa, Lucia Tkáčová, Emanuel Danesch, David Rych, Iara Boubnova, Zoran Pantelić, Branko Franceschi, János Szoboszlai and Boris Ondreicka for their superb contributions to this project, and all the anonymous citizens of Rouse who contributed their furniture and TVs to create a "state of emergency edition" of **Küba** since the T-B A21 barge was stuck behind the chain bridge in Serbia, due to the floods.





Aesthetics as Travel

Ivaylo Ditchev

Borders are the aesthetic phenomenon *par excellence*, as the aesthetic experience is an experience of transgression. Remember the anxiety, with which we approached the check-point officer, the insuperable smile, the secret obsessional gesture you make in your pocket to prevent bad luck. ★ I won't forget a Chinese colleague, at the German-Dutch border, fascinated by the fact that there is nothing there—no barbed wire, no machine guns, no Chinese wall—started to jump over the imaginary line shouting “Germany—The Netherlands, Germany—The Netherlands...”. If he has got his residence permit since, he probably hardly ever notices where countries shift in Europe anymore. ★ Some think that the gradual disappearance of borders is about to trivialize the world. The easier you can pass from one place to another, the lesser the experience of being anywhere at all. If the virtual utopia should be fully realized, the day you would be able to find yourself instantaneously anywhere in the world would be one of total immobility. When I say utopia, I mean not only the technological aspect of it, but mainly its socio-political implications: the ideal that a person should be able to come and go without asking permission from anyone, the abolition of the age-old distinction between locals and aliens. Travel becomes signing in, then signing out, implying no body, no effort, no relationship whatsoever. ★ It is against such visions that you realize the erotic potential of the actual proliferation of borders. It is the very way you move around these traces. To take but the Balkans, you enter rather a different country depending on the means of transportation. There is the glorious descent by plane, with nice airports and Europeanized border officers. It is this type of travel that creates the cosmopolitan illusion of what Paul Virilio called the end of geography. Then come the shabby, aging trains, inherited from the times there was a State, in which you tie up the door with your necktie against possible intrusions, and play cards with strangers on attaché cases. Further down the social ladder, buses circulate full of suitcase traders asked to get off at each border, to stand in a line and open their luggage for check. Finally, those who cross on foot, led by obscure guides at night, hunted down by guards. You can see how different the same imaginary line on the ground can be, when two cars stop at the checkpoint: one expensive and shiny, where some black-spectacled driver hands over the documents through stained glass windows, the other old and suspicious, which the customs officers will turn upside down in search of secret traces of crime. ★ It has become a banality to say that in the global world borders are not disappearing, but proliferating. Every artistic gesture, every thought, every political action is automatically situated on some border by interpreters, as well as by the actors themselves. In fact, the more we scrutinize the world through the magnifying glass of media, the more alien it seems. The result is some general ethnicization of what is surrounding us. Ethnic phantasmagoria is meant to separate, to trace insuperable borders. ★ Once we were longing to experience the fashionable, the progressive, the avant-garde; now we are fascinated by Indian cuisine, medieval puzzles, Zulu dances, Bosnian genocides. Aesthetics are reduced to ethnics, that is, to instantaneous otherness that needs no

effort or time, otherness visualized and projected into space. It is not some ethnic essence that has thrived all of a sudden in the global world multiplying borders; it is the over-aesthetization of the media that produces the effect of spatial difference, that we call ethnic. I can hardly think of any artwork, in which there is not this ethnic otherness; and if it is not explicit, it is me who would be tempted to add it, “Wait, wasn’t she Jewish...”. ★ If you have been following this argument, you will see why the new ethnic aesthetics can travel. Do not expect the artist to fast in monastery cells, to contemplate truth or brood over his unconscious. The beyond has now purely geographical dimensions, you only need to take a trip around in order to meet absolute otherhood. ★ There is here a sudden chance for the Balkans, where gods are not quite transcendent, leaders not quite legitimate, traditions—not quite authentic. For all that, the region is a powerful reservoir of otherness producing various overlapping borders and transgressions. We speak here not about tourism, but about real travel, where things may happen, cameras get stolen, people get drunk, nice girls propose marriage, and neighbors cut their throats. You see why there is always some writer or film-director traveling across the Balkans (go East), or the other way round, some artist or musician coming from there and discovering his/her ethnic self (go West). On one hand, there is popular kitsch, often being but a continuation of the tourist industry with other means, that breaks your heart with folk songs and local color. But on the other, all this might be complicated and deep, and you almost think he/she is been taken to modernist universalism struggling with the limits of one’s own self—then the journey concludes upon some tragedy, based on culture, that is, on space, and we are back to postmodern aesthetic geography. It is so ethnic in the Balkans, thus so aesthetic!

