

History Otherwise

Ahmet Ögüt

19 February – 24 April 2020

Wei-Ling Contemporary



Ahmet Ögüt's first ever solo exhibition in Malaysia, *'History Otherwise'*, challenges our ways of knowing and understanding the world. This exhibition unveils history through the perspective of the "subaltern" – revealing the realities that we often overlook, or consider invisible. Comprising four artworks of different mediums – tapestry, mail art, drawings, and video – the exhibition attempts to alter the Eurocentric way of looking at history without falling into the trap of creating new "centralisms". Each work unfolds stories that shape our current times seen through the lenses of various personages and societies, and poses fundamental questions surrounding history as we know it. *Who should write the global history? Who is it destined for? How do artists take part in remapping the connectedness of the world?* As historian Serge Gruzinski wrote, *"It is by shifting the focus and no longer only by inverting the points of view (..) that we can hope to achieve a history that makes sense in our own age"*^[1]

Spanning more than six meters in the gallery space is Ögüt's recent work entitled *History Otherwise: Ottoman Socialist Hilmi and Ottoman Women's Rights Defender Nuriye* (2019-2020), exhibited for the first time in the form of tapestry. This piece invites us to discover two invisible aspects of late the 19th-century Ottoman era; the Socialist heritage and the women's liberation movement. Created based on a painting that Ögüt had realize on the occasion of the Art Encounters Biennial 2019 (Timisoara, Romania), the image depicts two central figures set in an Ottoman style living room: Hüseyin Hilmi Bey, founder of the Ottoman Socialist Party (1910–1913) and the Ottoman Socialist magazine "İştirak", as well as Nuriye Ulviye Mevlan Civelek, one of the leading founder of the Ottoman Society for the Defense of Women's Rights (1913-1921). The Ottoman society had a small yet powerful circle of women who played significant roles in the public debates surrounding women's rights, notably through the publish of several issues of a feminist Ottoman magazine. The large-scale painting was done on a pedestrian street in the heart of Timisoara, in a particular way that creates an illusion of an archeological dig – a symbol of a forgotten history. Although the Ottomans used to rule the city between 1551-1716, there are very few visible traces of them the city's present urban landscape.

Intriguing is the way Ögüt repurposes what he calls "social ready-mades" – existing objects with specific social functions – into an artwork. The piece *Self-Made Mail Art Archive* (2019) owes itself to the artist's personal discovery of old Maltese envelopes with special graphics and

stamps; traces of the sociopolitical connections between Malta and the rest of the world. More than a tool of communication, the envelopes were conveyers of political messages across the country and beyond, linking the local and the global. These envelopes now serve as the artist's canvas, as he intervenes with copies of mail art gestures, stamps, and notes taken from matching year of mail art examples from several prominent artists: Genesis P-Orridge, Lee Lozano, Mierle Laderman Ukeles, On Kawara, Anna Banana, Luc Fierens, Hans Ruedi Fricker, and Sol LeWitt's postcard to Eva Hesse.

Meanwhile, pieces of personal experiences are laid bare in the work *Fantasized Fantastic Corporeal World* (2019), a series of pencil drawings on paper accompanied by typewritten texts by the artist. Each frame depicts a true yet ironic story, the result of tools enforced by the "nation-state"; passports, borders, embassies, and the state itself. Highlighting issues from racial segregation to border control, every vignette reflects the transitory element of the story at a given time, whilst suggesting a possible change in outcomes which could prevail over – or generate – a different narrative.

Lastly, the short animation *United* (2016-17), commissioned by the 11th Gwangju Biennale, was created by the artist in memory of a twenty-one year old protester named Lee Han-Yeol, who passed away in Seoul in 1987, as well as Enes Ata, a six-year-old Kurdish boy who lost his life during protests in Diyarbakır, in Ögüt's homeland, Turkey, in 2006. This animation, in the style of Korean comics "Manhwa", not only portrays the stories of these two young boys that fell victim to state violence – struck with gas canisters during civilian protests – but presents them both as narrators, advising tips on how to protect oneself from tear gas during a demonstration.

Consulting local historians and visiting remnants are Ögüt's approach in investigating the untold stories that have formed our society and the way we are. The four pieces in *'History Otherwise'* that so succinctly interrogate and reveal these accounts and events, serve as a testament to the necessity of analysing our own relationship to the so called history of the "subaltern". It is a recounting of those narratives that somehow do make it to our public consciousness, and a reminder that we are perhaps, much less removed from these events than we might first assume.

