

Tuğçe Arslan 26.3.2020

Contactless Contacts

Nezaket Ekici “Monday to Sunday”

Instagram Video Flashmob 2020

After the Corona crisis, which started in Wuhan, China in December 2019 and turned into a global epidemic in a short time, some of us are trapped in our homes, our safest shelters. Initially, we could not adapt to this confinement, but later, we forgot the bad images of the epidemic and began to feel that this brought us to ourselves. We have started to discover the spirit of our house, which has been forgotten, and its wounds that we constantly ignore or postpone, its shortcomings, even parts of our house which we have not noticed before, and the newly sprouting flowers.

Being involved in the global world through social media is actually a reality that encompasses all of us in recent years. For a very long time, many of us have been touching our loved ones, the places we love, our curiosities and dreams with a screen. Contact is no longer just a skin pressure for us, and we are already used to this new form of contact for years. Now, thanks to this social isolation we are in, we have begun to desire the reality of the skin contact again that we forgot a long time ago. Unfortunately, in the coming days, we must remain closed for some time to these valuable contacts that this menacing little green beast reminds us of. Nowadays, we are obliged to use the "contactless contact" of our age, which connects us, for more essential purposes.

These personal screens, which can offer very important subjects for their buyers, from the business world to educational life, culture and art practices, have turned into a platform where artists can transfer their productions to art lovers in the process of social isolation. Performance artist Nezaket Ekici who is recognized in Turkey and internationally also continues to maintain creativity and convey her art during this quarantine period through Instagram, a widely used media.

Her performance “Monday to Sunday” that started on Monday March 23, will continue until Sunday March 29, between these dates, it starts every day at 11:00 according to Germany's local time and lasts for 1 hour. First of all, Ekici combines the possibility of live broadcasting provided by the Instagram with the concept of performance art as a live art.

Every day, the artist gets in front of her phone's front camera at her husband's house in Stuttgart, at 11:00 am local time in Germany. Firstly, the artist shows to the video participants at each beginning an analog clock to remind them of their time. Then, in this performance, which is completely silent in terms of any speech or musical sound, the artist, wears her own personal headset, starts dancing as she feels. And invites the audience to participate in this dance for 1 hour with their own performances. The reason why the artist performs her own dance figures completely with her own personal music and without any sound is, that audience can reveal their own unique movements without being interrupted by any stimulus. Ekici who is calling a certain audience to this dance at the same time every day takes the references of her dance from her own experiences and asks the audience to create a chain of motion with their subjectivity. The aim of this dance is not to look beautiful or aesthetic, it is performed instinctively rather than aesthetics of dance for Ekici who says "everyone can dance at the end". However, Ekici's body discipline has an important place in this project, it is important to hold this meeting regularly for 1 hour every day. Ekici has also planned this 'visual' meeting as a spiritual relief that can make a good contribution to the quarantine process we are in, besides the body discipline. These days when we are physically trapped in our own spaces, Ekici thought of visual socialization and dancing together as a good way to calm down a little.

The name of the "Monday to Sunday Instagram Video Flashmob" performance is inspired by "Flash Mob" events that were very popular years ago and Ekici also participated frequently to this events. Flash Mob is a social activity where a group of people who do not know each other perform a determined task at a determined place and time by communicating through social networks such as social media or e-mail. With her "Monday to Sunday Instagram Video Flashmob" performance, Ekici gives an appointment every day at the same place and time to people she contacts through social media. The purpose of this appointment is for everyone to dance as they wish, for 1 hour, with their own experience, from where they have mastered or as far as they know.

