Marking a Shift
Nancy Atakan and Maria Andersson
18 October, NKF, Stockholm

The exhibition *Marking a Shift* looks for traces of past cultural exchange. It uses methods of serendipity while bringing the past to the present and anticipates the future through contextualized forms of collaboration.

The exhibition includes video, books, textile works and performance.

The artists started collaborating with collective research in 2012 when they discovered their shared interests in cultural transliteration and transcultural exchange. Their joint and individual research about Swedish Ling gymnastics as a modernist project in Sweden and Turkey has led to a series of separate works by each artist using their own modes of production. The work builds several parallel narratives directly and loosely connected to Selim Sırrı (Tarcan), who brought Swedish Ling Gymnastics to Turkey. And his daughters Selma Sırrı (Tarcan) and Azade Sırrı (Tarcan) who, influenced by their fathers radical ideas and ideals of a society, became pioneers of modern dance in Turkey (Selma) and developed a therapeutic method of teaching gymnastics to everyone (Azade).

Between 2013 and 2017 the artists have met several times in Istanbul and Stockholm. In Istanbul they have met with researchers of Gazi University in Ankara and relatives of Tarcan family and made research at the SALT Galata archives. In Stockholm they have made research at the Swedish History Museum, The National Sports Museum in Stockholm, The Swedish School of Sport and Health Sciences, Stockholm Olympic Stadium, various sports venues as well as the textile gallery at the Nordic Museum.

This exhibition includes work made in 2015 and 2016 from the artists’ individual art practices based on their shared research, as well as collaborative work completed during Nancy Atakan’s residency at the guest studio at NKF, The Nordic art association, in October 2017.

The exhibition *Marking a Shift* and the collaborative works produced during Nancy Atakan’s stay at NKF guest studio are supported by Swedish Arts Grants Committee’s through a project grant for Maria Andersson’s project *Anthems performed*.

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Traces and transformations looks into the transliteration made of the Gustaf Fröding poem “Tre trallande jäntor” (1894), with music by Felix Körling, to what came in Turkey to be “Gençlik Marşı” (“Dağ Başını Duman Almış”), also known as “The Youth Anthem”. Selim Sırrı (Târkan) brought the music from Sweden to Turkey and Ali Ulvi Elöve wrote Turkish lyrics. First sung in 1916 at a physical education event, this song is still today one of the most popular and well-known Nationalistic songs in Turkey, often sung at sports events.

My Name is Azade (Freedom)
Nancy Atakan
2014
23 pencil drawings with handwritten text  (12 of 23 shown in the exhibition Marking a Shift)

The drawings with handwritten texts are the result of research on Azade, Nancy Atakan’s first gymnastics teacher in Turkey who was the daughter of Selim Sırrı (Târkan) who brought Ling gymnastics to the Ottoman Empire at the turn of the 20th century. The text, neither fact nor fiction, presented in Azade’s voice, is based on interviews with and materials collected from a relative living in Istanbul and a professor at the Sports Department of Gazi University in Ankara. It continues the artist’s investigation into professional women of the Turkish Republic, born during the Ottoman period and her search for female role models.
Anthems
Maria Andersson
2015
Artist book. Box with 9 booklets and 4 loose sheets.

Anthems is a book and a choreography; A narrative that circles around bodies as tools for societal changes. Its starting point is the bodily exercises of the Ling gymnastic system, created in Sweden in the beginning of the 19th Century. The exercises came to be implemented in Ottoman schools as a strategy to shape the new Turkish Republic. The work traces and captures not only the cultural exchange but also the collaborative process of the making of this work.

Anthems presented in the exhibition.
Digital version of Anthems:
http://www.mariaandersson.net/main_anthems.html
Beats (of Anthems)  
Maria Andersson  
2017  
Single channel video, 1’.

Beats (of Anthems) extracts and abstracts the titles given to each chapter in the book Anthems. It looks for meaning in the details of the narrative (Place, year and short descriptions of the chapters.).

Beats (of Anthems) presented in the exhibition.  
(E.g. Stockholm, 1909. Bent knees and popular tunes)
Learning from the Past/Preparing for the Future
Maria Andersson and Nancy Atakan in collaboration
2017
Single channel video, 22’15”.

In the video Learning from the Past/Preparing for the Future the artists try to mimic positions from the Ling gymnastic system performed by a group of women pictured in a photograph taken at the Gymnastic Central Institute in Stockholm in the beginning of the 20th Century. With a projection of the photograph as a backdrop the artists, one by one, and together, practice the movements, while being taught by shadows.
As a gift for Nancy Atakan’s 2016 exhibition, Sporting Chances, Cevdet Erek created this sound piece to accompany her drawings, My Name Is Azade. The music references both the Zeybek tradition, and march music connecting to Gençlik Marsi, influences present in both Nancy Atakan’s and Maria Andersson’s works.

Overlapping
Maria Andersson and Nancy Atakan in collaboration
2017
Performance

As an addition to the video Learning from the Past/Preparing for the Future a live performance activates the video. The specifically written text Catching thoughts, losing track is performed live, as layers on layers of bodies and movements overlap each other. The performance brings the past presented in the video to the present in the space.
Catching thoughts, losing track
Maria Andersson and Nancy Atakan in collaboration
2017
Text

referencing references
rhythm of colour
linking
dancing
stitching
circular movement
circular thought
noting notations
threads of time
sew and sew and sew just so
text on textile text on text
text on and on
cutting shapes
shaping cuts
passing the past
overlapping
over and over
losing track
catching thoughts
thoughts on track
thoughts on thoughts
thoughts on thought tracks
Many Unknown Things
Maria Andersson and Nancy Atakan in collaboration
2017
Fabric wall panel, 340 cm x 200 cm.

Many Unknown Things is a collaborative textile based work made during the residency at NKF in October 2017. The work uses abstracted forms which reference Ling gymnastics, Azade and Selma Sırrı (Tarcan)’s gymnastic and dance movements from the beginning of the 20th Century. Nancy Atakan brought examples of Turkish kilims and needlework made in Turkey, and together the artists visited the Nordic Textile Museum in Stockholm to search for cross-cultural similarities. The fabric wall panel is a thought track, a choreography and a search for models for collaboration and sharing.
A woman born during the Ottoman period who became a professional in the Turkish Republic, Nancy Atakan’s first Turkish gymnastic teacher was in her 70s while she was still in her late 20s. In the early 1980s, Azade moved to Austria, leaving behind a video of her exercises. For over 35 years, Nancy Atakan has kept this video. The video is an important part of this project, although not shown in the exhibition Marking a shift.

Video still Passing On I
Teaser: https://vimeo.com/139910817
For full length version of the video, please contact Nancy Atakan.

Exhibition view: Passing on II and Learning from the past/Preparing for the future