IVAYLO DITCHEV was born in 1955 in Sofia, Bulgaria.
He lives and works in Sofia.



The background is a solid teal color. It features several white abstract lines and arrows. A thick white curved line starts from the left edge and points towards the text. A thin white line starts from the top left, curves across the top, and then loops down towards the bottom right. Another thin white line starts from the top right, curves down, and then loops back towards the bottom left. There are also several arrows pointing in various directions, some following the curves of the lines.

KUTLUG ATAMAN

Küba

40-channel film installation,
Turkish, with English subtitles

Küba is a community of men, women and children who live in one of the most notorious ghettos in İstanbul, a shantytown slum that started as a hideout for left-wing militants and other outsiders, refugees from the “East” in the 1960s. Since then it has developed into a cohesive society, a security zone presenting an impenetrable solidarity to the outside world and providing protection against violent assaults and political terror. Today, **Küba** consists of several hundred temporary refugees. The makeshift houses, built from scrap metal and soil, stand in the shadow of a twenty-first century megalopolis. It is a marginalized place that has learned to make do.

★ KUTLUG ATAMAN spent more than two years getting to know **Küba’s** inhabitants and filming them talk, narrating the stories of their lives in an uncontrolled stream of language. The majority of those interviewed leave a lasting impression with their arresting stories of sometimes tragic, sometimes bitter events. With **Küba** Kutlug Ataman seeks to fathom the boundaries—both geographic and mental—of an urban area.

★ The unsettling stories of **Küba** are presented on old television sets as part of a 40-monitors installation. In front of each TV is a chair, allowing only one viewer per set. Seen individually, from voice to voice, their soliloquies present a detailed mosaic of humaneness: terror, tragedy, love, obsession, resistance, survival. Seen together, the voices of **Küba** reveal a deeply moving communal portrait of the hidden society that they are proud to call home.

★ **Küba** was awarded the prestigious 2004 Carnegie Prize, and has been seen by audiences in London, Pittsburgh, Sydney and Stuttgart.

★ **Küba** was commissioned by Artangel and co-produced with Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh; Lehmann Maupin Gallery, New York; Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary (T-B A21), Vienna; Theater der Welt, Stuttgart, and The Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney.

★ KUTLUG ATAMAN was born in 1961 in İstanbul, Turkey. He lives and works in Buenos Aires and İstanbul.



What is Küba?

Kutlug Atman

Küba, named after the island republic, is one of the most notorious ghettos in İstanbul. Squeezed in the midst of a circle of low-income, high-rise suburban blocks near to the airport, the makeshift houses of **Küba** are made of cheap construction materials, scrap metal and soil: single storey hut dwellings in stark contrast to the rest of the buildings in the distant İstanbul megalopolis. Living in **Küba**—above all else—defines the **Küba** resident's sense of identity, unique in the way that it has no political, ethnic, gender, religious or national determination. If you're from **Küba**, then that is enough. In the past I have revisited the method of using talking heads and created a body of work revolving around the discourses of individuals. ★ In the case of **Küba** I want to go further and recreate the reality of the neighborhood through stories of the individuals that go to make up this community. The formula I found for this concept is to make an installation consisting of 40 talking heads, each one a **Küban**, from the matriarchs to the children. Each one will have a monitor allocated to him or her, and each monitor will have one chair in front of it, allowing only one viewer per monitor. By way of an installation, I intend to create a neighborhood that can travel as a whole, not just to the greater Turkish society which created **Küba** as its own anti-thesis, but more pointedly to major western centers where non-westerners are often accessed not as real individuals, but as role players of a greater presupposed fiction constructed for them by the international media, where Muslims imply terrorism and Africans simply embody poverty and disease.



