

DARO

HALGURD AHMAD,
HOSHANG BAHJAT,
KARZAN A. JAN,
LAYLA QADIR &
KOSAR MAJEED,
NIGA SALAM,
SABAH AHMED,
SRUSHT OMER

Approaching
mobility
via multi-media
documentations,
art interventions,
art-based
research and
(re)presentations

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Approaching mobility via multimedia documentation, art interventions, art-based research and (re)presentations

ZOZAN [sosa:n] is Kurdish for summer pasture and refers to the traditional lifestyle of keeping animals on summer pastures, to a mobile life and to relative freedom. The term is also used as a first name and refers to the picturesque Kurdish mountain landscapes.

The ZOZAN project combines three thematic areas, namely past and present mobility/s of Kurds, art production and representation in transnational spaces.

ZOZAN assumes two comprehensive collections of multimedia documentation of Kurdish societies created between 1968 and 2015 as its starting point. Both the Werner Finke Collection and the Mehmet Emir Collection are unique examples of documenting everyday Kurdish culture. They reflect traditional ways of life and socio-political transformations.

A central approach in the project is the organization of artistic interventions based on the two extensive collections. These interventions will take the form of workshops with (non-)Kurdish artists and selected audiences in various Kurdish and European institutions. This practice enables the workshop to capture highly fluid processes of identity, mobility and memory on the one side, and discuss such topics as past ways of living, cultural heritage and current challenges of globalization.

ZOZAN thus combines art-based research, artistic practice and social anthropological approaches to document, analyze and (re)present traditional and modern forms of migration/s in Kurdish societies. In other words, it visualizes connections reaching beyond national borders.

The production of artwork and visual media appears to play an increasingly important role in questions of (multiple) belonging(s) and memory work in transnational space. ZOZAN explores the following questions: Is visual art able to grasp the full sphere of memory and identity? What is the role of art in the construction of memory and historical narratives? How can art production cross ethnic and national borders and build bridges? How important is artistic production in the creation of commonality and togetherness in residential societies?

These artistic interventions seek to work out new forms of representation with an audience. In addition to the existing multimedia collections by Werner Finke and Mehmet Emir, the interventions will address recent confrontations with cultural heritage, identity and forms of memory. The results of these interventions will be shown in individual presentations and ultimately as an overall exhibition. Moreover, a series of publications, a website and a film will be produced.

THE PROJECT TEAM:

Maria Six-Hohenbalken (project leader), Mehmet Emir, Eva Kolm, Eva Stockinger, with the support of Eszter Agota Hárs and Marina Stoilova, with selected artists, other scientists and an interdisciplinary scientific advisory board. The four-year project is funded by the FWF¹ and carried out at the Institute for Social Anthropology at the Austrian Academy of Sciences.

¹ Austrian Science Fund
(Programme for Arts-Based
Research PEEK, AR 682)



01

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Boy in front of black tents
at the ZOZAN, 1967.

Tent camp on a high
summer pasture, 1967.

Street scene in
Mosul, 1970.

(PHOTOS: WERNER FINKE)

Werner Finke (1942–2002) was born in Perchtoldsdorf near Vienna and travelled to the Kurdish regions of Turkey for almost three decades. He compiled one of the world's most extensive ethnographic collections of Kurdish material culture (now at the Weltmuseum Vienna). His collection of multimedia documentation – handed over to the Institute for Social Anthropology after his sudden death – includes around 30,000 slides and photos, 8mm and 16mm films, and audio recordings. The collection has not been published so far.

Finke began visiting Kurdish villages, accompanying tribes to their summer pastures, and documenting their crafts and trades in 1976. His ambitious ethnographic journeys and unique collections reflect his interest in the natural environment, traditional agriculture, animal husbandry, trade and village life, and show how these have changed.

Decades of conflict in the



03

Kurdish-inhabited
regions of Turkey
resulted in the aban-
donment of traditional

modes of production (such as pastoralism) as well as forced migration. In many cases, migration to the provincial capitals and metropolitan cities of Turkey was not the end of the line. Emigration to other countries, mostly in Western Europe, and transnationally organized contacts with the homeland caused enormous transformation processes in the respective regions.

Today many of the residents Finke documented live together with their next generations in large Turkish cities and scattered all over Europe. Their community is active in cyberspace, connected via tribal websites and social media.



01

02



01
Elderly woman
in the village
of Zimeq, 1990.

02
Wedding in the
village, 1993.

03
Villager posing for
the photographer, 1994.

(PHOTOS: MEHMET EMIR)



03

Mehmet Emir was born in Dersim/Tunceli (Turkey) in 1964. He studied painting at the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna, specializing in photography, and works in multimedia. After moving to Vienna in 1981, he started documenting his region of origin as part of his annual visits. Emigration rates from the east and southeast of Turkey have skyrocketed due to rising political unrest since the 1960s, pressure to assimilate, and enormous dam projects. Today many villages are abandoned; others often only serve as summer homes for migrants who visit their region of origin during their annual holidays. Some villages were declared restricted military areas and are not accessible, and again others were destroyed. The residents of Mehmet Emir's

village emigrated to large Turkish cities or Europe, they are still connected through the village's Facebook page. So the village became a summer home for those living abroad. The multimedia collection includes more than 20 years of photographic, cinematic and ethnomusicological documentation, showing loss, adaptation, reorientation, emigration and its effects. Mehmet Emir's works have been shown in exhibitions in London, New York, Istanbul and Vienna.

2024

February

–

2023

December

in Slemani



LOCATION AND
COOPERATION
PARTNER:

ESTA Gallery



“ESTA Gallery” was established in 2018 as a venue for visual art events and exhibitions in the Kurdistan Region. Its mission is to build relationships and artistic exchanges with other Iraqi cities and neighboring countries.

The current gallery is part of the Culture Factory in Slemani [Sulaymaniyah], established in the old tobacco factory, and includes a wide range of cultural, artistic, educational and ecological programs.

The gallery strives to present works of contemporary Kurdish artists in a professional manner and according to international standards. It promotes the career of young people and respects experienced artists to show their works in a dignified manner as solo or group exhibitions.

ESTA Gallery intends to create a scientific, artistic, and critical discourse on the works and perspectives of the artists on display, and to contribute to the presentation of the contemporary and ancient history of Kurdish visual arts.

The HIWA foundation has kindly supported the exhibition of the workshop results in Slemani.

NOTES ON THE WORKSHOP



The seventh arts-based ZOZAN workshop took place under the direction of the curator DARO from December 2023 to February 2024. The curator brought together nine artists who spent three months of intensively exploring the themes of the ZOZAN project, such as migration and mobility, the environment, gender, generations, and material culture.

The participants boast various artistic backgrounds and brought many different methodological approaches to the individual topics. The group members (three women, six men) are all based in Slemani, have a Kurdish background, and are between 35 and 60 years old. The workshop was held in Kurdish and English. The artists worked with the two collections and formed an artistic collective that would like to continue working together after the project. The ZOZAN team stayed in intense online exchange with both the

collective and the curator DARO over the three months. The group discussions between the artists and the ZOZAN team were recorded. Between the individual group meetings, the participants carried out further research.

