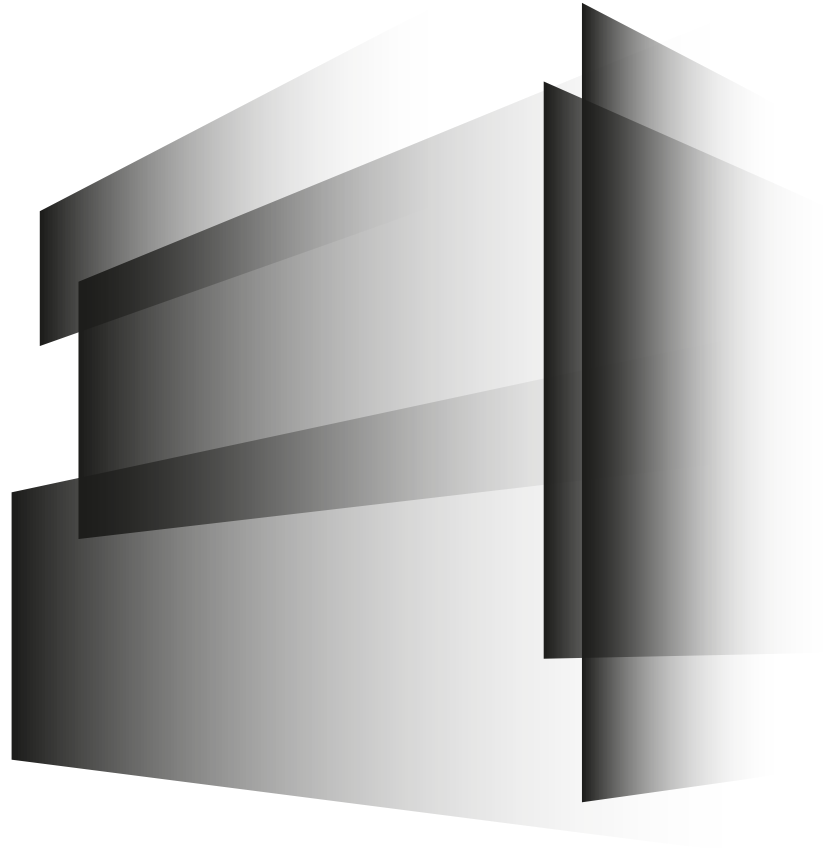


BULLETIN #19

Droste Effect

june 2019



Flow Out

Collective Çukurcuma
+ Istanbul Queer Art Collective
+ Funa Ye

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: Collective Çukurcuma

+ Istanbul Queer Art Collective

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Abstract

Collective Çukurcuma (Naz Cuguoğlu & Mine Kaplangı) included video works of Funa Ye and the Istanbul Queer Art Collective (Tuna Erdem & Seda Ergul) as part of the *FLOW OUT* exhibition, hosted by Bilsart (Istanbul) and held between May 29 and June 30, 2019. The program is based on the common practice of thinking, expressing and writing collectively about the present. As co-authors, they continued to write the collective essay through email exchanges—no one is the owner of the piece, whereas each of them is a participant. *FLOW OUT* does not belong to a place, but it refers to contemporaneity, addressing the problem of authorship in a collaboration, and experimenting with the idea of thinking and producing together.

Today a tulip was born in my garden in San Francisco, and I have been thinking about herbalist, writer, and thinker Stephen Harrod Buhner. He talks about Plant Intelligence and says cooperation is functional in Earth's ecosystem.¹ I am interested in the ways in which we work and think together. I have also been thinking about Glissant's *Poetics of Relation*. He says that roots are poisonous; he rather suggests errantry and finding one's belonging in those relations that we form.² How do we harvest our garden collectively?

¹ Buhner, S.H. (2014). *Plant Intelligence and the Imaginal Realm: Beyond the Doors of Perception into the Dreaming of Earth*. Inner Traditions/Bear & Co. To learn more, watch the conversation between Leslie Shows and Ross Simonini that took place at Kadist, San Francisco on Wed, February 27, 2019: vimeo.com/331130166.

² Glissant, Édouard (1997). *Errantry, Exile*. *Poetics of Relation*, trans. Betsy Wing. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press.



Istanbul Queer Art Collective (Tuna Erdem & Seda Ergul), *Green Knight A Dragaptation* (2017). Photo by Eda Sancakdar.

