

GABINET

OF

LOCAL WONDERS





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CABINET OF LOCAL WONDERS

Our exhibition "The Cabinet of Local Wonders" shows cultural and natural treasures in Amed. The cabinet shows objects and tells stories about disappearing cultural heritage in our town in Southeast Anatolia: Amed, Diyarbakir, and especially Sur, the old city.

Gathered through meetings and interviews with locals of different ages and backgrounds, this exhibition aims at sharing local wonders - those that are overlooked, that are pushed to the margins or that have already vanished. Memories of who we are and what we can learn from our past. Each object comes with a story: enjoy discovering them!

The Cabinet of Local Wonders is a growing sociocultural exhibition that documents and shares the cultural richness of our region. The objects exhibited in the cabinet consist of tangible and intangible cultural assets. They tell locally significant stories of living spaces, historical and contemporary, and the memories that resist its neglect. They are as varied as the experiences and identities in our region - you will find objects connected to local dishes and the way they are tied to peoples' lives, plants of local value that have been embroidered into many areas of life, objects relating to the ongoing practice of birding in the old city, as well as the time-defying "Deq" tattoo art.

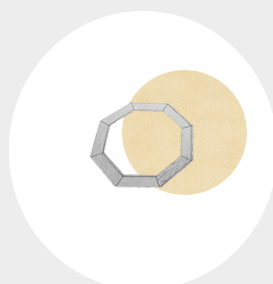
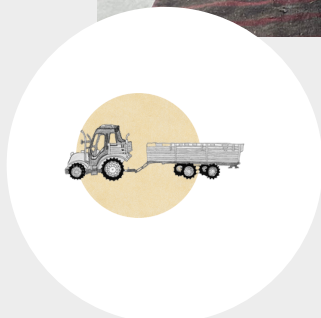
The objects in the Cabinet exhibition and its' stories convey topics such as forced migration, cultural habits that have come from the past but that cannot be maintained, and the change of the urban and rural social fabric due to the effects of political events on social and economic life. It frames memories of a city that resists time and destruction, while marking its traces in human lives and their social bonds. Their poetic, funny, sad or mundane character encapsulates what often is overlooked and therefore forgotten: local wonders, bearing wisdom, knowledge and experience within our natural and social surroundings. While you wander through this little exhibition, cultural heritage is decaying into oblivion, due to socio-political circumstances and the lack of people who continue its passing-on.

The exhibition's name refers to the "cabinet of curiosities" or "Wunderkammer", the first prototype of today's museums. Our cabinet differs from other classical forms of exhibition in that it invites our visitors to explore and interact with the objects, rummage through it, listen to and read the stories that accompany them while being embedded in a social frame - the opportunity to be together with other people who share curiosity and enthusiasm for our ancient city.



THE CABINET

In Amed



The Amed version of the cabinet was exhibited in the city center, between 20 June–3 July 2022 at Mordem Art Center.

Each object was accompanied by the story it tells, printed on explanatory cards with their illustration. The cards were available to be taken home by the visitors. Further exhibitions of the still growing Cabinet in Amed and the region are in the making. A performative installation with actors transmitting the stories is planned by Mordem Sanat in the old city. If you wish to invite the cabinet to be shown at your place or organisation, feel free to contact the team.

