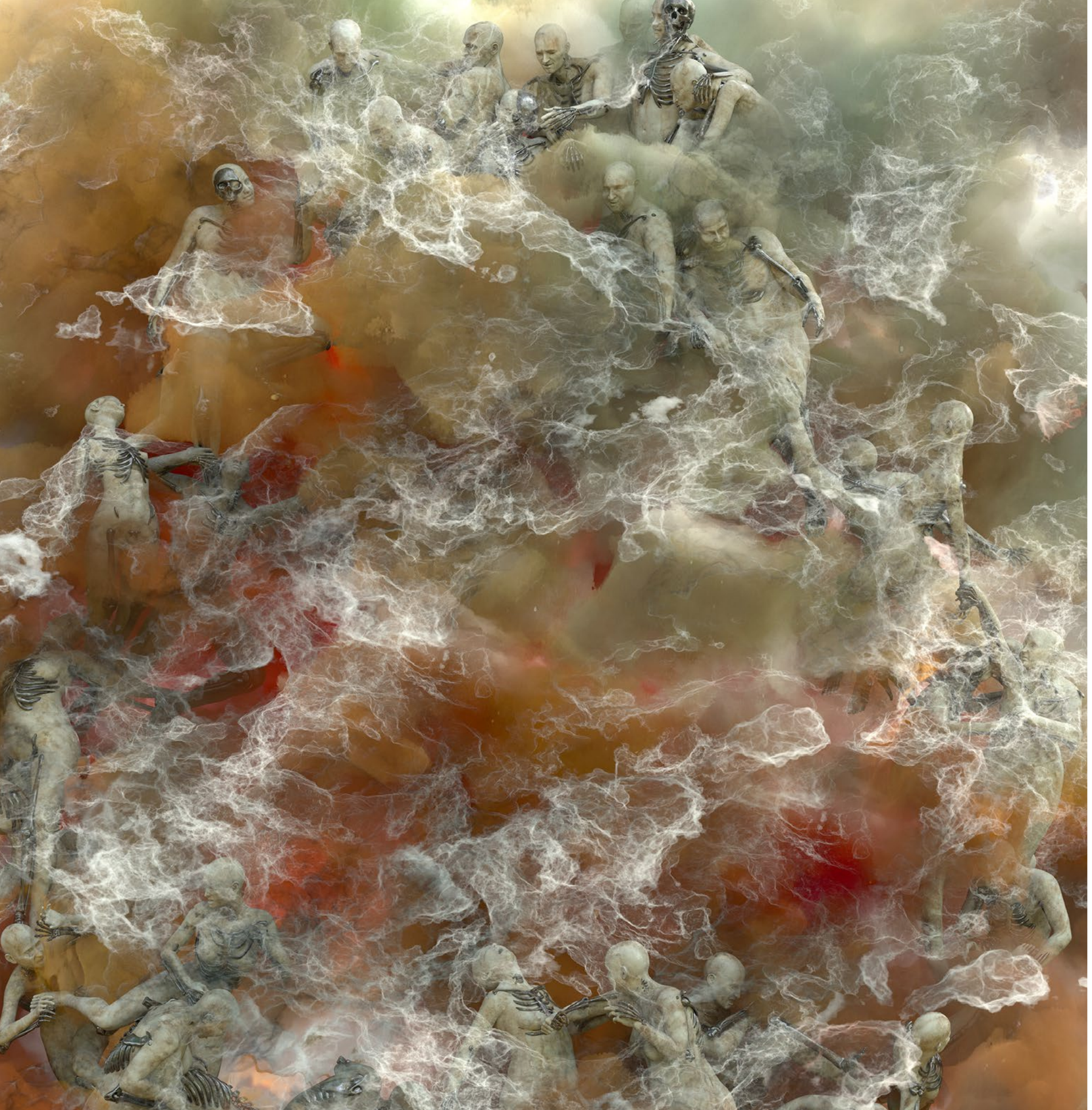
electric mannerism

ha:ar

Hande Şekerciler



electric mannerism

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JD MALAT GALLERY

electric mannerism

ha:ar ●● Hande Şekerciler

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The exhibition *Electric Mannerism* was previously presented under the title *Pulse: Electric Mannerism* in Milan and Venice with certain changes in the list of works.

Pulse: Electric Mannerism

1 August-26 August 2021
Scalo Lambrate | Milan

19 June-26 July 2021
Giudecca Art District | Venice

Curators: Chiara Braidotti & Filippo Lorenzin

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Planets That Expand Beyond Their Orbits and Glide Together

Burcu Dimili
in Conversation with ha:ar

Two resourceful planets spinning around their axis expeditiously, at each rotation discovering themselves and the universe, again and again, leaving unique and distinct traces while performing their ritual... These two planets expand beyond their orbits, to glide on a brand new, mutual course. This new course is not a starting point that disrupts their connection to the past, but rather an alternative route that accrues on top of the current narrative of creation, a new choreography, a piece of hybrid music, or an exciting space for play... With each spin, doors open to disparate discoveries and new excitements, and the orbits turn into a dance that keeps enriching each other towards immortality.

These two planets epitomise sculptor Hande Şekerciler and digital artist Arda Yalkın, the individual work of whom I have been following for some years. Since 2018, the two artists, who produce work in a wide array of disciplines, from traditional sculpture and painting to digital video, animation, 3D modelling, and contemporary new media aesthetics, have united their forces and been co-working under the name ha:ar. Not afraid to move out of their comfort zone and enjoy new experiences, they have also planted the seeds of the new media artists' residency programme Piksel to share the knowledge they gained through their expeditions.

There is an organic division of labour in their hybrid practice that brings together the techniques of digital and physical production. Their knowledge of and experience in different subjects fit into each other like a jigsaw puzzle. The works of the duo, whose practice has been in dialogue with the prevalent concepts of the pandemic, including the dichotomies of real/virtual, physical/online, almost form a bridge between the real world and the digital realm. The main themes of the works include blurring boundaries, demolishing stereotypes, bringing forms together over a single plane.

This conversation focuses on a variety of topics from the individual practices of Hande Şekerciler and Arda Yalkın to their shared work in ha:ar, from how digital transformation has been affecting their work to their NFT production and future projects.

Burcu Dimili is a writer and editor who lives and works in Istanbul. Her writing has been published in various print and online media outlets and publications, including *Based Istanbul*, *Istanbul Art News*, *Artful Living*, and *Vogue Turkey*.

How did the idea of producing together come about – how was ha:ar formed?

Arda Yalkın Hande and I have been together for a long time and shared our workspace for some years during which we helped each other out and talked extensively about our work. In March 2018, when I got accepted to a residency programme in New York, we decided to go there as a duo, to produce together. Later, we were accepted to other programmes around the USA, attended art fairs, and opened our first solo exhibition as a duo in New York and the second one in Ankara. We had solo exhibitions in Venice and Milan. Alongside these, we took the leading role in the establishment of the new media artists' residency programme Piksel, which we are still a part of. For the last three years, we continue to work both individually and as a duo.

Would it be possible to say that you moved out of your comfort zone to seek new experiences with ha:ar? From this perspective, can we consider it as your playground?

Hande Şekerciler For me, definitely yes! I believe that the experiences we gain through ha:ar provide new approaches to our individual practice.

Arda Yalkın I did not study art, so I have never followed a pre-planned, linear trajectory when learning about art and the history of art. Focusing first on motion design, then on new media art, I may even have been taking a reverse route. Contrarily, Hande has a vast knowledge of and comprehensive education on the subject. ha:ar for me is like a school. I keep expanding my knowledge in the history of art, being detail-oriented, and working tirelessly. As we share the technical responsibility, I have more time to focus on my own practice, I do not get distracted. In this context, it is also a new learning experience for me.

Your works have been exhibited in various countries including Turkey, USA, Spain, Italy, France, UK, Greece, and Russia. You live and work in Istanbul and New York. Specifically speaking of works produced in the digital realm, physical distances disappear and thus comes the ability to not belong anywhere and to connect with everywhere. How does this rootlessness, this condition of exhibiting works in various locations around the world affect ha:ar's practice?

Arda Yalkın We could not visit the USA for a long time because of the pandemic, but right before it had started, we were about to move to New York. The medium we choose allows us to move freely and you are right about the freedom of movement that it provides in terms of production. Yet, the fact that Hande is a sculptor requires a settled space. The production of ha:ar's physical works require a heavy manufacturing process. For this reason, we keep a studio in Istanbul and a bronze foundry which we have just opened. We have created a "hybrid" work method by bringing the digital and physical production techniques together. Through this method, wherever we are, we can carry out the planning of the works, as well as other preparatory stages, from our mobile studio. Our work studio, mocap system, and even our volumetric cameras can fit into our backpacks. What we accumulate when travelling, we produce in Istanbul. As you said, through the digital works, we are always in communication with the rest of the world.

Hande Şekerciler Ever since I was a kid, I have never felt a sense of belonging to a certain place. I still do not. That is why I am very content with the idea of constantly moving. Yet, as Arda mentioned, the work I do requires space, a large space indeed, and many materials and tools. To build a studio for all your needs is possible not only through the required financial means but also through the accumulation of many years. That accumulation is now rooted in Istanbul, the current production centre of our physical works. Still, thanks to the technological advancements, I can design my sculptures and create my drawings on my iPad. I have not used clay or paper in the design process of my works for such a long time. As we produce ha:ar's works only digitally, we can easily work when travelling. For instance, one of our favourite working spots is the Los Angeles–New York train, which gives us the chance to work for four days straight without leaving our laptops.

As you are two artists working across multiple disciplines, is there an organic division of labour in the work you co-created for ha:ar?

Arda Yalkın Yes, a division of labour was formed in time. We use methods such as generative art or artificial intelligence, both based on the aesthetics of the digital, to create works that are essentially based on the human body and its movement. As Hande is a sculptor, she is quite immersed in the human body and the materials. Naturally, she mostly creates the human figures, plans the compositions, and makes the drawings, and for our animated works, carries out the character animations and the mocap recordings. I deal with the lights, generative systems, simulations, renderings, any kind of research and development work, and the equipment. Of course, we decide the conceptual frameworks, the visual structures of the works, and write the accompanying texts together.

Hande Şekerciler An organic division of labour has indeed happened over time. In some of the works I personally created, I would have struggled a lot if not for Arda. Arda is one of those people who can easily apply his creative thinking to his work and life. He grasps situations in an extraordinary swiftness and can propose solutions to problematic points. As an artist, he has a keen eye and a very flexible perspective. When these assets come together with his knowledge of and prowess on the mediums he uses, to visually realise our shared dreams becomes quite easy.



Digitalisation, technological advancements, and our view of life, all of which were transformed through the pandemic, blurred the lines between the real world and digital space. What kind of impact did this state of intertwinement have on ha:ar's artistic practice, how was this reflected in the subtext of your work?

Arda Yalkın I am very interested in using the methods of digital production for physical works. Or doing the exact opposite, interpreting with digital techniques a medium that is experienced in the physical. I always aim for a unique way of doing this. For example, rather than using the synthesizer to simulate the sound of an acoustic piano, I prefer to use it to produce sounds that can never be obtained from an acoustic instrument. Of course, we are using technology to increase efficiency or reduce production costs but what we are really trying to pursue is to find new ways of using the conventional and ultra-contemporary mediums together. The underlying contradistinction in our works offers two separate world views: On one hand, a struggle against civilisation; on the other, a state of ecstasy peculiar to the people who have accepted themselves as they are.

