

PRESS RELEASE

Auditions for An Unwritten Opera. Around the Works by Mutlu Çerkez

July 14 – October 8, 2023

Exhibition at Staatliche Kunsthalle Baden-Baden

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June 22, 2023

Auditions for An Unwritten Opera. Around the Works by Mutlu Çerkez

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Press visit

Friday, July 14, from 11 am

You are invited to visit the exhibition on opening day. Please contact Lutz Breitinger at presse@kunsthalle-baden-baden.de for appointments with the curator and/or the artists* during the opening day.

Opening

Friday, July 14, starting at 11 am

The exhibition is already open in the morning, for detailed information on the opening program please see *Program*.

About the exhibition

“... I began to title each of my works with a date from the future that would fall during my possible lifetime. I would undertake to repeat each work in some way on its particular date. Every work would reappear at some later point during my life’s work. My work would not evolve, or at least the gradient of its evolution would be flat. It is a system where I can consciously fool myself that all my works are mature works. And working within this system I would, in fact, objectively use my own life’s work as its own subject matter.” Mutlu Çerkez

From July 14 to October 8, 2023, Staatliche Kunsthalle Baden-Baden presents an experimental exhibition format: *Auditions for An Unwritten Opera* reintroduces for the first time in Europe in two decades the multi-layered oeuvre of the artist Mutlu Çerkez (1964-2005) to a larger audience by unfolding the solo presentation into a constellation of installs and exhibits. Selected works by Çerkez are shown in dialogue with contemporary practices including Juliet Carpenter, Jesse Darling, and Hanne Lippard alongside relevant historical positions such as On Kawara, Ruth Wolf-Rehfeldt, and Felix Gonzalez-Torres among others.

We live in times when spaces for grief have been reduced to moments of interaction on social media. The politics of desire and technologies of pleasure are shifting our economy of attention to screen-navigated zoning and self-centered stimulation. However, this cannot replace the true meaning of shared joy. Connecting the exhibition space to emotional intelligence, collective unconscious, and conceptual thinking, this exhibition becomes a mental space between joy and sadness.

This is why the works by Mutlu Çerkez are recalled back today to investigate the ways in which

- the life of an artist is reflected on that of an exhibition history of an institution;
- the development of a work with its own work-in-progress including further interactions with new generations continues;
- and currency of conceptual thinking with its soundness, relevancy, and contemporaneity is still valid. These forms, research material, and artistic productions are brought together in compositions to invite the participants and visitors to shape, share and reclaim future scenarios together.

To this end, the exhibition departs from an unexpected protagonist from the antipodean past and aims to remember, reintroduce and rediscover the artist Mutlu Çerkez in the European context.

Borrowing its title from a key piece by British-born Australian-Turkish Cypriot Mutlu Çerkez, this exhibition is inspired by the uniqueness of his approach to titling. Often giving his works, not a standard title but one based on a future date on which they would be remade, he proposed for them a new form of life, veering conceptually from their momentary narration, production, or materiality.

Mutlu Çerkez is an excellent protagonist to create a room for reflecting, collective studio, and expanded stage to question our relationships with the future; our connections with the present art canon, and our position with those missing chapters of art history. This exhibition is not only about the legacy of an early loss, but an emphasis on rehearsing, work in progress, practicing every day, and exercising without final results, conclusions, renders, or end stations.

Auditions for an Unwritten Opera

Like no other genre, opera reflects on the duality of life and death; moreover, *an unwritten opera* as an artwork is inviting, encouraging, and stimulating for radical poetics of current contemporary practices. Being a form of conundrum; it has a rare aspect of aporia.

This exhibition, therefore, revisits an artistic position that continually inquired about one specific form; *an unwritten opera* as a conceptual piece. Historically


speaking, the artist dedicated almost a decade for inquiries as a series of props and make-up design studies to his *Unwritten Opera* between 1992 and 2000, and investigated variations of album covers for bootleg recordings of Led Zeppelin. Çerkez kept on practicing the *Unwritten Opera* by extending its forms and materiality to a painting texture, or the Marshall guitar amp favored by Jimmy Page (Untitled: 14 July 2030, presented as 'stage furniture/props for an unwritten opera' in 1999), or to its content; a curtain inscribed with those words, and the Auditions for an Unwritten Opera of 2000, an exhibition consisting of video documentation of the exhibition's opening.

As a conversation piece, this leading work "A design for the overture curtain of an Unwritten Opera, Untitled: 15 January 2028" (1999) -also shown as part of the 6th Istanbul Biennial, Turkey (1999); is positioned as a key reference for the dramaturgy, and choreography of the exhibition considering the narrative politics and gestures of movement and direction in the show.