EXHIBITIONS

Mordem Art Center in Amed





OBJECTS & STORIES



01

EAR OF WHEAT

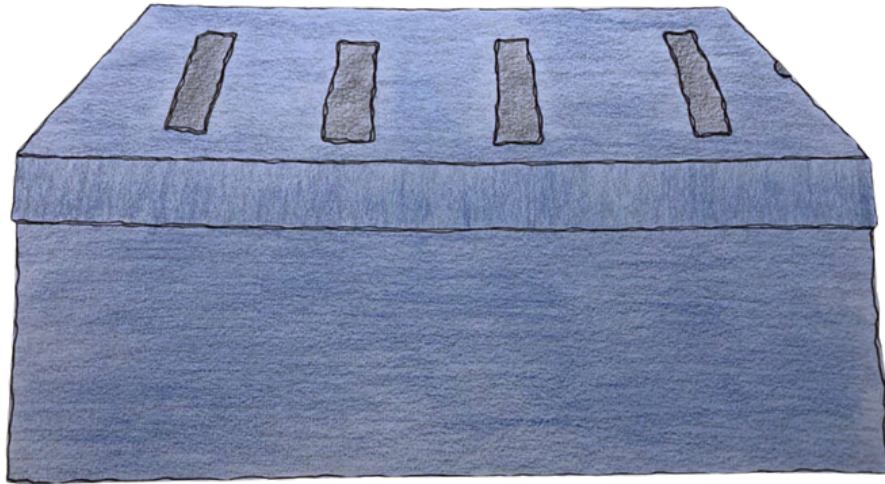
When I was found abandoned as a baby in the courtyard of a mosque, that courtyard with a large yellow gate, a vine and a walnut tree had already become my home. Since the imam of the mosque included me in his big courtyard, in his own family, I believe that the yellow-stained, straw-smelling books are where I belong. They all remind me of home. A home where crowds lived in a courtyard, where "I love you" was never uttered but everyone loved each other unconditionally. No one actually needed to say "I love you". The village where I grew up reminds me of the yellow of wheat too. Our childhood was intertwined with straw. Şemamoks, those fruits with their specific color of the sunrise - to me, yellow is always beautiful. We would hide our şemamoks in flour, that flour that is made from wheat, so they wouldn't spoil in the heat. In this courtyard, we'd fall asleep under the warmly light stars. Now we can't see the stars. We only see the darkness at night. Nothing else. After that... frogs. There would be frogs in our vineyards. I got warts on my hands. Supposedly because we touched the frogs. Our biggest fear was getting warts on our hands... My grandmother used to circle the wheat around the wart seven times with her prayer. Once again we expected the wheat to heal us. Our courtyard, where wheat turned into flour, food and healing, was so large in my mind... I went back to that courtyard years later. It was a small courtyard after all. Therefore our steps were small, as were our fears. And that beautiful big yellow gate had been replaced by an iron gate. We lost my mother and father in that house, they who opened that gate for me, whose courtyard was my home. Stones of that courtyard heard our juvenile screams and our requiem. Now, it is probably having its quietest time. That walnut tree and the vine are still there. They are the only things that haven't changed. Besides the stones of the courtyard.



02

HAMAM BOWL

Now, I don't know much about bathhouse culture. I will tell you what I know. Diyarbakır has a hammam culture. I mean, if I had the opportunity today, I would turn this place into a hammam again. Generally, the pleasure, joy, cleanliness, the joking and socializing of the hammam. I mean, think of it like coffeehouse culture. Just like going to a place for entertainment. Four to five friends, and you sit and chat, you laugh... so bathhouse culture was the same thing. The point is to come together, to have a good time, having fun. Back then I could really feel the joy, with my own friends. Well now, we have a shower in our house, a so-called bath. We say we take a bath, but what for a bath? So the joy you get here, at the hammam, you can't get that joy at home, no matter how much you take a bath. I personally can't get that joy. So bathhouse culture is very different. The sound of those songs, the sound of those stones, somebody shouting "the hot water didn't come", the other one says "naa, bla,bla didn't happen." For me, there are really very good memories. Now, none of us remembers anything. When we were young, we had a lot of hammams. There are no hammams in Diyarbakır anymore. Sur itself is kind of gone. Now, unfortunately, we are strangers in the city. Back then, it was just like saluting in the military - from the moment we left our house until we reached our workplaces we greeted everyone. The waves of hellos ended only once we finally got inside. Why can't we greet the shopkeepers now? Because we don't know each other anymore.