The topics of intense debate in these online meetings were finally transformed into artwork. As such, they are issues that affect the entire Kurdish settlement area: environmental problems (especially water problems), the transformation of economic traditions, especially cattle breeding and alpine farming, and the decline of knowledge systems associated with the abandonment of these economic traditions. The various types of memory characterized by flight and migration also played an important role. In addition, gender-specific topics and, in particular, women's areas of work were discussed and artistically processed. Material culture and the issue of preserving cultural heritage were of particular relevance as well. Yet another part of the working process was the potential contribution of artists in the preservation of cultural heritage and the role of the media in all this. Between the individual group meetings, the participants carried out intensive research.

In the upcoming exhibition, DARO will arrange the individual artwork in a joint exhibition to mirror the collective artwork process.



Dara Rasul Ola was born in 1965 in Slemani, Autonomous Region of Kurdistan Iraq. He chose his childhood nickname DARO to live and work as an artist.

DARO's interest in art dates back all the way to secondary school, when he began taking art classes. He received support and encouragement from other artists early on. These fellow artists ultimately helped him to present 25 of his drawings in his first exhibition in 1983. Back then he worked realistically and was still rather unsure whether he should pursue an artistic career. The success of his first exhibition kept him motivated, though. When he graduated from secondary school in 1985, political oppression in the region was increasing and he became involved in a youth organization against the regime. He had to give up the idea of studying at the art academy in Baghdad and fled to Iran. DARO describes his two-year stay in a refugee camp near Tehran as a very formative phase for him. He was friends with several artists who encouraged him to keep drawing. In Tehran, he was also able to see original works by well-known artists for the first time. In the end, he did not pursue his initial idea of studying art in Tehran but instead fled to Austria, where he was granted asylum in 1988. He is still in contact with the group of artists from this time.

Soon after his arrival in Austria, he applied to study under Adolf Fröhner at the University of Applied Arts Vienna, but was only offered a place as an associate student. He did not pursue this option, but worked as an autodidact for many years. As early as 1989 and 1990, he managed to exhibit his works in the gallery of the Afro-Asian Institute.

DARO began a series of paintings dedicated to the poison gas attack on Halabja – and at least one painting

followed each year to depict the human rights crimes and long-term consequences. One of these paintings was featured on the cover of the Diners Club magazine and sold in an auction at Dorotheum Vienna for the benefit of the victims. This success as well as his assistantship at the Salzburg International Summer Academy shaped his artistic career. Finally, in 2004, DARO decided to study Graphic Arts and Printmaking Techniques with Gunter Damisch at the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna, from which he graduated with distinction.

For many years, his preoccupation with Halabja, and in particular with landscapes depicting scorched earth and the consequences of war, remained a central theme in his work. DARO works both figuratively and abstractly with different materials (drawing, painting, graphics and installations). Many solo and group exhibitions in Europe followed, where he showed pictures from his series “Traces”, “Places of Memory”, “Words from Back Then”. In “The Letters”, he artistically processed letters from his family he had received in the first years of his exile.

DARO returned to Kurdistan in 2012 and has been teaching at the College of Fine Arts in Slemani since 2013. He founded and ran the Graphics and Design Department at the Slemani College of Fine Arts from 2015 to 2021. Together with Khabat Maroof, he established a cultural center in an old tobacco factory, the Culture Factory and founded ESTA Gallery in 2018, where he organizes and curates exhibitions.

For the ZOZAN project, DARO put together a group of eight artists presented below, organized our cooperation, and curated the presentation.



Works related to the ZOZAN project include several prints and two objects made of stone. Photographs by Werner Finke were the starting point (Woman making bread, 1975)

PRINTS

The works are generally based on the documentation of objects (from the ethnographic collection Werner Finke) but also present an attempt at archiving through art, especially through printmaking techniques. Printmaking techniques is a powerful documentation tool in itself due to the creation of main plates and the process of multiplication

and dissemination. Since the beginning of art history with the creation of this technique, the documentation, reproduction and dissemination of texts and images has been the main objective of this art.

I have used photographs from the two collections as well as other photographs that describe the mobility and life of pastoralists in Kurdish society.

The process of printing, reproduction and dissemination is the main goal of this project, as it is an attempt to historically preserve the documentation of an important part of the culture and traditions of Kurdish pastoralists.





Women's working environments
at the summer pasture, 1975.
(PHOTO: WERNER FINKE)



STONE OBJECTS

Another part of the work are two objects made of stone. The initial objects are called urination pipes, as they were used before the time of disposable diapers. The wider part was fastened in the diapers of babies, the tube part protruded and was led through a hole in the cradle for urine to flow out. Devices for boys and girls were made of wood in two different shapes. I recreated these objects largely according to the original size of the objects.

My idea to create this work of art was based on Werner Finke's collection of objects at Weltmuseum Vienna. Reproducing the shape and size of the objects in stronger material such as stone not only becomes a work of art, but also symbolizes preservation, indestructibility, survival, and immortality.



DRAWINGS

In addition to documenting objects, I focused on the role of women in Kurdish society, especially on the lives of tribes that lived by herding livestock and depicted in the Finke collections.

I focus on women in their roles as farmers, herders, seamstresses, child educators, and craftswomen who make black nomadic tents. Through stone objects, printmaking and drawing, I seek to show the roles and hard work of women in these societies.

HALGURD AHMAD MOHAMMED

Photo:
Halgurd Ahmad Mohammed,
2024



Halgurd Ahmad Mohammed is a Kurdish contemporary visual artist born in Qaplan near Slemani, Iraqi Kurdistan in 1983.

In his artistic practice he pays attention to the use of Kurdish, English, and religious texts in the context of art. Holding a master's degree from the University of Master's degree, London, Halgurd is currently a PhD student and lecturer at the College of Fine Arts, University of Slemani. In addition, he works as an art critic and art commentator for Kurdish television, and translates books and critical art articles from English to Kurdish. He has previously been the director of one of the artistic and feminist art projects at Zherzamin Center.

Halgurd is the founder and host of the YouTube channel Halgurd S. B. D., on which he interviews Kurdish artists in Slemani and documents their artistic work. He strives to expand the scope of the channel to all other Kurdish cities in

order to access the artwork and both document and transmit what Kurdish artists think to the whole world. Halgurd was a book designer for Bafr Center, a Kurdish center for writing and translating children's story books, for several months. He joined many group exhibitions both in and outside the country. His 2018 solo exhibition *Catalyst* was his first exhibition at ESTA Gallery, which focuses on new and contemporary art ideas. Halgurd serves as a leading figure of this new Kurdish generation of artists.

He has recently been turning his artistic attitude towards environmental issues, believing that art may have an impact on raising awareness for the environment and climate change. As Kurdistan and Iraq are facing the threat of environmental issues and climate change, Halgurd is engaged in producing artwork both for esthetic pleasure and in service to environmental issues.

ARTWORKS and Statements

HALGURD
AHMAD
MOHAMMED



Tent at the
summer pasture in
Beytüşşebap, 1976.
(PHOTO: WERNER FINKE)



CONTEMPORARY RASHMAL

When we take a look at the material of **Werner Finke** and **Mehmet Emir** (photos and footage), we see right away that a house is not a fixed or static unit but rather spreads out, is collected, moved, and spread out again. I'm talking about the Rashmal (Kurdish nomadic black tents made with black goat hair, as documented in the material mentioned above). It seems obvious that the (semi)nomads' interests or livelihoods depend on nature, grass, and water. This dependency makes them follow nature in a way that suits their interests. Thanks to their kind of deal with nature, they never have to think about building

a permanent house, but prefer light and movable or temporary accommodations, as we can see in these pictures provided here.

