

Firdevs Ev: Should we start by counting down from 9?

Aras Seddigh: I think counting down to 2 would work.

FE: In this exhibition, I feel that your works are increasingly focused on geometric balance. The onions in *Colony N*, which you worked on previously, were similarly embedded in the earth, reflecting the balance of nature itself. However, just as the viewer begins to immerse themselves in this harmonious aesthetic, you gently remind them: this is a spurious order. The masses you've placed between the strings are barely suspended in mid-air, on the verge of collapse. They are bending, disintegrating, and seem to want to disappear.

AS: The elements in the painting are reflections of the mind, captured in a moment just before or after entropy. They represent the last temporal point before change. These elements will exist as long as the tension in the lines is maintained, perhaps even a little longer, before they begin their search again. In this planned disorder, each painting tells its own narrative, while also attempting to connect with the previous and the next in the series. Each piece acts as an element that leads into the others, creating a continuity throughout the entire series.

FE: Maybe they're not spurious; they're just temporary. What do you think the role of art and narrative becomes when you think about it this way?

AS: The sense that they are spurious may stem from their impermanence. However, regardless of how ephemeral the content or method of art or narrative may be, I believe it has the potential to preserve and record social, historical, and individual memory.

The random movement of the cane in Sterne's *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy*, which inspired my production process, symbolizes randomness and transience while simultaneously documenting its own era and the theoretical evolution of literature.

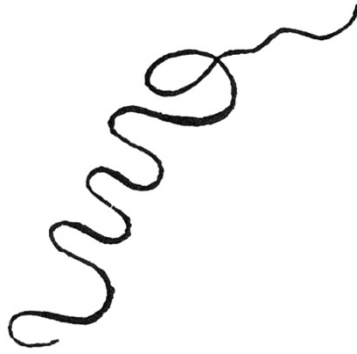
FE: It's nice that a book, known for never truly getting to the main point and making aimlessness its goal, has become part of our conversation.

Nothing, continued the corporal, can be so sad as confinement for life—or so sweet, an' please your honour, as liberty.

Nothing, Trim—said my uncle Toby, musing—

Whilst a man is free,—cried the corporal, giving a flourish with his stick thus—

In the novel, following these words, there is a random trace of the stick that illustrates the mentioned [movement].



At the point where words unravel and lose their meaning, a fleeting, random trace emerges — one that attempts to describe a vast concept like freedom on its own, one that is random but reaches immortality through narrative.

AS: This trace of a gesture, transformed into a visual form, reaches us from years ago to the present, like a fragment of permanent memory.

FE: Orhan Pamuk mentions that the structure of life resembles the rambling nature of this book. What is your process of translating randomness into images?

AS: When looking at a blank sheet of paper, do you begin by eliminating possibilities, or do you ignore them altogether and add specific elements? Or perhaps both?

I consciously choose my rules and methods weeks before I even approach the paper. These choices are shaped by the influence of ordinary coincidences. The stains or images that occupy my mind—no matter what rules or methods they follow to find their way onto the paper—are continuously tested against the relationship between shape and ground. Creating certain problems inherently requires solving certain problems.

In establishing this balance, one of my guiding principles is to avoid offending the senses. Feelings are the primary force that activates my mind; they rescue me from drowning in rules and methods, elevating randomness to the surface as a playful companion.

The entire process unfolds as a seamless interplay of planning and chance, woven together organically and almost unconsciously. It is a constant dialogue, a fluid exchange and interaction.

FE: I think of that vague shadow that often appears in your work. That little halo that remains the same no matter how the direction of the light, the shape of the mass changes. It's like the mark of Toby's stick, but unlike its randomness, it describes something that remains constant. Maybe it depicts loss, not freedom.

AS: I enjoy using these gray halos and colored shadows, which evoke groundedness and gravity, in a way that both belongs to the object and simultaneously casts doubt on its objecthood. Perhaps it is not the loss itself but the memory or remnant of it that seeks definition within these disembodied stains. At the same time, as we discussed in the first question, it strives to construct its freedom by reaching toward its next movement. On one hand, it dreams of escaping the laws of physics, yet it cannot fully connect with its own shadow unless it completely leaves its objects behind.

FE: What does it mean for you to use sound in your work in this context? Can we treat it like a trace that has the privilege of disappearing?

AS: The *Kanal [The Channel]* work in the exhibition, which incorporates sound, represents a buffer space with two exits, much like the book *Colony Vatos*, offering airflow and serving as a mediator between two distinct vital dimensions. From one exit, one can hear the landscape—the sound recorded from the open, outdoor space; from the other, the recording of your poem *From Its Tail*, performed in the private, enclosed indoor space.