In my mind, I keep her garden as a cellar door, opens up when she needs it, closes when she hides in it. Read out loud if you feel like you don't understand, scream out loud when you feel like they stand far away. Although we are distant from the blooming tulips, we are always in a form of touching, always ready to slip into the wormhole. If Eleanor does it, then I will do it willingly and valiantly.³ They are the only ones that I could share the dazzling existences of other universes and their otherworldly beings. And oh, they take it charmingly.

³ *Contact* (1997), directed by Robert Zemeckis. After years of searching, Dr. Ellie Arroway (Jodie Foster) finds conclusive radio proof of extraterrestrial intelligence, sending plans for a mysterious machine.



The garden in San Francisco (2019). Photo by Naz Cuguoğlu.

I have become very interested in the double meaning of «collaborator», ever since I read about Robert Rauschenberg's *Erased de Kooning Drawing* of 1953, in a book that Cüneyt lent me. (1) A person who works jointly on an activity or project. (2) A person who cooperates traitorously.⁴ I never tended any gardens until I came to London, and now I am amazed at my inability to distinguish between the weed to be plucked and the plant that I am to look after. Should I be collaborating with the weed or the plant? There is inherent violence in growing things and looking after a communal garden. Collaboration is the fellowship of those who do not lose the joy because of this, those who are not squeamish.

Ziad bought red and white tulips from the Columbia Road Market. His plans to plant them in the garden were vetoed by the three Turks he is living with, a longtime boyfriend and us, longtime temporary housemates. Yet, nothing can extinguish his cheerful enthusiasm, so he planted the tulips in the park behind the house. In one of the days to come, while walking the dogs in the park, I will see them come into leaf. I am reading *White Teeth* for the second time and thinking how different I am from Joyce Chalfen, a horticulturist mother who believes that she can grow and shape children as she grows plants, yet fails miserably, and her love proves to be poisonous.⁵ I, on the other hand, believe John Cage; he says, «Love is leaving space around a loved one».⁶ But I must have left more than enough space, withdrawn my love to the verge of carelessness so much so that I could never succeed in growing a single plant.

When nature-in-freedom meets feast. *Roses in Broth* is one of my favorites from *The Futurist Cookbook* by Filippo Tommaso Marinetti and Fillia.⁷ Revolution has surely started in the kitchen, and cooking will always be our nurturing collaboration. And we'll die while eating together around a long table, in a diverse *Grande Bouffe*.⁸ I'm

⁴ Ricco, John Paul (2014). *The Decision Between Us: Art and Ethics in the Time of Scenes*. The University of Chicago Press.

⁵ Smith, Zadie (2001). *White Teeth*. New York: Vintage.

⁶ Cage, J. (1961). In-determinacy. *Silence: Lectures and Writings*. Middletown: Wesleyan University Press.

⁷ Marinetti, F.T., and Fillia (2014). *The Futurist Cookbook*. Berlin: Sternberg Press. In 1932, Marinetti and his collaborator Fillia published a manifesto-as-culinary-innovation: replete with experimental recipes (Marinetti, the founder of Futurism, is known to have ranted about the social dangers of pasta eating) the book is a multilayered exploration of cultural metabolisms, with the dining table as its centerpiece, of course.

⁸ *La Grande Bouffe* (1973), directed by Marco Ferreri. A group of men go to a villa in the French countryside where they resolve to eat themselves to death.

always triggered by wondering how that *thing* tastes. What happens when you boil the tulips, cut the roses, make a paste, and taste it after you bite a wild mushroom? How can I love something so deeply that is so rightful in its nature, but explore it only with the razor of an oral record?

I still cannot stop thinking about the ways that we belong or don't belong. Whether harvesting the garden, even collectively, is a violent act. In his song *Into the Red*, James Blake says, «She is no traitor». My question is: Is she though, seriously? In her book *Argonauts*, Maggie Nelson solves the problem with what she calls *personalizing the public*: «But the thing is you can't really feel your labia lips», she writes—a professor who blushes at the beginning of her classes.⁹ My question is: Can showing our vulnerabilities be the solution or not? I am not talking about the «performance of the intimacy» as Nelson calls it in her book, instead I am referring to the intimacy in its fullness; not its performance or some kind of evil twin in any imaginable universe, but its essence—a supernova?