In other words, a natural de facto house turns into a replaceable house in the south of Great Kurdistan where I live. Due to the war and political conflicts between Kurds and Arabs, no one has ever thought of building a stable house/home until recently. Taking my own family as an example, they had moved three times before I was even born. They had been evicted from their village and my grandfather's house had been burnt down. After I was born, we must have moved at least twenty times, usually for political and military reasons. I can hardly remember when the Ba'ath Party flattened our houses with shovels during the Anfal Campaign. Once or twice, we were forced to live

in tents. Later, we were only able to build our houses from natural materials such as clay, stone, and wood. What I want to say is that both the military and war basically created the same concept of housing in my mind.

I would like to assert that there has been a kind of political and economic stability in the contemporary history of South Kurdistan in the last two decades. In all our cities, concrete buildings have been growing higher and higher; they are finally built to be solid and durable. In the

same breath, people build their houses as if they were eternal and could not be left behind anymore. Everyone who once lived in mud houses or tents due to the war now owns a solid concrete house. My brother Sabah even added iron bars to reinforce his concrete walls to withstand natural disasters (e.g., earthquakes). In my eyes, all of this expresses a certain kind of political, military, economic, and even natural peace and stability.

The concept behind the artwork is based on this understanding (see Figure 1). I wanted to rebuild or reproduce this Rashmal (nomadic Kurdish tent) – which bears the characteristic of displacement in itself – in concrete and reinforced concrete (using rebars). What I would like to convey in my artwork is the stable situation of Kurds today, at least in the southern part of Great Kurdistan. We experienced and have passed beyond nomadic life, agriculture, mud architecture and mud houses. The war and the conflicts between Kurds and Arabs are somehow over. Today concrete and steel bars express psychological stability as well as a strong infrastructure and the industrialization of Kurdistan. Whether the environmental consequences are positive or not is yet another matter and will be discussed in due course. I want my artwork to be able to express this historical transformation from humble nomadic life to concrete modern life.



Slingstone, 2024,
handmade, produced by
a nomadic man and my brother.
Halgurd's Collection



SLINGSTONE

This work is a primitive weapon for throwing stones. A sheep's hair by itself has no strength or form, but pull them together and you will get a lot more strength and a certain form. Nomadic people work and migrate together. One member alone has no strength. When working together, however, they become a force to be reckoned with, reflecting different social forms and configurations.

01



Photo: Werner Finke,
1968.

01

The Tablets of
Nomadic
Vocabularies,
4 pieces
(each 20cm x 20cm),
2024,
Halgurd Ahmed,
Artist collection.

02

02



THE TABLETS OF NOMADIC VOCABULARIES

The photographs and the various footage in the collections of Werner Finke and Mehmet Emir influenced me in many different ways. These portrayed experiences of nomadic life (their norms, goods, clothes, etc.) hardly exist among the Kurds anymore.

I noticed that the more people leave behind this way of life, the more their language and knowledge fall into oblivion. From this perspective, I tried to restore the elements' language that

are no longer used and vanish with the disappearance of nomadic life. My brother and I found some families that had lived as nomads for years. When we visited them, they told us the names of materials, tools and other stuff related to their lives in the course of a long meeting. I documented more than three hundred words. Later at home I engraved these words on four clay tablets and fired them in a kiln. The tradition of fired clay tablets with text engraved on them dates back to Sumerian times. Fired clay is one of those materials that last forever. Through my artistic act, I intend to preserve the history of nomadic Kurdish life as well as its related language and terminology.

HOSHANG BAHJAT EZZAT

Photo:
Hoshang Bahjat Ezzat,
2024



ARTWORKS and Statements

HOSHANG
BAHJAT
EZZAT



STATEMENT

Environmental factors are the main reason for migrations, including the process of transhumance (as practiced at the ZOZAN in the regions of Garmyan and Koestan in Kurdistan). For this reason, we may consider water shortage a main reason for their migration.

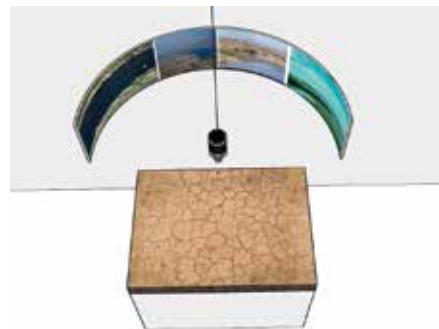
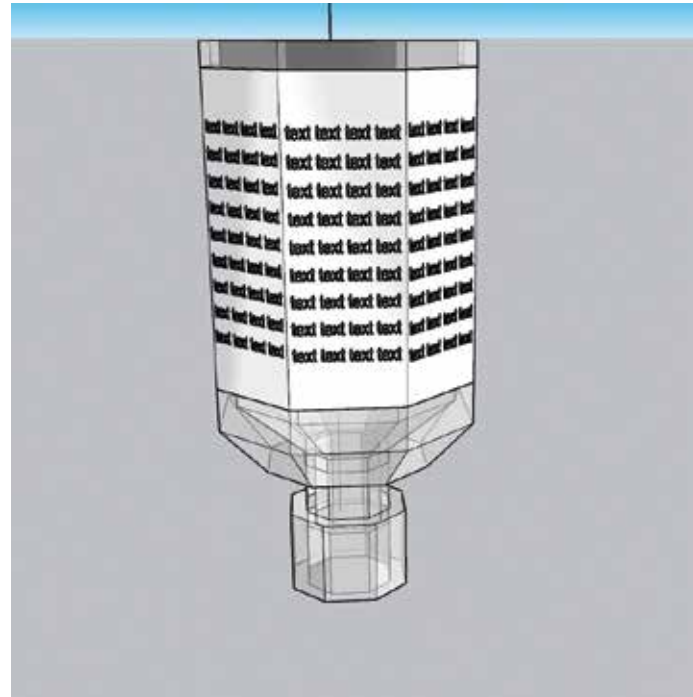
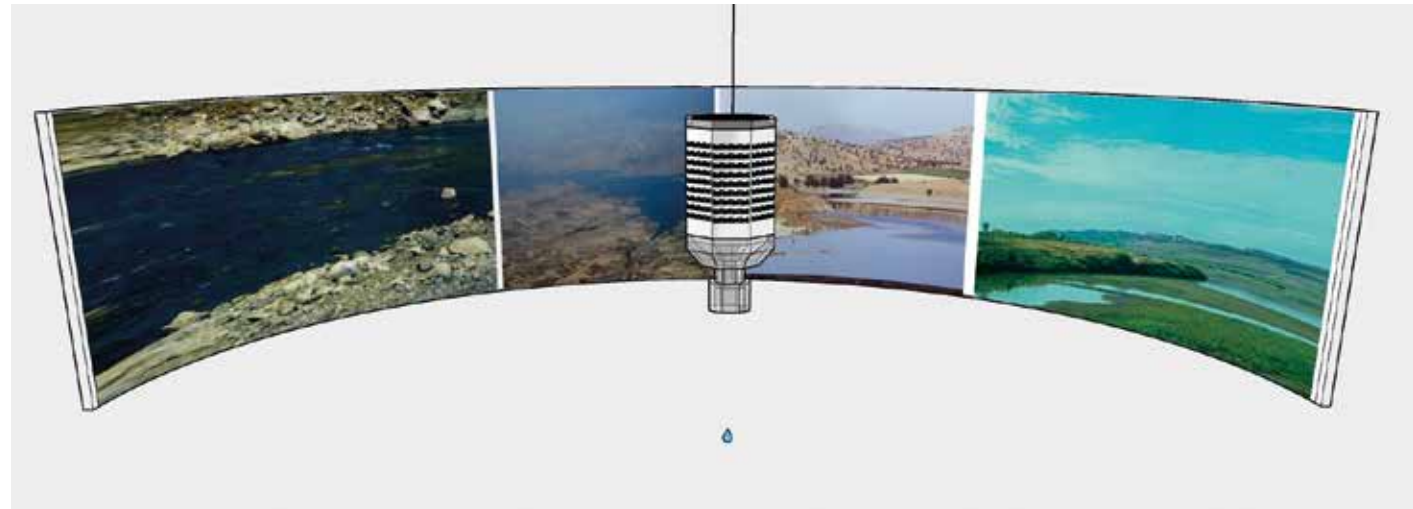
The lack of clean water is a battle everyone on the planet will have to face in the future.