Çerkez's oeuvre has been guiding the research and the exhibition process, appearing alongside works from a new wave of queer, critical, and radical practices that pose questions about the acts of rehearsal, the state of *work in progress*, and an artist's life as a biography of transition. The exhibition subtitle proposes 'around' instead of an expression such as 'about.' 'Around' refers to circling, gathering, and staying together. Scoring, rehearsals, cognitive exercises, musical notes, and other forms of conceptual thinking especially with works by Antonia Baehr, Delia Gonzalez, Julian Dashper, and Marco Fusinato operate as a leitmotif -based on different chapters of understanding the life of an artist as well as the span of artwork. The collaborative works of Mutlu Çerkez with Marco Fusinato and Callum Morton will be shown in the exhibition.

A new film work *Meantime* ('duration is to consciousness as light is to the eye') presented within a site-specific display by Juliet Carpenter, shortlisted for the Walters Prize 2024, and the recent work by Turner Prize 2023 nominee Jesse Darling will be shown within this project including a room dedicated to a conceptual dialogue between two Berlin-based artists, Hanne Lippard, winner of the Preis der Nationalgalerie 2023, and Ruth Wolf-Rehfeldt, winner of Hannah Höch Prize in 2022. Together with these positions, the exhibition framework proposes to rethink forms of reincarnation, reproduction, regeneration, and remembering within the limits of human memory, steps of memorizing, and escapes of forgetting.

Selected recent works, adapted to the Kunsthalle exhibition space with site-specific parameters and new museological concerns, by Pedro Gómez-Egaña, and Serkan Özkaya generate spatial links to the exhibition narration considering our gaze, human anatomy, and dynamic relationships between the body and the institution. Two different works by Özlem Günyol & Mustafa Kunt, both almost a decade old, are revisited on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the Gezi



Park Protests. Their associations with the transformation of the public space are inspiring for understanding the 2000s as opposed to the 1990s zeitgeist, for example the mutation of the street language -before the Internet, or singularity of a political subject, which comes together with the works by Mutlu Çerkez as extended poetry.

Egemen Demirci, who worked with the Kunsthalle Baden-Baden for two years as “Hauskünstler” (resident artist), a temporary position to engage artists with paid hours into the institutional framework, revisits his work from 2012, *Spectator on White*. In the video work, the spectators are going through imaginary artworks recalled from their memory, invisible to the viewer of the video. The remake of the existing work in 2023 within the neo-classical architecture of the Kunsthalle as a state-run art institution, in a heritage building and in the city of Festspiele, Kurhaus, Friedrichsbad, and others establishes a potent relationship with Mutlu Çerkez 's *unwritten opera*, even maybe as the missing libretto.

A co-commission by Staatliche Kunsthalle Baden-Baden, Museum of Contemporary Art, Warrane/Sydney, and the Plimsoll Gallery, University of Tasmania, Nipaluna/Hobart; Léuli Eshrāghi presents his new work, a double channel video installation, which expressly connects with the paintings of Mutlu Çerkez on DNA structures through their queer and indigenous poetic acts.

The assembly of these unique works is possible through generous loans from Monash University Museum of Art | MUMA, Felix Gonzalez-Torres Foundation, Staatsgalerie Stuttgart, Griffith University Art Museum, Anna Schwartz Gallery, Melbourne, PALAS (Australia), Michael Lett Gallery in Auckland, Sultana Gallery of Paris, Zilberman Gallery and ChertLüdde in Berlin, and Hot Wheels Athens.

With long hours of professional exchange and patience with Charlotte Day, Marco Fusinato, Callum Morton, and other colleagues of Çerkez; moreover Pierre Bal Blanc, Florian Lüdde, and Andrew Kachel, further substantial art historical connections with the legacy of Mutlu Çerkez are knitted through the presentation of works by On Kawara, Jeff Wall Production, Ruth Wolf-Rehfeldt, Felix Gonzalez-Torres among others.

Printed Matter and other exhibition materials are designed by Kunsthalle's long-term collaborator, Stuttgart-based collective Matter Of as a tribute to the typographical work by Mutlu Çerkez. Utilizing the research and the making of this exhibition as an editorial process, there will be a publication published by Hatje Cantz to be launched next year in Australia.

We acknowledge the financial support for the new production and travels of Serkan Özkaya by the Canada Council for the Art.

Auditions for An Unwritten Opera. Around the Works by Mutlu Çerkez is supported by the generous support of Land Baden Württemberg.

