

## **IN IMAGE WE TRUST**

**“In Image We Trust” is an ambiguous title, which I intentionally decided on for this exhibition. It may sound as a confession as well as a declaration. If it is a confession there is a possibility of looking for alternatives. If there are alternatives there will be options to exploit the problem and there will be a challenge to generate new solutions. If it is a declaration, it may expose certain surrender or an ironic escape...**

**When I think about more profound reasons of choosing this title, I link it up with a series of exhibitions namely, “New Proposals/ New Propositions I-VI” in Borusan Art Gallery (1998-2000), “Reise durch das Labyrinth” in Pozzo Pozozza, Berlin (1999) and “Resistance” in YıldızSanat I (2000). In these exhibitions I had the opportunity to come close to the young generation artists and tried to empathize with them. This generation had not only confronted severe political and economical crisis during their prime life, but also inherited the unsound sediments of catastrophes, failures and complications that shook Turkey since 1980’s. They are young individuals who have decided to be artists and to continue to be artists despite the inconsistencies in the cultural milieu of Turkey. They are individuals who prefer production of art works to other kinds of material productions. Consequently, they decided on one of the most complex positions within the web of liberal capitalism.**

**The above-mentioned exhibitions were organized with the intention of researching and presenting the dilemmas within these productions as well as the strategies of the artists to deal with these dilemmas. Accordingly, I have conceived this exhibition as an upshot of previous exhibitions in the autumn of 2000, after I have intensely observed the strong desire of the artists to articulate and to manipulate the technological images. At that time, I was looking for an occasion to realize it; when Leyla Belli, the president of the Association of Painting and Sculpture Museums has asked me to curate their traditional show, entitled “21<sup>st</sup> Exhibiton of Today’s Artists” for 2001, the accomplishment became possible.**

**It became necessary to explain the background of the exhibition, because, now it may be loaded with certain associations and inducements, which I could not foresee before. After 11<sup>th</sup> of September New York disaster and within the war against terrorism whatever one puts on view to the eyes of the beholder who has seen the destruction of the twin towers *live*, would not have the estimated impact. In this context one cannot expect art**

to generate a metaphor of violence and terror; however this would not mean that art couldn't anymore stimulate the viewer.

Change is inevitable. The capability of being stimulated by art will be changed as all thinking and behavior will change. The terror and war are induced to our consciousness through the technological images. It is high time to question and scrutinize these images and this exhibition is presented as a valuable tool. There is a pre-condition here: If the connotations and facts reflected through the art works in this exhibition are unexpectedly encompassing the realities we are living in, then it is crucial to believe in the visions and predictions of the artists.

The art works in this exhibition are intending to get deeper on minute details of everyday life or are steering the subject matter indirectly, so that the eyes of the beholder who is weirdly attracted by the superficial appeal of the commodity images, by the velocity of the reality shows and by the crudity of electronic appearances may not be easily contented. Yet, one should consider that the art works would hermetically command the viewer to perceive more disturbing situations or extremely marginal realities. For example the videos in the exhibition present a different rhythm and content, and propose a measured intellectual assimilation process as compared to the habits of the television viewer who would jump from one channel to the other or fix his soul to the images. Or, on the contrary they display multiple images with surrealistic connotations by erasing the expected logical transitions between them. In conjunction with these, the videos, while triggering an everyday behavior or a stereotyped action, present a fragment of a whole that has been disintegrated before, as something more than the whole itself. This is a kind of articulating the process/function of pictorial illusion in technological image.

On the other hand installations that has been produced in different techniques and with different materials incorporate the objects, habits and appearances selected from the daily life. As Baudrillard indicated the everyday *objects (and images) can become objects (images) of consumption only when they first become a sign. (1)* The artists target this *sign* within the object (image) of consumption reproduce it in to the metaphors of relations or antagonisms between the society and the individual, of edges between the inner and outer world and, of the tensions between the reality and the fantasy. These art works then occupy the center of the void which is in fact the root of the dilemma of satisfaction / dissatisfaction stipulated by the daily objects and their signs. This ends up with the significant function of the artist as a manipulator between the image producing economic system

and the mass that is forced to acquire these images. The question is centered on the methods and processes of this manipulation.

