ABDÜLCANBAZ (TURHAN SELÇUK)

Turhan Selçuk is the creator of Abdülcanbaz, one of the most famous comic book characters of Turkey. His first works were published in 1941 in the newspaper Adana Türksözü. For Turhan Selçuk, critical thinking was central while humor was secondary. Abdülcanbaz was first introduced to the reader in the newspaper Milliyet in 1957 and his adventures were published until 2001. Abdülcanbaz is considered the first original comic book character in Turkey. In his imaginary stories, which transcend time and space, Selçuk becomes the part of the political and socio-cultural history of Turkey and the surrounding area with a critical approach. This good-hearted and brave gentleman of Istanbul, who fearlessly waged war against rascals, is a folk hero and a crusader for justice.

The exhibition features all of the original drawings for the adventure *Voyage to Funjistan* first published in 1972 in the newspaper Cumhuriyet. In the story, Abdülcanbaz, accompanied by his faithful friends Qurunful Hodja, Fettah and Evliyah Chelebi, sets on a perilous journey to reach the uncharted Land of Funj. The adventure begins in Istanbul, in the machine called “The Amphibious Sphere of Perpetual Motion” invented by Qurunfil Hodja, the great scientist of the East. They then make their way through Apeland to finally reach the Land of Funj. Depicting several different situations – urban life during the Ottoman era; the mysterious lands of the East; the ceremonies of primitive tribes and impenetrable jungles – *Voyage to Funjistan* includes many details, both imaginary and real, about Turkey and its surrounding lands. The adventures of Abdülcanbaz often describe the encounter with various cultures and recount the experience with “the other” as a traveler would in a book of travels.

FURAT AL JAMIL

Furat al Jamil was born in Germany to a German mother and an Iraqi father, and moved to Iraq when she was a child. Well-versed in video, sculpture and photography, al Jamil is known pre-eminently for her filmmaking. Her diverse cultural background forms the weave of her work and constitutes its context. Interpreting her cultural experiences when confronted with different geographies, al Jamil develops her work fusing the Eastern and Western influences to reflect her identity.

The 3-D animation *Baghdad Night* is a shorter re-make of the original feature by the same name, presented at the 2013 Dubai Film Festival. *Baghdad Night* tells the story of Saluwa, a beautiful seductress who leads men to devastation. It takes place in the Qambar Ali district of Baghdad, where the artist’s family have resided formany years. The story tells of an apparently ordinary day for an Iraqi taxi driver, and of his enigmatic discovery. *Baghdad Night* relates an Iraqi legend that dates back to the Sumerian civilization.
MOUNIRA AL SOLH

Mounira Al Solh’s video work *The Mute Tongue* is the visual description of nineteen Arabic proverbs. To create this work, Al Solh invited the Croatian performance artist Sinisa Labrovic, who does not speak Arabic, to enact the popular sayings.

In this work, Al Solh challenges the viewer to think about the impact language has on our capacity of visualizing; in her own words: “...about language as a cause or effect of the imagined in our dreams or heads, or daydreams even.” Al Solh claims that, when these proverbs are translated visually, they show “humans’ insanity, which is totally very sane.”

MAJA BAJEVIC

Active since the 2000s, Maja Bajevic is known for her works in performance, video, installation, and photography. She explores the relationship between the private and the public space. Her work *To Be Continued / Steam Machines* brings together slogans shouted during social and political upheavals around the world in the years between 1911-2011.

Made up from a steam engine, *To Be Continued* projects slides with slogans onto a wall through a thin cloud of steam. The slogans are visible for a while before they start to dissolve like the vapor screen from the machine. The projected slogans are accompanied by texts that explaining their origin, timeline and content.

CANAN

In her artistic practice, CANAN addresses the taboos and pressures the individual is subjected to in traditional culture and in modern society. In her works, she explores the representation and the objectification of the female body. She addresses the consequences of control mechanisms on the individual imposed by the state and society through religion, mores, and family. In CANAN’s new video *Delusion*, especially made for *Neighbours*, the artist appropriates the oral tradition in Turkey, narrating a love story that ends in insanity.