Hande Şekerciler I do not see the mediums we use sitting on the fence between the real and virtual/digital. I find it more accurate to position this division as physical and not physical. Through the advancements in technology, the boundaries of what is real are constantly expanding. Coming back to our collective production, we founded ha:ar three years ago, before the pandemic, while exactly thinking about this permeability. The idea of bringing a practice like sculpture, which may usually adopt more traditional methods, requires a physical space both for its display and its creation, and new media, which can be freer and placeless in this sense, inspired us to go forward. Thus far, I believe we have created a viable "hybridisation" by bringing the two disciplines together. This approach affected even my own sculptures as well as my production processes and ways of displaying my work. An example of this could be our online exhibition taking place at JD Malat Gallery, the representative of my work in the UK, in 2020. The visitors of the exhibition could view my sculptures online or in the gallery space with a VR headset. With the AR version, they also had the chance to experience all the sculptures in whatever space they were in.

In ha:ar's series titled *Impossible Sculptures*, you almost push the gates of a utopian universe. On display is a world of sculptures that appear impossible to be physically built. Firstly, why is it physically not possible to exhibit these sculptures?

Arda Yalkın As the works in the series *Impossible Sculptures* are three-dimensional, they create the impression that they can also be produced with the means of the physical. But, due to the volumetric structures based on generative models that were used in the creation of these works, their production in the physical world is impossible. Of course, this impossibility can as well be interpreted from the perspective of our inaccessibility to the required resources. It is not feasible for us to work freely with such a colossal bulk of material under current circumstances.

The thin line that you like to navigate between the real and surreal, the physical and digital, reveals itself in the series *Impossible Sculptures*. Could you tell us more about the sources of inspiration behind the creation of the series?

Arda Yalkın We both adore the technical competency of Renaissance paintings. I have been also very fond of the Orthodox Christian iconography, a recurrent motif in my solo works. In the series *Impossible Sculptures*, we take our cue from the works of this period which we admire. In a way, we want to create an iconography of our own. At the centre of this series and our works in general is humanity's clash with civilisation and technology. Hande interpreted the forms which we see in the paintings and sculptures of the Renaissance period as gestures that can only be recognised when looked at very closely. In our works, we frequently refer to dichotomies like heaven/hell, profound/mundane that play a substantial role in Renaissance thought. In almost every painting, there is an emphasis on violence, and this contradicts the shiny, colourful, and alluring appearance of the work. The series became more intricate as we continued to work on it and each new detail acquired explicit or implicit historical, social, or political references. For example, the first work of the series, getting its inspiration from a moment we witnessed during Hillary Clinton's election campaign, focused on the idea of reproducing Leonardo da Vinci's *Last Supper*. If Jesus was resurrected, would you have a talk with him or would you take a selfie?

Lucid, another series you created as ha:ar, takes its name from the "lucid dreams" in which one is aware and conscious of dreaming. The works in this series, meandering between truth and fantasy, aim to offer an experience of the real within the digital. We encounter more



surreal forms and vague recollections from the dream world. Where did the series *Lucid* take its cue and what were the production processes preceding its formation?

Arda Yalkın *Lucid* refers to a technique frequently used by Rembrandt and his contemporaries through which they illuminated the portraits with a single artificial light source. We manipulate this lighting with generative liquid simulations. While doing this, we also subtly create space for certain contemporary gestures. Both of us believe that today as people form their own existence through social media, they instinctively seek a kind of self-iconography. There are a couple of reasons underlying this mode of behaviour: In some cases, we attribute an iconic value to the photographs we are fond of and keep on sharing them; in others, we repeat certain poses, a certain light, or patterns of colour. In Orthodox Christian iconography, it is believed that God creates the images through the hands of painters. The way that modern people use social media seems quite similar to this. We can say that the series *Lucid* is ha:ar's interpretation of what we define as a modern iconography.

The works displayed in your exhibition at CerModern, Ankara (26 March–18 May 2021) were also made available in the NFT format on the platform SuperRare for crypto art enthusiasts and attracted a lot of attention. Even though these were ha:ar's first works presented in this format, you have been researching and following blockchain technology and NFT creation for some time. How was your first exploration of NFT, could you elaborate on this process?

Arda Yalkın We first encountered the market of crypto art in December 2019 at a fair we attended in Miami. The artist edition of Eve Sussman's video *89 Seconds at Alcázar* was sold as 20 x 20 pixel tokenised pieces under the title *89 Seconds Atomized*. Those who acquired the tokenised pieces were allowed to trade the "atoms" in a closed market. It is indeed a vast field which covers dozens of creative applications but what we are talking about, what received a lot of attention from the art market is the primitive method we can simply summarise as marking a digital data input with a unique code that cannot be copied or reproduced. Once this unique code is purchased, it instantly enters the secondary market.

Thanks to my practice in motion design, I can read clearly how the aesthetics of NFT emerged and the culture behind it, and I do not believe that the crypto culture or the economy surrounding it are sustainable in their current states. I also do not believe that the NFT culture could be an alternative to the conventional art market. Yet, this gave us the opportunity to connect with a lot of people from all over the world. Programmes which focus on our NFTs were broadcast on Swiss and Italian television networks. The ability of the new media artists to communicate, help each other out and organise is unmatchable. It is a new, distinct experience that is unknown to the conventional art market.

Are you planning to create new works within the NFT field?

Arda Yalkın I do not think we will have a work that will solely be an NFT. We may publish some of the works in progress in the NFT format again. What excites us is to use the blockchain technology as a medium in itself. We are currently working on a project outlined and created with this principle in mind.

In Hande Şekerciler's exhibition of bronze sculptures, which was also opened at CerModern under the title *ecstasy* (3 March–2 April 2021) right before ha:ar's exhibition and continued its journey with the addition of the works from the latter, the audience is invited to reflect on a new set of contradictions and different moods. How was the exhibition *ecstasy* created?

Hande Şekerciler The civilisation we have built includes dynamics that make our life more complicated than it already is. There are certain constructs that we must comply with and if you do not stand in accordance with those, you are instantly labelled as the "other", "misfit", "marginal". If you are not a "white male" who is on the side of certain groups of power, at one point in your life you encounter one version of this labelling or the other, which instigates negative impacts on your social identity. This does not apply solely to Turkey – it is a symptom you encounter all around the world.

It also seems that no one is comfortable in their own skin. They do not like their hair, they are not in peace with their weight, height, or the colour of their skin. People are pushed into an abyss of despair because of their sexual orientation and the preconceptions based on their gender. We are communities full of people who cannot fully perform themselves, but still, everyone teaches the other "how to be". I am very concerned about this feeling that we all experience in our daily life and make others experience whether on purpose or not. At the beginning of my thirties, these issues began to strike a special chord. Since that time, I have been more and more involved in these concerns. *ecstasy* slowly emerged as a result of this process. I can say that these sculptures constitute a dream of a world in which people accept themselves and others as they are, embracing their existence in great ecstasy.

Albert Camus' statement which proposes that "man is the only creature who refuses to be what he is" was one of the inspirations behind the exhibition *ecstasy*. Can we say that the human figures in your works also break the shackles of social constructs and move beyond the mundane towards new experiences? Is there a common narrative that binds these figures together?

Hande Şekerciler What I am trying to highlight is not the importance of being "different", but the fact that what we define as "different" is actually ordinary – that everyone does not have to be "normal", because what is defined as normal is each of us being the way we are. The whole body of civilisation we have built is based on a single storyline, and even though we both take on the position of writers and actors in this piece, we can never really feel fit for the role. We somehow cannot feel comfortable in our own bodies. We are never content with the place we are at and the way we are. And those who feel a little bit of joy, we do not leave them be. In *ecstasy*, I tried to reflect the inner world of individuals who can accept their existence as they are. The bodies depicted in my sculptures are the reflections of the different moods of these characters – a manifestation of multiple emotional states expressed in the form of a human body at a given moment in time.

Transcending the confines of the major problems of our time, such as dissatisfaction, cynicism, feelings of incompleteness, seeking for validation and feelings of anxiety, the exhibition *ecstasy* invited visitors to a naked world which was also inhabited by the sculptures in the exhibition. A world that leaves chaos behind, in which calmness and silence reign. How would you define this utopic world?

Hande Şekerciler In this utopia, I aimed to depict no one as "different". So, there is space for every colour and form. My figures are naked because I do not want them to indicate a particular period of time, space, or social class. Another reason behind this nudity is that I see the human body as a form, a microcosmos that includes all the structures offered by nature. It gives me great joy to think about and discover these links while working. In the most recent works of the series, by adding a piece of cloth to the composition, I am trying to render a level of dynamism to the static movement without covering the figure entirely.

Another interesting feature of the sculptures/human figures in the series *ecstasy* is that they deny the social labels, sexist stereotypes and they refrain from any clothes or accessories at the expense of giving their identity up. Could this help us feel the inner worlds of the depicted figures rather than focusing on their physicality?

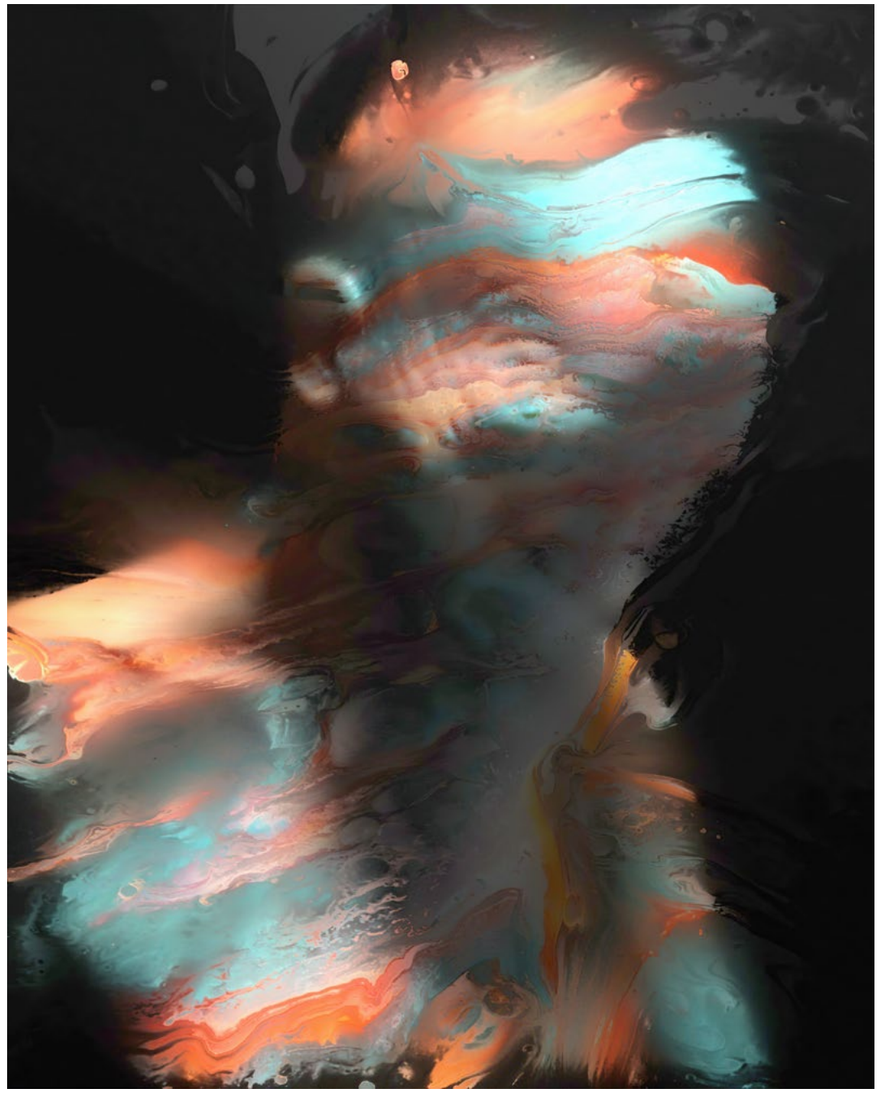
Hande Şekerciler I hope it does because this is exactly what I aimed for. Therefore, the figures are naked, with no accessories, and their eyes closed. Through this, I want to highlight that they have turned into their inner worlds, that by looking at these bodies we witness their feelings in that experienced moment rather than their physical experience.