Ahmet Ögüt (b. 1981, Silvan, Diyarbakir) lives and works in Amsterdam. Ögüt has exhibited at the 11th Gwangju Biennale, 13th Biennale de Lyon, 7th Liverpool Biennial, 5th Berlin Biennial for Contemporary Art, 12th Istanbul Biennial, amongst others and co-represented Turkey at the 53rd Venice Biennale. His works touch a broad range of media including video, photography, performance, installation, drawing and printed media. Ögüt is also the initiator of the Silent University, an education platform by displaced people and forced migrants.

[1] Serge Gruzinski, *The Eagle and the Dragon: Globalization and European Dreams of Conquest in China and America in the Sixteenth Century*, 2014, p. 44.



Ottoman Socialist Hilmi and Ottoman Women's Rights Defender Nuriye

Anamorphic painting transferred on carpet

6.3m x 3m

Ed. 1/5 + 2AP

2019

Image courtesy of the artist



Ottoman Socialist Hilmi and Ottoman Women's Rights Defender Nuriye

Anamorphic painting transferred on carpet

6.3m x 3m

Ed. 1/5 + 2AP

2019

(Installation view at Wei-Ling Contemporary, 2020)



Ottoman Socialist Hilmi and Ottoman Women's Rights Defender Nuriye

Anamorphic painting transferred on carpet

6.3m x 3m

Ed. 1/5 + 2AP

2019

(Installation view at Wei-Ling Contemporary, 2020)