03

BOX

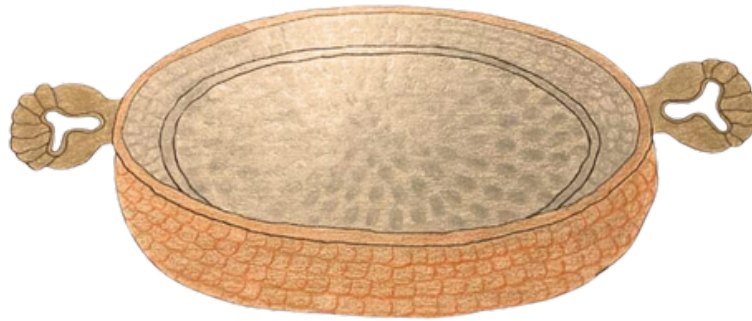
Sometimes pigeon parents don't take care of their babies. Then I take them and raise them in a box here in my barber shop. We have some pigeons that can't feed their babies by regurgitating because their beaks are too small. Because they can't feed their baby, the baby remains small, and if you don't take care of it, it dies if you don't intervene. Pigeons always had a special place in my heart. I mean it's a different kind of love, I don't know - for example, you get into a fight with your family or someone else, and then you feel really annoyed... then you just go and sit with the birds for an hour or two, and you fall into that specific kind of thoughtfulness... Our brother over there raises fighting roosters. I mean, he trades them, and he makes them fight. He created an organisation for it, they called it an association for the conversation of roosters, but he actually makes them fight. Think of it like a political party: they tell you that they won't do X, yet X is what they do. Don't you think people want to be a bird? I mean, I think every person wants to fly... I have never been away from pigeons, I was only away from them a little bit while I was in the military. And yet again, there I was in a boot camp, and there was a coop built for this soldier with antisocial personality disorder. There were pigeons in it, and who took responsibility for them? I did... We had pigeons during the time of war. This place became a ditch, you know. Well, I came here anyways, my house was here. I came on the second day, and I barely got permission from the police to pass. They wouldn't let me pass the beginning of the street. I said, you know, I have pigeons! And some of them were saying that they have their property there.. and I said, I have pigeons, I have to take them out. The police said no a couple times, but then he let me pass. I went, I filled three or four buckets of water for my pigeons, and I left their doors completely open. I poured a bag of food next to them. I said, whoever survives, let them survive! And when my uncle also had pigeons here - I came and found a pickaxe, I broke a round hole into the wall of my uncle, went in, put the birds in a box, and them out. I took them all back to the village. Because the events at Sur lasted so long, for three months, most of the birds died. Many birds died of starvation. We had brothers and friends there, their birds all died... You know, we don't have freedom, our best freedom is in the wings of our pigeons. I will take care of the birds in this shop for another ten days, then I will go and bring them to the village. There they'll be safe. When they are side by side in the box, they keep each other warm.



04

SCARF

I am originally from Derik, Mardin. For the first time, a woman from our tribe lives alone outside the family's house! I had a lot of trouble with this. I'll never forget, I'm in Istanbul, I'm drinking beer for the first time in my life. I'm at the Moda coast, alone. I'm wearing a headscarf and I bought myself a Tuborg Red. That red Tuborg has a special place in my heart. As I had never drunk alcohol in my life, I immediately got drunk. To be honest I don't think alcohol had much to do with the way I felt. Then I finished that beer, I walked towards that thing... towards that statue of the bull. Even though I was in a congregation house, even though I knew what the reaction of my family would be after I took off my headscarf - I took the scarf off in an instant. Oh my God, it was a very different moment for me. Even when I'm telling this story... it was so very different. It was as if the lights were shining at that moment, everyone was walking by themselves, and I was letting my hair down and tossing. I opened my arms, oh how I felt so free. That was the first day I took off my headscarf. I don't know how my parents found out about this but my mom called, and my sisters called: "You went to Istanbul and you went astray, don't come home like that!" It wasn't for beauty, though. I had such long and thick hair that I couldn't handle it. I went to the hairdresser crying and had it shaved off. I never grew it after that day. Yes, I got used to it at some point, that's another matter, but it definitely wasn't for the sake of comfort that I did it. When I was little, my mother told me to wear the scarf and I did. Thoughts in my head and that scarf were so contradictory. This battle took 6 years of my life. Now, I can tell my family about my boyfriend, my father hears me. Before, who was I that I could have a normal boyfriend. They would break your bones, you would have a bad reputation in the village. Now, if my friends come, I tell my father, they meet, and they stay with us for a few days in the village. We made each other suffer a lot, we fought a lot, and this is what happened as a result. My sister, for example, will not go through what I am going through now.