CANAN describes the work as follows: “*Delusion* is a love story which begins with the strange confession of love by a man who, for various reasons, is reluctant to open his heart to the woman he loves; a love story which ends with madness. It is the manifestation of solitude, of isolation in the modern world. Alongside this obsessive love story we also have a personal story in which love and madness become confused, in which love and hate paralyze one another. The female protagonist of the film creates the man in her mind; he is the woman herself, actually he is her shadow. The woman is like the character in Ursula K. Le Guin’s article “The Child and the Shadow”; learned, polite, idealist, and decent. Whereas the shadow is everything that is repressed in the process of becoming a decent, civilized adult,
the shadow is the woman’s inhibited selfishness, her unconfessed desires; the swear words she never uttered, the murders she never committed. The shadow is the dark side of her soul; which is not accepted and is unacceptable. The shadow is her fears, her disbeliefs; it is her best friend and her worst enemy.”

ETERI CHKADUA

In her works, Chkadua explores the effects of Georgia’s political history on its people, and through a wide representational spectrum, she expresses an array of emotions that go from pain and the feeling of loss to pride and power. Most of the everyday objects in Chkadua’s paintings refer to Georgian popular culture, its rituals and ceremonies.

In Black, Eteri Chkadua’s work in the exhibition, depicts a large dinner table called Ormotsi, which is set 40 days after a funeral, a ritual practiced in Georgia. Marking the end of a 40-day mourning period, this ritual also means that from that day on relatives can stop wearing black; however, those who are more faithful to the tradition do continue for one year. Chkadua displays how today the tradition of a ritual performed collectively following a death progresses and transforms in and throughout the Caucasus, and how, despite all this change, the past is preserved.

RENA EFFENDI

Rena Effendi, studied Linguistics and attended private painting classes; she took up photography in 2001. Both researcher and photographer, Effendi applies this double identity in the most visible fashion. Influenced by a childhood spent during the USSR years, her work is informed by an awareness of issues concerning political instability, economic imbalance, war, social conflict, and justice. Over the past 10 years she has been travelling to villages in the post-Soviet regions, recording the events, changes, and transformations these places have undergone since the early 1990s. Also covering countries such as Afghanistan, Iran, Egypt, and Turkey, the artist describes photography as a practice which gives her license to go to places she otherwise never could.

The series on show (begun in 2006) centers on the village of Khinaliq in Azerbaijan, where she first went in 2003 as a tourist in her country. This is a village where a unique and dying-out Caucasian language is spoken – a village able to preserve its ancient way of life thanks to its remoteness. Khinaliq relies on streams instead of running water, and natural fires sprouting from the mountains instead of gas. Before 2006, Khinaliq was inaccessible for 9 months out of the year, but after the then-president of Azerbaijan, Ilham Aliyev visited in 2007, the government built new roads to access the village. After this visit, the transformed village and its traditions became a subject for the artist’s camera. The series features scenes
from both ordinary and festive days: a shepherd heading back to the village, a large family gathered around the dinner table, wedding musicians, and family elders preparing the wedding meal.

**CEVDET EREK**

In *Black with White*, Cevdet Erek presents an inventory of the visible, tactile and audible pieces that are the products from the artist's travels from Istanbul to Cairo and further trips to Amsterdam, Antwerp, Beirut, Pori and places in between. In *Black with White*, the production processes can be tracked via a book, a catalogue, inscriptions and other materials interspersed among the actual works previously featured separately in group and solo exhibitions. Through this process, the artist describes situations, people, and objects he encountered, linking them together through his practice in sound, motion and visuals. *Black with White* establishes a matrix of relationships among seemingly "self-evident" notions such as rhythm, repetition, light, presence-absence, history, text and calligraphy, everyday material(s) and technology.

