

Cansu Çakar (b. 1988, Turkey)

İzmir based

born in Istanbul in 1988.

2006 - 2013 higher education - BFA Dokuz Eylul University Traditional Turkish Arts Department.

2012 - Exchange program; Moholy – Nagy Arts and Design University in Budapest; graphic design

2019- Master of Art and Design in Dokuz Eylul University of Fine Arts, MA  
Runs an independent art studio in Karşıyaka, İzmir.

Çakar investigates traditional art forms such as decorative drawing and illumination and integrates these traditions with contemporary art practices and topics. In doing so she articulates her wish to free traditional forms of expression from their stereotypical classification. Her drawings and paintings, together with the concepts, she explores in her workshops, critically question the typical male-dominated subjects of traditional miniature painting. Furthermore, they call into question the traditional classification of this art form and its conservatism. She draws a line between what it means to be a woman or a prisoner in an oppressive society and the aesthetics of traditional arts in our contemporary art world. Both share the struggle against conservatism and the ensuring fight for emancipation.

Among her projects and exhibitions are BB11 11th Berlin Biennale for Contemporary Art, The Crack Begins Within, KW, (Berlin, 2020) Miniature 2.0, Pera Museum, (İstanbul, 2020) Replica of the Origin, SALT Beyoğlu, (İstanbul, 2019) The Crime of Mr. Adolf Loos, Axel Vervoordt Gallery, (Antwerp, 2019) Ashkal Alwan - Home Workspace Program (Beirut, 2018/19) Cappadox Contemporary Art Program, (Cappadocia, 2018), House of Wisdom-DZIALDOV (Berlin, 2017), IKSV Building (Public program of the 15th Istanbul Biennial, Istanbul, 2017) and Framer Framed (Amsterdam, 2017), Bonington Gallery,(Nottingham, 2018), Freundschaftsspiel Istanbul : Freiburg”- Museum für Neue Kunst - (Freiburg, 2016), Linear Transcendency” at the Lab- Darat al Funun, -(Amman, 2016), SALT WATER: A Theory of Thought Forms. 14th Istanbul Biennial- 100°- FLO, (İstanbul, 2015).



Vajinatör,  
2014

## Selected Workshops

Cappadox Contemporary Art Programme  
Silence - 14June / 9July Ortahisar Cappadocia  
Curated by Fulya Erdemci and Iğın Deniz Akselođlu  
**Hands On Hips Motif Studio**



Cansu akar’s interest in the tradition of collective thinking and production is central to her work and informs her practice through her workshops, like *Hands on Hips Motif Studio*, are her very own anarchic resuscitation of foundational Turkish art form in order to bring to light present- day stories, issues, and ideas.

The name “Hands on Hips” references the common, though varied, motif of a female figure used on Turkish kilims to represent fertility and pluralism. Prior to the festival days of Cappadox, akar invited locals, especially local women, to join her in a workshop to produce new imagery using motifs collected by akar through a research period in which she studied the symbols and motifs of Ortahisar and the region, as well as the common aesthetics and uses of daily ornamentation both of the present day and the recent and distant past. Those invited to the workshop will reference a workbook prepared by akar in which there are representations of flowers, trees, local architectural adornments, pigeon holes, souvenirs, horses, icons, Anatolian carpet motifs, Mouth Erciyes (Argeus) and other geographic and topological staples like Ortahisar Castle. The participants will create their own interpreted motif-based story through recomposing the symbols and motifs in the workbook; the outcome of the workshop is expected to reveal collective points of view moral, cultural, and social issues as reflected through the decided reuses of motifs, artifacts, and ornaments of daily life in region.



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## Linear Transcendancy

23 APRIL – 6 MAY 2016, Amman

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Darat al Funun presents *Linear Transcendancy*, a collaborative exhibition by İzmir-based artist Cansu Çakar together with workshop participants. The project was initiated and developed by Bige Örer.