05

MIRTOĞE

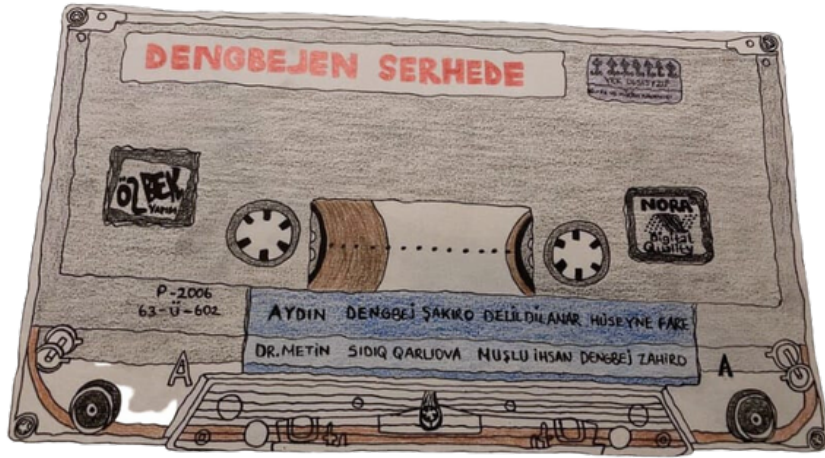
In the early 90s there was a great oppression of Kurds. At that time, soldiers were burning villages. One day, when we got the news that our village was going to be burned down, we took very little flour, salt and oil with us and started to run away towards the mountains. During that journey, when children started crying from hunger, my grandmother and the other older women of our village started a fire and made "mirtoxe", that simple dish using only the flour, salt and oil we had brought with us. After a journey of about eight or nine hours, we reached the villages on the peaks of the mountain range. These places were safe for us. Because the soldiers could not reach those villages high up there. All the villages close to the roads were on fire. We later migrated to the city center because we had nowhere else to go. We lived in deep poverty. My family could not return to their village for seven years. If our village, gardens, trees and animals had not been burned, my family would be in a much better situation now. There were days when we couldn't even make mirtoxe'; when there was flour there was no oil, when there was oil there was no flour. How many nights I saw my mother crying alone when everyone was asleep. I haven't made mirtoxe for many years, I mean, I can't. Mirtoxe means migration, it means poverty, it means burning villages, it means the smell of smoke and ashes. It means the tears of babies and children, it means the cries of mothers, it means a big sigh, like 'axx.'



06

STONE

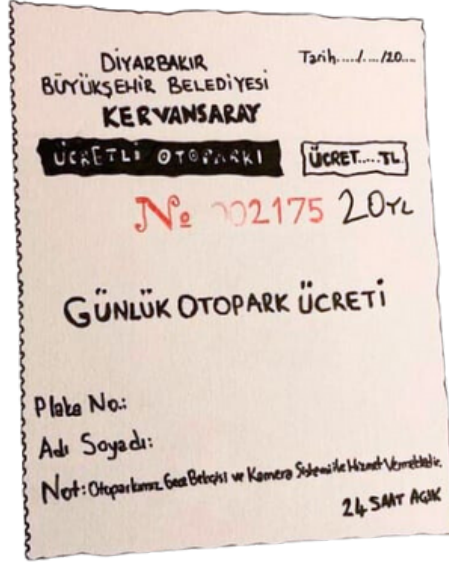
I didn't even throw the stones away, not the stones found in this place. For example, those treasure hunters came for their brutal excavations, there were stones everywhere. I put them all in the back of that that room. Just in case. The idea is that one day, when someone comes, they will still be here. It took me three years to organize this place. The garbage, the dust... I mean, I was healthy when I came here, now I got COPD. My dream is for this place to be restored. To open it to the public. It can be a bathhouse, it can be a museum, it can be something cultural. As long as our people see it. That's my only goal. Let them see the beauties of our homeland. People always talk about us badly, and now people see us as the bugaboo. Let them come and see, let them see our history, let them see our culture. I said at least we can protect our culture, that's my aim. And I did this by opening the café here. Why did I do it, just to protect this place. It never bores me personally. Everywhere I look, it refreshes me. Believe me, I'm very happy. I mean, I enjoy it. Maybe I'm crazy too, I don't know. The neighborhood says "Cuma has gone mad here." So I'm a volunteer porter here, a buried guard. I take care of the hammam, I get the same joy and pleasure from this bathhouse that I get from my grandchildren. So, yes, I'm crazy - in love.