The main point of the artwork will be available to the recipient when looking at the installation from an environmental (water)-centric perspective. Examining the presented data and statistics which will take the viewer to the heart of the work.

Hoshang Bahjat Ezzat is a visual artist born in Slemani. He holds a bachelor's degree in Visual Arts and a diploma in Plastic Arts from the University of Slemani. Starting his career as a painter, he became acquainted with other new and different media of contemporary art, such as video art, installation, video performance, and new media art.

Hoshang participated in several group exhibitions with the Sulyon Group (e.g., Touch project, Rega project, and Enviroment project, "Artists in the now" curated by DARO), exhibited the solo show "Artwork and Audience" in Munich, Germany, and curated other art exhibitions.

In addition to working as an artist, he published several articles in the field of art criticism (e.g., "The Power of Concept", "Artwork as a Critical Act", "Art in Context", "Thinking about Art"). Hoshang teaches art at the Slemani Institute of Fine Arts - Non-Governmental and continues to work as a visual artist and art critic.



Dams around Elazığ, 2014.
(PHOTO: MEHMET EMIR)

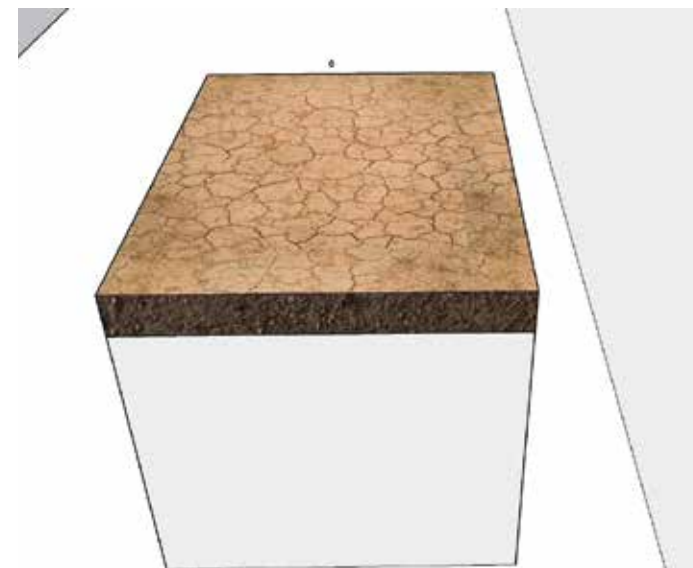


Photo:
Karzan A. Jan,
2024



Karzan A. Jan is a visual artist and lecturer at the Department of Plastic Art, University of Slemani in the Kurdistan Region Iraq.

Karzan received his diploma in Painting from the Institute of Fine Arts, Slemani. After his bachelor's degree in 2005, he ranked top of the class in 2008/2009. In 2012/2013 he graduated with a master's degree in Contemporary Art from the School of Art and Design, Cardiff Metropolitan University (UK).

Karzan participated in numerous exhibitions both in and outside Kurdistan. His last cooperation project was in "Themes & Expressions in the Artist Now" (2022), a cultural project with 52 Kurdish artists at ESTA Gallery.

In addition to his academic career, he is a member of the Board of Directors at the Hazhan Organization for Thought and Spirituality, where he publishes articles and writings in this associations' magazine. In 2018 he published his first book entitled "Art and Spirituality, an Introduction to Islamic Art and Architecture".

ARTWORKS and Statements

KARZAN
A. JAN

AN OAK TREE

Medium: oak tree,
Markana, tetrapod
Themes: Water Scarcity
Crisis leads to Migration
Trends: installation art
Size: 35x35x100 cm
Date: 2024



WATER SCARCITY CRISIS LEADS TO MIGRATION

The art project delves into the concept of "Migration in the future", in which the looming water scarcity crisis in the region becomes the primary impetus for human migration. Unlike historical trends driven by warfare, economic turmoil, or the pursuit of improved living conditions, this unprecedented

migration arises from the acute scarcity of water resources. Embedded within the realm of Contemporary Art, this project offers a visionary solution to the water scarcity dilemma: the promotion of afforestation,

particularly through the cultivation of oak trees. Recognized as irrigated land, oak trees possess the remarkable capacity to absorb substantial quantities of water, up to 654 gallons (about 2,500 liters) per tree, replenishing groundwater reservoirs. The overarching objective of this art initiative is to heighten societal awareness regarding imminent threats, thereby fostering proactive measures to mitigate potential risks. Central to the project's implementation are numerous oak trees strategically planted to symbolize resilience and sustainability in the face of adversity. Additionally, the project incorporates the symbolism of Markana, as a historical water storage vessel, serving as a poignant reminder of traditional water conservation practices.



01



02



01

Donkey in a forest,
1967.

02

03

Pottery workshop Mosul,
1970.

(PHOTOS: WERNER FINKE)

03

LAYLA QADIR & KOSAR MAJEED

Photo:
Layla Qadir & Kosar Majeed,
2024

Layla Qadir was born, lives, and works in Slemani. She graduated from the College of Fine Arts, University of Slemani, with a bachelor's degree in 2002. She then continued at the Kharkiv State Academy of Design & Arts and graduated with a master's degree in 2010.

Layla participated in various group exhibitions in Kurdistan (in various galleries and museums, such as the Amna Suraka Museum) and abroad (e.g., in 2006 in the Kurdish painters exhibition in Norway and 2008 in the exhibition "Dream for the better" in Kyiv, Ukraine).

Kosar Majeed Ibrahim is a Kurdish artist and sculptor. Born in Baghdad, he enrolled at the College of Fine Arts, University of Slemani in 1998. He also received his bachelor's degree in 2002 and graduated from the Kharkiv State Academy of Design & Arts with a master's degree in 2010. Kosar participated in many art exhibitions and workshops in Kurdistan and Ukraine.

When the College of Fine Arts was established in Slemani in 1998, Layla and Kosar were both accepted among the first students. They graduated from the Department of Plastic Arts in 2002 and stayed on as lecturers at the same college. Both artists went to Ukraine and enrolled in the master's program at the Kharkiv State Academy of Design & Arts, where Layla specialized in portrait art and Kosar in monumental sculptures.