**ADIB FATTAL**

Born in Washington DC, Adib Fattal is a Syrian artist who currently lives and works in Damascus. Fattal travelled back to his homeland twenty years ago, after a series of life changes and a powerful calling to create urged him to return. Casting aside his education and career, Fattal embarked on a prolific oeuvre of memory and myth. With humble materials and a self-taught technique, he painted what was to become a never-ending series of intricate landscapes, where dense luminous cities bustled with harmonious street lives and cultures. Fattal's careful use of colour and his symmetrical repetitions reveal a profound imaginary region, far removed from the conflict of the real one.

**BABAK JALALI**

In his film *Frontier Blues*, Director Babak Jalali crafts a portrait of the life in the Northern Iranian province of Golestan through the interconnecting stories of four protagonists. He employs fixed-camera shots to emphasize what his sparsely scripted tale depicts—namely, the life in this remote region which borders Turkmenistan.

The storyline is simple. While being photographed for a forthcoming book by a Tehran artist, the Minstrel, who is always accompanied by a cadre of four young followers, recounts how his wife was stolen from him 30 years earlier by a shepherd in a green Mercedes Benz. His vain attempts to locate her bred a misery akin to that felt by Alam, a Turkmen chicken farmer planning to move to a nearby town with, he hopes, an Iranian woman for whom he silently pines. The cast of characters is rounded out by mentally challenged Hassan, who was
abandoned by his mother and now travels everywhere with his pet donkey, and Hassan's uncle, whose clothing store is stocked with items too big for its customers. These isolated, discontented figures are all mired in mundane lives defined by go-nowhere circularity, a notion expressed explicitly via matching shots of Alam and Hassan's uncle staring at a rickety rotating ceiling fan, and implicitly through director Jalali's day-in-day-out narrative and recurring use of the same locations and images.

**HAYV KAHRAMAN**

Hayv Kahraman's early years, marked by the outbreak of the Gulf War, inform the body of work that she would produce in the years to come. The series *Waraq* (2010), meaning “play cards”, portrays figures that are emblematic of the plight of the people in Iraq after the Gulf War, forced to live daily with the ordeals of immigration, separation, and relocation. The title of this series echoes the name of a popular card game and evokes a serene pastime. The series points to complex human emotions in the face of a simple pleasure, juxtaposed with the hardships of life in Baghdad today.

Kahraman depicts the figures in her works in the form of playing cards, and, through her stylization, brings to the surface of the painting the politics of gender and identity and the entanglements of power and authority. In the paintings presented at Istanbul Modern, the artist calls attention to the fraught relationship within the individual, forced to live a dichotomous life, entangled in contrasting emotions.

**PAVLOS NIKOLAKOPOULOS**

Pavlos Nikolakopoulos’s work *Overlook*, a large watercolor and drawing composed of 270 individual tassels, is a fitting example of his practice. The drawings that constitute Overlook are as much philosophical drawings as contemporary art offers today, a compendium of behaviours that covers the four corners of human experience. Dante’s Malebolge, the “evil ditches” of his inferno, are blue-prints for *Overlook*, both for its anecdotes and for its design: the events of each drawing, like Dante’s Inferno, are connected into a larger image and built into a rational structure. Similar to the long paths running from the circumference of Malebolge to its center (the 9th circle of hell), the individual paths contribute to create the larger picture of tangled wrestling bodies. The large image is a contemporary meditation on *La Battaglia degli Ignudi* by Pollaiolo, or on the fresco of *The Damned* in the cathedral of Orvieto by Luca Signorelli. The individual drawings: personal stories, parables laced with a cruel undertow, contemporary Brother Grimm’s fireside stories. And to a large extent visual folk tales they are, with the depth and structure so well indicated by Vladimir Propp’s seminal book from 1928, *Morphology of the Folk Tale*. The work is accompanied by a vitrine...
of Nikolakopoulos’s sketchbooks, an everyday activity of jotting down ideas, intricate drawings, experimental juxtapositions of color and form mingled with text.

