

The burning energy of Collage and Hardworking Small Humans

Who founded the seven-gated city of Teb?
The books mention the names of lonely kings.
Or the kings that carry the rocks?
And there was Babylon, taken to the ground over and over,
who rebuilt Babylon every time?
In which houses did the construction workers live
of Lima swimming in gold?
What do you think happened to the masons when the Great Wall was completed?
Or the ones who built memorials of victories in noble Rome?
Who did Ceaser defeat to achieve these victories?
Wasn't there any other place to live but palaces
in the magnificent Byzantium?
Even in Atlantis, the land of tales,
people cried out for help from their slaves,
drowning in a growling sea in the middle of a night.
How did Alexander, the child, captured India?
Did he do it alone?
How did Ceaser defeat the Ghouls?
Did he not have even a cook with himself?
Philip of the Spanish cried, they say
when all his fleet was sank.
Was it only him who cried?
Frederic the second won the seven year war?
Was there no one else who had victory that day?

Books have victories written all over them, on every other page.
Who is it that cooks the meal of victory?
A grand man stepped on and forward in every step.
Who is it that pays for the money spent?

There you go, with a handful of situations
and a handful of questions.

Said Berthold Brecht in his poem. Yes, they were bitter questions regarding the grand "small people".
It was an attempt to read history backwards... It was an attempt to fool history itself with grand
characters, grand happenings and a glamorous parade of victory. It is possible to extend Brecht's
question to eternity. Yet, who made the classy iPhone, or shiny tablets, or the skyscrapers in the
clouds reflecting the entire metropolis on their glass facings, or the shopping malls – the cathedrals
of the day? How does it feel, one wonders, to be the lonely operator in a tall construction crane?
Who activates the lever of a nuclear reactor with a luminous safety hat, or who turns people into a
pile of flesh and bone with a single adjust of a switch without ever seeing them? Who is in control of
the boats or drives the comfortable busses? Who builds tunnels, lit up and cool, by drilling the rocks?
The answer is: The Small Human Beings.

TETRIS HUMAN BEINGS:

Small human beings are everywhere... sometimes when a zebra is trying to feed on grass fields, while we watch it on TV as we sit and relax in our armchairs, they appear rushing out of nowhere, yet self confident and fast pacing. These are the Tetris humans. They move with the energy and the alertness of a game, they are poured on the canvas with the numeric nature a game possesses. Or an elephant moving slowly, looking for its grave. Yet again, a chainsaw is being poured on it, with its tiny sharp teeth and horror in the name of an engine sound. Yalkın, makes the Hardworking Small Humans confront the nature in state of a layered structure. His dreams are so grandiose. His defeat as well... I am talking about the Small human beings who continue on like characters in a video game, who run with tools to shape nature, like slipping from the chains of a saw and shapes with pace and noise the civilizations with their cranes In the collages of Arda Yalkın. It wasn't easy to come up to this point from Arda's liquid layers, of course. It was a result of hard work that he got himself this space in the glorious media of art history. Had to wait for centuries to be able to be seen with all the impressiveness of its stature. In other words, art did not accept the Small human in his throne room... It was more like employment within the physical hand work of the craft, in areas Plato despised, areas of necessity and imitation.

"SEDUCING" TRANSPARENCY OF THE LAYERS

Arda Yalkın's hard working Small human beings are both within and without the family trees of this long history of course. His people gain meaning through the liquid surfaces of screens with high speed processors. The meaning is gained through the numeric acts of information that melt in layer by layer. It captures the memory of the history that is hid under it. Sometimes scared, sometimes indifferent... If we were to define modernism, established after 1830 and made visible after the 1900's, we could use the example hitting a glass surface. So the art, which never imaged the nature with its purity, started to deal with the glass itself on where the results are displayed. The displayed three dimensional projections lost importance against the dullness of the glass that became the main playground for an artist. The art itself started to bend around its own materialism and methods. The process that started with Impressionism – the process of focusing on the paint and the movements of the brush – transformed into the materialism of the canvas and the surface. And after that, Duchamp's creations of dangerous and thorny within the world of daily life objects were to follow. Yet, the act of internal bending of Modernism (what is art?) and focusing on the tools of the art process gave some play field to the real revolution Cubism. That was barely a touch... Though, it ended up as collage and montage, tasted fully by Dada after 1914. Collage and montage gave life a cinematographic image. All things that were never seen possible to bring together became pieces of works through the equality and democracy of forms. An umbrella or a sewing machine... Objects were free of all of their boundaries and were open to never-heard before concepts of usage. Modern city life, lights on the shop windows, endless reflecting on glass surfaces, the natural cubism of the newspapers that Hagel called the modern people's morning prayer, collage and montage was the natural understanding of the people of crowds... The vagabond of the modern life already was busy finding out new meanings from the pieces of the city: open ended and valid for re-evaluation. Ford T, the first model of Ford, also took advantage of the cubist approach as cars for middle classes were made through the power of montage... Hard working small people were screwing in every piece of the car as they helplessly moan about the indifference of the assembly line...

