# Balca Ergener

www.balcaergener.com

In my art practice I try to defamiliarize and subvert everyday sights, objects and languages to make reflection possible.

My works include photographic series, collaborative book projects, collective writing performances and installations with textual and visual elements.

In my photography and video work, images of physical surroundings refer to politics and history shaping these locations.

In recent projects I have been working with language, researching methods to deviate from habitually constricted ways of using language to possibly escape conditioning and enable communication of experience.

I desire to build solidarities with participants in or audiences of my works by sharing commonalities that are obscured by the mainstream.

Building feminist solidarities is a driving force for me. I am also a member of M. Paradoxa, a feminist artist collective founded with Esther Schena, Linda Strähl, Lisa Biedlingmaier and Ziqi Jiang in Zurich in 2018.

#### An (art) historical research on Gustave Courbet (2020)

Archival pigment print 118x90.5 cm., 2-channel video installation (loop), 1:38 min. and 2 min.

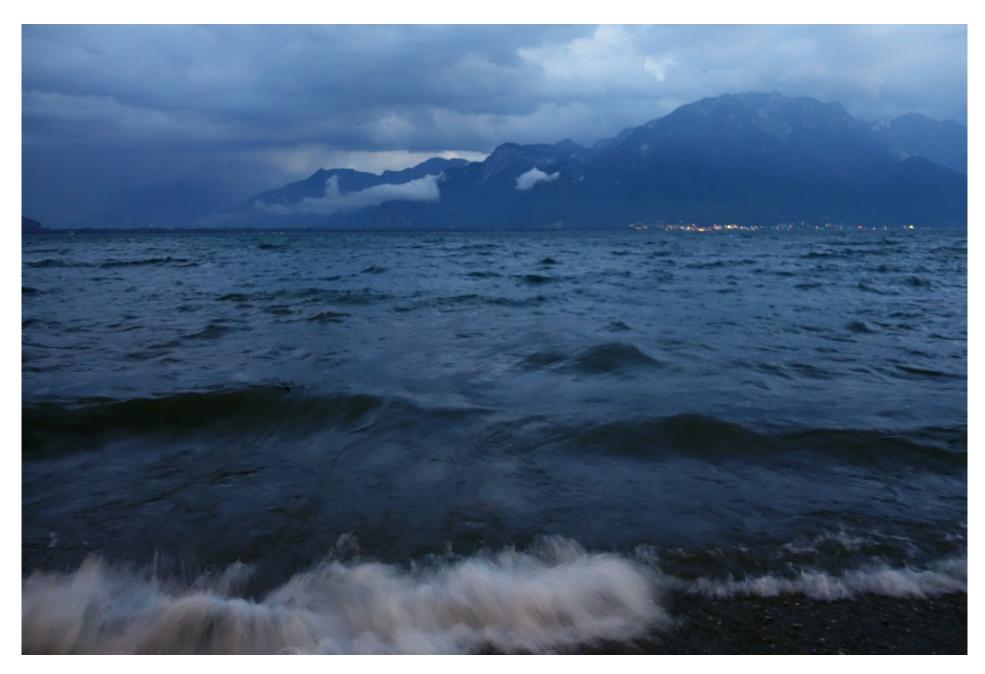
A work commissioned for the exhibition *Futureless Memory* presented at Kunsthaus Hamburg, compiling "contemporary artistic works and historical documents that were created in or reflecting on exile." This work is on Gustave Courbet's exile in Switzerland and his striking yet not widely known story researched thoroughly by Swiss art historians. In 1873 the French painter came to live in exile on the Lake Geneva Riviera in Switzerland because of an ongoing trial about his participation in the Paris Commune, as an elected delegate of the government

and as the president of the Federation of Artists that worked for "The free expansion of art, free from all governmental supervision and from all privileges." He was held responsible for the tearing down of the Vendome Column and was attacked with a public campaign. His trial ended during his exile and he was sentenced to pay a huge sum for the rebuilding of the column. He died in Switzerland in 1877, one day before the first installment of the fine was due. The two videos, one showing Courbet's former grave site in La Tour-de-Peilz, and the