ADRIAN PACI

Adrian Paci was born in Shkoder (Albania), 1969. He lives and works in Milan. After the civil war in Albania, he relocated to Italy in 1997. Trained in Tirana as a painter, in Milan he began experimenting with the medium of video. This allowed him to develop and articulate an ongoing narrative, exploring the consequences of political shifts in his country, as well as commemorating its traditions and customs.

Piktori (2002) is a meditation of the artist’s role in society in periods of political upheavals and unstable transitions. At the end of the communist regime, in Albanian cities there started to appear a number of kiosks with the writing “piktori” (painter) on them. In these small and unauthorized kiosks, artists produced oil paintings, portraits from photographs, but also fake car plates, and false documents, such as birth and death certificates, university diplomas, visas for traveling abroad. This work, a reconstruction of one of such kiosks, refers to the political circumstances of Albania at the time. It dovetails into addressing the nature of art and freedom (to travel with a fake passport, to work thanks to a university diploma). The piece includes the forged death certificate of Adrian Paci, as created at the artist’s request by a “piktori” in Tirana.

MICHAIL PIRGELIS

Michail Pirgelis explores the notion of flight, seeking the resting places of obsolete airplanes and transforming their remnants into sculptures. Following a different process each time, the artist decontextualizes the fragmented aircraft parts while keeping the aura of the objects intact. His sculptures and drawings tell a layered story. Pirgelis explores the fragility and the awe of flying as well as the human desire to defy gravity; he makes reference to today’s modes of travel, and to the nature of sculpture as a pure form in space.

The work in the exhibition, Alma II, consists of a wall covered with airplane isolation panels that act as a colour background for a sculpture made from a side of the plane, in this case scraped to reveal a shiny, mirroring aluminium surface. In his presentation there are two main references to art history: the surface of flat insulation panels mimics minimal sculpture in its grid and sobriety of colour; the shape of the object is a contemporary solution to the perennial question of positive and negative space in the three-dimensional object. In the exhibition, Alma II is accompanied by a series of drawings. Representing different parts of an airplane on a white background, they are two-dimensional paragons of Pirgelis’s sculptural work.
**FAHRETTİN ÖRENLİ**

Fahrettin Örenli, who lives in the Netherlands, defines himself as a universal “anartist”, a neologism coined by the artist by merging of the words “artist” and “anarchist”. Örenli’s *Conspiracy Wall > ANARTIST* is an installation that presents a series of surrealistic drawings focusing on the regions surrounding Turkey. It points to historical and contemporary port cities, or better yet, to a metaphorical port between reality and virtual reality. Örenli notes that his work “looks at the social, political and economic problems faced throughout history, particularly those faced over the last decade... I believe that the most important knowledge in this region in history is the mystical story telling within philosophical and artistic aspects of our lives. That is the reason I would like to use this knowledge to create the conceptual visual narrative form in my artist book and with my installation.”

**ONE SQUARE METER - BİR METREKARE**

The Armenian Centre for Experimental Contemporary Art was founded in Yerevan, Armenia, by a diverse group of people that include artists, poets, architects, journalists, and cinematographers. In 2006, the Armenian Centre created The One Square Meter Theater Festival. This is a multifaceted event that presents performances that can be played within the constriction of on a one-square-meter stage and a time limit of 45 minutes. The project points to how, despite the restrictiveness of the space, the verbal and bodily forms of expression in the visual, literary, and auditory arts know no limits. Istanbul Modern borrows the concept by setting the same one-square-meter stage in the very middle of the exhibition hall during the entire course of the exhibition *Neighbours*.