In these years, they participated in many group exhibitions in Kiev and other Ukrainian cities. Since their return to Kurdistan in 2010, they have been teaching at the Department of Plastic Arts as part of the College of Fine Arts, University of Slemani. They live and work together in Slemani, Kurdistan Region of Iraq. In 2012 they installed the sculpture "Towards Science" at the University of Slemani campus. In 2016 they participated in a competition for a Peshmerga monument, in which their model ranked first.

From 1994 to 2021 Layla participated in many exhibitions and workshops in Kurdistan and Europe about women's life, culture, and nature. Focusing on the environment and the land, Kosar has been working with many cultural development organizations.





Child in the
village Zimeq
1991.
(PHOTO: MEHMET EMIR)



STATEMENT

If nothingness (oblivion) is "determined to be existing" so not all existence is eternal, that is why we always experience a kind of fading to the point of non-existence with other things.

In transferring photos of the Finke and Emir collections into a form of mirroring, the artwork addresses the relationship between our perception and authentic documentation.

Choosing a sketchbook as the medium of art connects to the instability of the ZOZAN way of life and the materials of the portrayed protagonists.

What happens after relating to our memories – when we only feel their translucence and blurriness?





Survivor of
Dersim 1937/38,
2009.
(PHOTO: MEHMET EMIR)



STATEMENT

When life, human beings, and animals are aligned and in parallel – the Zozan lifestyle acts as an example for creating a special system of life.

If the animals are at the center of the life cycle, this is the context for livestock farmers to decide on the necessary migration routes. Taking the same route twice but in different directions (back and forth), is manifested in the composing of the artwork. Mud as a material in the artwork intends to create harmony with the nature of the Zozan's materials. Being limited or facing receding areas of proper environments and properties also reduces their circle of life.

“As proper areas disappear,
so does the Zozan process”



Kurdish sheep farmers
on their way to the
summer pasture, 1975.
(PHOTO: WERNER FINKE)





Niga Salam is a Kurdish artist and curator based in Slemani, where she studied at the College of Fine Arts, University of Slemani.

Her Her artworks raise questions about society and social constructs. The artist showcases a great deal of criticality, storytelling, and investigative journalism in combination with experimental materials and methods.

Her first exhibition for college was a private show named INSIDE/OUTSIDE, covering gender-related issues, hair as an objective matter, and womanhood. Although her presence in the contemporary scene has been a challenge, Niga's brilliance, attitude, and sense of management always allowed for opportunities. Afterwards she was the Deputy Managing Director for the first Iraqi photography agency and curated several shows as part of the organizing team, including Here Through the Eyes of Our Female Photographers, We Came From Fire (Joey Lawrance) 2019, Kama-ran's Momentos 2019, The Marshlands

of Iraq (Mootaz Sami), Iraq Through Our Eyes, Metrography Photo Festival 2018 & World Press Photo 17–19. Her journey continues after Covid as a curator for Zherzemin 2021 and assistant curator for Together [] Alone 2022. In these years, she was also a participating artist in Khobun, Artists in the Now, Today, Tomorrow, Space21, Journey and Silsal.

Niga has also been present in the international scene, e.g. The Doc Festival – Kassel 2019, Moving Artist's Residency – 2018, United Nations International Day of Peace 2023.

ARTWORKS

NIGA SALAM

and Statements



UNTITLED

Medium: installation
Year: 2024
Material: mud and water

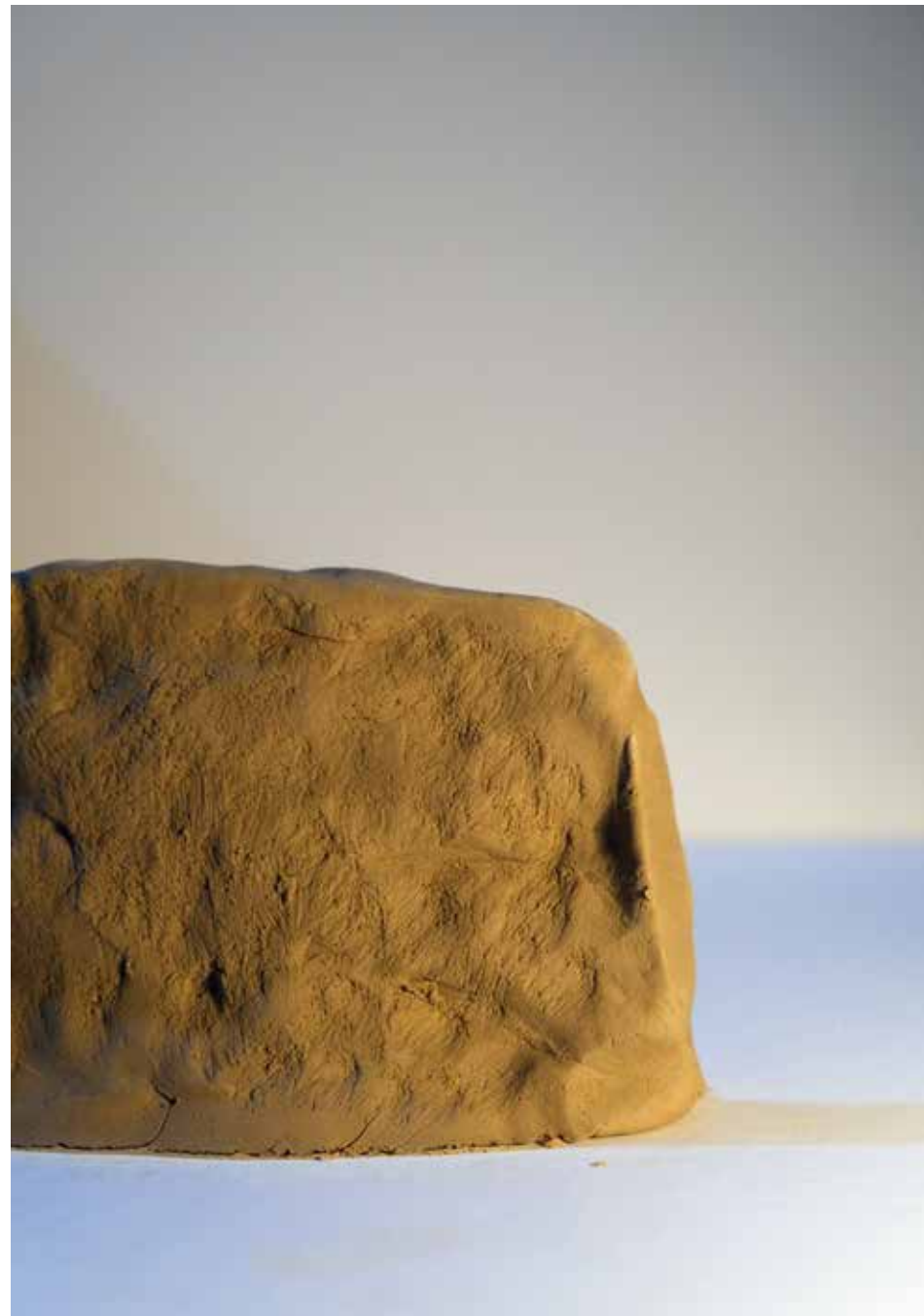
STATEMENT

The seminomadic cattle breeders always traversed these lands in search of a green and well-hydrated environment for their herds of livestock. While all they ever faced was mountains and plains, civility decided to draw more imaginary borders related to political authority than a natural boundary. The simple lifestyle would not comply with the requirements of authorities, as

priorities and definition of things change. The cattle breeders care for what is vital to their existence only. These

sides have different understandings of nature, sanctity, and borders. This artwork displays a wall of mud and how it gets washed away by water. The installation itself clashes with the space as it shows natural borders trying to withstand the flow of civilization.