KUTLUG ATAMAN

Küba, 2004

Arafat, Arif, Arife, Avni, Bahri, Bozo, Bülent,
Dilşah, Doğan, Eda, Ekrem, Ekrem, Emine,
Erol, Fevzi, Güler, Hakan, Halis, Hatun,
Ilhan, Kadriye, Makbule, Mehmet, Mehtap,
Meliha, Mithat, Mizgin, Muzaffer, Nejla,
Ramazan, Raziye, Safiye, Soner, Tozkafa,
Uğur, Vesile, Yalçın, Yüksel, Zübeyde



KUTLUG ATAMAN

Küba

Exhibition view the Sorting Office, London 2005



The background is a solid light beige color. It features several white, flowing, curved lines that create a sense of movement and flow. One prominent line starts from the left edge, curves upwards and then downwards, ending in an arrowhead pointing left. Another line starts from the top left, curves across the top, and then loops back down towards the center. A third line starts from the bottom left, curves upwards and then downwards, ending in an arrowhead pointing left. The overall composition is minimalist and abstract, suggesting a path or a journey.

Life as a Metaphor

Daniela Zyman in conversation with Kutlug Ataman

*Daniela Zyman: How would you describe your way of documenting? Would you use that term when speaking about your work **Küba**—and if so, in what sense?*

Kutlug Ataman: There is a fundamental difference between a documentary and documentation. If documentary basically means the method of making films about issues, people, places, animals, events or whatever, to access information, I think there is something fundamentally wrong with this.

★ From the very beginning, my work had been showing that documentary is actually a very subjective medium. For me, there is no documentary because of that. But there is documentation and documenting and recording. I believe in recording. My research brought me to a point now where I am going to explore in recording: in visual and oral history. And inherently always making clear that what you see is something very subjective and personal. That is important, because we forgot to diversify. With the invention of the documentary, and the worldwide media, we created, without realizing, a reality that doesn't exist. It's a world of fiction, a format. People don't realize that. So we have a lot of fiction written about the "Other", about distant lands and peoples and cultures, that is in fact not real. And a lot of the political and social problems that are happening are basically happening because of this master screenplay.

★ So up until **Küba**, I showed only individuals constructing their identities in front of the camera. I exposed

this construction, the engineering, and I said the person you see is not real. But the act of engineering is. The difference between the two has to be realized. We all do this, and in the end, that's also the basis of art. Art is all about artifice. Artifice can have negative connotations, but for me it doesn't, for me it is the basis of all creation, it has to be. It's a jacket that you wear, like identity.

★ With **Küba**, the process was slightly different. The reason I was so interested in doing it was not initially to give a voice to people who are otherwise voiceless, it wasn't that face value approach. For me, **Küba** was interesting because for the first time I had seen a community of people working on a singular common identity. I was very fascinated by the way they were doing this.

★ For me, this is research. But I'm not a sociologist, I'm not a philosopher, and in the end, it has to be art. I don't do social study. And I don't have the responsibility that news people or documentary filmmakers have. They feel that they have ethical responsibility and they legitimize what they do. But I have a problem with that. It's a very blurred area, and I prefer it that way. I am trying to invent a new area, a new space. And when you are doing that, everything gets dusty, because you are breaking things.

*In one of your texts you bring up the notion of the metaphor in the context of **Küba**. You are claiming that "It isn't really a place—it's a metaphor". Why would you say it is a metaphor rather than a real place? Did you offer "them" a metaphor in order to be able to speak about themselves and their lives just as you are offering this metaphor to "us" in order to allow us to direct our gaze at **Küba**?*

Obviously, **Küba** has a geographical address, it is somewhere in a city. But for me, it is not about that specific little village-like area. Yes, it is there, it is real, but it could be anywhere. My **Küba** is not that **Küba**. My **Küba**, the way I created it, could be anywhere. It travels, it goes from one city to another. Obviously, the artwork is different from the actual thing, because it's beyond social documentation. The notion of **Küba** is something that is created by the subject. It's a creation and for that reason it is a state of mind. That makes it more an idea than an address.