Fantasized Fantastic Corporeal World 1

9 drawings, pencil on paper, typewritten text

21cm x 29.7cm each

2019

Image courtesy of the artist



Fantasized Fantastic Corporeal World 2

9 drawings, pencil on paper, typewritten text

21cm x 29.7cm each

2019

Image courtesy of the artist



Fantazied Fantastic Corporeal World 3

9 drawings, pencil on paper, typewritten text

21cm x 29.7cm each

2019

Image courtesy of the artist



Fantazied Fantastic Corporeal World 4

9 drawings, pencil on paper, typewritten text

21cm x 29.7cm each

2019

Image courtesy of the artist



Fantasized Fantastic Corporeal World 5

9 drawings, pencil on paper, typewritten text

21cm x 29.7cm each

2019

Image courtesy of the artist



Fantasized Fantastic Corporeal World 6

9 drawings, pencil on paper, typewritten text

21cm x 29.7cm each

2019

Image courtesy of the artist



Fantazied Fantastic Corporeal World 7

9 drawings, pencil on paper, typewritten text

21cm x 29.7cm each

2019

Image courtesy of the artist



Fantazied Fantastic Corporeal World 8

9 drawings, pencil on paper, typewritten text

21cm x 29.7cm each

2019

Image courtesy of the artist



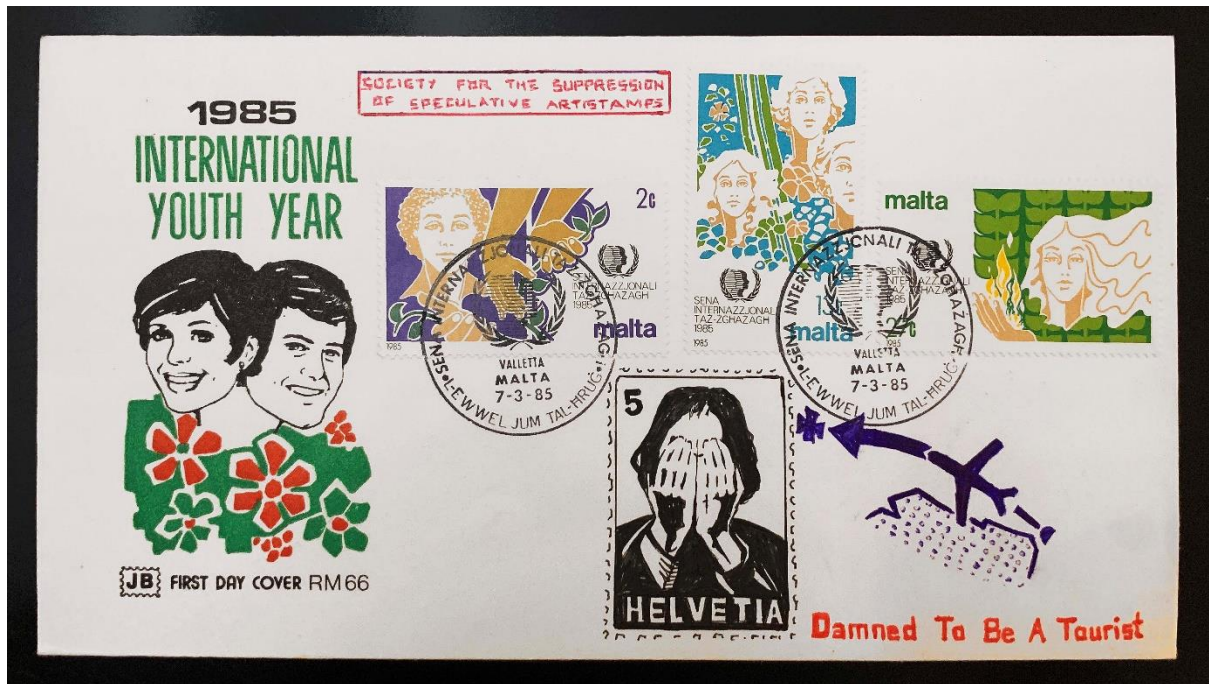
Fantasized Fantastic Corporeal World 9

9 drawings, pencil on paper, typewritten text

21cm x 29.7cm each

2019

Image courtesy of the artist



Possibly Self-Made Mail Art Archive:

Hans Ruedi Fricker, 1985

Ten original envelopes from Malta, with artist's intervention of copies of mail art gestures, stamps, notes taken from matching year of mail art examples of several artists

Variable dimensions

2019

Image courtesy of the artist



Possibly Self-Made Mail Art Archive:

Anna Banana, 1978

Ten original envelopes from Malta, with artist's intervention of copies of mail art gestures, stamps, notes taken from matching year of mail art examples of several artists

Variable dimensions

2019

Image courtesy of the artist



Possibly Self-Made Mail Art Archive:

Valie Export, 1975

Ten original envelopes from Malta, with artist's intervention of copies of mail art gestures, stamps, notes taken from matching year of mail art examples of several artists

Variable dimensions

2019

Image courtesy of the artist



Possibly Self-Made Mail Art Archive:

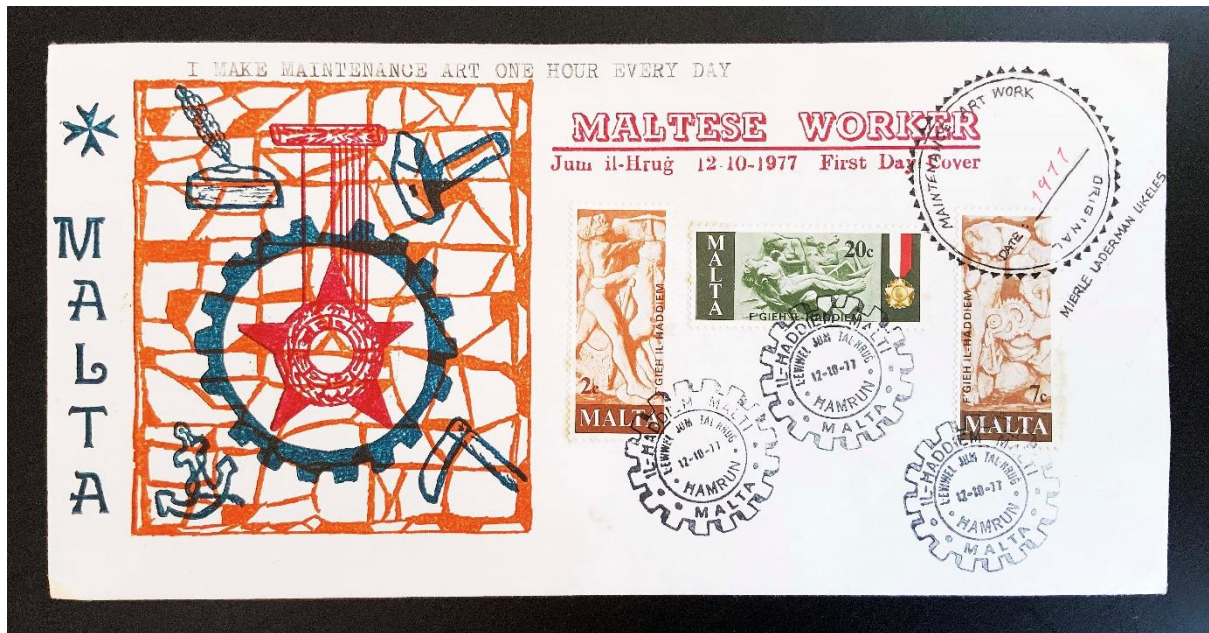
Sol Lewitt's postcard to Heva Hesse, 1967