5 separate performances are featured in the exhibition: “You and Me,” which renders visible the relationship between actor and audience; “To My Lungs,” from William Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*; “Mold,” about energies which are trying to occupy our space and capture our matter; “Servant Simon,” adapted from Avetik Isahakyan’s story; and “The Hunter that Lied,” from Hovhannes Tumanian’s fairy tales. After hosting the shows of theater groups invited from Armenia, One Square Meter will continue to host diverse events from Turkey and the region.

**YEHUDIT SASPORTAS**

One protagonist of much of Yehudit Sasportas’ recent work, and specifically of *Vortex of Separation*, on exhibition in *Neighbours*, is a marsh – a flat, organic, self-sustaining living habitat that follows a seasonal natural cycle of life and death. Sasportas’s focus on nature is the logical continuation of her early work: a keen interest in living matter, in the beauty of
simple yet mysterious growth systems and primordial entities. One can infer that the life cycle, from spores to ferns to trees, all steeped in darkness, water, and humidity – in other words, in the obscure and magic life of the forest – serves as significant subject matter in the oeuvre of the artist.

Sasportas’ work has been honed by serious research and by a profound immersion in drawing, sculpture, and film. Animation figures prominently, and her video work is slow and emotionally intense. *Vortex of Separation* is a metaphor of a voyage that is deeply embedded in our consciousness. What appears to be a loosely structured narrative is a tightly constructed spiritual journey, a series of epiphanies that take the form of objects from the artist’s stream of consciousness – memories and allusions expressed in occasional leaps from the artist’s austere black-and-white aesthetic to bursts of color, all the more powerful and significant because ever so rare. As in a film by Tarkovsky, the images in the film are equivalent to cryptic utterances, clues to a narrative that only unfolds through a subjective taking-in of the parts. It is the hermetic nature of these images that guides the viewer toward a deep experience of the piece. Well-aware of the symbolic weight of a vortex, Sasportas employs the image to suggest turning and change, a passage from one state to another, and a loss of control: the vertigo experienced in surrendering to a primal natural world.

**WAEL SHAWKY**

A world-famous artist known for his works in various fields such as photography, video, installation, and performance, Wael Shawky explores historical, religious, and sociocultural issues, with an attempt to draw attention to the tense relationship between storytelling and historiography. He touches on elements such as oral tradition, language, translation, interpretation, and mediation. He reconsiders various legends and major historical events as well as themes pertaining to the Arab world in particular including cultural hybridization, the modernization of society, and the impact of religious and political history on today’s world.

In *Al Araba Al Madfuna* (2012), the artist’s work in the exhibition, a historical story is reenacted, this time by children with the voice of adults. The artist reconstructs the story based on his experiences in a mysterious place, utilizing a parable by renowned Egyptian writer Mohamed Mustagab. According to the story, the village of Al Araba Al Madfuna, near the ancient city of Abydos in Upper Egypt, is under the domination of a shaman who is said to heal all illnesses and claims that there are treasures of archaeological value under the hill beyond the village. This prophecy throws the village into turmoil and the people, led by the shaman, set out to find the treasure which has been buried for thousands of years. *Al Araba Al Madfuna* forms a panorama of a multifaceted Egyptian community in which two opposite value systems, material and spiritual conflict.
SLAVS AND TATARS

Slavs and Tatars is an artists’ collective whose work investigates the sphere of influence between Slavs, Caucasians and Central Asians. Language and politics of linguistics constituting the core of their works, Slavs and Tatars concern themselves with the Turkic languages in regions such as Xinjiang, China and Turkey. Commissioned by Istanbul Modern for the exhibition, the collective produced a new work comprised of two elements: Lektor and Nose Twister. In Lektor, excerpts from Kutadgu Bilig, an 11th century work by Yusuf Khass Hajib, are heard both in its original Uyghur language, and in modern Turkish with the voice of Rüştü Asyalı. The work emphasizes the eastern origins of the Turkish language: “Kutadgu Bilig achieved for Turkish literature what Ferdowsi’s Shahnameh did for Persian, in essence demonstrating that Turkic was as robust a linguistic and intellectual tradition as Arabic or Farsi. We’ve chosen several passages that focus on the virtues and pitfalls of the tongue, of language, which we feel have particular importance in Turkey, given the history of alphabet conversion and language reforms. By restoring the nasal or velar ’ŋ’, The Nose Twister reminds us of the eastern origins of the Turkish language, a kind of resistance to the oft assumed, both within Turkey and outside, western project.” A work experienced by sitting on it so that they may listen to the sound recording, the installation Nose Twister looks like the letter that describes that special sound, and a nose that is split into two.