Çakar redefines the traditional format of miniature in her artistic practice. She has organized series of workshops where she collaborated with participants from different backgrounds including women, refugees, students as well as architects, artists and activists. The process highlighted the act of working together and mapping different stories and destinations using miniature technique, which is traditionally commonly used in mapping. Workshop participants were invited to create maps for different purposes – maps drawing every day in the city, maps drawn to find the city they want to live in, local and international maps, or maps in which we can disregard any political, social, religious or economic constraints — using, but not limited to traditional mapping and ornamental techniques.

Cansu Çakar said; ‘What was and what made the border? The borders used to be rivers, mountains and seas. The color of the earth could change as it pleased, the rocks could move as they rolled. But which border is a mountain's or a river's in our day? The infinity in the space becomes more meaningless as we divide our tiny world with lines. We become more shallow and then we begin not to deserve infinity. We draw rough lines by means of paws of the civilization while as the Nature offers us all the answers with her kindness. A World where the crows could land on the whales must have been a dream, but for now, we can only dream of a world where there are no borders.’



for more info: [Linear Transcendancy PDF Document](#)

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TUZLU SU:Düşünce Biçimleri  
Üzerine Bir Teori .14.İstanbul Bienali kapsamında  
Within the scope of the SALT WATER: A Theory of Thought  
Forms. 14th Istanbul Biennial

100°

*Committed to social justice, she utilises the transformative powers of art to connect people and foster change. She teaches how to paint miniatures, in jails with the convicted, or in a small room above the bustle of commerce, with women. Attention, precision, practice. They cannot colonise our minds.*  
Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev

We run a collaborative traditional arts atelier with women on the 4th floor of Flo building (Anatolian Passage) at Istiklal Street. With anybody who considers themselves as a woman. A traditional arts atelier gets around like a gossip, from mouth to mouth. It intends to provide criticism on subjects of traditional art books. For instance, if miniature is a form of information design, then we don't still in need to tell about Ottoman Empire but we can tell contemporary. This is exact point traditional arts seem to hold a similarity with being a woman in a society, in the struggle against conservatism and unliberatedness. Thus in 100 degree it was assumed that women could instrumentalize traditional arts and create an effective language. Songs, poems, letters could be decorated, or a variety of worlds could be drawn with flowers, trees, clouds. It can be considered as a course; however; it is certain that its systematic fall out of traditional education system. We aren't even sure if it has a defined system. We bound through our womanhood and then we are producing works by means of traditional arts. While the atelier mostly relates to drawings on paper, it also inclines to interior decoration, visual installations and literature. Its context enables valuable emotions or concepts, which can be decorated, which requires pictorial narration to be told, to be turned into miniatures. It wishes to dive into depths of what seems surficial but still playing with the deep on the surface.

Studio Director: Cansu Çakar



for more info: 100 derece PDF Document



*Dreams, which fly away...*, 2013  
26 x 32 cm

The exhibition displays the work of inmates, which is the result of a five month Traditional Turkish Art education. The exhibition's content consists of slang, poetry and sayings, often heard around prison, as well as letters, uniquely decorated with traditional Turkish motives, symbolically written to the outside world. Ultimately, the aim is to transmit the life inside prison to the outside and to bring the outside audience in.

The exhibition presents life from behind the bars to the outside world and underlines that we as the outside world and its prisoners must break these conceptual bars in order to fully comprehend the work of these hard-working and productive inmates.



for more info: TII PDF Document

**Selected Collective Show**

The Crime of Mr. Adolf Loos,  
curated by Alistair Hicks

Axel Vervoordt Gallery

*Dirty Side of White, 2019*



a converse reading and rewriting the essay from Adolf Loos, Ornament and Crime-  
6 ornamented and calligraphed sheets, watercolor on paper, 60 x 80 cm