In Kurdish architecture mud was used to create houses; in the dry season, they would undergo re-covering, and as winter came, rain and snow washed the mud away – again and again. This cycle of inevitability is the same with the seminomadic cattle breeders and their geopolitical origin. When new materials came into the region, the mud houses were abandoned and left unmaintained. They have no power to back their ways of life.



Tent camp in late summer
close to a river, 1966
(PHOTO: WERNER FINKE)



UNTITLED

Medium: installation
Year: 2024
Material: paper

DOCUMENTING

This artwork is a collection of thought processes of the artists in this workshop and exhibition that ended up on paper. It represents their collaborative effort to create something from the two collections by Mehmet Emir and Werner Finke. Their creative imaginations traverse different terrains of thought. The artwork displays these

journeys and documents them. It runs parallel to the Zozan lifestyle in a lot of ways. Traversing aside, the Zozan life-style doesn't have much to leave behind in the environment. Their traces are merely seasonal, enough to be recovered by nature. It makes me wonder about all the traceless habits we lost before they began remaining for a long time.

I wonder: if the digital realm of information exchange didn't exist, how much more would we have lost?

SABAH AHMED MOHAMMED

Photo:
Sabah Ahmed Mohammed,
2024



Sabah Ahmed Mohammed is a diligent and skilled professional in the field of innovative ideas in mechanics and a dedicated inventor. He is renowned for his mechanical creations used both for simple, everyday tasks as well as larger machines used for tasks such as clearing mine fields.

He has been one of the greatest contributors to Kurdish cinema, presenting unprecedented skills in creating devices and mechanisms for camera movement. Many say the award-winning, Kurdish film "Bekas" would not have been possible without his skills. The film itself is regarded as one of the most amazing feats in Kurdish cinema.

Sabah believes in educating young people, which is why he has been dedicating his time to teach in his areas of expertise. His role as an educator granted him workshop opportunities

both nationally and internationally, which resulted in his role in remodeling the education system.

Sabah has a deep love for nature and the environment. He is an active member in demining operations and water preservation, which currently focus on creating clean water from polluted sources and creates documentary films about the environment. Sabah's creativity and inventions are also reflected in his creative drive, which makes him present artworks, specifically sculptures made of iron and stone.

ARTWORKS and Statements

SABAH
AHMED
MOHAMMED



STATEMENT

When I sift through the collections of *Finke* and *Emir*, I see a lot of noteworthy scenes, tools, and objects, and all of them are of particular importance. Creating this mental and physical ability of livestock farmers to travel to the Zozan in the high and harsh mountains, away from the city and civilization, is quite fascinating to me.

This form of coexistence between animals and humans in the severe and harsh environment of summer pastures (Zozan) is beneficial to both sides. The production of good milk means valuable nutrients. The bonding between animals and humans is based on the sense of touching, as in getting milk from the teat of the animal. This allows the continuation of life at the Zozan in the harsh and rocky terrain. That is why I chose stones from these mountains to show stance and resilience, and the teat in respect of this aspect of the life.



Milkers on the summer pasture, 1975.
(PHOTO: WERNER FINKE)

In the collection there is a very attractive pot made of wood for milking the animals. It has a handle for transportation and an edge to pour out milk. I have seen this kind of pot only in the Finke collection. After studying the images, I was able to create one from stone. It took quite a lot of research but I was able to find its name in my own language "Kepule /kəʊlə/", in other villages they call it "milk jug".

Participating in this workshop considerably changed my perspective on the Zozan and the transhumant way of life. A few years ago, I joined a group for a camping trip in the Kurdish mountains. I was there as a hiker and photographer for the trip to document the journey. Back then, I also took pictures of families we encountered in the Karoukh mountain range, living on their summer pastures. Later I set aside the tapes that documented their lifestyle at the Zozan. Participating in this workshop gave me a push to elaborate on this documentation and work on them. Despite all fears that the material is no longer accessible, I was able to create a 25-minute video as a another separate artwork.

SRUSHT OMER INAYAT

Photo:
Srusht Omer Inayat,
2024



Srusht Omer Inayat is an artist in the Autonomous Region of Kurdistan Iraq. Srusht's style of expression is linked to her own character. She loves highlighting the beauty of nature, which to her inspires development. When something grabs her attention, she likes to present it with an added touch. She has three degrees in arts from the College of Fine Arts, University of Slemani.

Srusht has been part of many exhibitions all over Kurdistan. She was part of the Institute Lecturers Group Exhibition in 2005 & 2006 and participated in the Ceramics and Sculpture Group exhibition in 2010. Her debut solo exhibition took place at the Slemani College of Fine Arts in 2017. She participated in many workshops and exchange programs, most recently a collaboration between Austrian & Iranian institutions, entitled "Cultures Drawing Closer Together" in 2023.

ARTWORKS and Statements

SRUSHT
OMER
INAYAT



A COAT NAMED KULLABAL

This artwork relates to a Kurdish traditional coat worn only by men. The coat is typical of the mountainous region of Hawraman and used especially in the winter season.

The main raw materials used in Kullabal is wool, which comes in different colors. The wool is felted by means of water, adhesive materials like honey

glue, and a special soap called Raqi. This soap is a local product used for washing and cleaning wool.

My aim in presenting this cloth is to identify the raw materials used in making a Kullabal and to show them in artwork. Moreover, I wish to highlight the materials, as they are local and made from nature. This also relates to the independency of Kurdish products. As a sculptor I am glad to present this local cloth as a piece of art and attempted to use all ingredients used in the manufacturing process of the coat.



Shepherd's felt reinforced
with plastic, **1986**.
(PHOTO: WERNER FINKE)



A shepherd's felt not only
offers protection but also
a base for a rest, **1976**.
(PHOTO: WERNER FINKE)

REFLECTIONS ON THE WORKSHOP INTERVIEW WITH THE CURATOR AND ARTIST DARO

DARO led the workshop in Slemani, is the curator, and also put together the group of artists. What the participants have in common is their artistic training, their role as active artists, and their exhibition experience. The participants met over the course of several months, and the ZOZAN team attended some of the meetings online.

DARO reports on the different levels of engagement with the collections of Werner Finke and Mehmet Emir. He has different experiences in working with groups, as a teacher at the University of Slemani, at the Summer Academy in Salzburg, and as a curator. In his work as an artist and curator, he boasts a wealth of experience with arts-based research, always in connection with recent Kurdish history (genocidal Anfal trials in Iraq, poison gas attack on the city of Halabja in 1988 and long-term consequences).