NASRA ŞİMMES

Nasra Şimmes’s family are the last of the traditional block printers in Mardin. Refined through the years, and within the tradition of folk art, this is an old technique employed in Eastern Anatolia to create patterns on fabrics. The Syrian ascendancy of the artist places her within the history of Southeast Turkey Christians. Şimmes has dedicated her life to the creation of images that illustrate Biblical stories on large fabric sheets, often employed to cover altars in churches when the service is not performed. Like Gothic portals in French cathedrals, the artist’s humble compositions served the purpose of informing the faithful of a section of the Gospels, in ways that all would easily grasp. Compositionally, the structure of her presentation is straightforward, yet complexly layered. Her free hanging canvasses feature a main story in a large circle or oval in the centre. On the four corners of the fabric are cameos illustrating the watchful presence of other Saints, referring to the Christian concept of “community of souls”. Repeated woodblock prints of flowers and abstract motifs all around the main scene and on the edges of the sheet point to the sacredness of her representations.
NĪL YALTER

Regarded as the first exponent of video art in Turkey, Nil Yalter’s artistic practice shows great diversity, ranging from abstract to figurative painting. Standing at the juncture between poetry, philosophy, and sociology, Yalter incorporates in her work interrelated themes such as gender politics, cultural identity, migration, and social class conflicts in the global world.

Nomad’s Tent (1973) is a work that situates itself between art and documentary. After her research on settlements around the city of Niğde, Turkey in 1973, Yalter created a yurt, a portable tent structure that originates from Central Asia. The yurt reflects the role of women in nomadic way of life. It points to the idea of a world in and of itself, reminiscent of the maternal womb, a unit that can give and retain heat thanks to the felt and sheepskin covering it. The close connection between Nomad’s Tent and Central Asian shamanism is reflected in the fact that every element in it is created according to a specific meaning, belief, and significance. Yalter’s video featured in the exhibition, recorded with a portapak camera, displays the first digital images during her installation at the Musée d’art Moderne de la Ville de Paris.

Živadinov:: Župančič::Turšič

One of the founders of New Slovenian Art, established in the 1980s, Dragan Živadinov has produced many pioneering works in the field of art. Živadinov, who became a candidate cosmonaut in 1998, founded a group whose main objective was to merge art and science. The group produces theoretical research, exhibitions, music, and theater in the field of “post-gravity art.”

In 1995, together with Miha Turšič and Dunja Župančič, Živadinov designed NOORDUNG::1995/2045, drawing inspiration from Herman Potočnik’s book The Problem of Space Travel. This theater project, which is defined as cosmokinetic action and will consist of 5 ‘repetitions’ that will spread over a period of 50 years, was staged for the first time on April 20, 1995 at 10:00 p.m. in Ljubljana with a crew of 14 actors and actresses. The first repeat performance took place on the same day and hour in the International Space Station in Star City, Russia. The project is a series of performances with no definite space, spread out in time, and which experiment with the abstract and futuristic forms created by the body in a gravity-free environment. The continuity of NOORDUNG::1995/2045 will be achieved by repeating it every ten years with the participation of the same artists on the same day and hour and in the same conditions. When an artist in the project dies, the role played by that artist will be represented in outer space, by a rhythm if it’s a man and by a melody if it’s a woman. In 2045, for the finale of the performance, high-resolution 3-D satellites will replace the faces of the artists who will likely no longer be alive. The exhibition features a
documentary-like art installation calling attention to the process to date of this immense interdisciplinary project.