Everything I seem to have found interesting about *Argonauts* has to do with Maggie Nelson's partner Harry Dodge, and even then, I kept on wishing I were hearing it all from the horse's mouth. At least, I have learned not to feel «weird» that I can actually feel my labia lips, nor feel enraged when people don't believe that I can. Even when it is stripped from all its performative aspects, doesn't the showing of vulnerability still have something to do with exhibitionism? Especially, when it is done in the name of intimacy? Especially, when it is presented as a/the solution? A supernova is the perfect orgasm, but as the poet says, «This is the way the world ends: not with a bang but a whimper».¹⁰ We have so many dear curator friends that enable the best in us. One of them, Xavier de Sousa, has a performance called *Post*, where he becomes the perfect host: he cooks for the audience, then invites them to

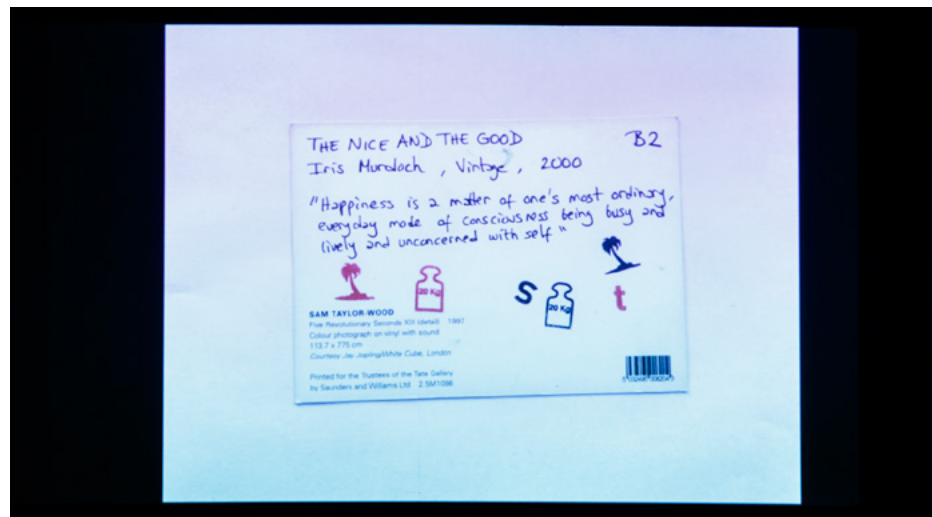
⁹ Nelson, M. (2015). *Argonauts*. Minneapolis: Graywolf Press.

¹⁰ Eliot, T.S. (1925). *The Hollow Men. Poems: 1909-1925*. London: Faber and Gwyer.

sit at the table on stage, gives them question cards to facilitate debate, and by the end he has relegated to the dark background, having left the entire stage to the «spectators».¹¹ So yes, cooking together, eating together around a table are to me blissful images of collectivity. Behind them lies the violence of tending the garden and the violence inherent in cooking: chopping and crushing at the very least. Not to mention the many forms of institutionalized violence inherent in the feast when it is not vegan. I hope «the list of things I can live without grows longer».

¹¹ The performance titled *POST* (2015) by artist Xavier de Sousa is an exploration of what it means to be a migrant, of constantly inhabiting a «national limbo» and failing to adhere to border- and identity-defining norms. vimeo.com/190589379

Choosing the right stones, placing them in the right order... Lately, I have been thinking a lot about the ubiquity of «accumulation», and how it defeats «repetition» rightfully when it comes to unspeakable sides of these thought and text experiments.



Istanbul Queer Art Collective, *Psychic Bibliophiles* (2017), opening performance of the exhibition *House of Wisdom Amsterdam* at Framer Framed, Amsterdam. Photo by Eva Broekema. www.istanbulqueerartcollective.co.uk/psychic-bibliophiles

I cook almost every day, and while cooking I frequently find myself in the middle of counting something. 17, 18, 19... The first time it happened, I suspiciously looked at the onion I was working on and counted the slices. Voilà! It turned out that, at the background, without knowing, I had been counting the movements of the knife. Slices of peppers, slices of tomatoes, slices of mushrooms. And whenever I cut a lemon in two, I remember Boysan.¹² The first time it happened I wondered why that might be, but a heavy reluctance stopped me from going further. I got used to it. When the time came that I found myself ready to give it a thought, slices of associations, slices of memories, slices of time came together. Familiar words lined up in sentences that were not so familiar to me. I am always surprised at the mysterious ways that our mind works. And I am not sure if I wrote this out of a desire for exhibitionism.