Ten original envelopes from Malta, with artist's intervention of copies of mail art gestures, stamps, notes taken from matching year of mail art examples of several artists

Variable dimensions

2019

Image courtesy of the artist



Possibly Self-Made Mail Art Archive:

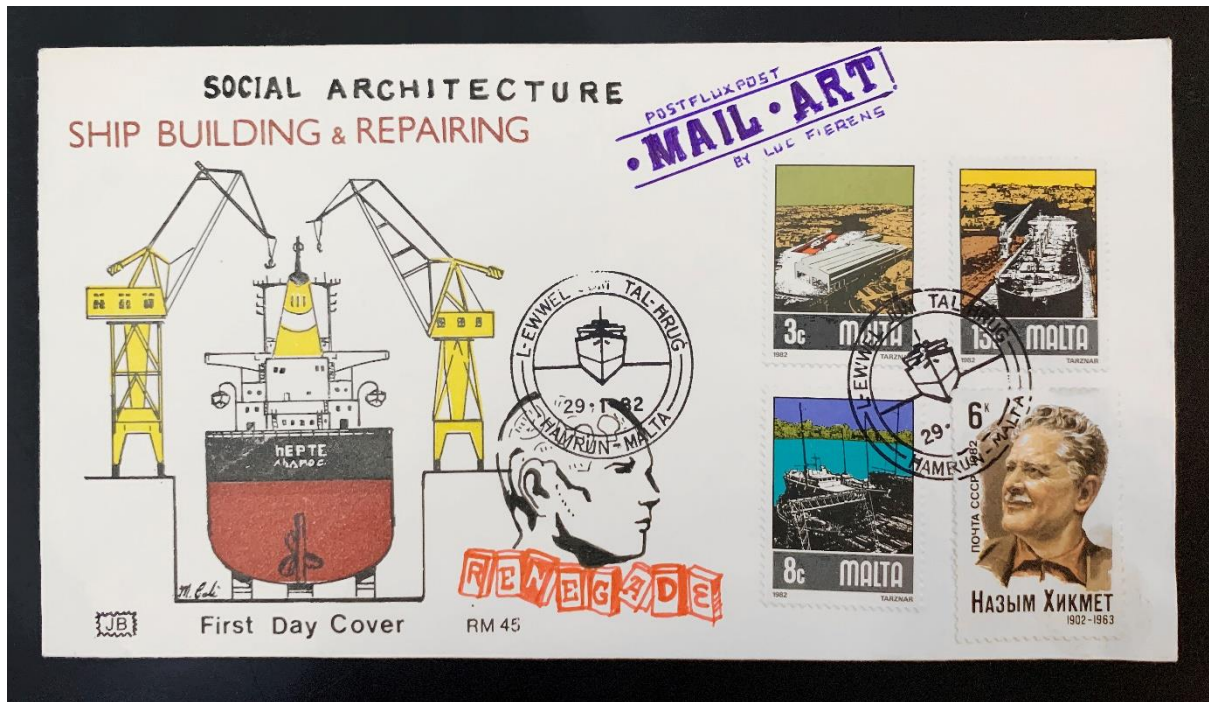
Mierle Laderman Ukeles, 1977

Ten original envelopes from Malta, with artist's intervention of copies of mail art gestures, stamps, notes taken from matching year of mail art examples of several artists

Variable dimensions

2019

Image courtesy of the artist



Possibly Self-Made Mail Art Archive:

Luc Fierens, 1982

Ten original envelopes from Malta, with artist's intervention of copies of mail art gestures, stamps, notes taken from matching year of mail art examples of several artists

Variable dimensions

2019

Image courtesy of the artist



Possibly Self-Made Mail Art Archive:

On Kawara, 1972

Ten original envelopes from Malta, with artist's intervention of copies of mail art gestures, stamps, notes taken from matching year of mail art examples of several artists

Variable dimensions

2019

Image courtesy of the artist



Possibly Self-Made Mail Art Archive:

Lee Lozano, 1968

Ten original envelopes from Malta, with artist's intervention of copies of mail art gestures, stamps, notes taken from matching year of mail art examples of several artists

Variable dimensions

2019

Image courtesy of the artist



United

HD animation

Ca. 3 minutes

2016-2017

(Video still)



While Others Attack

Bronze, granite base

Man: 94cm x 54cm x 37cm; Dog: 45.5cm x 80.5cm x 29.5cm

Edition 3 + 2 AP

2016

Image courtesy of the artist