

Hera Büyüktaşçıyan
On Stones and Palimpsests

19 September - 7 November 2020

*Gazing towards the concrete, uncanny horizons
 and the land where waters
 flow backwards
 My fingertips follow the line that consists of
 an infinite number of points*

...

How do landscapes (both territorial and cultural) shift as carriers of cyclical time? Can we translate volatile geographies into architectures of memory? These are amongst the concerns Hera Büyüktaşçıyan delves into in her exhibition ***On Stones and Palimpsests***, marking her second solo at the Gallery. Looking at territorial divisions and historical ruptures in different cities across time, she unravels these unstable spaces across a series of drawings, sculptures and video.

Buildings, stones, city maps, and objects are brought to life in Büyüktaşçıyan's work. She is interested in how our senses can connect to the personal and collective recollections of spaces we haven't encountered, spaces that bear witness to violent eradication. For her, the built environment, in its lines, cracks and tears, and embossed, fossilized forms, is akin to a living organism; it charts an archaeology of identity.

Her work is often focused on silenced histories, and their re-tracing within architectural memory. In acts of map-making and mark-making, she creates a materiality of space. Exploring notions of representation through the contradictory relationships between erasure and reconstruction, past and present, the imperceptible and the material, the artist evokes images that defy the very disappearance she is questioning. This encompasses the destruction of whole environments, communities and cultural heritage, which she reconstitutes in architectural forms, topographic drawings and aerial views.

Büyüktaşçıyan digs into the depths of terrestrial imagination by unearthing different historical narratives and timelines. A case in point is the sculptural installation ***Reveries of an Underground Forest***, placed at the heart of the gallery space, which was first shown at the 2019 Toronto Biennale. Referencing the forests and riverbeds of the indigenous peoples that were destroyed and forgotten in the construction of the city of Toronto in the early 1800s, the work alludes to the lumber used by migrant workers to support urban infrastructure. Like amputated tree stumps, these foundations stand in columns of rolled (and unraveling) industrial carpets, parts of their epigraphic surfaces relaying intricate cartographies of land and urbanity. Their designs are composed from Indigenous and Punjabi (Phulkari) textile patterns and aerial city maps, accentuating the artist's interest in other contested lands across time. The pillars are symbolic witnesses of the past and the present resurfacing from the ground; their imprinted forms occupy a space before language – part musical annotation, coded symbols of collective loss, part unbounded geographies situated between place and displacement.

The artist's link to Punjab's cultural history is further brought out in her video ***Infinite Nectar****, in which Büyüktaşçıyan traces various Sikh heritage buildings that were abandoned during the 1947 Partition between Indian and Pakistani Punjab; spaces that bear the imprints of adversity, power shifts and urban transformations over time. Through the layered histories and conflicts of the Punjab region, she explores the reconfiguration

* The piece has been produced as a part of the Lahore Biennial 2020 in curatorial collaboration with Hajra Haider Karrar.

of territory and how it impacts the sociopolitical realm. In poetic vignettes that mirror the lost and found elements of space, she brings the voice of the exiled queen Maharani Jind Kaur back to the city in which she couldn't die, through a tactile yet marble hand. The artist's voice casts a ghostly presence. It becomes the channel of an ethereal existence, an alienated past, the sound of an artefact that creates as it destroys. Fingers dig into the terrain, feeling fissures and filling gaps with mosaic-like stones placed in moving paths to form rivers or the flow of time. Here, Büyüktaşçıyan's reading is topographic, her vision a palimpsest, and her vocalization a form of lithic verse.

Linking contemporary and prehistoric timelines, *Lithic Verses* is a series of drawings that incorporate archival photographs from archaeological excavations of Pergamon, the pre-Hellenistic city that was destroyed, raided and rebuilt many times across history. In this exploration between power and architecture, scale and representation, the artist references how the German archaeologists employed the local villagers as a source of measurement, their existence invisible, yet evoked in architectural fragments. Büyüktaşçıyan expands the archive using paper cutouts to trace barely visible outlines in graphite frottage against white backdrops.

Throughout the artist's work, imprints of time and space are uncanny, re-formed and abstracted in suspension, emblematic of both solid presence and near-absence. In her language of material forms, she challenges monochrome readings and voices histories of trauma through cracks and unseen layers. In this hyper-representation of objecthood, stones and palimpsests become tectonic images that speak.

Artist Biography

Hera Büyüktaşçıyan was born in Istanbul in 1984, and graduated from Marmara University, Faculty of Fine Arts, Painting department in 2006. She lives and works in Istanbul, Turkey.

Selected exhibitions include: *LB02: between the sun and the moon*, Lahore Biennale, Lahore, Pakistan (2020); *Every Step in the Right Direction*, Singapore Biennale, National Gallery, Singapore (2019); *The Shoreline Dilemma*, Toronto Biennial of Art, Toronto, Canada (2019); *On Threads and Frequencies*, GIGANTISME, Dunkirk, France (2019); *Neither on the Ground, nor in the Sky*, Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen (ifa) Gallery, Berlin, Germany (2019); *Planetary Planning*, Dhaka Art Summit, Dhaka, Bangladesh (2018); *Doublethink: Double vision*, Pera Museum, Istanbul, Turkey (2017); *Write Injuries on Sand and Kindness in Marble*, Green Art Gallery, Dubai, UAE (2017) (solo); *Still (the) Barbarians*, EVA International - Ireland's Biennial, Limerick, Ireland (2016); *Saltwater*, Istanbul Biennial, Istanbul, Turkey (2015); *Armenity*, Armenian Pavillion, 56th Venice Biennale, Venice, Italy (2015).