DARO explained, however, that this workshop was quite different, as the group organized many sessions out of their own interest to discuss different contents, to conduct further research, and to work on their artistic realization. According to DARO, this form of collective work in the visual arts has been practiced in Europe since the 1990s, but is a new experience for him and the participating artists in the ZOZAN project. They discussed their own and others' works in the form of a symposium and explored many other issues. Some of the topics documented by Finke and Emir were new to the artists. Traditional livestock farming in the Kurdish mountains, in particular, has rarely been the subject of art. In DARO's words,

“the themes are there but we have never really been aware of them.”

The artists carried out intensive research from one session to the next, and even investigated and continued to work on artistic forms of representation after the official end of the workshop.

“We actually developed a lot of ideas through the project, so the group can keep working together on other projects, other topics, and can also expand. (...) Everyone is totally motivated and that's really great. So this is a group that works together and the connection and communication with you [ZOZAN team] is very interesting. That's why everyone is totally motivated and wants to continue working on the final exhibition.”

This commitment and impetus was very enriching for DARO, just as the extent of results was very surprising.

DARO also explained that the themes in the ZOZAN project, such as gender, the environment, mobility/migration/refuge and war, and material culture, were very broad and that the participants felt differently addressed. Some of the participants had experienced major refugee movements in the Kurdish regions of Iraq themselves and incorporated their own experiences into the artistic representation.

One of the main topics that emerged was environmental problems, particularly the water problem in Iraq. DARO said that environmental awareness (through the Ministry of Environment in the Autonomous Region of Kurdistan Northern Iraq, through a series of international conferences, the internet and social media) among the younger generation is very high and people are much more aware of these issues. The environment is also an important and vibrant topic in art internationally, which is also why some group participants wanted to contribute to this development.

For the participants (who come

from the southern, Iraqi part of the Kurdish settlement area), dealing with the life of cattle breeders, as depicted in the collections of Finke and Emir (for the northern, Turkish part of the Kurdish settlement area), was new for several reasons – and also “exotic” to some, according to DARO. There are still cattle breeders in Kurdistan Iraq, but only very few still practice transhumance. Due to the colonial efforts of the British after World War II, many factories were built and the process of industrialization was initiated. People gave up farming, moved to cities, and were increasingly employed in factories. In addition, more than 4,000 villages were destroyed during the Ba'ath regime under Saddam Hussein in the 1980s. Farmers were settled near cities in order to control them better. As most of the artists grew up in Kurdish cities, these traditional forms of Kurdish livestock farming were new to them. Examining them stimulated reflection on sustainable forms of economy, self-sufficiency, environmentally conscious management, and the associated knowledge systems that are increasingly being lost.

This also inspired the curator to do further research into whether these traditional forms of economy have ever been a theme in visual arts in Kurdistan Iraq. Although he reported that there are many contributions in music and literature, there are only very few related works by visual artists.

In terms of content, it was also interesting that history, writing, and language were a topic in the several group meetings. DARO's own approach to the depiction of landscape has also changed as an artist. The framework for the “spatiality” of his paintings has always been the Kurdish landscape in order to symbolize genocidal violence. For more than three decades, DARO has shown the scorched earth, ruins in the landscape, and nature destroyed by poisonous gas in his paintings. However, he said that the two photo collections also motivated him to work on the beauty and esthetics of landscapes. He does not want to be a landscape painter, but for him landscape is an entity or a symbol of his artistic language.

As the founder and curator of ESTA Gallery, DARO follows a broad understanding of education – i.e., he does not want to work for an exclusive audience but to reach as many interested people as possible in Slemani (Kurdistan North Iraq). He has placed particular emphasis on the

younger generation by promoting young artists as well as art education for school children, and facilitating visits to exhibitions. In 2023, he brought together 52 artists for the first time, some of whom were also graduates of DARO. The group exhibition was open for three months and visited by almost 10,000 people. There are many music and film productions in the Kurdish cultural scene, but the visual arts have not received much attention from the general public for a long time. Through exhibitions and educational work, he wants to make visual art accessible to a broad population in Kurdistan and Iraq.

For this reason, DARO is also committed to bringing together the individual artwork of the ZOZAN workshop participants in an overall project and making them accessible in an exhibition. The individual formal, aesthetic approaches the artists have chosen, such as photography, installations, collage, sculpture, abstract or clear figurative works, will be exhibited as a common art object at ESTA Gallery from May 18 to June 18, 2024.

REFLECTIONS BY THE ARTISTIC COLLECTIV

One of the really interesting aspects of working together in this project was sharing ideas, exchanging ideas, learning from each other, and supporting each other.



Workshop in Slemani,
2023.

These outlines are based on a group discussions with the artists in December 2024.

All but one of the workshop participants are artists working with different methods. They know each other, and some have also taken part in joint exhibitions, yet have never worked as a collective before. Certainly interesting for everyone was the aspect of artistic research, which came about almost automatically as a result of the group situation and the idea of working as a collective.

The source material (Werner Finke and Mehmet Emir's collections) and the approach to artistic research, in which several thematic clusters were presented, offered a range of discussion points,

levels of research, and opportunities for development. New to all participants were the long discussion processes within the group, the intensive research undertaken by individuals between meetings, and the extensive conceptual debates.

In the beginning, some participants questioned the idea of examining history as well as the notion of combining various collection themes with their approaches to end up with a progressive understanding of art. The extensive research for the project which not only involved literary studies but also small-scale field research, however, encouraged the participants to take a critical look at traditional economic practices in the Kurdish mountains and their own cultural heritage. The group had thought long and hard about whether they should work on a collective work of art. In the end, they agreed that everyone should contribute an individual work of art, which the curator would ultimately bring together to create an overall show, a "Gesamtkunstwerk".

A number of topic clusters finally emerged, which the individual participants worked on using different approaches. For some, their own history – their own experiences of expulsion and persecution – were incorporated into these individual concepts.

As for the overarching theme of the environment, the workshop team discussed questions of water problems and water management in the region as well as the connection between water shortages and forced migration. One participant also pursued a future and solution-oriented approach.

The group was also preoccupied with questions of space, the landscape of use, and changes in landscape and space for a long time. Among the issues of debate were the enormous transformation processes and the many violent attacks on the civilian population in Kurdistan Iraq in recent decades. Departing from the over 4,000 villages destroyed by the Baath regime under Saddam Hussein, the participants critically

REFLECTIONS BY THE ARTISTIC COLLECTIV



discussed the concept of use of space and local limitations of space for extensive grazing. After all, grazing land and space to move around with your animals is still limited to this day due to relics of old wars (especially the many mined areas) but also new encroachments on the Kurdish mountains by neighboring nations.

For the participants, both problem areas (water and land) were discussed under the term “decline”. After the establishment of relative stability in Iraq and especially in the Autonomous Region, the participants believe that there was far too little reappropriation of land coupled with a false understanding of modernization. Today individual artists work on issues of space and, above all, the relationship between humans and animals. In their art, they draw inspiration from the local population’s lack of attention for their own resources, their increasing dependence on external food supplies, and related long-term consequences (waste problems, low quality food). Cultural heritage (awareness, documentation, archiving, and loss) was an important area in almost all discussions. The



participants feel that art in particular can play a vital role in this regard. An important cross-sectional area is arts-based research but also the possibilities of representation.

By examining cultural heritage in the Kurdish regions of other nation states, the participants were able to search for traces of their own traditions. The direct exchange of experiences with the artist Mehmet Emir and his collection provided yet another range of topics for debate, in particular the question of cultural heritage in the transnational space.