What kind of dialogue do the works in the series *ecstasy* and your practice as ha:ar form between digitality/virtuality and reality?

Hande Şekerciler The way that the outputs of two kinds of productions are displayed together offers an interesting experience for the audience. By its nature, sculpture has a structural potential that invites the viewers to interact with space. I guess right after seeing the bronze works produced in a rather classical technique, to find their ephemeral projections, which at once bear their sculptural weight and appear out of this physical world, in the digital universe, open a different space.

Can you tell us more about the new media artists' residency programme you founded and how it functions?

Hande Şekerciler By the time we were confined to our homes, we started to receive questions such as "Where should I begin?" and "How can I do this?" even more frequently than before. We wanted to find a way to be of assistance to those who were reaching out to us and decided to share this idea with Çelenk Bafra, curator and the director of SAHA. Through Çelenk's reference, we met Cem Leon Menase. Cem, alongside his position as advisor to Faruk Eczacıbaşı, is also in the management of a non-governmental organisation called Beginning Node, functioning under the Turkish Informatics Foundation (TBV). Beginning Node follows the global technological transformation very closely and brings together people and projects that enable this transformation,



creating a ground for new collaborations. Through Çelenk, we met Cem, who was simultaneously thinking about the effects of digitalisation on art, both in terms of content and methods of production and how the artists can come together within this context. Thus, our parallel universes collided and the seeds of Piksel were sown.

At Piksel, our main objective is to provide information for the artists who are at the onset of their careers on how to use contemporary technologies in art, where to begin, and how to cruise through this field. We also aim to create a community focused on art and technology. We are trying to create an organic community, which will bring together artists and people from the tech world, such as AI engineers, and art and culture professionals. We have an active discord channel that started with this idea and developed in line with the programme. We can discuss projects or ideas any time of the day via this channel.

Following your first video presented in the 16th edition of Contemporary Istanbul, you also produced two new video works for your upcoming exhibition *Electric Mannerism*, which will take place between 12 January and 12 February 2022 at JD Malat Gallery in London. These videos from the series *Impossible Sculptures* will be premiered in London. Has the decision to include video and moving image in your practice offered new potentials to think about the underlying dynamism of your works?

Arda Yalkın Video is not a medium that is unfamiliar to either of us. In the past, we collaborated in creating stage design and music videos for renowned artists. One of our video works from a different series was also exhibited in Miami. In Contemporary Istanbul, we presented the first video of the series *Impossible Sculptures*. To realise a video as part of this series is a technically complicated process because there are too many character components, and it is not very easy to give motion to the generative structure that we have built according to these characters and the emotions they portray. For this first video, we adopted a simple technique – also because of restrictions on time – and we used the characters statically as if they are part of a painting and created the movement through the remaining elements. Since we wanted to add a performative layer to the work, we worked every night throughout the fair and each day added new scenes to the video. On the last day of the fair, I started to design the sound during the visiting hours and in the afternoon the sound channel was integrated to complete the work. So, the final, complete version of the video was only on display for a couple of hours. This was indeed a great experience for both of us. In the videos that we produced for our London exhibition, we also added motion to the characters. We use a mocap system to achieve this and animate the characters ourselves. So even just through our movements, we appear in the videos. We worked with the same technique for the music video we created for Gazapizm and Gaye Su Akyol, which was viewed by more than 12 million people on YouTube. Some of the movements in this video are also adapted from the moves of our own bodies.

As we do not create videos that are completely generative and based on the aesthetics of the machine, their processes of production, planning, application and finalisation are not so simple. When the audience encounters a constituent related to the human body or its movements, they instantly compare what they see with the experiences of their own body and if there is a huge discrepancy between the work and their corporal memories, we believe that the work misses its point. Therefore, we try to represent the human body, both its anatomy and mobility, in the most valid form. We follow the same principle in our ongoing artificial intelligence and generative video projects.

Starting its journey from CerModern to travel to Giudecca Art District (Venice) and Scalo Lambrate (Milan), and finally to JD Malat Gallery in London, the exhibition *Electric Mannerism* presents two exhibitions in one which technically and content-wise are in dialogue with each other. In the London edition, there are also five new bronze sculptures from the series *ecstasy*. Could you tell us about these sculptures and the spatial layout of the exhibition?

Hande Şekerciler Whenever I refer to my own sculptures and ha:ar's works separately, I feel like I have multiple personalities. Of course, ha:ar is influenced by my artistic vision as I constitute half of it. Yet, the fact that we managed to become an artist duo relies strongly on the similar perspectives we share. And at a certain point in the production process, the lines get so blurry that it becomes unclear who created which part of a painting or a video. And regardless of the medium in which we create, I continue to sculpt. Thus, speaking of "my sculptures" as those by ha:ar and those by Hande feels awkward to me. To interlace these two worlds when displaying our works does not make things any easier.

Coming back to *ecstasy* and *Impossible Sculptures*, while *ecstasy* focuses on the individual's relationship with themselves, with the civilisation's influence on its being, in ha:ar's work the narrative is about one's relationship with other people, their environment and the civilisation in general. We believe that to experience the two different points of view together enhances the narratives of both. The idea to merge the two exhibitions into one came from this previous idea that different viewpoints help these two narratives to complement each other. For London, we worked with similar strategies to display our work. Unlike the previous exhibitions, here with the addition of videos, the answer we have been seeking for the question "How can we bring together sculpture with new media?" since starting ha:ar takes on a whole new meaning. In the new sculptures which will be exhibited for the first time in London, I imagined the figures as coming out of each others' skins, intermingling. I believe that this highlights the underlying narrative of the series.

Undoubtedly, we will continue to see your work at different international locations. What are some of your upcoming projects?

Hande Şekerciler After the exhibition in London, we wish to go to New York and start to work on our next exhibition scheduled to open in Istanbul in 2022. As the hometown of ha:ar and *Impossible Sculptures*, I trust that New York will inspire us anew.

In Istanbul, alongside my existing work, we will be exhibiting *Electric Mannerism* with the addition of an audio-visual installation, which we have been working on for a long time, and a large-scale ceiling mural. Along with these, I hope that I will find time to produce at least one large-scale sculpture to be presented in the Istanbul exhibition. We are also planning to come up with a concurrent display of a performance-sculpture project in Contemporary Istanbul 2022.



* This conversation, which first appeared on the digital and print art magazine *ArtDog Istanbul* on 28 October 2021, was revised and expanded for the publication which accompanies ha:ar and Hande Şekerciler's exhibition *Electric Mannerism* taking place at JD Malat Gallery from 12 January to 12 February 2022.