COME AGAIN?

The video program *Come Again?* locates performance as an integral element of storytelling, as well as the practices and ways of living that go with it, which form the conceptual basis of the project *Neighbours*. *Come Again?* makes its point by conveying the narratives of all the stories it contains without the use of a verbal language. Bringing together 13 artists from diverse countries, the program draws the map of not only the notion of ‘being neighbors’ in terms of visual culture, but also the perpetual repetitions in everyday lives and how a body neighbors its own mind as well.

The video program attempts to analyze, through new relationships and collaborations developed parallel to the exhibition *Neighbours*, the reservoir of collective experiences to which the show refers: Is simultaneously experiencing an event enough to create collective memory and knowledge? How much do distances between events and people account for the diversity in ways of thinking and living? Without a verbal language, can the body bring expression closer to universality? With all the tension – that it perhaps creates in its thought – can a mind become dissociated from its body?

*Come Again?* seeks the traces of an intellectual and emotional togetherness that can be thought of independently from the proximity or distance between physical or geographical boundaries. It offers a fertile land to be shared both by one at a heartbeat’s distance, and one who wanders far away.

Language and Repetition

Prior to Islam, Arab poetry as an oral literary form was considered among the richest means of recording memory, social identity, and cultural heritage in the regions it dominated. As people spoke and wrote poetry, the exchange between what was seen and what could be said served as a key instrument in the communication and conservation of collective knowledge and memory – in other words, verbal language held utmost prominence. However, as the body traveled, as language transformed, as the eras progressed, the possibilities of expression also became flexible. Taking this transformation as a departure point, can we ask whether it is possible to track down – with the help of today’s various modes of thinking – the written and oral forms of narration in interaction with the geographies that are in the focus of *Neighbours*? *Come Again?* embarks on a search for the possible answers of this question by following the compass of the flexible and unlimited possibilities of performance without the use of a verbal language.
The Body and Performance

*Come Again?* also brings in its wake the relationship between mind and body, which is a locomotive of performance. It explores the struggle to remain within the boundaries of established social rules, the concern to transcend one’s mental boundaries, or the effort to comfort, which has become the absolute condition of our time. The troublesome distinction between what is in the subconscious and what is visible, the fear of becoming meaningless through an inexhaustible quest for serenity, the obsession to justify, or banality’s dry sense of humor all leave the limitations of juxtapositions to confront the infiniteness in expression; in this video program, all the human states common to everyone envelop a single body. And life as a shared living space provides the blood circulation for this body. The works attempt to calculate the body on a timeless and placeless platform. The idea of a nomad, expressing one’s identity, memory, and cultural heritage through language by writing poetry or speaking, is instead expressed though the body. *Come Again?* finds its breath in the idea of an ability to express meaning through the body, so long as it exists. The surprising effect of the distance we establish with the one that is next to us, and with that which is inside us, or the intellectual and emotional proximity with that which is far beyond, probes at the points which performance can touch within the universal and individual contexts. In the stories, which progress synchronously with multiplicity and repetition, as in the expression “Come again?”, we watch these artists in a way that we wait for the continuation of a word that is not heard, not understood, or disjunct.

Cycle

*Come Again?* creates its own cycle through the accumulation of all the repetitions it incorporates; it takes a step toward its own repetition. The video program, which invites its viewer to a process of concurrent experience, emphasizes continuity and infinity through its 88-minute video cycle.

In her video *Sleep*, Lamira Joreige centers on the subconscious, the most complex area of the mind. With a visuality which keeps appearing and disappearing, we are not sure whether sleep points to a transient, peaceful dream or a nightmare full of tension. Mona Hatoum appears in the middle of a tense endeavor striving to preserve her individuality. While she struggles to prevent her mouth from being shut by a male hand she repeats the outcry “So much I want to say!” over and over again. The barrier which prevents her from being seen or heard is built on the artist’s very face.

