









About Dilara Akay - 3. International Mardin Bienale

As Priapus, the symbol of fertility and masculinity, attempts to rape Hestia, the symbol of grace and family, while she sleeps vulnerably, Hestia suddenly wakes up with the untimely bray of a donkey and is lucky to get away from this humiliating act. So Priapus curses all donkeys for causing him to be unsuccessful, and punishes them to serve as beasts of burden.

Based on the above mentioned story of Greek mythology, in my work I wanted to empower the automomous being of women and draw attention to the hard working existence of the Municipality worker 45 garbage collecting donkeys whose mournful braying can be heard every day repeatedly in Mardin. I intended to create an opportunity to communicate with women living difficult and different experiences, and to create a collective work which would make them feel that they are not alone, and support them in their struggle of individualization, as well as to contribute to the multiplicity of social actions that make a change

By using concrete construction materials left abandoned for a long time in the Mor Efram Monastery, I created a fictional space of celebration. For the opening day of the 3rd International Mardin Biennial, I planned an event in which seven young women who have learned folk dances in Mardin Meydanbaşı ÇATOM courses, will be performing regional examples around the erected pole of installation. The local musicians will be playing livelike in a festivity, and at the same time the dancers will be weaving red ribbons hanging from the top of this pole. With this resultant collective work which will be accompanied by the sound of braying donkeys heard frequently in Mardin, the audience will be invited to explore the truth that lies behind traditional heteropatriarchal approaches that further solidify gender roles and models.

As I was carrying out this project, we have shared a sincere collaborative process and exchanged ideas on issues such as environment, culture and women empowerment in the society, and experienced possibilities of communication on subjects of art and social justice with UNDP project coordinator Gönül Sulargil, Mardin Meydanbaşı ÇATOM director Leyla Gün, folk dances instructor Yasemin Ak and the folk dancers team. I would like to thank them all, for the the support they have provided.