ha:ar

















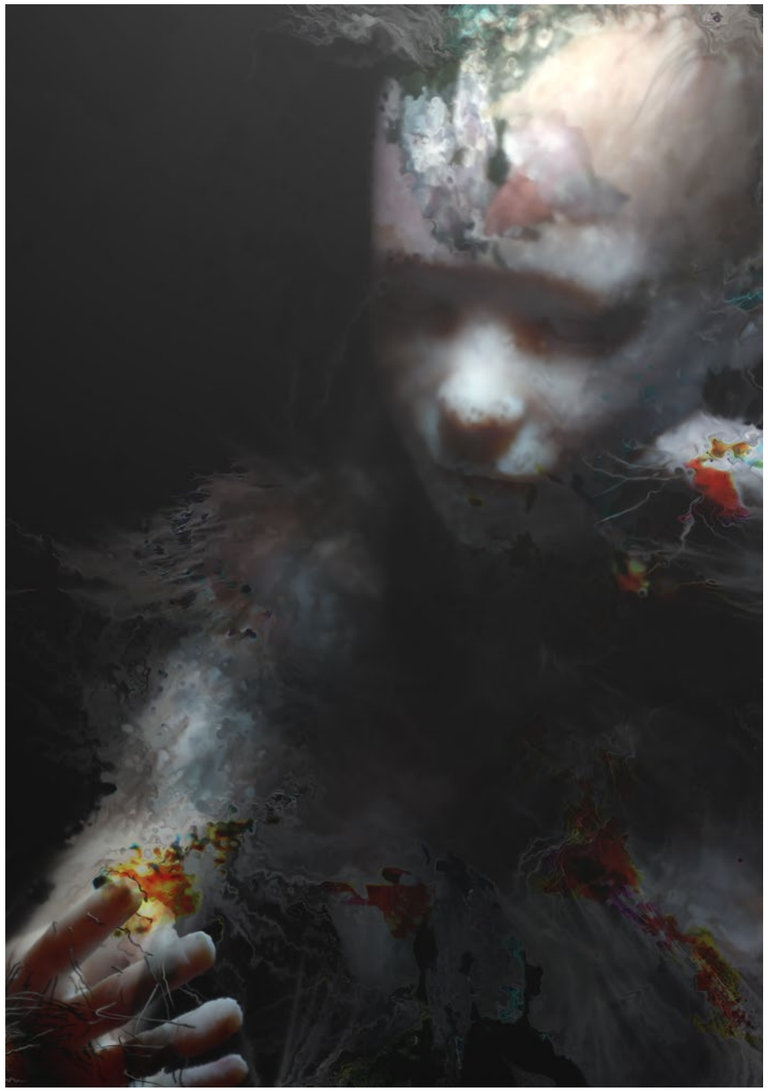


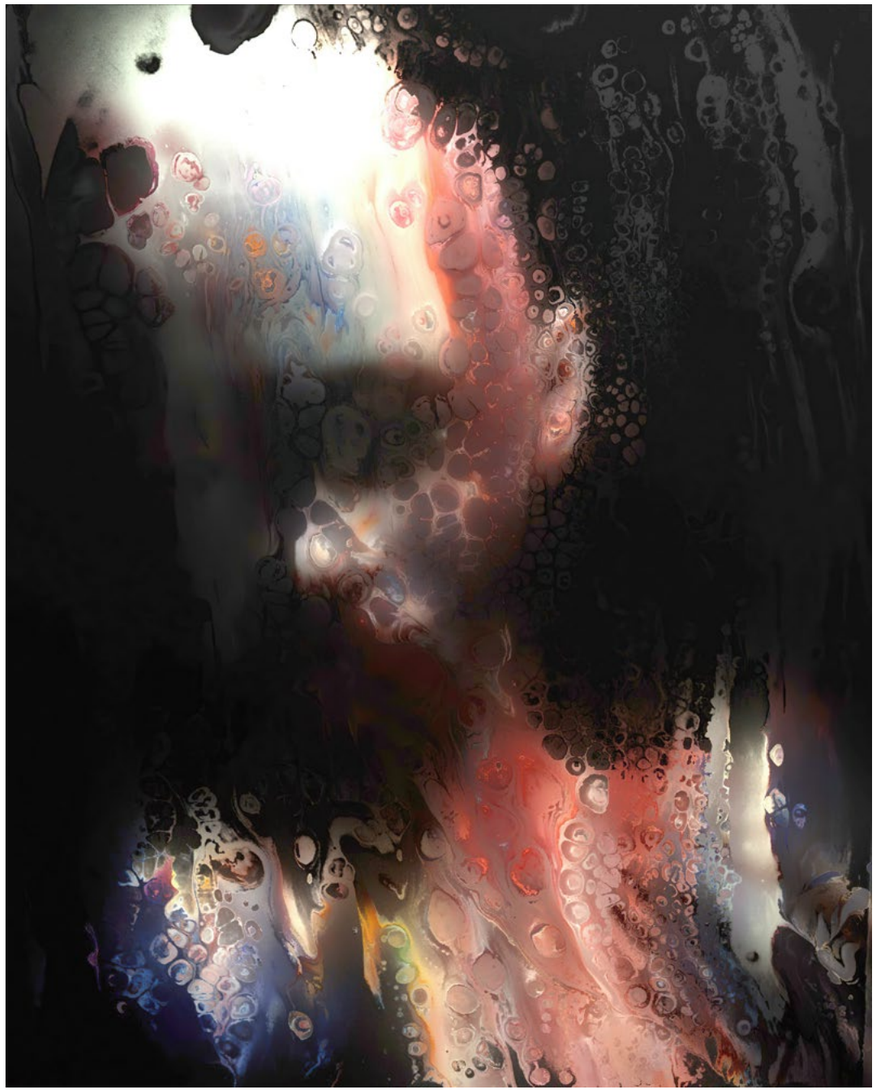




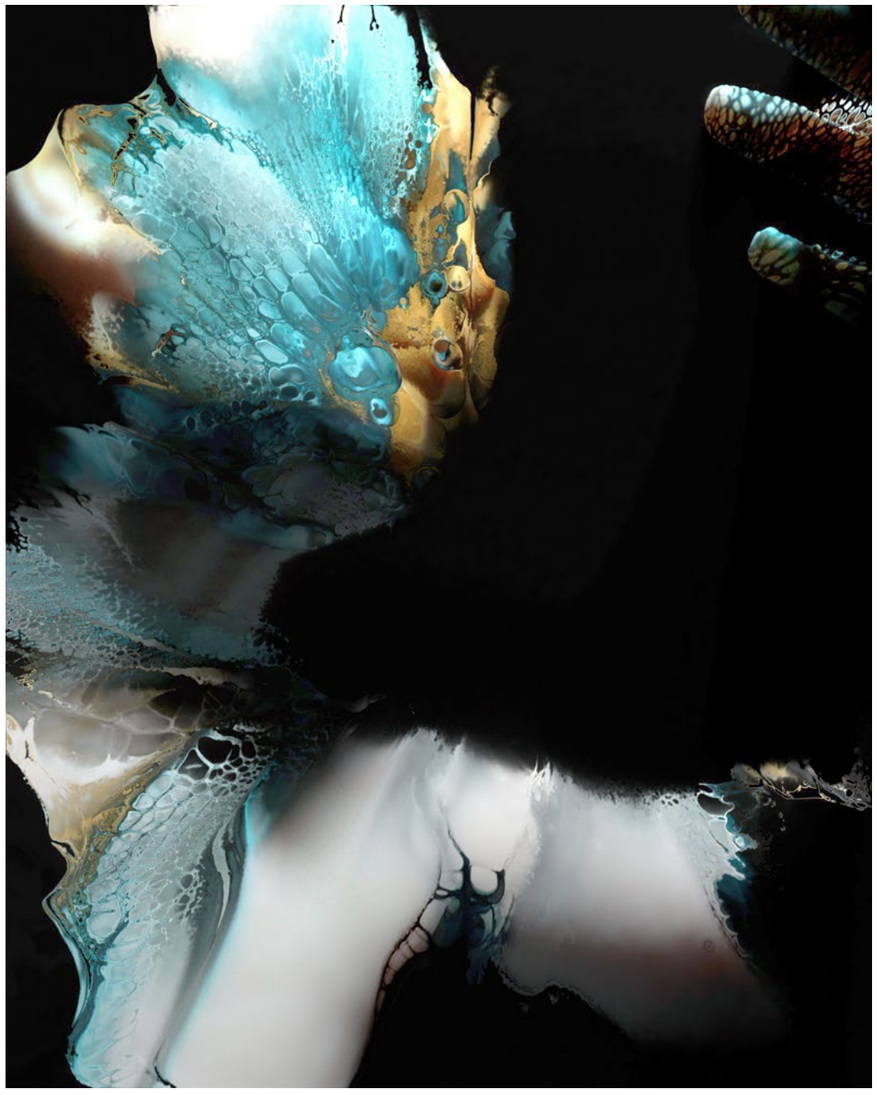














Symmetry Restored When Lost: *Electric Mannerism*

Süreyyya Evren



About this text

This text consists of text blocks (lexias) that are linked to one another. I put them in alphabetical order but you can start reading from wherever you like. Like in any other hypertext, it is up to you where to start reading and in what order to continue. At the end of each lexia, there are links that direct you to another. You may wish to follow these directions or may as well read in alphabetical order, or in any other order which I cannot think of at this moment. (Q.v. **Spatiality and corporality**)

§

Against the flow

When encountered in the form of a sculpture, Hande Şekerciler's figures create the feeling of a potential event. They occupy space in the physical world; despite their fluid, ephemeral, dynamic gestures, they have a substantial weight, and here they are, in front of us. They look like they have been slowed down by the totality of all forces of friction related to space, time and material, and eventually came to a halt. Yet the same figures, when encountered in the works of ha:ar, the artist duo of Hande Şekerciler and Arda Yalkın, appear to be floating frictionless and ceaselessly in space. We see them in postures that are carrying an emotional weight, being punished, suffering, afraid, never within the context of an event, but always part of an eventless flow. They do not belong to a certain place, time, or material. Here and now, they may have a form as such (for instance within a lightbox, as a UV print on custom-made glass), but they create the impression that they are only like this because we are looking at them – after all, the NFT versions of almost all the works are available, there is the possibility that they could have been exhibited in various metaverses. Their original forms are either disputable or even 'off topic'... (Q.v. **Figital oscillations**)



Art in the time of the pandemic

The art world's frequent and worldwide use of digital space during the time of the pandemic, which started at the beginning of 2020, at times, functioned in a way that made the authentic space for art obscure. (In this sense, the art world got closer to the oscillation, of which ha:ar and Şekerciler are a part too, on a larger scale). Several questions have followed: shall we consider the physical exhibition as the main venue of art itself; does the virtual version of a physical exhibition/an artwork merely function as a virtual projection or is it a substitute, a representation, a kind of 'electric metadata', or does the virtual version – as the (new) main venue of the exhibition/artwork and the experience of art – have a self-contained prominence? During this time, institutions not only organised 360-degree virtual versions of physical exhibitions but also created websites for exhibitions that were never shown or will ever be presented in physical space, which then will remain as their unique version. It will probably be naive and hasty to believe that this issue will be concluded soon and resolved thoroughly. But where we are now, points at the fact that more and more widely, virtual reality is getting accepted as a kind of reality rather than a substitute for it. Still, the blurring crossroads push on us the following alternatives: There is a (virtual) reality as such and this reality is either an alternative (and today not as a subcategory or genre like new media art, but as a possible new medium of all art) space for art or a shadow, reflection or metadata of physical art in the real world – even though the feeling of virtual reality or the simulation it creates develops coextensive with the advancements in technology. The determinant tension here comes from the following: is the art that we experience through AR or VR or on a sophisticated website, a projection, version, reflection, representation, substitute, or metadata of the art that is outside, on the street, in the gallery, studio or museum? Or is the art in the virtual world (and to highlight again, not as a subgenre like new media art – because to define art that belongs to the virtual as new media art suggests that the main venue for art as an umbrella term is not a virtual one – but as a thing produced at a place where art happens) a thing by itself? (Q.v. **Model-like figures**)

§

Call to no masks

We are living at a time in which there is more inspection of and surveillance over the physical experience than the digital one. The images of digital art experienced at home, in front of a screen with no masks on, can suddenly become open to surveillance through the obligation of wearing masks, mandatory vaccination, and social distance. ha:ar winks at the audience from customisable spaces of the digital experience in which the former can flee constant inspection. In this sense, impossible sculptures encounter the visitors in an art space, to call them to the outside, to other (digital/figital) spaces. (Q.v. **Online within the psychoanalytic frame**)

Destabilisation of metadata

The manners in which ha:ar's works position themselves are not stable at all. In addition to the lightbox versions of the works that are on display in the exhibition and their NFT versions, usually limited to one copy, when the gallery or the institution which hosts the exhibition offers a digital – maybe a 360-degree – version of it online, and when the viewer visits the website to find themselves in front of – in the digital sense – a work by ha:ar and click on it, they access the 'real' digital file of the work; not a representation of it. So, there is an oscillation between what is metadata and what is data as well. In common practice, the 360-degree exhibition tours which are designed for an online experience of a physical exhibition, are presented as part of the metadata rhizome formed around the exhibition. The websites of the exhibitions are part of the gigantic metadata cluster, consisting of the installation stills, press releases, publications, guides, tours, artists' talks, the arrangement of exhibition photos in the catalogue, and others. But in ha:ar's works, the digital file we encounter is the artwork itself – it is almost as if the version in the lightbox becomes metadata for a moment –, as the main data of the bronze sculpture is the bronze sculpture itself, for the digital file, the main data is essentially the digital file itself. Maybe we are living in the era of metadata – art includes metadata; the artwork itself is not everything. The experience of art which is obtained without a physical encounter with the artwork stands out. But is metadata where we think it is? Is it something that we can find where we left it the last time? (Q.v. **Which Electric Mannerism**)

§

Figital oscillations

Looking through the lenses of figital, a term used for situations in which the digital experience overlaps with the physical one, the oscillation between the artist as a creator (Şekerciler who produces the sculptors) and the artist as a representative figure who models the movements of the human body for the mocap system (Şekerciler who intermediates the recordings of her movements with cables on her body[1]) is also included in this figital oscillation. But the audience too, finds themselves invited to physically experience Şekerciler's works and then to experience their AR and VR versions[2]. Moreover, considering Şekerciler's enmeshment in ha:ar, it becomes more difficult for the audience to tell whether the physical bronze sculptures they experience in the gallery space is the original and the one experienced in AR or VR is a metadata (projection) of the original. (Q.v. **Simple oscillations**)



1 See: www.icloud.com/photos/#0q3aIzEnqRtarwRKvCemRKabw (accessed on November 2021).

2 For the alternative forms of experience offered to the viewer, see: (web) ecstasy.garageatlas.com; (AR experience available for IOS) ecstasy.garageatlas.com/ar; (VR) ecstasy.garageatlas.com/vr (accessed on November 2021).