other a dead trout floating in the Loue in his hometown Ornans (referencing Courbet's paintings), reflect on how life goes on after failed attempts at changing the world. The soundtracks in both videos composed of still shots attest to this ceaseless flow: construction noise, children's screams, chatter, bells... The photograph of Lake Geneva during a storm, full of force, stands in contrast to this feeling of inevitably and references Courbet's love of the lake. The videos and the text written for the exhibition can be viewed <a href="here">here</a> on my website.



An (art) historical research on Gustave Courbet, screenshots from the videos



An (art) historical research on Gustave Courbet



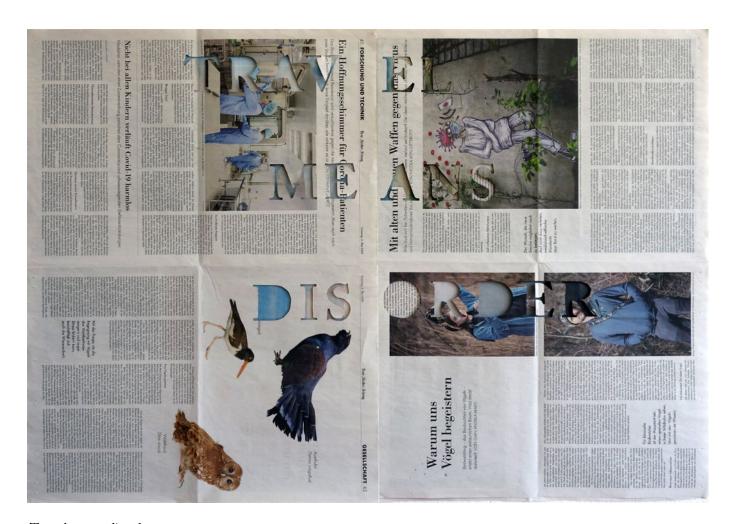
Installation view from the exhibition Futureless Memory, Kunsthaus Hamburg (2020). Photograph by Hayo Heye.

#### Untitled series (2020)

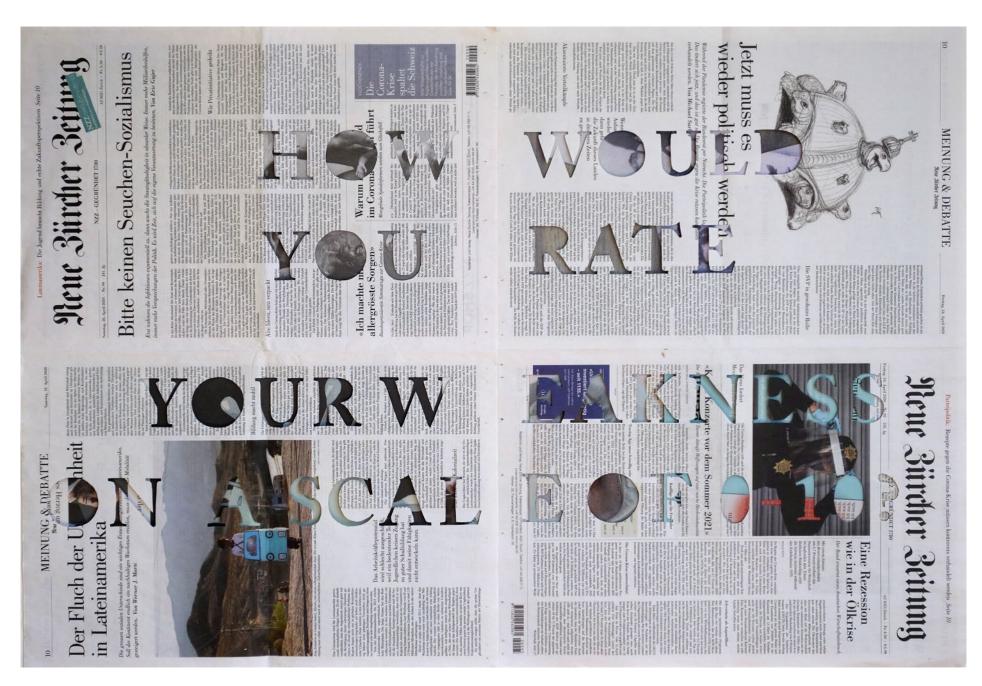
Newspaper pages with cut out text, c. 95x65 cm. each

