

Sherine Anis

I split myself to be equal

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Austrian Cultural Forum Istanbul



In conversation with Ulaş Parkan an art historian, PhD candidate at F.M.V., curator and co-founder of 'Poligon the Shooting Gallery' & 'Lastik Project' in Istanbul.

Sherine Anis is an artist specializing in the field of stability and leverage, as communicated through her objects. Her studio is part of 'New Jörg' in Vienna.



UP: The name of the show portrays your artistic and plastic approach in a witty fashion. In your sculptures, we can see clearly that you build your message on the foundation of notions such as dualities, schisms, balance, opposing forces, polarities, equality. To what extent do you consider this to be a reflection of the dichotomies you see around you?

SA: These opposing forces you mention are all around us. We experience them in society, through political issues, in the educational systems, in fashion, even on our mobile phones ... There are numerous forces amongst which we are brought up and in which we are able/unable to act, linked to various forms or norms.

Additionally, when you talk about dichotomy, there are several ways to see or understand this word, i.e. when a cell divides, it does so in order to become an entirely new being. The seed cracks in order to become a plant, a vegetable, a green form, the embryo becomes a newborn and so on.

Dichotomy can also be an involution of simple contradictions. Like two different meanings on one single sign: 'Do Not Enter' & 'Entrance Only'

For me, differences in action enable us to find individuality. What if this paradox stuff is an invisible power or force? If you observe many politicians, they are successful in using or abusing the issue of having an identity.

Maybe the issue isn't about binary opponents, but rather

simply about our individual choices? In the linking of choices with the opposing facts, there is a tension, that occurs. The existence of this tension or non-tension is aduality itself - simply put. There is nothing wrong about it, but I think we should consider the causality in our choices.

You are based in Vienna yet you spent time and produced sculptures in İstanbul and for a project you were also in Egypt for a project this summer. Do you anticipate that, as in your artistic practice, there is a difference that occurs in the production phase in different places - for example Cairo, İstanbul or Vienna; that perhaps the viewer can witness on the final product / outcome?

Well, places and people I meet by accident, through common interest, or on purpose after researching on a specific topic, have an influence on me. And furthermore, on the way in which I challenge and produce art. I use these two words production and challenge to describe my own approach. Some pieces I do myself, others are done by machines, or others. For me, there is no contradiction in it. This is what I want to emphasize as a general topic, or to trigger questions of production in order to show the socioeconomic context we're living in.

In school as a teenager, we read Jean-Paul Sartre, 'The Chips Are Down.' I was fascinated by the play. I didn't know why. I began to learn more when I became interested in my family structure and their history in the city of Cairo, to figure out the mechanisms that were behind such a story. My grandfather on my mother's side used to have his own industrial company; my grandfather on my father's side was a talented carpenter.

I live in Austria now, still my roots are in Egypt, getting to know both city systems comes on top of my individual experience.







Opposing structures are simply there and present within me. I have the feeling that I am stuck in the middle, and the global issues are strangely related to me.

My basic motivation is to show what we all share.

Some of us have the privilege to examine diverse techniques and the freedom to move, to have time, the right to choose or the luxury to fail.

To witness this simple necessity is a big deal nowadays and if the viewer can witness the different production places depends on the viewers interest, knowledge/experience and curiosity.

**Do you think there will ever be another Thomas Muster?
Do you think there ever will be an Egyptian tennis player
winning a Grand Slam?**

No.

Okay, I don't care about the Grand Slams - actually I dislike these worn-out, exhausted players, having one arm stronger than the other. Perhaps it's another way to understand power issues in action? I think it would be great, if they would play barefoot. The human heel is a fantastic body part.

**Can you briefly tell us more about your point on how the
understanding of sculpture, form and beauty evolved or
altered since the creation of the Winged Victory of
Samothrace?**

I'm sorry to say that, but it isn't possible for me to define the vast amount of sculptural approaches briefly from then until now. It is simply too big and too broad.

Perhaps I can try to be the oracle, in a way, that the question wants me to be.



From my perspective, it is the idea of the moment that everybody captures from different angles. These individual angles can be put into words. For example, who says that a book, and the images you perceive while reading it, aren't the basis for your construction? You have the ability to label it. The difference is that image is linear and the object multidimensional.

A moment you share with others can be a 'one minute' performance. We are already skilled in self-presentation with our own data - an overload of narcissistic behaviour. I believe that there are various ways to answer this question. Maybe the moment where Angeline Jolie's dress exposed her bare leg at one of the award nights? It was the same kind of artificial, performance moment, something that reminds me of the Winged Victory of Samothrace. A dress from Iris van Herpen or Christopher Kane would be a much better choice, if you ask me, and would perfectly round up the idea of digitalized and handcrafted fabrics and shape. I saw some dresses of them exhibited at the Met in New York. The ones I have in mind are designed in a futuristic way.

In the same manner that the serial parts are made in my work, the company, where the objects for the show are produced - somart Istanbul - replicated a 3D drawing via CNC technique.

And now the questions about contemporary sculpture: Can objects relate to a moment that you share? Does a sculpture or an object have the ability to make you feel? For me they do in both cases. Maybe that is the reason why I have dedicated my practice to materiality.

And then there is Heraclitus, my personal favorite madman. In terms of the alleged doctrine of the Identity of Opposites, Heraclitus too believes in some sort of unity of opposites. For instance, "God is day night, winter summer, war peace, satiety hunger ..." (DK22B67). Do you believe in god(s)? If yes, what sort of god(s) is that ?

Do you know the film: 'Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close'? I enjoyed the scene where father and son, during a flashback within the plot, had a paradox word composition match. They fenced with oxymoron words.

To have the right to be controversial or contradicting, nowadays or in former Greek times, makes you privileged. You don't have to define either/or. It is both. Generally speaking, for most of us, we want both - either we have the resources or we don't. Allowing yourself the right to be paradoxical isn't complex.



If I want to compare it to my artistic approach: It's like balancing out the form with the spirit level or finding the center point where leverage effects compensate one another. When you ask me about gods or goddesses, I think that this form has a particular energy; however, to put it into words is nearly impossible for me, like a strange mixture of anything you can imagine happening at the same time. Maybe gods are that thing that happens, without you knowing it consciously or something you know, but that just happens unconsciously?

This one is a tricky one: culture or nature?

Why don't you ask me 'Amnesty International' or 'Greenpeace'?

works illustrated

split | spit | sip, 2017

anticipating objects

glazed ceramics, rope,
plinth casted via CNC technique
120 x 24 cm & variable

technical support:

Thomas Kersten

Dominik Strecelek

Varol Somuncuoğlu

Sherine Anis (b. 1976, Cairo) received her BFA at the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna, under Heimo Zobernig in 2012. She completed a short-term residency in Istanbul in 2017.

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