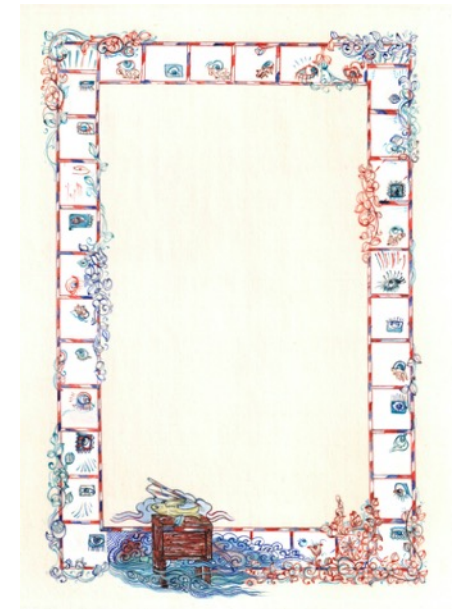
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## Site- specific public installations

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Love's Labour's Post, 2018

Site-specific project in the Alsancak - Bostanlı / Karşıyaka ferry, post box, letter papers, envelopes.





*"Calm down a little because the sea is too restless. Sit down and write to someone from the other coast and put it into the box."*





The spatial project called Love Labour's Post produced for ART IN PUBLIC PLACE: EVOLVE and curated by Dr Necmi Sönmez during PORTIZMIR International Contemporary Art Triennial, keeps swimming since the passengers on the ferry named Captain Enabir Can wrote those letters. The reading of the letters that were written at the Alsancak- Bostanlı- Karşıyaka route between 2-25 April took place at the archive exhibition organized in collaboration with Büyük Siyah Kapı Photography Collective for the Migration Stories Festival in 6-11 May for the first time . Dr. Necmi Sonmez comments on the project with such questions:

*What is the function of a mailbox placed inside a ferry? To whom will the passengers write letters? Who will read what is written?  
We run away from daily journeys. Let's put our yearnings on paper by writing letters.  
The reply would come to us from the Bay.*

Cansu Çakar, the artist of the project, presents the re-opening of the box that has spatial and mobile features for the DEMOLITION group exhibition with the following statements that explain the characteristic of the work.

The gulf is the memory of the seas. It collects and remembers everything. The gulf box also looks for the representation of what İzmir Gulf has been collecting in the historical process. The box is open now. You can read the letters that have been much personal and that dive in deep as much as they stay on the surface.





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Darağaç Collective, 2016

*Chic Latife*



PORTIZMIR3- International Contemporary Art Triennial- Temporary Intervention in  
Kemeraltı Exhibition – 10 days long workshop- Street Installation- 2013  
madder and acrylic on gypsum panel and tile, 200-150 cm

*The Sea*



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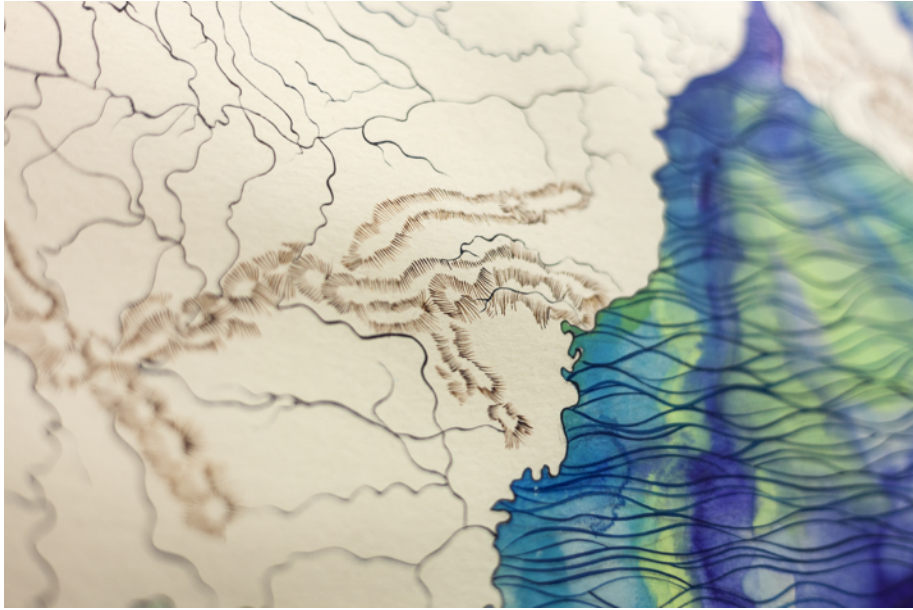
## Selected drawings and paintings