From cyborgs to mannerism

As the figures we encounter in the exhibition *Electric Mannerism* make reference to styles, scenes, and elements from art history, their background, which aims to constantly push the potentials of technology and their mannequin-like, or android, or cyborg states that even holds the possibility for them to be half-human half-AI, keep them somewhere in-between. Is that why we do not see them working on something or labouring? The appearance of a mannequin is also a theme celebrated in postmodern literature. It makes a comeback in the post-capitalist era as it has a side to it that is against work. Social life is depicted not through scenes of labour but of value-creation, identity, war, and others. (Q.v. **Mitosis of the tension**)

§

Mythical postures

We may ask why ha:ar's works try to convey the human body in its most accurate way, in terms of both anatomy and movement. Why does Idris need to be a model in the workshop? And why hyperrealism? One of the reasons for this can probably again be found in figital oscillations. The same reason why in Tournier's novel, Idris, who goes after an image (a photograph) from the deserts of Africa to France, made his living by giving his body as a cast to make human-size mannequins after travelling from the reality of the desert to the imagery of photography. Şekerciler makes human bodies abstract and turns them into cyborg figures that are reminiscent of mannequins, then these figures oscillate from her sculptures to ha:ar's works and from there, back to the human. The figures that fall into the rifts during these figital oscillations find themselves rolling over into the violent scenes of art history and frequently appear in mythical postures. (Q.v. **Against the flow**)



Symmetry Restored When Lost: Electric Mannerism
Süreyyya Evren

Metadata and Mirrors

The cultural climate which determines the real value of data, puts all of the knowledge produced around the work, all of its reproductions, photographs, videos, programmes, thousands of texts, and the whole metadata which relates to it in a curious position. Curious because when this occurs, the metadata and the datafied work become more intertwined and less distinguishable. Maybe, they are forming a system of mirrors that reflect each other and each one of them enlightens and arranges the other. It becomes even more apparent through the oscillations in ha:ar's works.
(Q.v. **The destabilisation of metadata**)

§

Mitosis of the tension

The interwoven character of ha:ar and Şekerciler's works does not put weight on one side or the other, does not point to a proposition that favours one path and cancels the other: It rather stands in between the digital and physical, positions itself in the oscillation between the two, and through that oscillation, aestheticises the state of being in-between and explores the boundaries through experiments that survey the different paths the tension between them can take. Being a duo, as in being two people, allows them to reflect this double-sided tension in a more intense way. The two exhibitions are enmeshed; their boundaries are uncertain. Which reflects which? At times, it seems like a figure created as digital data has evolved first into a lightbox then into a sculpture. At others, the opposite happens: A figure formed as a sculpture appears to be suffering anew in the digital realm. As they perpetually diversify and produce physical exhibitions and their digital versions, the question of which one is the original space of the works gets irrelevant. The primary space of both the works and their enmeshment is this figital liminality. To make things more complex, they display the works produced as a duo (the works that already hold the tension of their bicephalic production practice) next to the sculptures by Şekerciler. Tension undergoes mitosis. (Q.v. **Art in the time of the pandemic**)



Mannequin-like figures

Through ha:ar's works, new paths open, that are beyond the experience of seeing an e-exhibition which tries (and guarantees its own failure) to imitate or *substitute* the *original* experience of art in the place where it *belongs*, which usually takes the form of an art gallery or a museum; to attempt to carry the exhibition to the internet. Is digital reality a substitute or an alternative reality on its own – is it a simulation or life itself? We keep facing the same question: What is the original space of art? Is it the NFT edition, the digital realm in its widest sense, the art gallery, the digital space of the art gallery, the dimensions of daily life that are experienced through AR or VR (digitalising intermediaries), or the studio? In Michel Tournier's novel *La Goutte d'or*[3], a French tourist takes a photograph of a young Berber shepherd, Idris Chambaa, wandering in the Tabelbala Desert, Africa. And she never mails the photograph to Idris. Idris goes after the photograph to France. And one of the jobs he will be working at while trying to survive in this new country would be modelling for the production of wax figures. Can we trace the journey of Idris, who finds himself sitting for figure mannequins, lending them his human form while in search of his own representation, in the mannequin-like forms of Şekerciler's and ha:ar's timeless figures? (Q.v. **Mythical postures**)

§

Online within the psychoanalytic frame

Looking from the perspective of art, the idea that a work in the virtual realm can replace the real work may at first seem like the denial of the possibility of a real experience and emotion. However, as a reality of the pandemic, today, online sessions of psychoanalytic therapy are taking place all around the world – considering the continuous structure of the experience of psychoanalysis on the couch, in a very striking way. It is believed that the subconscious can find itself a way during an online session which in turn comes out as 'real'. Moreover, it also means that the online can be included in the concept of *frame*, a concept imperative to psychoanalysis. If we can hope for the subconscious to find a voice, to appear within a frame that can be described with the structures of psychoanalytic therapy when applied to an online session, we can also raise the level of realness that we expect from digital art. Well, of course, psychoanalysis points out a problem that is as undecided and new as it is in art: Is the online session a substitute for the real one or does it hold a self–contained status as it offers a separate frame or can be included in another? (Q.v. **Story Re-told**)

3 Michel Tournier, *La Goutte d'or* (Paris: Gallimard, 1986). [English edition: *The Golden Droplet*, trans. Barbara Wright (New York: Doubleday, 1987)]

Simple oscillations

Electric Mannerism is an exhibition that oscillates between the digital experience and the physical. A pendulum swinging between these two experiences, at one glance, moves towards bronze sculptures, the sculptural materialisation of intermingling figures with garments wrapped around them, the way that an artist forms a material in a studio; another glance, and it has reached to computer files, the mocap system of censors and optics which translates the movement of the human body into a language that a computer can process, and then helps these movements to be reproduced for the 3D characters, and the weeks-long rendering processes on high technology computers.
(Q.v. **About this text**)

§

Spatiality and corporeality

The fact that digital experience is considered less real or less authentic when compared to the physical one is based on the absence or relative weakness of corporeality and spatiality. Yet, it is difficult to say that there is a theoretical ground that supports the validity of this absence. On the contrary, it seems like the gaps can easily be filled with technological advancements. As developments like the technologies that, through VR, allow the brain to grasp surfaces and volumes as if they are there, will proliferate, it will probably become a discussion of the level of development in reproducing perception. How should we interpret everything revolving around us, in an era in which the questions of whether we need to experience artworks in physical spaces, whether to see, view and read, their representation on the internet, meaning metadata, can be compared to experiencing the world at a venue; and can the time the viewer spares on art be occupied by 'seeing about' as much as just seeing?
(Q.v. **Call to no masks**)



Symmetry Restored When Lost:
Electric Mannerism
Süreyyya Evren

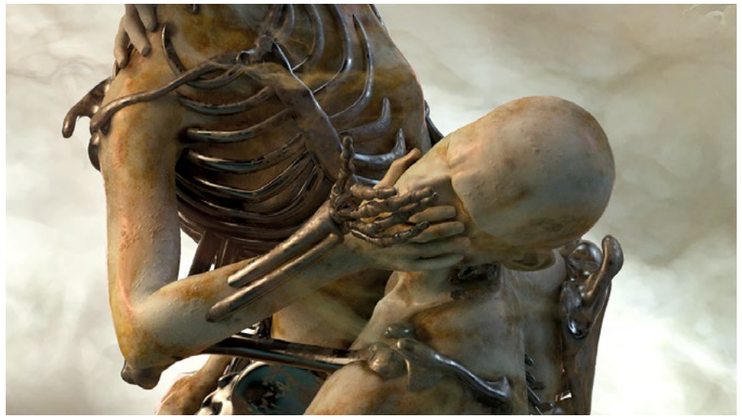
Story Re-told

The way that Hande Şekerciler contributes to the same exhibition both as Hande Şekerciler herself and one of the components of ha:ar, and that the boundaries of division and dialogue between the two are not very clear is a great example for the liminal spaces where oscillations function. Another good example of this is how some of ha:ar's 'impossible sculptures' are limited to one NFT edition only. The concept of edition in art has been determining which copies of a reproducible work will be considered as an artwork and which ones will just be copies. What defines an artwork is obviously not an inherent value. In modern art and especially in contemporary art, it is not possible to conclude about whether a thing is an artwork through its inherent features: To claim something as art, depends on the subject who produces it with the intention of making art, and a certain art world to recognise these things are intended to be art. But this recognition relies on a structure that accrues on the previous definition of what art is. For someone who is looking from afar, this may seem like a kind of randomness or nepotism. But when the physical dynamics are examined, one stumbles upon the accumulation of past works, the adjoining of previous experiences of art, and, specific to contemporary art, the addition of a theoretical experience to this accumulation. So, for a work to be recognised as artwork in the art world, for a thing produced with the intention of making art to be considered as an artistic production, happens when the current actors in the network find a place for this new production in the complex cluster of knowledge consisting of a bundle of previous productions that were considered as art. And for this exact reason, sometimes a very innovative work (for instance, because it cannot adjoin the current structure of a country's art world) cannot be coded as a new one, does not get acceptance, and remains shunned. What the NFT system does to art is to delete the step that necessitates an artwork to join the current structure of the art world for recognition and look solely at the mechanism of recognition by itself, copy it or reproduce it, and thus to take the structure of how something is recognised as art mot-a-mot and realise it in the virtual realm. In art, like in cryptocurrency, this only works as much as the stories around this new value do. The permanency of stories is not measurable, so does the permanency of all else. What makes the oscillation in *Electric Mannerism* potent becomes apparent at this point: Şekerciler's bronze sculptures also function as the 'story' of ha:ar's digital works. In a way, the digital moments draw their authenticity (their links to the past) from this story. And they add to the story, expand, reproduce, circulate, tell versions of it, and thus join the story as a new theme, and change it. The figital oscillation presents itself in the exhibition's story too. (Q.v. **Metadata and Mirrors**)

§

Which Electric Mannerism

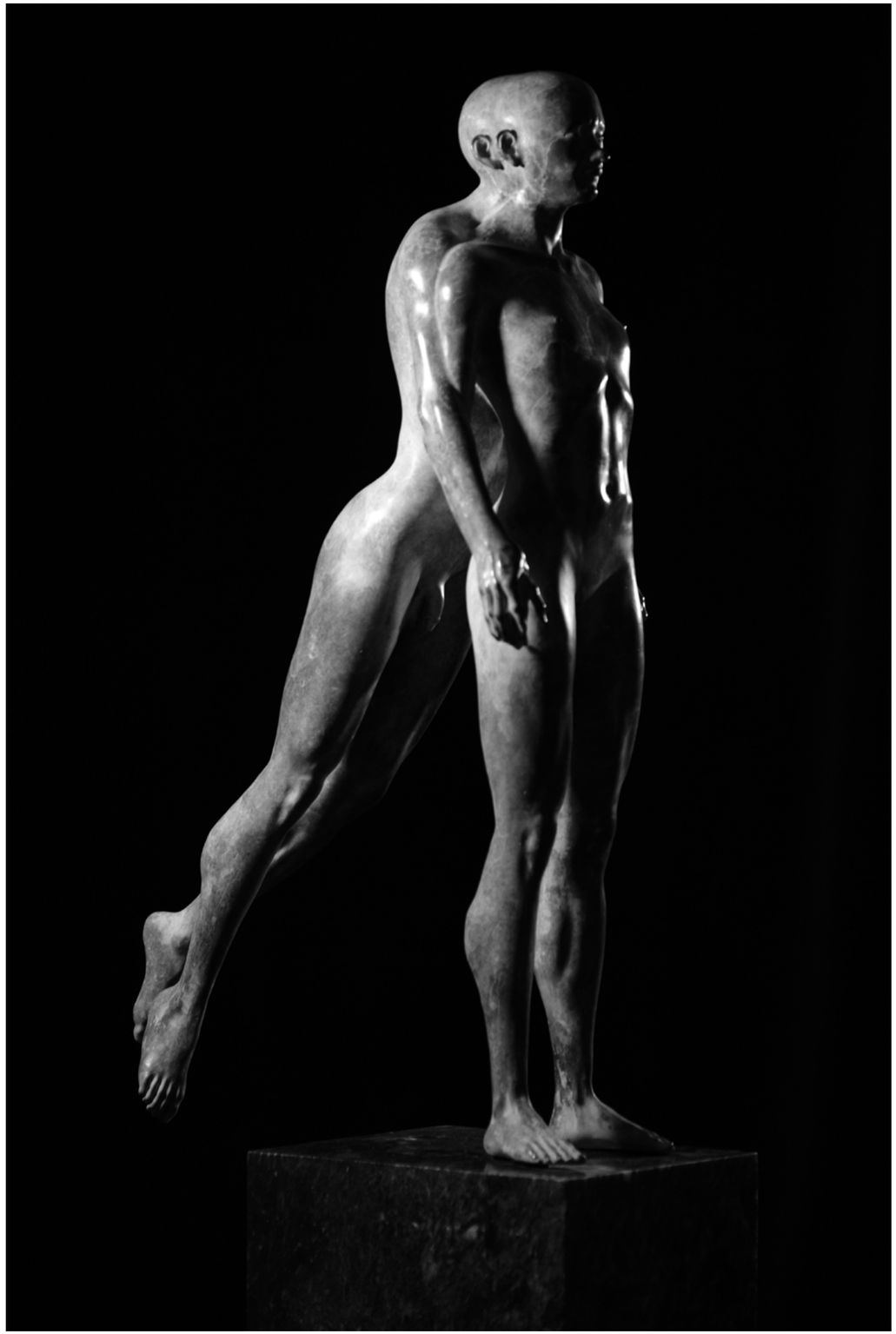
We need to read the title *Electric Mannerism* not as an attribution that implies a digital rearrangement of the history of art or as if a re-Renaissance, re-Mannerism is taking place in the post-electric era or a digital version of the art historical mannerism is happening here, but as if there are things that separate themselves from the history of art – for instance from the coordinates of mannerism – and oscillate toward electricity, and the same things then oscillate back from electricity to art history. (Q.v. **From cyborgs to mannerism**)



Süreyyya Evren's works focus on literature and contemporary art. He published various novels, collections of short stories, poetry and essays. He completed his Ph.D. in Political Science at Loughborough University on the relationship between avant-garde art and anarchism. He gave lectures on modern and contemporary art at many institutions. He is currently the Publications and Content Coordinator at Arter, Istanbul.