Phrases and questions incised on layered pages of the newspaper *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* published between 15 April and 15 May 2020. The cut out sentences express anxiety about looming dangers and incompetencies. Sounding like they are uttered by an unknown authoritarian voice, they are products of both conditioning and experience, imitating proverbs and headlines. They try to reach out from the confusion and feeling of ignorance media bombardment creates.

This series is a continuation of my work in the publication *Forgetting Oneself* presented to Zürcher Hochschule der Künste as a Master's thesis, where I laid out and performed writing exercises which can help one escape habitual ways of using language. The exercises lead to a kind of writing that enables articulation of experiences and dreams, in a world where our communication about ever-changing events can be limited to short reactions in social media. While inviting inspiration from other artists and persons, the work also references questions related to influences, conditioning and ideology.

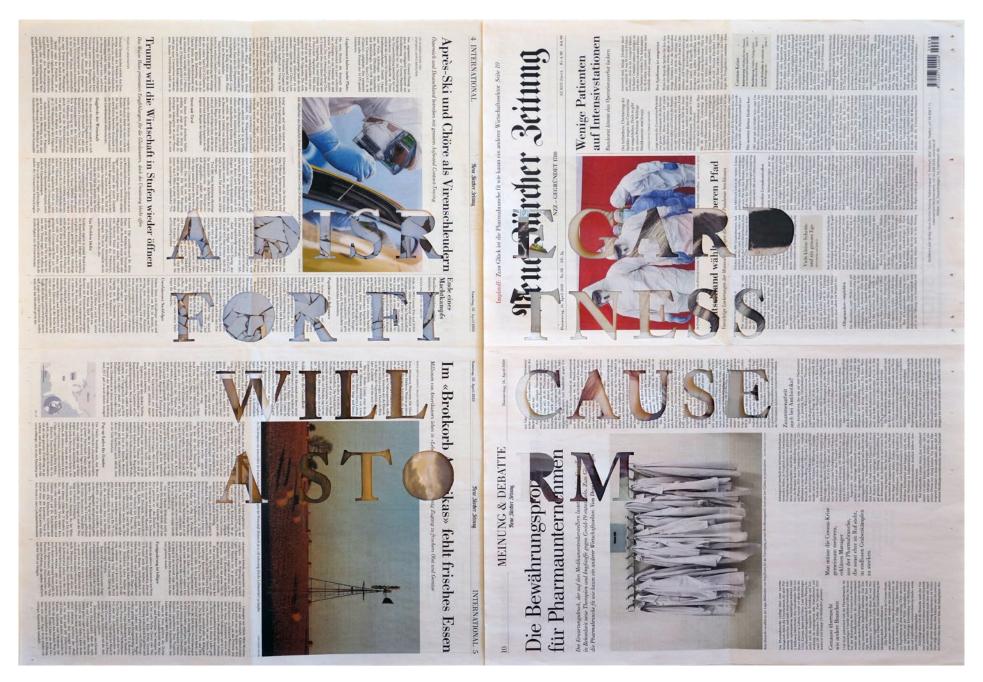


Travel means disorder





Things get out of track in time routines protect you





#### Wild Olive Game (2017-2019)

Collective writing performances, changing duration and locations, 2 artist books documenting the performances