*Göz görmeyince gönül katlanır mış,*  
*The heart won't grieve over what the eye won't see, 2016*

watercolor, gouache, ink and gold on paper 70x100cm

To discard the whole in order to display a detail deemed unimportant, or to burn the house to reveal the mouse, might be the guide in establishing the essence meaningful. Each detail is valuable, for in practice they present the unlimited number of reproduction of the whole.





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(detail)

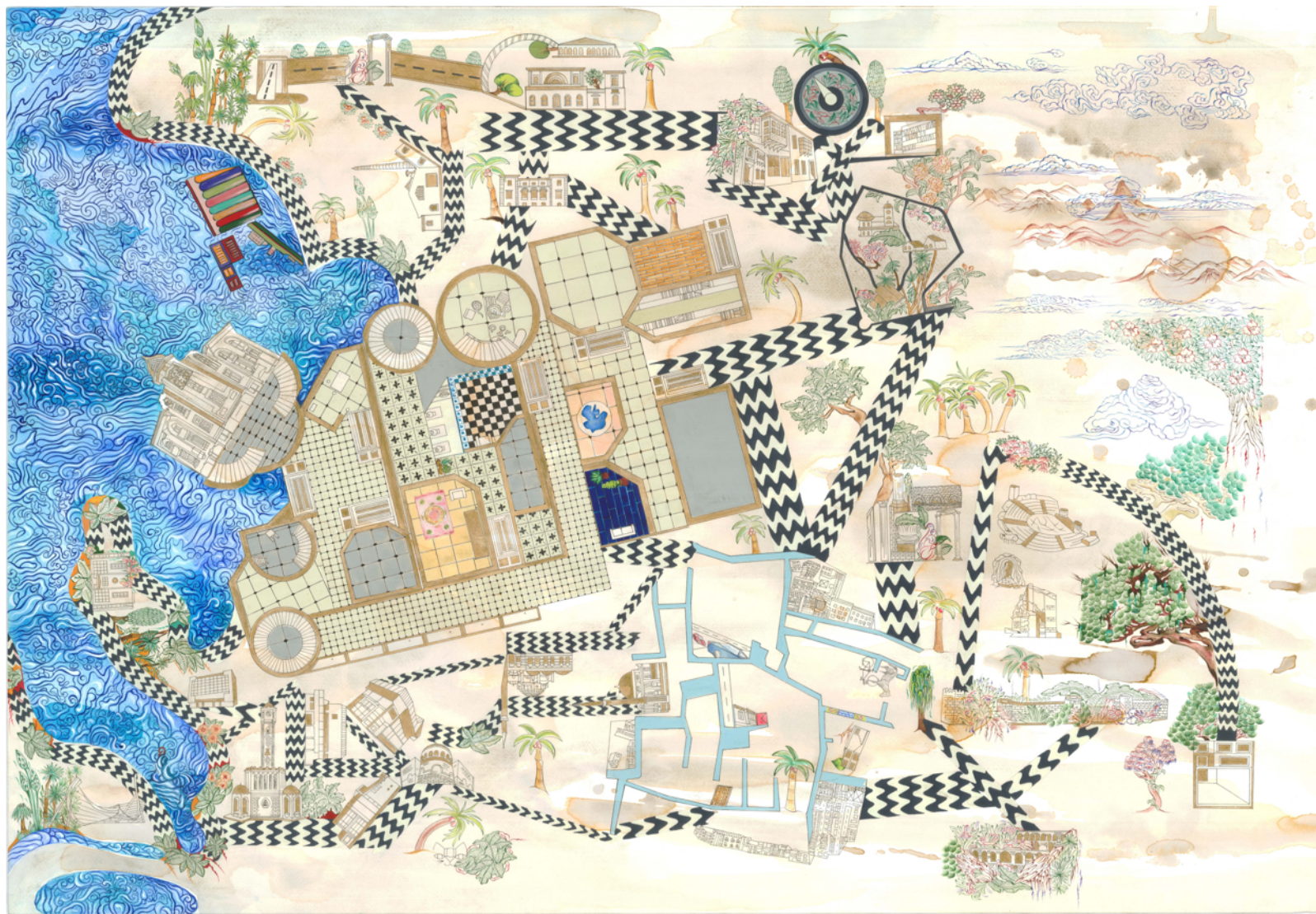
*Rumi*, 2016  
gouache, gold, ink and watercolor on paper,  
70 x100