Curated by Misal Adnan Yıldız

Participating artists

Mutlu Çerkez with Antonia Baehr, Juliet Carpenter, Jesse Darling, Julian Dashper, Egemen Demirci, Pedro Gómez-Egaña, Léuli Eshrāghi, Marco Fusinato, Delia Gonzalez, Özlem Günyol & Mustafa Kunt, On Kawara, Hanne Lippard, Callum Morton, Serkan Özkaya, Ruth Wolf-Rehfeldt, Jeff Wall Production, and Felix Gonzalez-Torres

Program

Opening days - High Tides

The opening program starts on Friday morning at 11 am with blessings and *Spectral Arrows*, a durational noise-guitar improvisation by Marco Fusinato, who kept a close friendship, manifested several works, and lived his youth with Mutlu Çerkez.

It will lead to an opening speech at 7 pm by another close collaborator and friend of Çerkez, Callum Morton, followed by statements from the Kunsthalle team, and participating artists, later evolving into celebrations with sharing food, memories, music, and dance.

Friday, July 14

Blessings

from 11 am *Spectral Arrows* durational performance by Marco Fusinato

Statements

7 pm Opening speech by Callum Morton

7.15 pm *Who's Mutlu?* Misal Adnan Yıldız, opening remarks in English, director and the curator of the exhibition, together with the Kunsthalle Team followed by welcoming in German by Çağla İlk, director

8 pm *The Last Question*, performance by Pedro Gómez-Egaña

Celebrations

10.30 pm DJ set: Lathe

Saturday, July 15

- 12 am Brunch and artists' talks
2 pm Performances by Antonia Baehr & Jule Flierl

Sunday, July 16

- 2 pm Curatorial tour with Misal Adnan Yıldız, director and curator of the exhibition, in English & German

Friday, July 21

- 5 pm I GOT UP / Jeff Wall Production, Film Screening and Lecture by Pierre Bal Blanc, in English, at Moviac Cinema Baden-Baden

In between days - Good Vibes

In August, the Kunsthalle offers exhibition walks with several of the participating artists, dates and names to be announced.

Saturday, September 9

Tag des Offenen Denkmals
Exhibition walks with a group of the participating artists, during opening hours

Ending days - Blue Skies

Friday, October 6

- Performance by Pedro Gómez-Egaña, during opening hours
6 pm Performance by Léuli Eshrāghi
7 pm Performance by Delia Gonzalez
8 pm Artist talks

Saturday, October 7

- Performance by Pedro Gómez-Egaña, during opening hours
2 pm Curatorial tour with Misal Adnan Yıldız, director and curator of the exhibition, in English & German
3 pm Discussion: *How do curators deal with distance, death, grief, legacy, and heritage?* In English
6 pm Film screening by Delia Gonzalez, at Moviac Cinema Baden-Baden

Press images

We can provide you with the following pictures in print quality for press purposes. Please contact us directly to request them: presse@kunsthalle-baden-baden.de

Please note: When using the images, they should not be cropped and must not be overwritten with text. The respective captions are mandatory. Please note in any case the © of the images.



Mutlu Çerkez: *Untitled 13145 (12 September 2000)*, 1990
synthetic polymer paint on canvas board
22.5 x 30 cm
© and courtesy Anna Schwartz Gallery, Melbourne



Mutlu Çerkez: *A design for the overture curtain of an Unwritten Opera, Untitled: 15 January 2028*, 1999
© and courtesy Monash University Museum of Art



Mutlu Çerkez: *Untitled 2023*

Installation view, Mutlu Çerkez, Anna Schwartz Gallery, Melbourne, 2003

© and courtesy Anna Schwartz Gallery, Melbourne

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Information

Title and running time are subject to change. You can download our press kit and image materials at www.kunsthalle-baden-baden.de/presse.

Detailed information on the program of the Staatliche Kunsthalle Baden-Baden can be found on the [Website](#).

Opening hours

Tuesday – Sunday, 10 am – 6 pm

Open on all holidays except December 24 and 31.

Prices

7€, reduced 5€, Friday free entry

Staatliche Kunsthalle Baden-Baden

Lichtentaler Allee 8a

76530 Baden-Baden

www.kunsthalle-baden-baden.de

The Staatliche Kunsthalle Baden-Baden is an institution of the State of Baden-Württemberg under the auspices of the Ministry of Science, Research and the Arts of Baden-Württemberg.

STAATLICHE KUNSTHALLE
BADEN —
BADEN



Baden-Württemberg

MINISTERIUM FÜR WISSENSCHAFT, FORSCHUNG UND KUNST

June 22, 2023