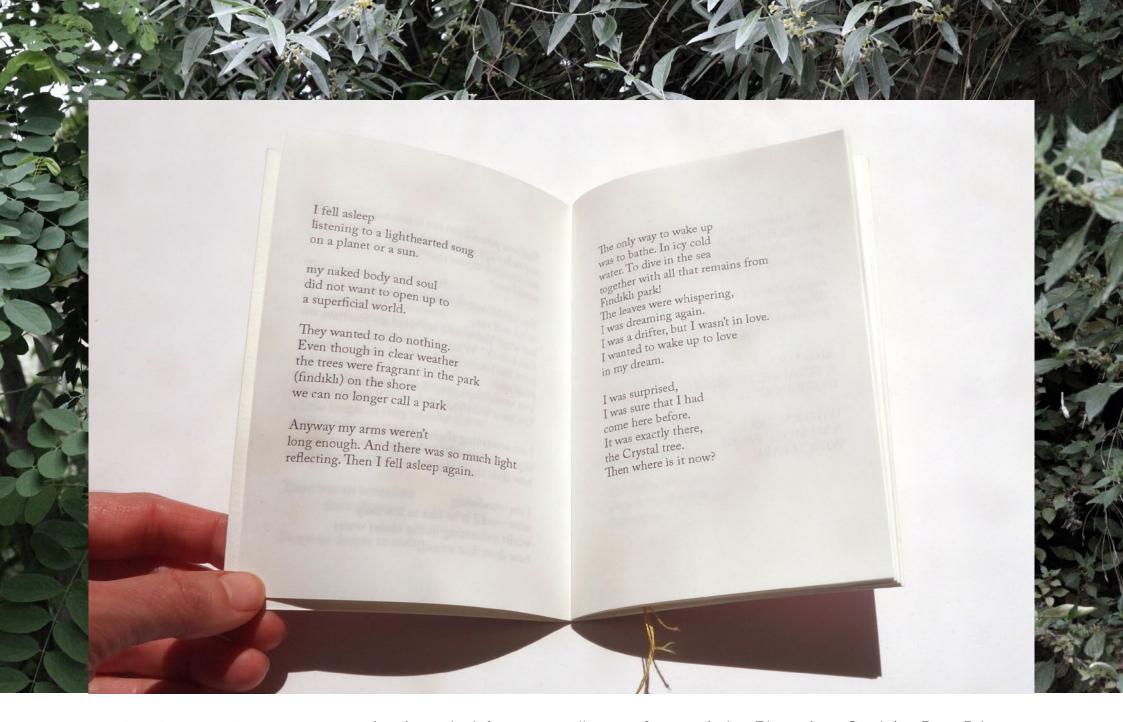
Wild olive (Elaeagnus angustifolia) is a deciduous tree with silver green leaves that produces small, but abundant pale yellow flowers in early summer. According to some sources the strong smell of these flowers have the power to increase women's libidos! *Wild Olive Game* is a work wishing to spread this speculative information to facilitate provocative encounters between women and Wild Olive trees to incite joy and stimulate Eros. In the game, players

write sentences with words they pick randomly and share them with each other. This randomness possibly enables us to talk about our desires and other things evading dominant patriarchal and capitalist formulations we fall back into involuntarily. An important aspect is imagining this relationship between our (urban) environments and affects and how we can act in the space this opens up. In spring and summer 2018, small groups of women played

the game in Istanbul and Zurich. In May 2019, twenty women played it under the Wild Olive tree in the garden of the Women's Works Library in Istanbul. In this game, each time players wrote their lines individually, they passed their notebooks to somebody else, who would continue to write by picking new words. The result was a long poetic text with continuities, repetitions and gaps. Two books document the 2018 and 2019 performances.



Wild Olive Game at the Women's Work Library, Istanbul (2019), collective performance, 3 hours. Photograph by Merve Elveren.