“Replaced”  
29.09- 20.10.2016  
Rampa Gallery

Çakar’s work on paper, *Rumi* (2016), replicates the Islamic Art motif called Rumi, which was once an animal figure turned into a simplified motif so as to follow Islamic laws in art, ideas which made firm to avoid figurative representations. She nods to the transformation and dispossession of the motif from its animal form due to religion. The affect of religion on something so benign as an animal motif brings to bear the many natural things made necessarily hidden and dispossessed because of religious sanctities. The artist further comments on this by drawing an upside down mosque, specifically and pointedly that which is the burial ground and shrine of Mevlana Rumi. Today lovers of Rumi’s writings can go there, and ironically, can even buy plastic replicas of him or the mosque.

Nicole O’Rourke





*İzmir Map, 2014*

Un-informatic, useless map, represents contemporary art scenes in İzmir.

ink, watercolour and gold on paper 70x100 cm



*Tak Tak Tak Girç Girç Girç Tak Tak Girç Girç, 2017*

Nefs'i İstanbul ironic reconstruction map,  
gouache, gold, ink and watercolour on paper,

70 x 190 cm





inc, watercolour and gold on paper 20x47 cm

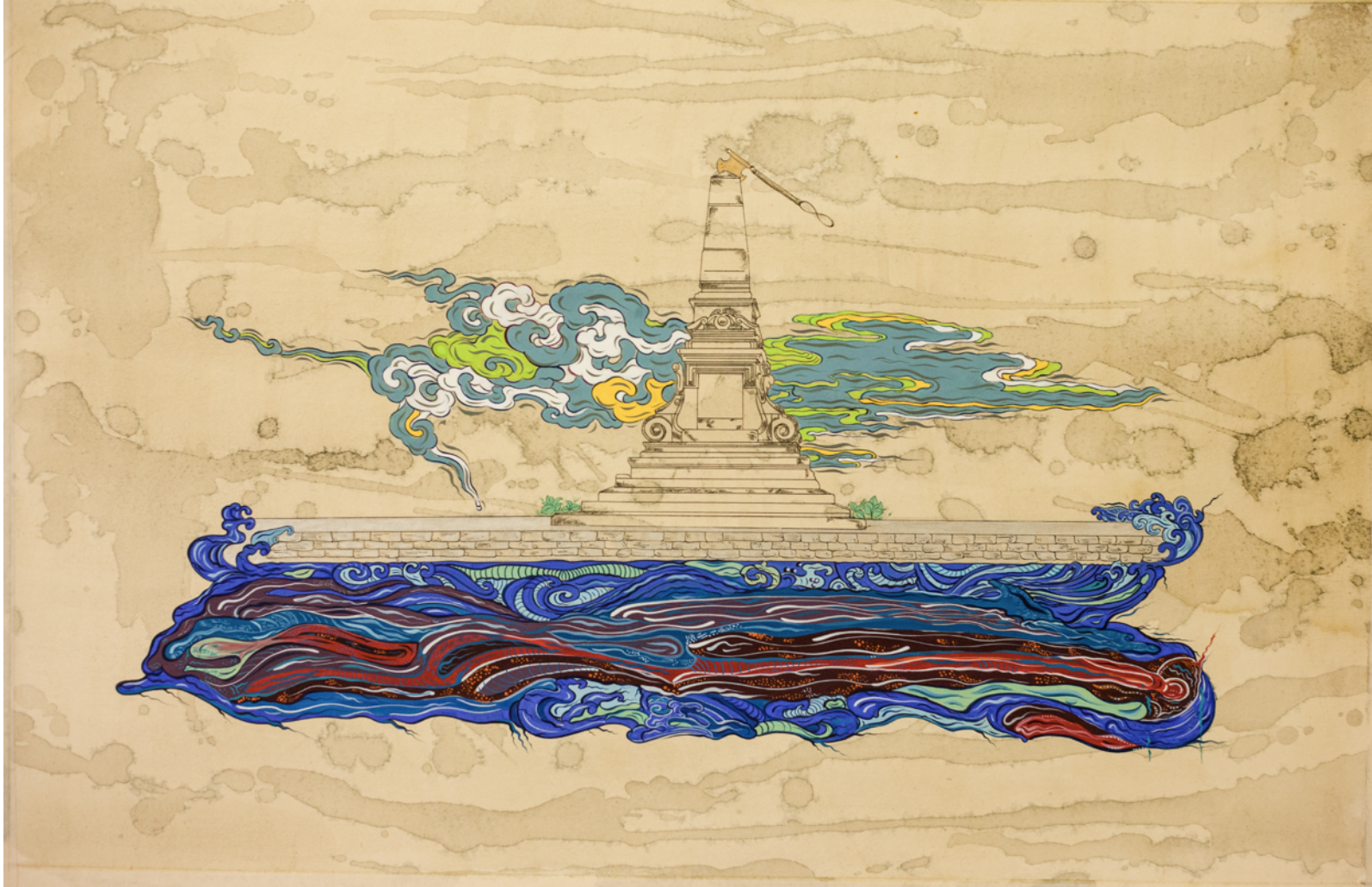
*Mars Peygamber*

*Mars The Prophet, 2014*

August, 2013. There was a great tension in the heaven and on the earth. My friends and I were spending awkward moments watching war videos on Liveleak. I was impressed by the footage of heroic tanker against Al-Nusra and instantly made a screenshot. Afterwards, I prepared a surreal platform for it by introducing symbolic readings. While flame pattern which I attempted to idolize represents flame over the heads of holy people in traditional miniature art, the continuity of firing refers to the fact that cruelty never ends. Every other image is a result of a complex imagination.