We love sentences that you happen to hear as you pass by, sentences out of context, without a subject. A few days ago I heard the phrase: «in a pervert world». It took me 10 minutes to realize what had actually been said, which was: «in a perfect world». To me, a perfect world would be a pervert world, embracing all perversions including exhibitionism. Yesterday, while reading about the artist Bojana Barltrop, we happened upon these words: «listen to Voltaire who, in precarious and tumultuous times similar to those in which we live today, recommended to everyone: just cultivate your garden». ¹³ But I would rather not listen to Voltaire, today. I would rather think of Derek Jarman's garden, which we recently visited—a garden that is less about cultivation and more about placing the stones in some order or another. And I would rather try to determine how much of me was created by the shock of reading his book *At Our Own Risk*.¹⁴ The thing is, every work of art—any work—is created by at least 10 people and each person is created by at least a million others. Everything is utterly collective, radically collaborative.

¹² Late LGBTI activist Boysan Yakar.

¹³ Bojana Barltrop (born Bojana Jovanovic in 1949 in Skopje, Macedonia; also known as Bojana Komadina) is an artist and photographer. Her process-based body of work investigates the relationship between desire and politics through the lenses of the performative body and the architectural space.

¹⁴ Jarman, D. (1992). *At Your Own Risk: A Saint's Testament*. Woodstock, NY: The Overlook Press.

I am at the Dresden airport reading your notes and trying to think about my distant garden. I was here for a workshop on a private collection that would soon be open to the public; we were called to question it with smart ideas and maybe to justify it.¹⁵ After a week of workshops, conversations, and socializing with «art people», what I felt was mere exhaustion. My group asked the question: What can we learn from the gardens for our archives? Nobody seemed as frustrated about the lack of women artists and people of color in a project titled «whole life» as much as I did. When we visited the botanical garden, the curator showed us a tree that was cut because they did not have the documentation that they fancied for it. It could have been there another 100 years, the curator told us. The botanical garden functions on the ideas of control, authority, and purity—it does not allow cross-breedings, interactions. The curator is the gatekeeper. She also showed us a model in which a dragonfly enters a plant, and gets trapped in it until it successfully fertilizes the plant. During this time, the plant feeds the dragonfly with honey. When the fertilization is over, the plant carefully opens up its doors and lets the dragonfly out. Collaboration with care for each other. When we are focused on who is going to read what during a public presentation after a week of collective thinking, can we say that we learned what we were supposed to learn from the garden? What happens to the one who believes that «everything is collective» when no one else seems to agree? Can the curator/artist let go of the «authorship», not only to impress the art world, but because she really *cares*? Or is flow a mere hope of those who still believe in the power of poetry, the fragmentation of ideas, and feeding each other brain juice? Would this conversation still flow if we only spoke with shiny ideas, but did not listen to each other—if we did not show our vulnerabilities and fragilities? The fact is that I have been vomiting all day today. My body simply ejaculating this whole week. Thesaurus suggests «came from» as a synonym to «ejaculate», and suggests «flow» as a synonym to «came from». My mom says: «Su yolunu bulur». Some others say: «Water seeks its own level».

¹⁵ For more information about the program: www.hkw.de/en/programm/projekte/2019/the_whole_life/das_ganze_leben.php.

I often have this kind of experience. When I teach students, I prefer to be a listener rather than a commentator. After all, the kind of knowledge that can be told and remembered is relatively unimportant. However, it is always precious, the time that we spent together, the joy of sharing different points of view collectively. Sometimes I feel I have harvested their ideas, but then I seem to forget it. But the seeds that were left in the soil may grow. I can imagine two happy things: one is when we work hard and harvest; the other is when, during a conversation, you realize someone can understand and appreciate your every thought. The tulip only blooms once.



Funa Ye, *Flying Dance* (2017), still from video.

