

Kazıklıköy or the Golden Times of Bosphorus

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"In today's mode of production, first and tangible success is primarily taken into account in the face of nature as well as in society."

Friedrich Engels

"Science has been crystal clear for more than 30 years. How dare you still turn away and say that you've done enough while your policies and solutions are nowhere to go."

Greta Thunberg

The Bosphorus is the line uniting, or dividing the Black Sea and Marmara, and Asia and Europe. It is told to us the shores of the Bosphorus, subject to the writings of many travelers, authors and historians had until recently preserved its architectural identity. Who had given us this information? Edmondo de Amicis, Mrs. Pardoe, Theophile Gautier, Lamartine and many others. However, especially after 1980's, as a result of migration, both the population increased and the city expanded towards the sea, losing its natural boundaries. The material used for filling the sea was the excavation of buildings demolished in other parts of the city. What was gained by filling the sea? With her exhibition "Kazıklıköy", Beste Kopuz takes us to a new district of Istanbul both well known and not known at all and shows us the outcomes. There is use in exploring the Bosphorus more closely before reviewing the history of this district.

In Greek mythology, an important quality of Zeus, the lightning bolt hurling god of all people, was his womanizing. Ancient Greek gods were anthropomorphic and stories about them are laden with details on humanity and his daily life. Zeus assumes different identities to evade Hera, his sister and also wife, the protector of women and marriages. The particular instance of Zeus' womanizing related to our topic is his love for Io. Zeus falls in love with Io, the granddaughter of Oceanus and daughter of Inachus, and they copulate. When Hera learns of the relationship, a frightened Zeus takes the form of a cloud and turns Io into an ox. The unrelenting Hera tails Io with a fly and Io, desperately trying to escape from the fly, strikes the earth with such fury that the ground breaks into two and forms a strait, the Bosphorus. Thus, Bosphorus is composed of Bos (Ox) and Poros (Strait). The strait, formed out of a love story, becomes a scene of love and fun. This unparalleled story is told by Herodotus, Plinius and Dionysius through generations. The beautiful story lives in the works of Orhan Pamuk and many authors of the 20th century. Yet, this beauty is now over.

So what happened to the Bosphorus within time? How was it destroyed? Which pieces remained? A long time has passed since the first filling in the 17th century and the Bosphorus was filled many times in the 20th century. This trend continued from the

Emirgan-Sarıyer line to the Üsküdar-Harem line to the Çayırbaşı-Sarıyer sector to the direction of Kuruçeşme-Arnavutkoy. These were followed by the fillings on the Telli Baba Cove, İstinye-Tarabya coves and the village of Garipçe. The fillings in recent history took place between 1956 and 2011.

The fillings devastate the city's ecosystem. Beste Kopuz' view is quite important in this context. Viewers are shown the topography of the 35th districts alongside their archival images. Viewers will think that in place of the areas in the archival images now stand skyscrapers and shopping malls. Because these districts were sacrificed to the rent economy after privatization. While we try to walk in narrow spaces on either side of the Bosphorus we realize that as the sea was filled and new urban areas were created a tragedy was caused. All the buildings, the environmental planning and lives destroyed will be visible to us through the research and application of Beste Kopuz.

Beste Kopuz's work shows the spectator through a hybrid perspective of documentary and interpretation how the shores of Istanbul were destroyed because of faulty planning and urban works. The intensive building activity and its continual, in fact, has caused severe pressure to the city and a shortage of societal and physical infrastructure. While viewing the geographical structures of the neighborhoods and archival images the spectator will sense how uncontrolled urbanization and urban transformation affect the shores and increase the pressure for urbanization. With this interactive installation the artist showcases a calamity that is cloaked as life continues because the object is clearer from a distance and from the distance you will see how the strait became narrower and the boundaries of the new district of Istanbul called Kazıklıköy.

Beste Kopuz' black and white large scale photographs makes the viewers feel the rapid expansion and the opening of the shores to housing and industry which cause the urban invasion. Once upon a time Istanbul's shores had a history and as these were put under pressure they were covered with fillings, completely devoid of any planning and with the sole purpose of creating rent. As you look closely at these pictures you will see Istanbul submerged. The unclear images under water reference the fillings, the supposed solution to problems regarding the shores. As these unshapely pieces assume the role of fillings towards the bottom of the sea, one must keep in mind that meeting places, coastal roads and areas where you exercise or walk stand above them.

The shores of the strait could not be protected in their natural form and the fillings were motivated by economic and political rent sought by city councils, people and commercial enterprises. However, as the increasing difficulty of navigating through the strait demonstrates, faulty planning causes problems for the people. The difference between the plans and outcomes of these projects can be understood in the open compositions of the artist's photographs: the gap between what is demanded and what is realized is massive. The non-representative, as in works that do not seem to be referencing the real world, the difference between the promised and reality can be clearly seen. Beste Kopuz visualizes for us how history is invaded to accommodate the political and economic rents of governments, and not to accommodate humanity. At this point there is no consideration of public welfare; the easily visible coastal history of Istanbul where we could indulge in

nostalgia disappears behind a curtain of mystery. There is an image behind it, but we cannot see it, just like the coast protection acts that are never enforced although they exist.

Kazıklıköy is a district of such a dystopia. Humanity interfered with nature many times during its quest for civilization. Humans who cut down trees and grazed animals in their pastures were of course not stupid; they cut down trees to build ships or flatten the land for agriculture. However, what Beste Kopuz shows us is the long term destruction caused by short sighted greed of humankind. In the images we perceive as dreams when we look at the photographs there are no natural resources or animals. Because Kazıklıköy, and the filling that caused this district, was not made for the cycle of life. There is no fact that is beneficial for life and the destruction it causes is great. The governments that built Kazıklıköy did not fulfill their promises, they lied. The tragedy is that the people demanded this false promise. However, lack of clarity in the images show those who profited from these are who excavated and applied the fillings. Thus, in fact, memories can be traced in the excavations of buildings but while the ideal is a clear presentation of the memories we can only trace them.

With the exhibition "Kazıklıköy", Beste Kopuz skillfully visualizes how non-conscious societies are unable to react to environmental disasters. This is the reason, why we see excavation images in a black and white form instead of landscapes that should be de facto seen as a result of a beneficial application to humanity. The lack of color indicates that problems can only be explained by these two colors. Instead of parks, recreation areas and gardens reflecting the quality of life, vague images of the filling application in the dystopic concrete city are striking. But ironically, perhaps, the reason for the lack of human presence in images is that the public is satisfied with it. They like to spend time on concrete rather than on the natural view of the coast.

Ecological changes threaten not only human life but also many vital patterns including deep sea creatures. Excavation materials carry the risk of collapse over time. Kopuz implies that the collapse, while reporting to us that materials of excavations are mixing in water. The residents of Kazıklıköy are destroying the environment. While trying to reach a better life, the desires they demanded and the economic and political rent that benefited from this generated this landscape. Would you like to have a place in this dystopic city? Life in Kazıklıköy is really something!