If you look at the content of the collection (ZOZAN), it reflects a certain way of life where people once migrated, moved from one place to another, and supported each other. They were working together in unity and helped each other. That was kind of the old way of life. We have revived the same spirit. We as a group of artists.

Another topic of interest in the interviews was the social component of alpine farming. The pictures conveyed to the

artists a sense of cohesion, of working together, of living in a collective. This in particular was very inspiring to the workshop collective and gave them the strength to keep working together.

This collective process encouraged some of them to reconsider their own opinions on Kurdish history and cultural heritage, inspiring them to develop new artistic positions. Aside from the exhibition in May and June 2024, another far-reaching and lasting result of the workshop is the intention of all participants to continue this form of cooperation.

This exhibition, in other words, should become a platform for visualizing Kurdish identity.

SUMMARY

The seventh arts -based ZOZAN workshop took place in Slemani (Autonomous Region Kurdistan Iraq) under the direction of the curator DARO from December 2023 to February 2024. The workshop was held in Kurdish and English and took place in intense online exchange with the ZOZAN team.

The curator and the nine artists focused on drivers of migration (such as water shortage in the Middle East and dam projects), various environmental issues, questions of traditional forms of mobility, such as transhumance and its transformations, and the related loss of knowledge systems. Moreover, the workshop addressed the working worlds of women as a key topic of discussion and art. The preservation of cultural heritage (above all material culture) and the shaping of memory systems were of further relevance.

The starting point of the workshop were two multimedia collections of Werner Finke and Mehmet Emir, which depict socioeconomic developments and transformations in the northern Kurdish-inhabited areas. For the participants of the workshop – all from the southern regions of the Kurdish territories – these collections evoked many discussions and intense research.

The participating artists came together as a collective in the course of the project. They decided to create individual art projects with different methodological and artistic approaches. The various artwork was realized during and after the workshop. It will be arranged as a collective artwork, curated by DARO and exhibited at ESTA Gallery in Slemani from 18 May 2024 to 18 June 2024.

ZUSAMMEN- FASSUNG

Der siebente kunstbasierte ZOZAN-Workshop fand von Dezember 2023 bis Februar 2024 in Slemani (Autonome Region Kurdistan Irak) unter der Leitung des Künstlers und Kurators DARO statt. Der Workshop wurde in Kurdisch und Englisch abgehalten und wurde in einem intensivem Online-Austausch mit dem ZOZAN-Team organisiert.

Der Kurator und die neun KünstlerInnen (drei Frauen und sechs Männer) beschäftigten sich mit den Triebkräften der Migration (z. B. Wasserknappheit im Nahen Osten und Staudammprojekte), verschiedenen Umweltthemen, Fragen traditioneller Mobilitätsformen wie der Transhumanz (Almwirtschaft) und ihren Transformationen sowie mit dem damit verbundenen Verlust von Wissenssystemen. Darüber hinaus wurden die Arbeitswelten von Frauen als zentrales Thema der Diskussion und der Kunst behandelt. Die Bewahrung des kulturellen Erbes (vor allem der materiellen Kultur) und die Gestaltung von Erinnerungssystemen waren von weiterer Bedeutung.

Ausgangspunkt des Workshops waren die zwei multimediale Sammlungen von **Werner Finke** und **Mehmet Emir**, die sozioökonomische Entwicklungen und Transformationen in den nordkurdisch besiedelten Gebieten dokumentieren. Bei den TeilnehmerInnen des Workshops – alle aus den südlichen Regionen der kurdischen Gebiete – lösten diese Sammlungen viele Diskussionen und intensive Recherchen aus.

Die teilnehmenden KünstlerInnen fanden sich im Laufe des Projekts als Kollektiv zusammen. Sie beschlossen, individuelle Kunstprojekte mit unterschiedlichen methodischen und künstlerischen Ansätzen zu schaffen. Die verschiedenen Kunstwerke wurden während und nach dem Workshop realisiert. Es wird als kollektives Kunstwerk arrangiert, von DARO kuratiert und in der ESTA Gallery in Slemani vom 18. Mai 2024 bis zum 18. Juni 2024 ausgestellt.

پیوخته

حەمەتەمین "وۆرکشۆپی زۆزان" لەسەر بنەمای ھونەریی، لە مانگی کانوونی دوومی ۲۰۲۳ تا شوباتی ۲۰۲۴ لە شاری سلێمانی (ھەریەکێکی کوردستانی عێراق) بە سەرپرستی ھونەرمەند و کۆراتۆر "دارو" بەڕێوەچوو.

ئەمما لە ئالگورىكى چىر و بىرى ئۆنلاپىدا رىكخرا.

کورتور و ههشت هونرمه‌مه‌که (سی ژن و پینچ پیاو) سرقالی باباتی هیزمپالنسر و بزوینسر مکانی کۆچکردن بوون و مک نموونه‌ی (کمی ناو له رۆژه‌هلانی ناوهراسست و پرۆژمکانی بهنداو)، پرسه جۆراوچۆرمکانی ژینگه، پرسیارمکانی فۆرمه نهرتیهمکانی جووله و کۆچکردنی وهرزیی ئاژمّداران- ترانزهرۆمانس (له‌هرگهی کۆیستان) و هه‌روه‌هاش له‌مهدستانانی ئهو سیستمه زانیاریانه‌ی که په‌یوهرستن به‌م باباته‌وه، به‌دهر له‌مانه‌ش مامه‌له‌کردن له‌گه‌ڵ ژینگه‌ی کارکردنی ژنان و مک باباته‌یکه‌ی سه‌رمکی گفتوگو و هونهر بوو.

پاراستنی میراتی کولتووری له پیش هه مووشیانموه (متهربائی کولتووری) و نه خسه سازی سیستمی یاده مری، چنگه گری گرنکیدانیکتر بوون.

خاالی دمستیپکی وۆرکشوپکه بریتی بوو له دوو کۆکراوهی مالتیپیدیای "فۆرنس فینکه و میهمەت نەمیر" که پێشاهات و گۆرانکارییه کۆمه‌لایەتی-ئابوورییه‌کان له ناوچه کورنشینەکانی باکوردا نوێکۆمێنت دەکەن.

هونەر مەندانی بەشداریبوو لە ماوهی بەرێوەچوونی پرۆژەکاندا خۆیان وەک کۆمەڵەیەک دیمینیوه. بیریاریان دا پرۆژەی هونەریی تایبەت بە بەکارهێنانی رێز و میتۆدی هونەری جۆراوجۆر بهێننەکایەوه.

کاره هونرییه جۆراوجۆر مکانی له کاتی وۆرکشۆپهکه و دوای وۆرکشۆپهکه هاوونوئەمەڕ هەم، وەک کارێکی هونەریی هاوبەش پێکەمخێت و لەلایەن "دارو" موه سەرپەرشتی دیمکریت و لە گەلمەری "نیستا" لە شاری سلێمانی لە ۱۸ ی ئایاری ۲۰۲۴ تا ۱۸ ی حوزیرانی ۲۰۲۴ نمایش دیمکریت.



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TRANSLATIONS
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<https://bit.ly/zozan-translations>

Girl in
the village,
1991.

(Photo: Mehmet Emir)