Hande Şekerciler

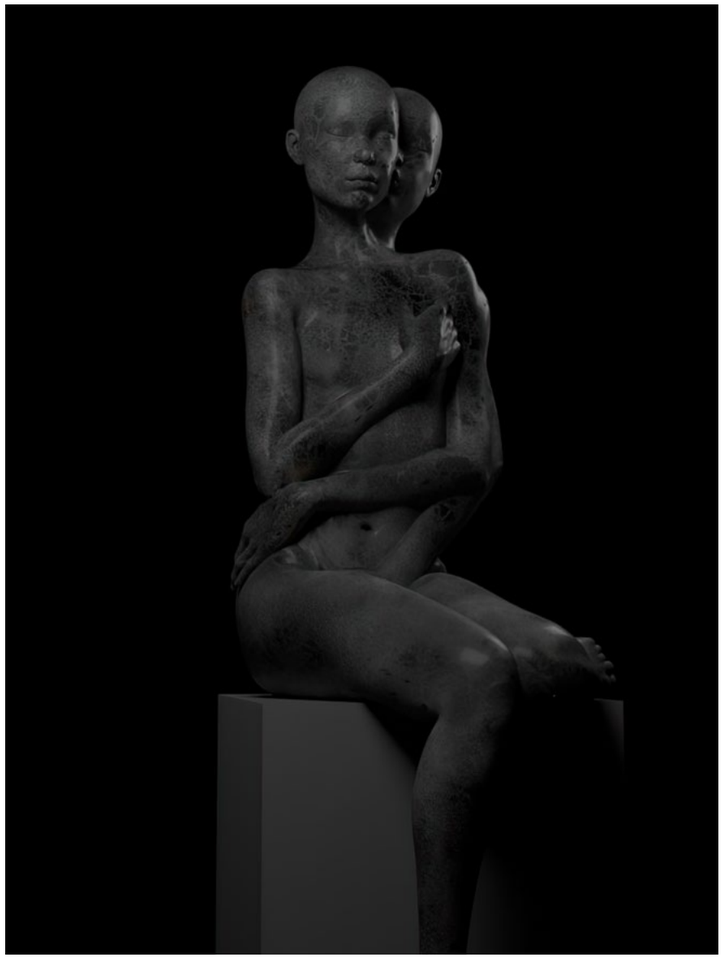




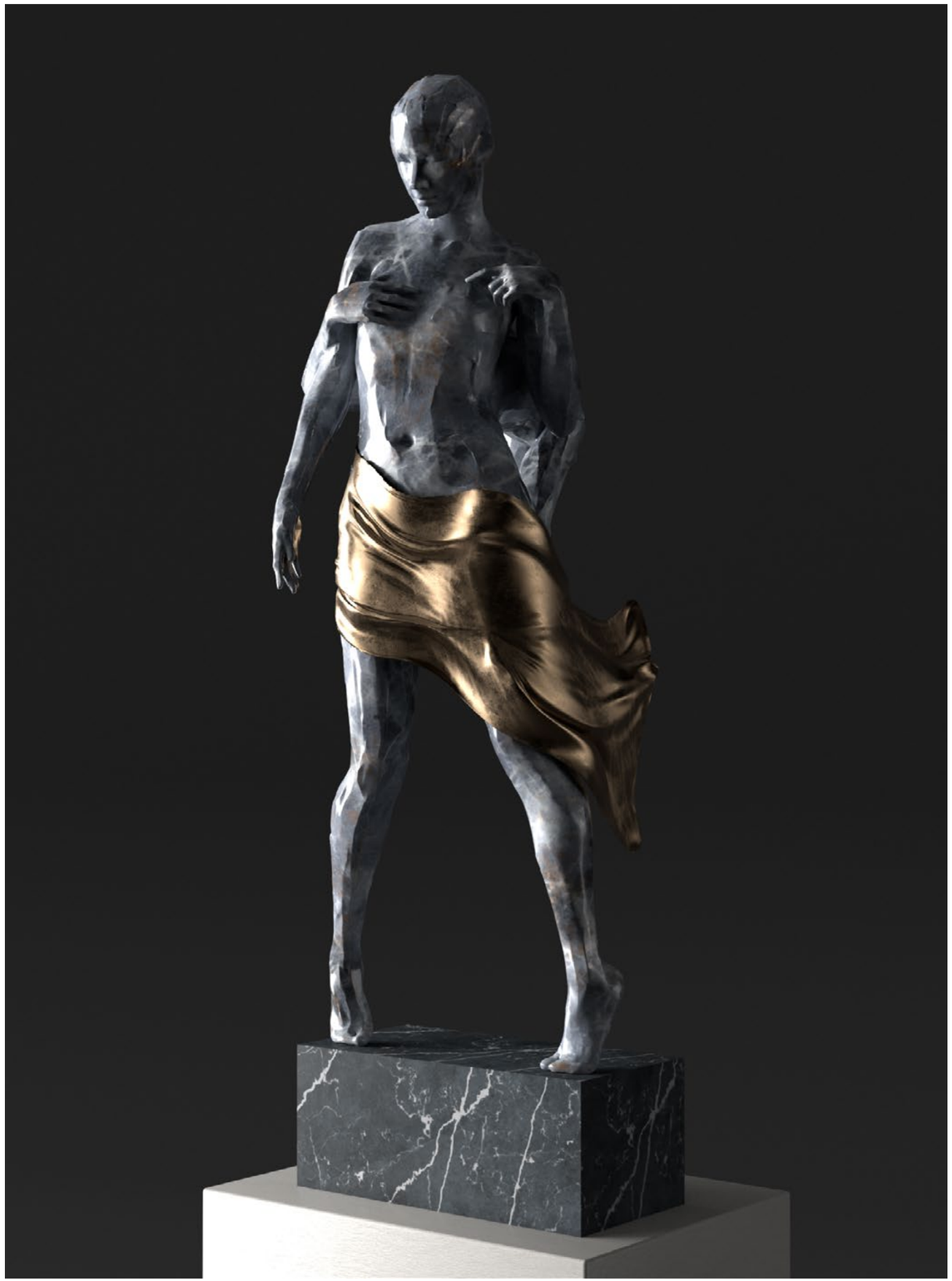


















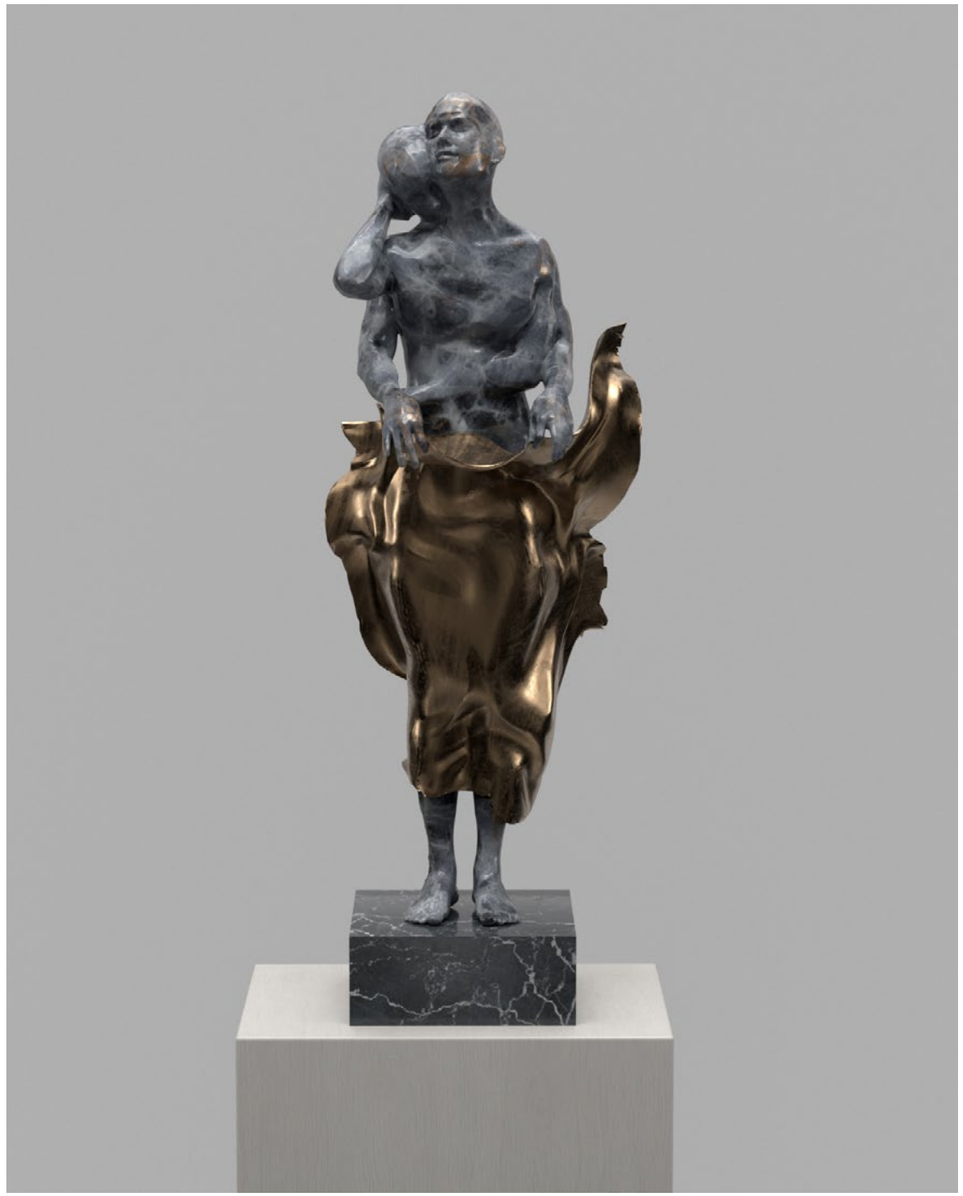


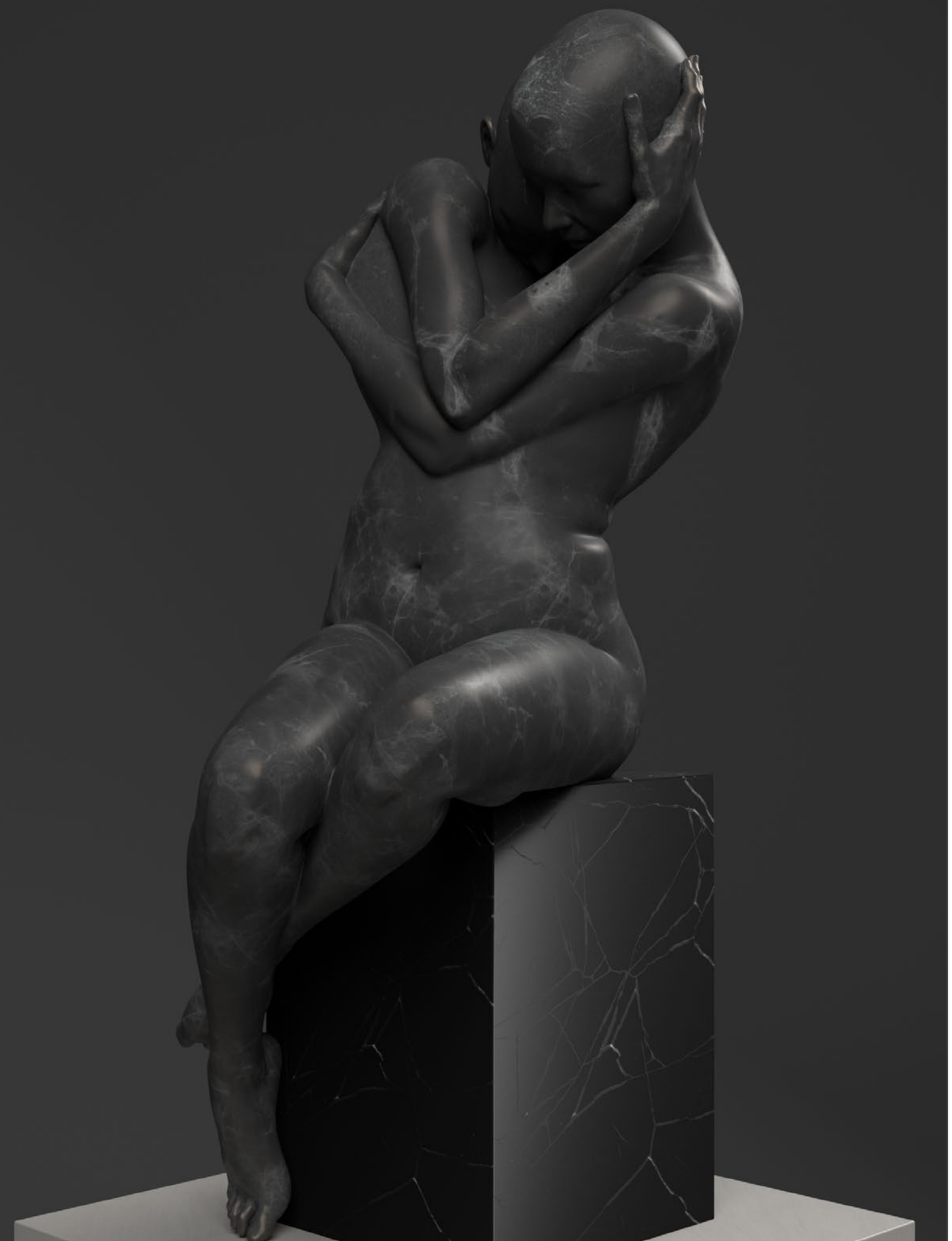


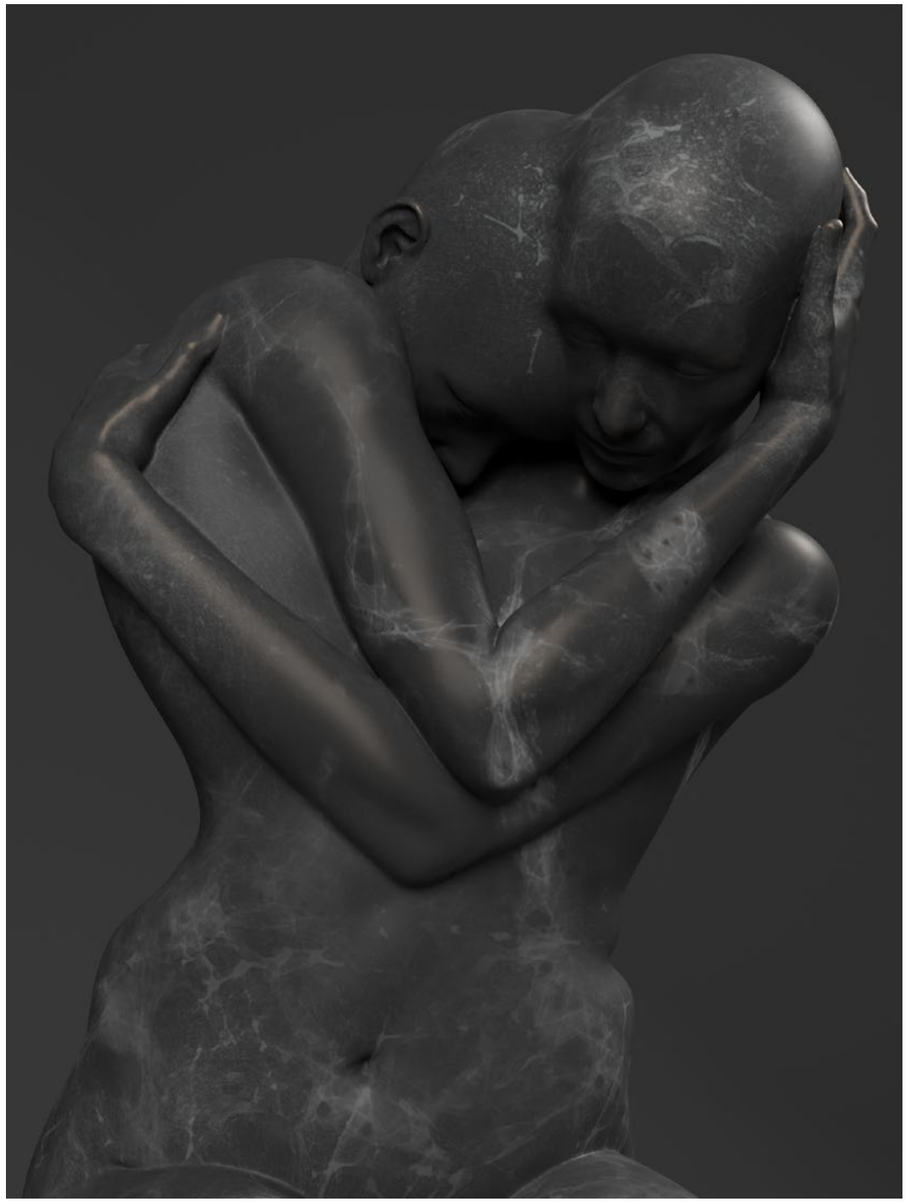












Electric Mannerism