Yes, the modern life's patchwork reflection was finding its own language in montage and collage yet in forms scattered, desultory, open-ended... Today's digital platforms carried this revolutionary energy of the early 20th century into a whole new level. Let it be pixel or vector based, 2D or 3D, digital plates welcome whole new spaces through successive layers, transparencies, opacities and more in a multimedia universe. Shapes melt away, holding a threat of cynicism. Arda does the work he knows best, uses a language he was born into. His spaces and collages make one go into the displays... Glass surfaces are all displays nowadays. Arda does not paint, he pours the digital pallet he uses as an arm of his own onto the still surface. The small people are poured onto the monitors as gears creating a liquid emotion, through layers. One expects a new rollover or a silicon reanimation... Arda does not go to the digital from painting, the common way... He creates an original digital painting as a concept, or animations or films that were captured in a digital landscape.

DOMESTIC AND OBESE DESIRES

Arda, in "Güzel Ama Yalnız Kadınlar – Beautiful but Lonely Women", diverts the aesthetics of advertising on himself. So this is not only happening in greater collages... He takes the 50's advertising, diverts them. He does this without falling into a retro nostalgia. He thinks of this as the main issue, while he pours down a flood of images onto the Small Humans. Branded Chicken. Eat and sleep! Shopping malls, the cathedrals of today presents the hard working small people with opportunities of relaxation with shiny windows... every single debt passed through the chips of credit cards become a abstract artificial nightmare. The destruction and state of absence become increasingly solid, while money loses its present, matte existence through the transformation of all things physical to a digital simulation... This notion, which really shakes the foundation of the society, could best be explained through another digital surface, I guess. Right or Red Hack... What is needed is to hack without being done.

Ripped Cloth of the Needy

"Incredulity" of Saint Thomas (Caravaggio) in the 16th century, is one of the most extraordinary artworks of what the small people in the art history ever witnessed. Caravaggio converted the ordinary people into a surface that is alive through chapels, canvasses, kings of Jesus, the pope and nobles alongside them. Just like a light in the darkness, just like hope itself. The touch on the scar of Jesus was so real that the church was skeptical about it, concerned on counter thinking issues. If one narrates skepticism so real on canvas, people might actually become skeptic, and doubt Jesus. Yet, what they did not see was that the real scar was not on the body of the Jesus in his work, it was the ripped part of the clothes of the needy, that the ordinary were wearing. These two separate scars were meant to create gigantic revolutions, and even today, they continue to do so. After that, humanity took pieces from the wide canvases of Brueghel. With all the beauty of life, playing, sleeping, dancing and all the weight of the daily life, people experienced this. The small human was so "large", that Brueghel could only communicate with them through wide spaces. Hogarth's and Daumier's works followed from within the cities covered with smells of coal and sheep... With humor and tragedy... Yes, the thing called art was no longer a place where only sacred kings, prophets, aristocrats and angels of inspiration from myths could appear.

COCCOON OF SMALL PEOPLE

Yet, after the 18th century, the real domain of the Small People became novels rather than paintings. We can describe novel, in the most general terms, “epics of a world that lost its god” in the words of Lucas. As Walter Benjamin perfectly described, novel is the cocoon of a “hero that could not be a hero.” Or they are shelters for fallen heroes of imaginary fights against “merchant” windmills, such as Don Quixote. Ancient Greek’s half human half gods, defeater of giants or legends are not the modern heroes... The heroes are the people of crowds, dirt under their nails, from cities smelling coal, from streets narrow and winding. These heroes do not have the will to fight like Julien Sorel from Red and Black, nor the desire to continue on to destruction with a tragic sensibility. They are not the small bourgeoisie trying to capture Paris either. They are just like us. They walk around in the streets of Petersburg like low ranked officers of the city, the underground people, who look at the emptiness of a cliff and think that the emptiness does not dare look back... But mostly, like us, out from Gogol’s Coat. Small Human was given birth to within the Russian literature in one way. With no hope to get by, living by the fuel of its own powerlessness but at the same time imagining creating a broader world, The Small Humanity was the source of these heroes. This was sometimes one of us, here in this country like “Lüzumsuz Adam – Unnecessary Man” by Sait Faik: A man who walks around the city... the crumbs of sesame and tobacco in his pocket were mixed into one. Or, it might be in the arms of construction workers in Orhan Kemal’s novels...

After the novel, the next stop would be cinema. A world lit up by torchlight, the world of Chaplin. Stuck between gears, sad, funny and defeated with honor. Movie theaters were to be transformed to the new cathedrals of the Small Humans. Cinema would be the most important catalyst of change in human history, where science and art gets the “divine marriage.” The Small Humans, while executing the October Revolution, within a fracture of time would be building concentration camps, inspired by the jests of Hitler. So to speak, this would represent hope with one side, while acting very tempted to total destruction. Just like the two sides of Janus.

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