07

CASSETTE

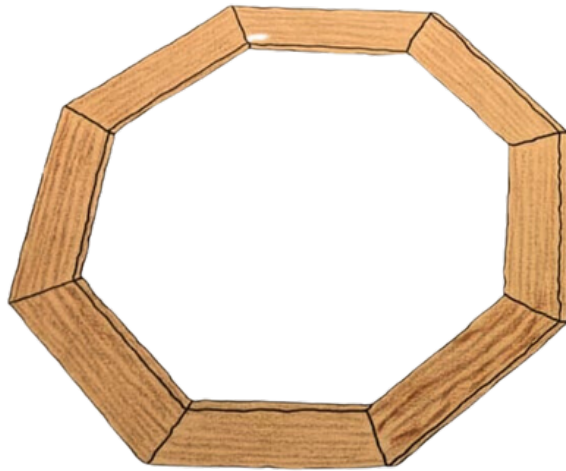
Kurds have a lot of these stories. Almost every house has one like this to tell. There are those about buried Kurdish cassettes, and those where they buried their books inside the wall... That is, they put a book here and then they build a wall in front of it. When they open it years later, sometimes they'll see that rats have eaten it. Like at the Aktepe Madrasa. We have so many stories like that. In the 90s, you know, houses were raided in Diyarbakır. These and similar things were happening. We also had books at home. One day I put all my books in a suitcase without telling my family. I thought, "Who would search my grandmother's house, she is an old woman?" Just in case they would actually raid the house, I took the books and hid them in the attic. Secretly, without my grandmother knowing. Apparently, my father saw some of them. So he started to burn them secretly to protect us. He was getting rid of the books, destroying them, just in case. When I went to look for the books, half of them were gone. I took the rest of the books to another place. Much later, when we were excavating for restoration in the old city, we found Kurdish books buried inside the bastion. They called me, and I shouted at them that they should immediately destroy them! ... because there were workers around. Then I secretly told the boy working there to collect them and bring them to me. I had them restored and took them with me. What I was able to save is still in my library.



08

PARKING TICKET

My sense of belonging to Sur, to the city, is deeply engrained in me. Until 2015, I used to spend my free time walking the streets of Suriçi. I would discover new things every time I entered the narrow streets. Since my childhood, my youth and my working life took place here, every spot here coincides with a memory. For example, when I was a child, I used to cry when passing through Anzele, "Oh, let me get into the water with those children." My mother wouldn't let me go in these ancient pools. Until today I always think about that. For example, the house where my grandmother lived was an old Diyarbakir house. It was a very beautiful house. A huge, historical building with two doors opening onto two streets and a big courtyard. That house always seemed mystical to me. Towards the end of the 70s, old houses in Sur started to be destroyed and to be replaced by apartment buildings. The land of our house is now being used as a parking lot. They built a huge parking lot, just a small part of the house was left and it became a shop. I don't have the heart to park there. I just can't. The destruction of Sur, this process bit by bit, is what hurts me the most. The house I was born in is gone. The school I went to is gone. Those streets I roamed are gone. I am not dead so that I could have a grave already. There is not much left to explain my relationship with the city. That disappearance has also damaged my sense of belonging to the city. Sometimes I wonder whether I should leave or not.