III. Abdülhamid Kazığı  
III. Abdulhamid Ripoff, 2015

watercolour, gouache, ink and gold on special paper 55x70cm



*Natural gas pipeline, 2017*

t: bleached leather album

s: 31.5x32x1.5 cm

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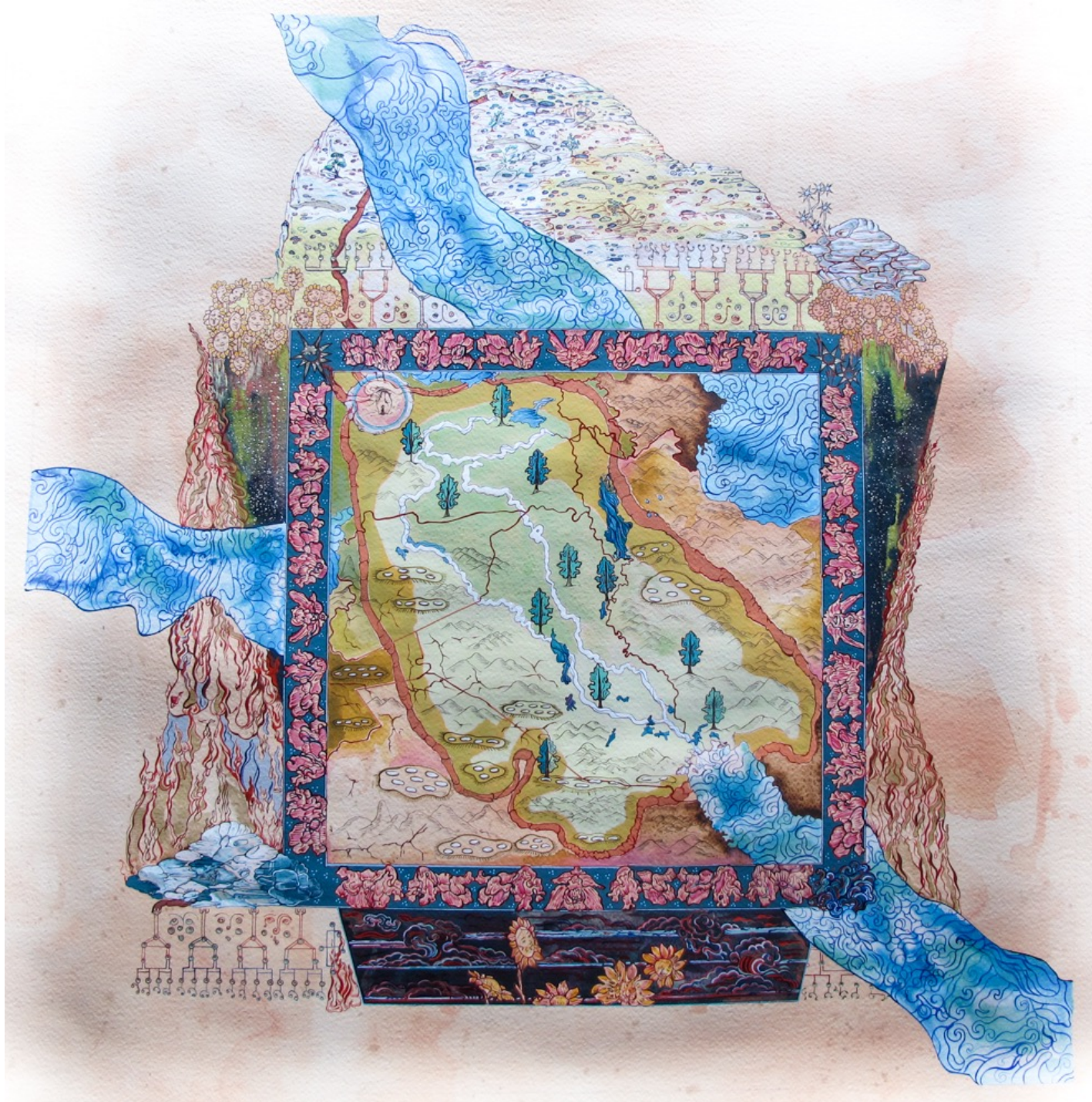


Green lizards on red rocks, 2017

visualization of a poem Black Snake, Nazım Hikmet Ran  
8 pages  
t: ink and watercolor on paper, leather album



GREEN LIZARDS ON  
Red Rocks  
Illustrated by  
2017



Rahime, 2019

Fictional map of Shatt al Arap,  
t: watercolor, ink and gold on paper,  
s: 70 x 70

In Rahime, Çakar looks at a mythicized region called Shatt al- Arab, where the Tigris and the Euphrates meet. The love story between the two rivers has been popularized and mythicized. The region has highly political and strategic importance as well as economic strength, supporting its own hinterland; it is also a contested region for for these very reasons. The artist looks at the map of the region and compares it to female body. The borders of Mesopotamia become the contours of female body and the artist creates the work, a crossover between painting and map, without trying to establish a cause- effect relationship. The name of the work derives from the love between the Euphrates and the Tigris, the female representation, and the assumption that “Rahman” represents the male principle and “Rahim” the female principle, leading to”Rahime”

(detail)