Wild Olive Game Women's Works Library Istanbul (2019), artist book documenting collective performance. Authors/Players: Asena Günal, Ayşe Boren, Balca Ergener, Banu Karaca, Dilek Winchester, Eda Gecikmez, Eda Sezgin, Evrim Kavcar, Ferhan Özenen, Gülcan Deniz, Gülin Ekinci, İmre Tezel, Melek Aksoy, Meltem Ahıska, Nalan Özsoy, Nalan Yırtmaç, Özden Demir, Sibel Horada, Tilbe Saran, Zeynep Ekmekçi



Wild Olive Games (2018), artist book documenting collective performances. Authors/Players: Aslı Çetinkaya, Aslı Hopa, Alev Ersan, Ayşe Aydın, Ayşe Boren, Balca Ergener, Banu Karaca, Büşra Soycan, Ceyda Özdemir, Dilek Winchester, Elif Kamışlı, Ferhan Özenen, Gülin Ekinci, İmre Tezel, Katarzyna Nowak, Linda Straehl, Lisa Biedlingmaier, Meltem Ahıska, Nurhan Özenen, Seda Hepsev, Su Başbuğu, Sibel Horada, Yasemin Özcan, Zeynep Baylan, Ziqi Jiang

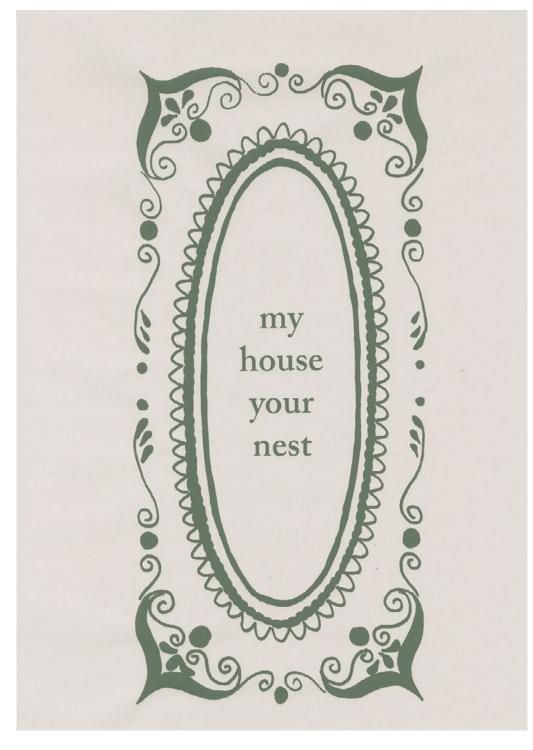
#### My Dust Your Grace (2019)

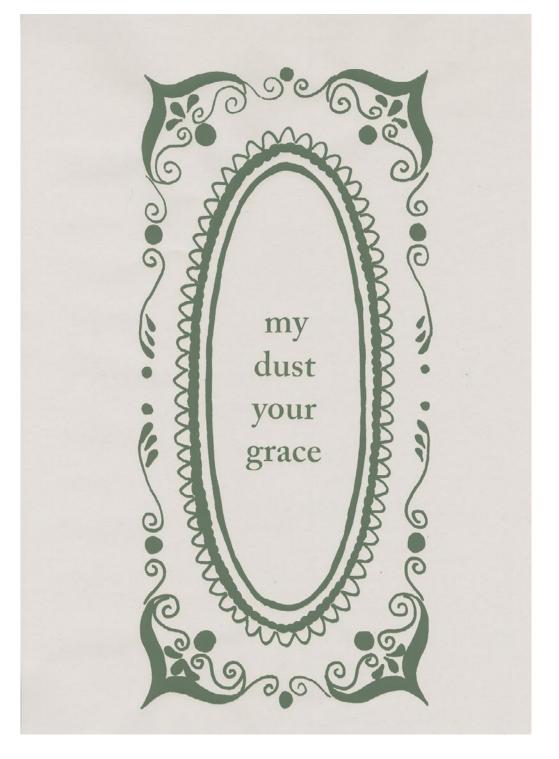
Screen printed wall paper installation variable in size and composition, screen printed posters, objects

This piece is about house and care work, domestic space, aesthetics and women. The play with a domestic tile pattern functions as a release of tension in a destructive way. The short phrases on the posters which accompany the wall paper

confess envy but also rebel against the oppressive woman ideal that always haunts us: the woman who has to provide good care, a dust free and visually pleasing house and maintain an exemplary body language.