in Milan & Venice





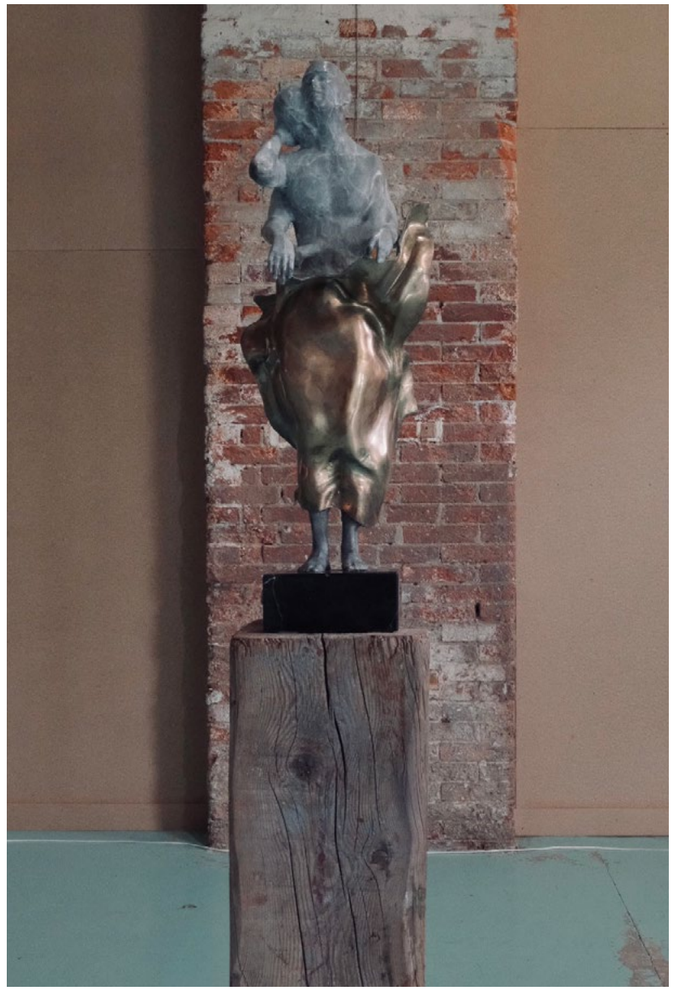


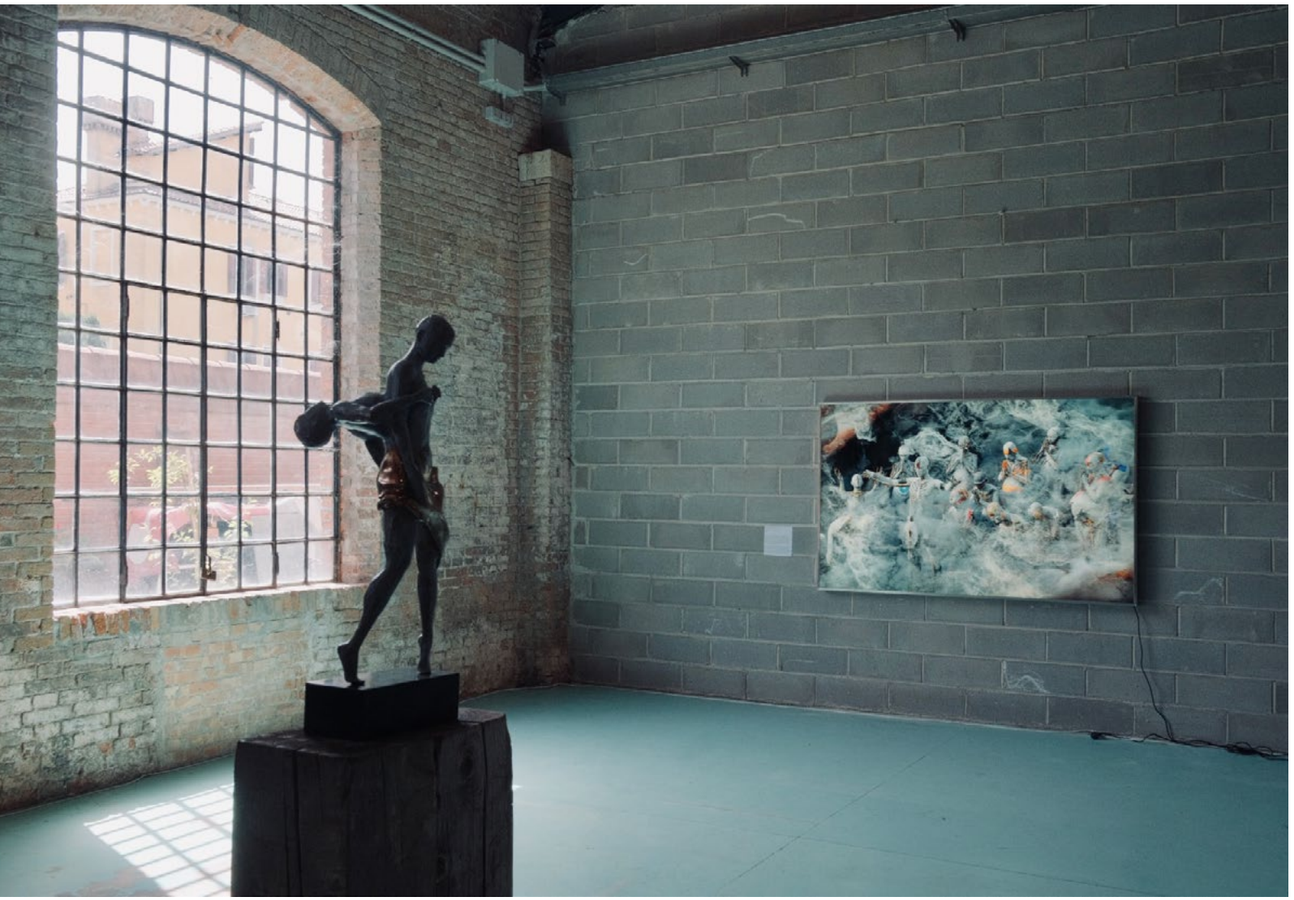

T-ArtLog


FRAGILE
THIS SIDE UP













Index of Works

ha:ar

Impossible Sculptures No. 1
Computer-generated imagery
UV print in lightbox
300 x 135 cm
2018
[26-28]