Azra Tüzünoğlu, 2020  
Miniature 2.0 Pera Museum



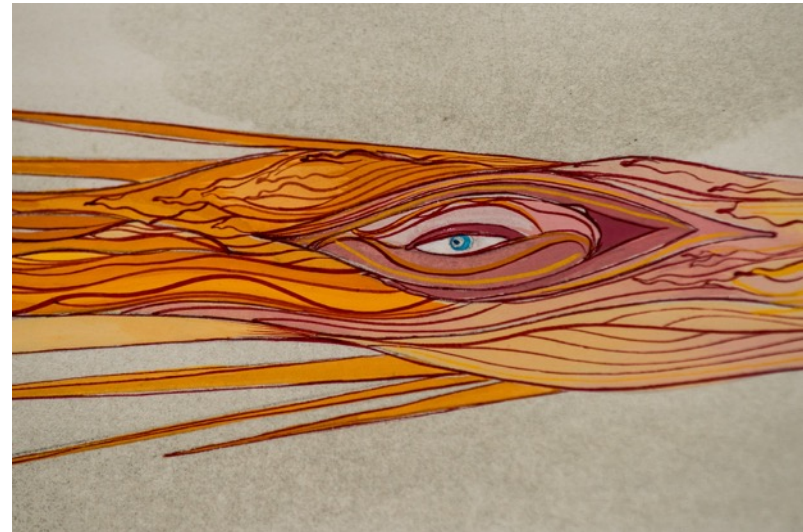
*Labyrinth to Kybele, 2020*  
*11th Berlin Biennale for Contemporary Art, the crack begins within*  
*KW Institute for Contemporary Art*



The struggles between the traditional and the modern that define contemporary Turkey underlie the stories that Cansu Çakar renders in delicate detail. In her series *Labyrinth to Kybele* (2020), Çakar creates a landscape of vignettes drawn from anecdotes in the Turkish press: A man murdered his daughter, after the look in her eye as she made breakfast convinced him that she was possessed by evil; a family tree shows the characters in this real-life drama. A watery setting refers to two treasure hunters who were granted governmental permission to lay a lake dry with explosives, making it into a black hole; nearby village officials comment that they are glad the lake is gone because its depths were a danger to local children. Another scene, featuring a maze-like architecture dotted with female figures, is inspired by a rape trial in which the defendant's female lawyer interrogates the victim with the malicious logic: "I am also a woman. Why have I not been raped?"

A keen observer of the social fault lines in Turkey today, the artist works in miniature painting as a gesture synonymous with tradition. Reviving this ancient method of storytelling, Çakar's practice reflects on how society deals with everyday violence and injustice—and how gender inequality impacts women. The labyrinth represents the enveloping silence of a culture of oppression, which for Çakar is passed on from generation to generation through the legitimization of tradition-dominated narratives, a process in which the mother plays a central role. At the heart of the labyrinth is Kybele, an ancient Anatolian mother goddess who embodies the unlearning of handed-down power structures and institutions—a symbol of nurturing and hope. In *ExRotaprint* the artist has made a large-scale wall painting of one of the motifs in her miniatures: an inclusive sun, bored by its divine position, that touches everyone with its light.

Laura Schleussner







*Circumcision Feast*  
From the series  
*Labyrinth to Kybele*,  
2020, watercolor,  
gouache, gold on paper,  
70 x 100 cm



*Possessed Woman's Murder*  
From the series  
*Labyrinth to Kybele*, 2020,  
watercolor, gouache, gold on paper,  
70 x 100 cm





*Closed Court Hearing*  
From the series  
*Labyrinth to Kybele*, 2020,  
watercolor, gouache, gold  
on paper,  
70 x 100 cm

*Ancient Lake,*  
From the series *Labyrinth to Kybele*, 2020, watercolor, gouache, gold on paper,  
70x100 cm





*The Return of the Goddess*



*The Return of the Goddess*

From the series *Labyrinth to Kybele*, 2020,  
watercolor, gouache, gold on paper, 70 x 100 cm