When observing that the electronic and digital techniques are gradually replacing the traditional techniques of art, one can recognize that to question or scrutinize these images are quite difficult even if at first glance they seem to be too easy to interpret and to decipher. Moreover, these techniques articulated within contemporary art practice intricately wrap up the art images with the images of consumption, so that the art experts as well as the viewers are approaching these art images with distrust and miss the differentiation. With other words, they seem to believe that, like themselves, the artist is also under the spell of the images of consumption and likewise, cannot deal with them.

Somehow this might be in this manner as also indicated by Vilem Flusser: *"...the world of techno pictures fascinate us more and more, because they carry a new message. Almost nobody had gained knowledge of manipulating these new codes in order to articulate the built-in messages. The level of consciousness that relate to these codes has not yet been reached. Therefore they are extremely dangerous: they program us without allowing us to understand their nature, and instead of connecting us to the reality as visible bridges they threaten us as impenetrable walls. This is our crisis."*(2)

Producers of art works are also fascinated, but they also try to decipher the codes that are fascinating as well as causing trouble and thus create the collective techno-image of art. If the viewer will acquire a new and composed skill of looking at the artwork regardless of the long duration of this process, he/she will find the key to a new procedure of being stimulated by art.

The visual language of image technology or techno images is a process of re-shaping the individual to the requirements of the commodity culture. It is worthwhile to be suspicious about how much of this process is human-made; it has not yet been accomplished to go beyond the given data of technologies and techno-imagination. Therefore it is necessary to examine today's image language within the two orders of Lacan, namely within the symbolic and the real (3). If the symbolic is an experience of reciprocal transitions between the analysis of libido and lingual categories and if the individual is buried into this daily language with no way out (4), then we have to consider that the techno image language deeply embedded in the symbolic, can destroy this experience. On the other hand, the third order of Lacan, namely the real is a real, which we cannot have ever and it goes beyond

**the language (5). It is very likely that techno images are already manipulated the real.**

**As a matter of fact, techno images seem to deal with the reality, seem to protect human beings against the unendurable reality and seem to reflect the reality with a kind of compensation. Indisputably, this is a fake shelter. A virtual world is being presented as a shelter for the already shattered real. One can contemplate the reality without ever being in trouble, but at the same time one can have profound contentment as if one is able to cope with the crisis.**

**When thinking about the impact of the techno images one must also think about the memory and the attention; these are the battlefields of image technology. Memory is finally a selection of remembering and forgetting closely linked to the culture and experience of the individual. However, the image technology also commands what to remember and what to forget, thus controlling the memory. Memory becomes a field of operation for this technology.**

**Then again, the image technology directly targets the attention of the individual; the attention which is an inevitable necessity for him/her to exist in the age of communication and information. Within this new economy the attention is the most desirable tool for the individual and the producer of the techno images; only with this tool the market is sustainable. Yet, the artwork also calls for the attention; however demands a more intricate course of comprehension that will concentrate on the concept of the artwork and on the individuals' soul. From this point of view, as the artist cannot deny the sovereignty of the image technology, has to shift the field of exploitation to his personality; he has to build up his strategy to arrest the memory and the attention of the viewer into his identity/personality.**

**BERAL MADRA/ EKİM 2001**

- 1. Jean Baudrillard, The System of Objects, Verso, 1996, p.200**
- 2. Vilém Flusser, Kommunikologie, Fischer 1998, p. 105**
- 3. Madan Sarup, An Introductory Guide to Post-structuralism and Post-modernism, University of Georgia Press, 1993, p. 48**
- 4. a.y. p.26**
- 5. a.y. p.49**