#### Journal (2016-2017)

Photographs, archival pigment print, each 20x20 cm.

Between October 2016 and May 2017, I photographed the sky from my position in Istanbul every morning after dawn and every evening before dusk. I wrote the date under the photographs which give no information about what was happening below in a country at war and ruled under a state of emergency, at the same time witnessing an unprecedented destruction of natural and built environments. The archive exists online and an installation of selected photographs was exhibited in Istanbul in 2017.



Installation view from the exhibition *Floating Tactics After a Sunken Island*, Daire Sanat, Istanbul (2017). One photograph from each day between 10 October and 2 December 2016 was exhibited to partially match the dates of the exhibition on the same days a year later.

#### Rhythm of Transience, Rhythm of Happiness (2014)

Self-published artist book, 22x25 cm., Turkish and English editions, 61 pages

A book we made in collaboration with sociologist and writer Meltem Ahiska to reflect on the 2013 Gezi uprising in Turkey. We came together to look at photographs I had taken during the uprising, the year leading up to it and its aftermath, and talked about what Meltem had been reflecting on. The relationship among happiness, transience, progress and destruction proposed by Walter Benjamin ended up being what we dwelt on most. After Meltem wrote a text we placed the photographs next to its fragments and ordered them. The digital version of the English book can be accessed <a href="here">here</a>.

"Benjamin radically proposes to reflect on transience as eternal. The rhythm of transience gives us the rhythm of happiness... 'the rhythm consists in an apprehension that all is bound to pass away, undergo its downfall, then this rhythm, the rhythm of transience itself, is eternal, and this rhythm is precisely what connects the inner life of the person, the person who suffers, with what is eternal."

(A quote from the text by Meltem Ahiska.)





Two photographs from the book  $\it Rhythm\ of\ Transience$ ,  $\it Rhythm\ of\ Happiness$ 







Two photographs from the book Rhythm of Transience, Rhythm of Happiness





Site specific mixed media and sound installation at Kunstraum Waldhaus, Zurich

The work *Mixotricha P*. is an installation where viewers are guided by the various voices of Mixotricha Paradoxa coming out of ceramic objects resembling fragments of different bodies. They are invited to immerse themselves in the Mixotricha-Universe and digest her stories from the guts.

"This is an unstable world, you know, and there are five of them here inside of me breathing, touching, embracing each other. I have to be careful, really gentle to not disturb their symbiotic fluid. Sometimes when it is quiet and I can hear them breathing and sometimes gasping, then I know that I am not alone." (A quote from the sound installation.)







## **Do You Believe in Digestion? with M.Paradoxa (2019)**Site specific sound and video installation, temporary tatoos, and

publication at Volumes Art Publishing Days, Kunsthalle Zürich

For Volumes Art Publishing Days we created a space where viewers could sit, listen to or read M. Paradoxa's stories and view associative images. They could also apply her manifestations on their bodies as temporary tattoos.







### How to become a contemporary witch? with M. Paradoxa (2019)

Workshops accompanying Doris Stauffer's exhibition and the symposium "TREMBLEZ TREMBLEZ... Féminisme, sorcières, art et pédagogie" at Centre Culturel Suisse Paris

M. Paradoxa organized two workshops inspired by Doris Stauffer's archive at Centre Culture Suisse Paris. In the "Eat Art Spells" workshop, participants could decorate their own Lebkuchen with wishes, curses and images to give away to others or to eat at time of need. In the "Cosmic Entanglement" workshop visitors were invited to immerse themselves in a 10 minute meditation session, and transmorph themselves with one of the earthly creatures far far away.