The conceptual dimension of this dance establishes a relationship between the subjective experiences of Ekici's early youth and today's pandemic crisis. Ekici, who studied art history and art pedagogy at the Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich and also studied sculpture in Akademie der Bildenden Künste, says that she always wants to do performance art and strives for many years in her interviews. And also in various interviews, she tells a disco dance story for her first personal performance. Although she has been in Germany and her family is open-minded, she grew up in a

conservative environment and therefore it was very difficult for the artist to go to the disco and dance at the time, because of social life was directed by this conservative environment. She says that she went to disco as barely when she at the 16 or 17 and she noticed she can dance as she desires and show off her body as she wishes. According to artist, this is a serious audacity and her first performance most likely was this dance. Ekici discovered that to be watched by people around and dancing with them is great. Ekici performed this dance performance for the second time, in 2019 at DAS ARTY, Schau Fenster, Raum für Kunst in Berlin with the “Wellspring” project. In the “Wellspring” performance, which lasts for 5 hours and this time the music is spread everywhere, the artist, who dances on her own. She kept the audience out for the first 4 hours and invited to dance with her in the room during the 5th hour. Dance is important for Ekici, it is always an activity she loves, but her dance does not fit certain patterns, rhythms or methods, she exceed these determinants. In this context, the “Wellspring” performance is also based on the first disco dance, it is a practice that visualizes the daring young woman she was in disco back in Duisburg.

The reflexive dance figures in the performance "Monday to Sunday" bring to mind her first disco experience and the first social dance of this 16-17 year old woman with her own desire. But the meaning of this dance is a little deeper. This dance is connected to a 'social isolation' in all respects. The conservative environment, where the artist grew up in Germany, it was obviously a restrictive place in terms of the women to using their own bodies as they wish. Therefore, the freedom of a woman to exhibit herself / her body in a public manner in a public space is already banned with a social isolation, created for women. In the quarantine days, which now obliges all bodies to isolate without discriminating gender, Ekici attaches her body to a social environment again and again with her own desires and bravely through Instagram.

The deep-root aim of Ekici's artistic practices, which she has practiced in many countries and in different cultures throughout her performance life, has been to bring people closer together with bodies. She adds every culture she meets to her own body and transfers in each performance the elements of the a culture to another culture. Thus, she brings different cultures together. The artist's goal of bringing the cultures together was observed in the Marina Abramovic Akış/Flux Exhibition the current. Within the scope of the Marina Abramovic Akış/Flux Exhibition, from Turkey and from abroad many performance artists were called to participate in the exhibition process with their own practices. Ekici, who was a student of Abramovic, in HBK Braunschweig for 4 years, was among the performers. Ekici, participated to Marina Abramovic Akış/Flux Exhibition, with the “Work in

Progress-Personal Map” performance, which is a mapping of her own performances. Previously, she had performed this performance in 2008 that this was a personal map of her performances until 2008. This time she extended the history of the practice from 1998 to the present day. Ekici, in her “Work in Progress-Personal Map” performance, showed her knowledge about the conceptual infrastructure of her practices while she spoke about continents and countries. During her performance she talked about the sociality and culture of the proportion in each country she went to; her experiences and how these experiences led her art. Considering all this mapping process and the artist's experiences in different cultures, it can be said that the “Monday to Sunday” performance has a similar traveling feature.

Ekici, who dances with her own music in the "Monday to Sunday” performance, actually also gives place for small ethnic figures in the dance she performs. Numerous ethnic figures, from the Spanish flamenco to the lezginka of the Caucasus, from the Aegean zeybek, to the romen dance of the Romanian people, to the oriental of the East, to the azontos of Ghana, etc., reveal themselves in this performance in various formats. All these figures, with the "Monday to Sunday", performance are now reaching the geographies Ekici has previously reached with the physical presence of her body with a media tool. All of this in her muscular memory in the artist's body. With an example; her “Imagine” performance in 2012 was shaped as a result of a flamenco ritual she saw during her visit to Spain. In this performance, which reveals its motion flow with completely flamenco elements, it transformed the flamenco elements into its own concept. Ekici, who has created a place for every sociality and culture that she has reached in her art, tries to make these societies and cultures come into contact with each other and establish a relationship between them.

Ekici's art is established to produce concepts as opposed to concepts that separate societies and people. With these figures in “Monday to Sunday”, referring to the cultures that own them dances, she is trying to convince us of the absurdity of the variables that separate people these days. Because the consequences of this disease, the whole world suffers from without knowing the limits, causing the same pain for all humanity. In addition, it is conveying the message that we are all in the same position and face the same struggle in this epidemic, without boundary concepts such as language, religion, ethnicity, gender or class. For this reason, the "Monday-Sunday" performance appears as a global dance in this global retreat.