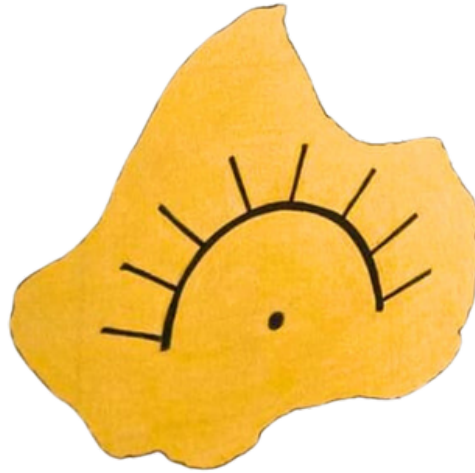


09

OCTAGONAL

I know this bathhouse like the back of my hand. I have worked in every corner of it. The steam hall, for example, is a place for body cleansing and it is one acre and three hundred meters square big. And it's always octagonal. It's always octagonal. There are eight windows on top, eight domes, and eight steps that go to the stone pool. Everything is octagonal.

The central stone you lay on, I was cleaning it. One day, I called out to the children while cleaning out the building. I heard a strange sound coming back to me, and I got scared. I jumped. I remembered when I was a kid - our mothers would tell us that there were goblins and fairies in the hammams... in that moment, I remembered that. I stopped. I looked left and right, no one was to be seen. The children were playing; "God gracious!" I stepped up on the stone - again and again it was the same voice. I was yelling "Come here, son, come here, come up here. There's a strange sound coming from here." Bro, I figured it out right there and then. My friend sat across from me, I spoke over to him "Yilmaz, pass me that cup", he said, "Bro, my ear exploded"! "What happened?" I said, "Son, your voice also made my ear explode". That's how we discovered those magnificent sound effects in the main bath hall, I mean we didn't know. After that, I started researching... I mean, I've been doing my own research. I am a primary school graduate, I learned to read and write in prison.



10

DEQ

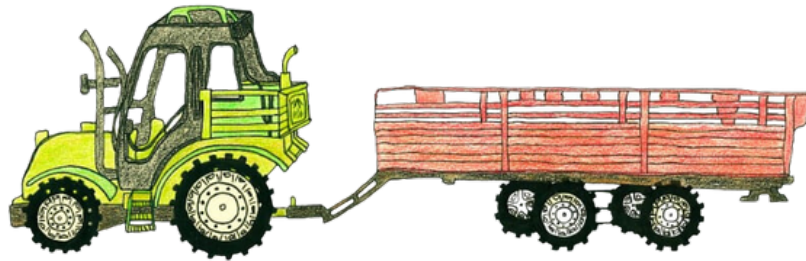
There were a few aunties in our village. They had many deq motifs on their chins and cheeks. That's how my curiosity started. Their answers did not satisfy me. Return to the roots, return to the essence... I wanted to have a deq on my chin and I used to draw it with a pen. I even wanted to wear the deq as a necklace around my neck to carry it with me at all times. At that time, the sun motif was really appealing to me. There are certain motifs that are done with certain rituals. When I told my mother, she said, "te buye keşmer (you're such a bum)." This gave me the feeling that this is my body, or I don't know, this is my life. "You can't interfere with me." I feel like deq is part of my body. It's like the feeling of being trapped in a place again, you're in a mold and now that mold is too tight for you and you break it. It scares you to go back to that mold. Deq is a form of rebellion. I declared my freedom through deq. One day I met an aunty in a bus. She had a motif that I know. I asked her why she did it and what it meant. It's a "komika sewiya." My aunt did it for me. "Kumika seviya" is the community of orphans. The meaning changes from region to region. For example, there was another woman who made a motif of three dots on the inside and the outside of her hand. I asked her why she did it. "Well," she said, "when you do it like this, your husband won't get a second wife." Then I asked why did you do it on the outside too? "Well, my husband brought a second wife, and then I did it again. And he brought a third one."