This text is one of the major reasons why I'm doing what I'm doing at this moment and in this place precisely. Today I've watched the wonderful Oxana Timofeeva's talk on her book *The History of Animals: A Philosophy* with her orange hair and pink pants.¹⁶ The choice of colors is important, as well as the choice of complete observation. That's why we choose our color for the text, we intend to keep it «anonymous», yet we fail gloriously. And that's why when I watch Funa Ye's *Flying Dance* I can not stop thinking about her neon green hair when the video evolves into stories.¹⁷ And (maybe) that's why there will be no more structured-constructed-bordered titles like *curator*, *director*, or *writer* sooner or later. There will be other representations; in fluid beings where one can understand the vanity of the entire universe, clearly witness the end(s) of the tunnel which actually holds a billion different types of light, each uniquely formed for individuals—and yet will just become a holder of certain paragraphs. Digging is not only horizontal or vertical anymore, but one must dig deep, always. And, therefore, worms are the best, because the slimes are very attractive. And share everything you discover with the ones who will magically fuck with your brain out and force you to question everything you hold on to, twice.

¹⁶ Timofeeva, O. (2018). *The History of Animals: A Philosophy*, intr. Slavoj Žižek. London: Bloomsbury Academic; HPOD edition.

¹⁷ For more information about Funa Ye's *Flying Dance* video: funaye.com/2017/12/09/briefe-aus-dem-gefa%CC%88ngnis-flying-dance.

Collective Çukurcuma is a non-profit curatorial collective from Istanbul, Turkey. It was founded by Naz Cuguoğlu and Mine Kaplangı in 2015 and joined by Serhat Cacekli in 2017. The collective mainly focuses on collaborative thinking and creating processes through its reading group meetings and cross-national collaborative exhibitions, and highlights the potential of trans-disciplinary collaborations within contemporary art, process-based rather than outcome-based research with an experimental laboratory approach through their curatorial and editorial projects. Founded in response to a need for building a platform generating progressive dialogues and discussions on contemporary art, it aims to rebuild the nearly-forgotten «neighbor» experience among artists, curators, researchers and collectives through forming collaborations locally and internationally. Collective Çukurcuma organizes periodical seminars, exhibitions, talks and performances, and also with their reading group project the research processes of their exhibitions are shared with artists and other participants. The reading group's archive is open to all and can be accessed from the collective's website.

www.collectivecukurcuma.com

Istanbul Queer Art Collective (IQAC) was founded in 2012 with the aim of focusing on queer performance art and a flexible structure open to collaboration. The collective has since been engaged in the ongoing project of remaking Fluxus performances by «queerifying» them. IQAC firmly believes in what Jack Halberstam calls the «queer art of failure», and embraces what Renate Lorenz calls «radical drag». The collective, currently comprised of the two founding artists Tuna Erdem and Seda Ergul, is based in London. IQAC has performed and exhibited at various

art events around the world, among which are: House of Wisdom Exhibition in Berlin, Amsterdam, Istanbul and Nottingham; Queer Future Exhibition, If Independent Film Festival, and Mamut Art Fair in Istanbul; Athens Sound Acts Festival in Greece; Zürcher Theatre Spektakel and Les Belles de Nuit Festival in Switzerland; and Deep Trash, Queer Migrant Takeover and NSA: Queer Salon in London.

www.istanbulqueerartcollective.co.uk

Funa Ye was born in Kunming, China in 1986. She graduated with a BFA in Experimental Art from the Central Academy of Fine Arts, Beijing and an MFA from the Central Saint Martins College of Art, London. Her practice is concerned with the relationship between the realities of everyday life. She is interested in the perceived connection between authority and many areas of social life such as different power structures, ethnic groups, and the fictional space of propaganda for the concept of «perfection» in an ideological system and utopian landscape. Her work is politically charged, subtly engaged in pastiche as a satirizing style of propaganda. Her work has been the subject of solo exhibitions, including: *Curated Nail Residency*, MoCA Pavilion, Museum of Contemporary Art, Shanghai (2015); *People's Congress via their Nails-Exhibitionist's Curated Nails*, Art Museum of Nanjing University of the Arts, Nanjing, China; *Zha Golden Flowers—News from Nowhere*, V Art Center, Shanghai (2014); and *Galerie Pièce Unique*, Paris (2014). Her recent solo exhibitions took place at Longmont Art Projects in Hong Kong (*Selfiction*, 2018) and at Nottingham Contemporary (*From Hand to Hand*, 2018). She currently lives and teaches at the Department of Experimental Art of the Central Academy of Fine Arts in Beijing.



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