Impossible Sculptures No. 9
Computer-generated imagery
UV print in lightbox
110 x 90 cm
2019
[32-33; 47 (detail)]

Impossible Sculptures No. 10
Computer-generated imagery
UV print in lightbox
110 x 90 cm
2019
[20; 21, 44 (detail)]

Impossible Sculptures No. 21 *
Computer-generated imagery
UV print in lightbox
200 x 166 cm
2021
[25; 18-19, 24, 55 (detail)]

Impossible Sculptures No. 22
Computer-generated imagery
UV print in lightbox
200 x 120 cm
2021
[40-41; 53 (detail)]

Impossible Sculptures No. 23*
Computer-generated imagery
UV print in lightbox
200 x 166 cm
2021
[34; 35, 50 (detail)]

Impossible Sculptures No. 24*
Computer-generated imagery
UV print in lightbox
200 x 175 cm
2021
[30; 2-3, 31 (detail)]

Impossible Sculptures No. 27
Video
2021
[22, 23; 43 (detail)]

Lucid Portraits Series No. 1
C-print
100 x 70 cm
2019
[14]

Lucid Portraits Series No. 2
C-print
100 x 70 cm
2019
[36]

Lucid Portraits Series No. 3
C-print
100 x 70 cm
2019
[37]

Lucid Portraits Series No. 4
C-print
100 x 70 cm
2019
[38]

Lucid Portraits Series No. 5
C-print
100 x 70 cm
2019
[39]

Hande Şekerciler

ecstasy No. 2*
Bronze with custom-made chemical patina
65 x 44 x 22.5 cm
Ed. 6+1 AP (+ AR edition)
2020
[58]

ecstasy No. 3
Bronze with custom-made chemical patina
54 x 34 x 27 cm
Ed. 6+1 AP
2019
[61]

ecstasy No. 4*
Bronze with custom-made chemical patina
101 x 35 x 64 cm
Ed. 6+1 AP
2020
[63]

ecstasy No. 5*
Bronze with custom-made chemical patina
65 x 30 x 31 cm
Ed. 6+1 AP (+ AR edition)
2020
[60]

ecstasy No. 6*
Bronze with custom-made chemical patina
62 x 30 x 27 cm
Ed. 6+1 AP
2020
[62]

ecstasy No. 7
Bronze with custom-made chemical patina
62 x 30 x 27 cm
Ed. 6+1 AP
2019
[65]

ecstasy No. 10
Bronze with custom-made chemical patina
80 x 32 x 35 cm
Ed. 6+1 AP (+ AR edition)
2020
[73]

ecstasy No. 12
Bronze with custom-made chemical patina
80 x 38 x 30 cm
Ed. 6+1 AP (+ AR edition)
2020
[64]

ecstasy No. 15
Bronze with custom-made chemical patina
82 x 55 x 48 cm
Ed. 6+1 AP
2020
[59]

ecstasy No. 30 & No. 40
Bronze with custom-made chemical patina
65 x 80 x 51 cm & 75 x 49 x 55 cm
2021
[70-71]

ecstasy No. 31
Bronze with custom-made chemical patina
55 x 29 x 24 cm
Ed. 6+1 AP
2021
[74; 75 (detail)]

ecstasy No. 32*
Bronze with custom-made chemical patina
50 x 30 x 27 cm
Ed. 6+1 AP
2021
[66; 93 (detail)]

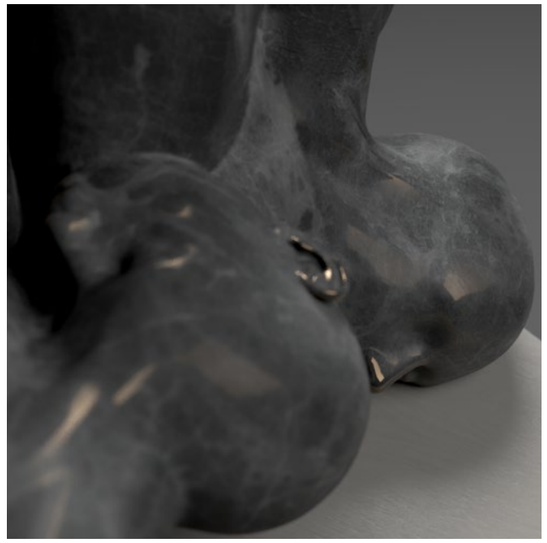
ecstasy No. 33*
Bronze with custom-made chemical patina
47 x 34 x 39 cm
Ed. 6+1 AP
2021
[67]

ecstasy: Self-portrait No. 1*
Bronze with custom-made chemical patina
92 x 112 x 101 cm
Ed. 3+1 AP (+AR Edition)
2020
[72; 56-57 (detail)]

ecstasy: Isolated No. 1
Painted bronze
20 x 20 x 20 cm
Ed. 6+1 (+AR Edition)
2020
[69 (detail, below)]

ecstasy: Isolated No. 3
Painted bronze
20 x 20 x 20 cm
Ed. 6+1 (+AR Edition)
2020
[48 (detail), 69 (detail, above)]

ecstasy: Isolated No. 5
Painted bronze
20 x 20 x 20 cm
Ed. 6+1 (+AR Edition)
2020
[68]



Please scan the QR code to experience selected works from the series *ecstasy* in a computer-generated environment through VR technology.

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* Exhibited works are marked with an asterisk; this list might have been changed during the installation process after this book was printed.

ha:ar

Working between Istanbul and New York, sculptor Hande Şekerciler and new media artist Arda Yalkın established ha:ar with the passion to combine a classical approach to art with new technologies. Their passion for mastering production and exploring new possibilities of expression has led the duo to work in a wide range of fields including video, animation, music, generative art, and artificial intelligence as well as conventional methods such as painting and sculpture. Seeking a new and original forms of expression by blending their individual practices, ha:ar's works explore the "conflict with the civilisation created by humanity, the technology it produces and the way of existence."

ha:ar received invitations from Residency Unlimited (NYC), Artist Alliance International (NYC) and 18th Street Art Center (LA), and completed programmes there. ha:ar, which opened its first solo exhibition in New York in 2018, participated in CADAF in 2019 as part of Art Miami, and Contemporary Istanbul from 2018 to 2021. The duo, who undertook the curation of Turkey's first physical NFT exhibition within the scope of Contemporary Istanbul in 2021, is the co-founder of the Piksel New Media Residency Programme (en.piksel.ist), a non-governmental organisation that seeks to support young artists to incorporate digital technologies and new media into their practice.

The duo's works have been exhibited in museums, international art fairs and galleries in Turkey, USA, Spain, Italy, France, Great Britain, Hungary, Greece and Russia. In 2021, they opened highly-acclaimed solo exhibitions in CerModern (Ankara), Giudecca Art District (Venice) and Scalo Lambrate (Milan).

ha:ar has also worked in the music industry and for a variety of advertising campaigns and commercials, designing and producing concept art and animations in line with their artistic approach.

www.wearehaar.com



Hande Şekerciler

Born in 1982 in Bursa, Turkey, Hande Şekerciler attended Marmara University, studying in the Department of Arts and Crafts Education from 1998 to 2002. A sculptor renowned for her figurative forms, she credits her influences as artworks from the Hellenistic and Renaissance periods. Artworks from these periods act as a stimulus from which she uses to experiment with ideas of form and social issues in her sculptural work.

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

2021 *ecstasy*, CerModern Museum, Istanbul, Turkey

2020 *VR exhibition*, JD Malat Gallery, London, UK

2018 Gaia Gallery, Organised by Unilever Turkey benefit of Cancer Warriors Foundation, Istanbul, Turkey

2015 *Monophobia*, Gaia Gallery, Istanbul, Turkey

2010 *Sıradakiler*, Gallery Selvin, Istanbul, Turkey

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

2019 *Portrait*, Taner Ceylan Studio, Istanbul, Turkey
Summer Exhibition, JD Malat Gallery, London, UK

2018 *Summer Exhibition*, JD Malat Gallery, London, UK

2016 *Fugitive Shadow*, Elgiz Museum, Istanbul, Turkey
The Call of Marsyas, Gaia Gallery, Istanbul, Turkey
Mystery of Figure, Plato Sanat, Istanbul, Turkey
Alter Hero, Gaia Gallery, Istanbul, Turkey

2015 *Plaza Worker*, Elgiz Museum, Istanbul, Turkey
Small Faces, Large Sizes, Elgiz Museum, Istanbul, Turkey
On Paper, Gaia Gallery, Istanbul, Turkey

2014 *Teras Sergileri < 40*, Elgiz Museum, Istanbul, Turkey
Batteries Not Included, Gallery Linart, Istanbul, Turkey

2013 *Are You As Great As Your Shadow*, CerModern, Ankara, Turkey
Friendship 2, Artist Causa Gallery and Technohoros, Athens, Greece

2012 *Warhola*, Alan Istanbul, Istanbul, Turkey
Group Exhibition, Çağla Cabaoğlu Gallery, Istanbul, Turkey
Friendship 1, Artist Causa Gallery, Thessaloniki, Greece

2009 *My Name Is Casper*, Sümerbank Building Karaköy, Istanbul, Turkey
İhsan Oktay Anar Symposium Exhibition, Bilgi University, Istanbul, Turkey

2008 *Artist 18. Istanbul Arts Exhibition*, Casa dell'Arte, Istanbul, Turkey
Art Bosphorus Contemporary Arts Exhibition, Artium Arts Gallery, Istanbul, Turkey
Summer Exhibition, Casa dell'Arte, Istanbul, Turkey

2003–07 *Taking Action*, The Hall, Istanbul, Turkey
35th Anniversary Exhibition of Terakki Art Gallery, Terakki Art Gallery, Istanbul, Turkey
Island Ferry Contemporary Arts Exhibition, Island Ferry, Istanbul, Turkey
Mulayim Taarru, Gallery X, Istanbul, Turkey

RESIDENCIES

2018 *Residency Unlimited*, New York, USA
Artist Alliance International, New York, USA
18th Street Arts Center, Los Angeles, USA

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