11

GOLD

I was 12 years old, in Istanbul, when I started my career. Jewelry was a profession that I never thought about or even dreamed of. I started this profession without knowing what gold meant. One day my brother told me that one of my customer's brothers had a jewelry workshop and he needed an apprentice, "If you want, you can work there." Jewelry was fascinating to me. I liked to break things and remake them, to recreate something. So I said yes. In fact, something happened in the morning when my brother and I were on our way in the morning. We were holding hands, we got out of Aksaray, and we were waiting at a stoplight. And there - a bird shat on my head. My brother laughed and took out his napkin and said it was a sign of luck. "You know, jewelry is your profession now, you can't escape from it. You've done other jobs, and now this is your profession. Look, the bird shat on your head." We left after that, it was such a different feeling, it was a good feeling. After the earthquake in 1999, we moved back to Diyarbakir. It was our dream to move back to Diyarbakir. Because Diyarbakir meant our life. After moving, a workshop was opened in Diyarbakir and they needed a craftsman. I started working in the workshop. Then, our boss, whom I worked for, killed someone and went to jail, so I opened my own workshop. Now I officially had my own workshop! So, we started with a team of three or four people. Then we became a team of 25 people, we were a strong team, until the war at Sur broke out. We had to close our workshop again. In 2016, about five or six months after the Sur events ended, we again kickstarted our commercial battle, our battle to be involved in life. Maybe we need to wait for another bird to shit on our heads again.



12

ROMÖRK

An audition was happening for a theater project. This project was about migration and they asked me what migration means to me. I replied, "not knowing where you are going in the darkness of the night, with your stuff thrown randomly into the trailer of a tractor." We moved from Lice to the village in 1985 when I was three years old, until I was ten or eleven; until we were forced to migrate. We had our own animals in the village. I was a shepherd, we would sustain ourselves mostly from nature. One day, while I was grazing the animals again, there were a lot of military vehicles in the opposite village, helicopters were over our heads, people were being strafed, some of them were trying to escape. I was watching with no reaction. Those who could manage to escape were fleeing just below the hill where I was grazing the animals, some of them were wounded. Some were trying to carry their dead relatives on a donkey while trying to escape. An atrocity is happening right in front of my eyes. The whole village was burned down but I was watching without reacting, I didn't know what to do because I was only 10 years old. Suddenly I saw my mother and aunt coming towards me from a distance. They were beckoning me with hand signals, and when I saw them, I started running towards them. My mother was signaling me not to run, but I didn't understand, and the gunfire and bombs made it very difficult for me to hear them. There was a little distance between us, I ran for about 150 meters and gunshots rang out behind me... It turned out that shots were being fired at me from the police station near our village, fortunately I was not shot because I was running. Two or three days after this incident, a military officer came to our village and told my brothers "Either you become a village guard or you will end up like the village across the street." My brother said, "We are farmers, we won't become village guards", but the commander just replied, "We will come back in 2 days, either you take your weapons and become village guards or you will end up like that" and then left. In the middle of the night, we threw all our lives into the trailer of a tractor and traveled as if we were lost in the dark of the night.

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Special thanks to our generous interview partners

Diyarbakır / Amed

2023

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Cabinet of Local Wonders AMED is the second generation project in collaboration of Mordem Sanat, Other Music Academy and Stadtforum Altenburg in the frame of the VAHA Dissemination Phase III. The original Cabinet project was conducted as an international collaboration among Culture Routes Society, Antalya Culture and Arts, Other Music Academy, Futura and Stadtforum Altenburg.

The project is financially supported by the VAHA programme, an initiative of Anadolu Kultur and MitOst e.V, funded by Stiftung Mercator and the European Cultural Foundation. The VAHA partner consortium is in collaboration with the iac Berlin to implement a series of thematic workshops and network meetings. We thank the Chrest Foundation for its support of travel related expenses.

VAHA (meaning "oasis" in Turkish) is a two-year programme made with and for the empowered voices of independent arts and culture spaces, advocating for public discussion and dialogue in cities across Turkey, Europe, and their neighbouring countries. Bringing together the diversity of hybrid spaces and contextual responses to the crises of democracy the regions are currently facing, VAHA explores the power of learning from local practices to develop tailor-made support for platforms of free expression and cultural programming. Exchange on alternative approaches and transformative economies, as well as transnational solidarity and outreach are at the core of VAHA's activities. With this approach, VAHA hopes to provide a framework that allows local venues to form a socially prominent ecosystem of interconnected oases, growing as fertile landscapes for open dialogue. Creative players in and around the spaces above-mentioned are invited to join the process to gain insights into systemic practices and connect their endeavours, helping them thrive in greater resilience.

For further information please visit: www.vahahubs.org



