

ACTIVITIES

July 12 at 7pm Talk by the curator of the exhibition "Şükran Moral. The world inside" Claudia Giannetti and the artist Şükran Moral Auditori. Open and free activity.

18, 20, 25 y 27 July, from 10am to 12am. Workshop «Traspassem els rols. Què passa! Gènere i performance» in relation to the exhibition «Şükran Moral. The world inside». IB Dona activity designed by Aina Bauzà with the monitoring of the Education Area of Es Baluard

Dates of exhibition: 13/07/2018 - 9/09/2018

Museum Opening Hours:

Tuesday to Saturday: 10 - 8 p.m

Sundays: 10 -3 p.m

Mondays closed

English

ŞÜKRAN MORAL

Like every summer, Es Baluard is inviting an international artist to present a thematic project in the Aljub space, just as Miao Xiaochun, Michael Najjar, Thomas Hirschhorn and the Russian collective AES+F have done in the past. This year we are highlighting feminist activism by recognising the work of the Turkish artist Şükran Moral, under the curatorship of Claudia Giannetti, who directed an important retrospective on her at the Edith Russ Haus für Medienart, Oldenburg, Germany back in 2014.

“The World from the Inside”

A seminal figure in the recent history of contemporary art in Turkey, and recognised internationally, the artist Şükran Moral works in different fields: performance, sculpture, video and photography. Her oeuvre calls into question gender roles, power structures, the influence of social taboos on people's private and public life, the mechanisms of art and the politics of representation. Above all, societies with dogmatic religious beliefs based on a patriarchal system, which act on the female psyche and female bodies, are the focus for questioning in her performative actions and video performances, of which Es Baluard presents a selection in its monographic show dedicated to the artist, the first solo exhibition by Şükran Moral in Spain.

More than documenting her actions, her videos are pieces conceived for the audiovisual medium, in which Moral is both performer and director. The naturalness of the dramaturgy and the experiential intensity of these works reveal her proximity to the theme addressed, arising from her experiences as a young girl from a small village in the province of Samsun, on the Black Sea. When she left her family and home at the age of eighteen to become an artist in Istanbul, she had to overcome innumerable barriers as a creator and a woman. For that reason, the roles that she plays are never disconnected from her person, but they mostly incorporate her own autobiographical experiences.

Moreover, in this globalized age, specific cultural or local idiosyncrasies have transformed to become matters of relevance and general interest.

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Through migrations, some customs of certain regions have been implanted or continue to be transmitted to other generations in different countries. This process is inherent in the history of humankind, but nowadays it has an unprecedented global dimension. In this regard, in spite of the references to her country of origin, many of the themes Moral deals with in her work can be clearly extrapolated to international contexts and the subjects of debate in global forums: misogynist violence, the institution of marriage, discrimination of women or female sexuality, to give a few examples.

In the words of artist, “provocation and criticism are part of my artistic posture.” Actually, Moral does provoke by challenging taboos, traditions, social, cultural and political hierarchy structures, but also by questioning with deep irony the supposedly historical domains of the world of art. Whilst her performances create extreme situations, the artist achieves a balance between tension, surprise, controversy and derision. In the animation *Mirror* (2011), the action of a rat staring at the spectators and who unexpectedly spits in their direction is Şükran’s burlesque response to conservative or hypocritical attitudes to her works.

Şükran Moral’s artistic practice comes under the line of work by female contemporary artists committed to the criticism of gender policies, identity determinants, the genealogy of violence, otherness, the languages of the body, patriarchal practices, power relations or the fictionalisation of reality, such as Yoko Ono, Nil Yalter, Carolee Schneemann, Valie Export, Lynn Hershman Leeson, Marina Abramovic or Ana Medieta, to name just a few. However, her production has a strong personal bias and assumes very particular aesthetics, related, as we mentioned above, to her life and her individual experiences. Her artistic practice distances both from the purely carnal or physical experiences of certain artistic actions from the 1970s, as well as the participatory or relational tendencies of performance art. In the context of Turkish contemporary art, Şükran Moral was the first artist, from the 1990s on, to dare to vehemently question the authoritarian patriarchal order, the abuse of power over the female body and the social exclusion of certain minorities. In fact, her work opened up the way for the new generations of women artists in Turkey.

Two outstanding aspects of her artistic work are taken into account in the selection of works presented in this exhibition. The first of them is related to the constant dialogue with the controversial situations generated in public and private sphere. Particularly convincing is her way of ascribing her artistic actions to the public spheres. An example is her strategy of inscribing her artistic actions in the public sphere – with formal and infor-

mal social rules, either imposed or consensual – in order to bring about a kind of short circuit in its prescriptive mechanisms. She transforms spaces, like a brothel (*Bordello*, 1997), a men’s Turkish bath (*Hamam*, 1997) or a square or street in a village (*Married with Three Men*, 2010), into intervention areas. Contrasting with a theatrical or epic attitude, Moral operates on the “inside” of these spaces, coming close to the vision of what Francisco de Quevedo called the experience of the “world from the inside”, to which the title of this exhibition is a direct reference. Actually, the contextual relationship and the question regarding the social places of art are essential to approach her work: the question of the “place” is inseparable from her “place” as a social individual.

The second aspect is associated to the way in which Moral explores themes of the universe of art, establishing a bridge with contemporary culture. In *Bordello*, in addition to criticising the sexual exploitation of women’s bodies, Şükran speaks ironically of the market of art and the subjugation of artists to the business-based stamp: at the brothel entrance she placed a sign saying “Museum of Modern Art” and assumed the position of a prostitute-artist, holding up a “For Sale” sign. The video performance *Hamam* launches a criticism against the clichés perpetuated in orientalist representations of women, especially in the European paintings of classicism and impressionism, which continue, to this day, to be a western reference with regard to the exotic, mainly imagery of the women of the Orient. The fact that orientalism is still alive in a contemporary artistic setting is confirmed by Moral’s own experience as an artist: in international forums, her work usually ends up being “pigeonholed” under the category of “Turkish art”, although the subjects she deals with are from the global domain and are present, at this very moment, in Spain or in any other country of the world.

By placing us in the uncomfortable position of voyeurs, her video performances and animation question our way of seeing things, how we position ourselves when faced with a transgression, the manner in which normative power imposes itself on reason... In short, her works instigate us to perceive how disciplinary mechanisms and our moral constraints act on the way we observe, assimilate and judge the reality of an action and, as a result, on our own realities.

Claudia Giannetti, curator

June 2018