You are documenting and representing a disappearing island, a community of people. And you give the people of Küba the possibility to present themselves in front of the camera—to other people, who might not have thought about this before and who obviously never organized themselves in order to speak up but rather "simply" live their lives. How do you see your role in this process and how are you changing and interfering with the situation? Have you been aware of your strong impact throughout the project?

I knew what was going to happen, but I didn't know it in all its dimensions. You never know in advance. You have a concept, you develop it and you create it. And it evolves, it's organic, but the moment it comes out of your hands, you lose control of it. And that's only normal, with any work. I can't say that's not how I meant it, it's supposed to be the other way round. The work of art starts having its own life, independent from you.

*What was the moment for you where you felt that the people of **Küba** were prepared to participate, what made them want to be part of the project?*

In the beginning, it was not possible to get their okay, because they didn't

know my intentions. They thought I was from Turkish television, and, since **Küba** is a very conservative society—when I say conservative, it shouldn't be understood as religious fundamentalism, but more connected to tradition... For example, Kurdish tradition doesn't really allow women to come out in public and talk. So I started talking with them and trying to describe what it was. Slowly, they started believing in the project. Some of them were actually very, very thankful, it was almost like a free therapy. They were talking for the first time. There was one woman that said she didn't want to talk in the beginning, but then she was so glad I made her talk, because this made her realize she had never talked about these things before. So it started with very good intentions. But as with anything, when something is so traumatized, something like tradition for instance, you cannot change it immediately. So there are always two steps forwards and one step backwards.

Does the trauma result from the traditional lifestyles?

That's different from individual to individual. Men usually don't have trouble with this, they don't care if they are seen in public or not. It was mostly women who had a hard time and who were under a lot of strain. For instance, when we did this show in London, the Turkish tabloid press started to show these women's images and printing things they never said in order to create a sensation in Turkey. The women were scolded by the male members of the **Küba** society. We were very worried that there were going to be serious incidents. That luckily didn't happen, we kept it under control. But that was the backlash. ★ They warned me. They said we can only talk with you if it is never shown in Turkey, and I made this promise to them. Now I feel it is a pity that we cannot show it in Turkey. But it is imperative that we keep this promise, for the wish of the subjects and their well-being must remain sacrosanct.

***Küba** has a very strong testimonial aspect, with people revealing secrets, even intimate details for the first time in their lives. What is the reason for this phenomenon? What is the trigger for people? To testify to a stranger, knowing it will be seen by a broader public—is that something rooted in us?*

I think it is, in a way. Sometimes, when I'm interviewed by the press, I say what I believe, and I say it very openly and boldly. When people around me start telling me, "don't talk like this, you will get into trouble", I start having second thoughts. But I think human beings have this specific voice they cannot stop. Under any type of endurance, you shut up, you hide, or you freak out and you say don't publish it, I didn't mean it, but then you say it again. Maybe there is one side of your brain that simply can't stop, even if it concerns secrets that have never been revealed before.

While filming, do you actually notice these "testimonial" moments occurring? Do you have the feeling of borders getting crossed, of people stepping beyond a certain line right in front of you—and because of you?

I guess I do. In fact, I am only looking for those moments. You have to build trust to bring them out and it's important for the strength of the pieces to come there. It's a very blurred area, ethically. Showing it is the next step. They sign a release, they say you can show it, but if this is going to get them

into trouble, you don't really want to show it. But if it reveals a greater truth, you take a certain risk. You take it for them. It's a very blurred area. It has to come out, you feel you have to do it, because maybe your own kind of voice makes you do it. It's not even a voice, it's this one side that tells you it has to be done, it cannot be hidden, and you cannot stop yourself. It happens. You do it out of self-respect. It is so fundamental, it's everything that you believe in. If you don't do it, it will be jeopardized.

What is the advantage to you as an artist of using storytelling and narratives to talk about very concrete personal or social matters? Would you say that through such artistic strategies you can reach a "higher level" of profundity?