Ana Čigon, who gives a much more overt answer to the attempt to expand the limits of expression, struggles to push back the wall right next to her with her incessant kicks and fists. As she expects to reach a different outcome by repeating the same ineffective movement over and over again, she winks at despair. In contrast, Nezaket Ekici, in her performance, first confines herself inside a plaster tomb and then, hammer in hand, strikes
for hours at the form around her which is reminiscent of a cocoon. With each blow Ekici promises herself a life; perhaps she divests herself of her mortality.

Quite the opposite of this attitude, Vesna Bukovec caresses the head of a plush animal she holds on her lap and tells it over and over again “It will be OK!”. Questioning the rationality of comforting an inanimate and silent object, the work examines the curious boundaries of optimism and tolerance. Another example of silent repetition is Sonia Balassanian’s women rhythmically sifting wool without saying a word. In this work, performances engendered by tradition and social order are placed under the microscope. A curbed inner sensitivity becomes visible through the emotionality triggered by the ceaseless act of sifting. In the first of three of Hamlet Hovsepyan’s early works from 1975, the figure who constantly scratches his back seems to be uncomfortable not just with the fabric he is wearing but with his condition as well. The gesture, which by being constantly renewed before the eyes of the viewer, signals a discomfort and unease, and aims to explore existence in a trivial style.

Gül İlğaz sews together two white curtains aflutter in front of a window. Through this act, which she performs while leaving herself outside the image, İlğaz closes the outside to the inside and vice versa. She prevents, though for a brief time, the curtains from laying bare the image by being drawn back to either side by the wind. Aslı Sungu challenges herself with a different kind of fastening task. Striving to button up a shirt whose buttons are on the back, the artist presents a work laden with humor, through the flaw and failure in this act of dressing. She treats of the body’s solitude and its sometimes futile effort with an apparent strangeness.

In her work, Burcu Yağcıoğlu fixes her hair with thick hair spray and creates a headscarf by camouflaging herself with a part of herself; she thus presents a choreography of the everyday act of getting dressed and readying oneself to go out in public. The work points to the fact that hair, which can be used in various ways as an accessory, can not be independent of its social and cultural codes. Another work by Hamlet Hovsepyan very closely approaches a person’s head lathering shampoo into his hair. Immediately afterward, he examines a male head and its short hair from a proximity that reflects it virtually as if it is a sharp surface. It seems that he aims to show a mind which, through its thoughts, draws itself back, pushes itself away from society. He points to a solitary individual who, as he grows distant, isolates himself from simultaneous experience. He thus draws one step nearer to his video of the thinking head which is presented in his other work in the program.

Hatice Karadağ strives to create a perfectly smooth impression on the fabric of her wedding gown by ironing it. But she does this while the gown is on her. The wedding gown and the act of ironing point to the states of beautification, sprucing up, and being admired which in this work are turned into responsibilities by which one has to abide. Sevdalina Kochevska shows a man and a woman who try to disturb each other’s balance by playing a hand game; Kochevska thus turns, in an amusing manner, gender conflict into a game per se. The hand
game, which is fun to watch, becomes deceitful through the awareness of the physical inconsistency of the female and male hands.

Younés Rahmoun’s performance is another work in which we perceive the entire body through hands alone. In this performance, Rahmoun repeats 99 times the word “Wahid” which is one of the 99 names of Allah and means “one,” “the unique.” Rahmoun’s effort, which looks like a ritual, a spiritual satisfaction, a state of contemplation, and a first step toward inner peace, is followed by Hamlet Hovsepyan’s Thinker, the artist’s third work in the series. Hovsepyan shows, in the sparest possible manner, the solitude of the individual left by himself sitting on a chair with arms crossed. The yawning of the thinker as the video progresses brings us a step closer to the work at the beginning of the program, Lamia Joreige’s Sleep.