I never really think of a higher level of profundity. For me, it's more basic. I go for the rare ingredient that is life itself. Life is made out of stories and what is interesting about stories is that they use life as a metaphor. It has a beginning, middle and an end. It has a hero, that is us—we are all heroes and heroines of our own stories. You are, according to me, the supporting character, and the other way around. Then there is conflict, which is also important. In fact, if you look at any dramatic structure—opera or theater, film, novel, mythology, religion, painting—any creation, any art is a metaphor for life itself. And the main player is always a human being. Even in a photography of nothingness one is aware of the gaze to nothingness, it tells a story. You cannot escape the narrative. The way we organize it as an art form is not just craft: The way you organize it is capable of making a much more important and universal comment, a piece of communication. I don't like the notion of "message", but in the end, it is also a message, although I prefer to call it communication.

You often reference theater. I rarely hear you referencing other films, for instance...

I don't reference theater *per se*, in terms of plays. If you look at the narrative structure, theater and film are the same. In theater it is perhaps more visible. When we talk of narrative and fiction we immediately think of theater, but film and novel come from the same tradition. If we remove the dogma from Brecht, the alienation effect that he formulized... That formula became very important for me, I borrowed it as a tool. I'm trying to demonstrate how this doesn't have to be something that we have to learn because it just happens in life. That is where this parallaxing of reality comes into play. Especially in my earlier work I was very much interested in showing how people are not what they seem to be.

★ But I don't want to limit it to that. It's an ongoing research. I'm not always happy to see my works shown by themselves, but in an order: Chapter after chapter, because that's how I do my work. I am following a progress of always going to the extremity of dealing with fiction and reality, as long as it takes me. When I did *Veronica Read*, I thought that was really it. I attached the beginning to the end, it became a circle, a sculpture. I thought there was nothing after this. And then I did *Stefan's Room*, which is like a sister piece, and then **Küba**. I never knew this was going to happen. And now I do *Paradise*, which is like **Küba**, but it won't be. You always go forward.

★ As I said, it's a research. While I am doing it, I am not trying to take advantage of the subjects. They want to understand, they are the heroes

and heroines of their own fiction. They use you in the same way. When I did *Veronica Read*, she used me for her own publicity, I was the supporting actor for her. ★ This is also my comment about the periphery and the center.

This is not only about society, but also about people. Who is in the center? There are so many different centers. The people of **Küba** have their own lives, their own issues, they don't care about me, I'm just a cameraman.

You're always searching for very special characters that carry some kind of popular cultural language...

This comes to me more instinctively. Maybe it's because of my film training that I'm naturally attracted to them, without realizing. I knew a lot about my subjects before my art career started. Stefan, Semiha, all the women in *Women Who Wear Wigs*. I knew them before, I didn't have to find them for the sole purpose of making art. When I was little, my mother had a friend who was clinically mad. She used to come to our house and I was fascinated by her. Maybe that's how I learned to be attracted to unusual people.

As an artist, you have never been attributed to a specific discourse, your work always flows in a greater context...

I am glad about this, because I don't like labeling. That's just not challenging enough, you don't really learn something new, it's repetition. ★ I see

Küba as my own work, but the **Küba** journey concept is not my own concept. I think it is great, very refreshing. It gives my work a dimension that I myself didn't see before. It's a bit like my *De-regulation* show. Irit Rogoff conceptualized it in a way I didn't think of before. My work is used as an ingredient, which is much more challenging than showing the same installation again and again.

In Küba, there is a strong parallel between the formal aspects and the content of the work, like in many of your works. You identify very specific ways of showing it, how to install it, how it works in space. Can you elaborate on the ways how format and content interact in your works?

For **Küba**, I have an original concept that I like to keep as much as possible. I want to maintain the 40 separate monitor approach because of the relationship between the work and the viewer. I want the viewers to visit this island like tourists, to go from monitor to monitor. Two people should never have exactly the same relationship experience. Each visitor does his own, non-linear editing, watching five minutes of this and an hour of that. When walking out, you navigate through it, just like a tourist in a foreign country. That is a very strong comment on the nature of information, the nature of documenting. I want to preserve this comment. ★ The fact that it travels

is a completely different notion now. That doesn't have to stay. It is an outside element.

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