The *Kanal [The Channel]* provides a pathway for the voices to travel, yet they may struggle to follow it. As you've pointed out, the voices can behave like imaginary traces, capable of disappearing, seeping out of the channel, and dissipating. The fact that the sounds emerge from two different ends of a single air duct symbolizes their permeability and ambiguous existence.

This co-centered duality, which can shift and transform between the two, also aims to challenge binary perceptions and realities. This emphasis on duality is mirrored in the diptych paintings, where two distinct elements coexist and interact.

FE: Especially when discussing randomness, I realize that the method we adopted in the production of this work aligns with the concepts you explore throughout the exhibition. Clearly, we're not so different from the inscrutable masses in your paintings. I'm looking at your mass, searching for another mass that fit into the ropes that bind it. You're suggesting to stretch the ropes a bit further for me, but I just want to see the ends. I think *From Its Tail* emerged from the conversation between two untransformed darkneses, and in that sense, it will hold a special place for me.

AS: In the beginning, my only intention was to transmit the sound of the landscape to you as data, leaving the sound recording process to the *Channel* and your voice. In doing so, from my perspective, I'd be allowing for randomness on one hand, while a pre-planned and pre-prepared outcome awaited us on the other. This situation, I imagine, may have also appeared in your own production process.

In this context, particularly through the lens of duality, a concept we both coincidentally touched upon, would you like to discuss the formation process of your poem *From Its Tail* which emerged when I asked for an audio recording?

FE: I remember that the recording you sent me took me to a pre-verbal place, making it essential that it prioritized sound, not words. A voice telling a shapeless, undefined creature what awaits after its first breath. In a language that raises the question whether it's actually understood or not it speaks of light and darkness, of the pleasure that emerges from contact, and of the potential that transforms dualities. One of the things that will stay with me about the process is the gradual unfolding of what you generously shared, allowing me to absorb it step by step and deepen it within myself—like a room within a room.

Let's return to you from here. You've created a separate gallery within the gallery for the paintings. Asking the viewer's consent again before diving one layer deeper gives them the opportunity to process.

AS: Exhibiting the paintings in a separate room from the other works reminds me of your statement from the first question: "This is a spurious order!"

This room creates another interior space within the gallery's interior, echoing the sound recording that speaks from behind the walls. While viewing the series of paintings from the outside offers the opportunity to feel alienated from the works, it ultimately asserts, "This is a painting exhibition."

Through this distinction, a promenade and corridor are formed around the room, parallel to the air duct. I wanted this space to offer those who are curious the chance to connect with the voices and the book—to become one with them.

FE: Could you elaborate a bit more on the notions of landscape and ambience? What do they mean to you, and what does it mean to take a rambling stroll through them, as you mentioned?

AS: Landscape can carry related yet distinct meanings in both literature and visual arts. Simply observing the landscape, or allowing it to transform into an inner landscape, requires different layers of perception. Here, the landscape is a concept perceived through an individual's self-awareness and understanding of their own location, where the sound opens up to the outside world.

Ambience, on the other hand, represents the unique and intimate environment in which an individual is isolated from their surroundings, confronting their own self, with sound resonating from within.

I believe that wandering between these two concepts, along a route that is not predetermined, can awaken sensory awareness, an enlightened body, and the potential for spiritual transformation, all while embracing the randomness of coincidences. In my own process this wandering forms a path that allows the character NUX 9 to emerge.

FE: The character NUX 9, which also gives the exhibition its title, represents a search for the self that flits between the randomness of life, the volatility of memory, loss, and creation. In the

book *Colony Vatos*, which accompanies the exhibition, we can trace a similar trajectory from the vague to the concrete. How would you draw a connection between these two?

AS: NUX 9, as a fictional character with an underdeveloped personality, began to take shape with the exhibition after the book *Colony Vatos*. The subjective particles named Back, A1, and Vatos in the last chapter of the book evolve into NUX 9, a character with alter ego potential within the exhibition. NUX 9's story begins with a mind embarking on an inner journey while gazing upon a vast landscape. As the journey unfolds, the mind's evolution draws closer to the atmosphere of a shrinking room. Nourished by the coincidences encountered during its wandering, NUX 9 becomes a new self that attempts to materialize by absorbing the elements of the landscape. Perhaps, in the end, it transforms into a new landscape itself, containing consciousness within it.

FE: You mentioned that NUX 9 was inspired by the Enneagram Type 9, one of the personality types discussed by Claudio Naranjo in his research on *Character and Neurosis*. You take Type 9, characterized by a barren, closed inner world, a lack of imagination and transform its meaning by attaching it to something that represents the richness of an inner world: an exhibition. Why exactly did you choose Type 9?

AS: By combining some of the characteristics of Type 9 with the word *Nux*, I aimed to construct the unique, contradictory personality of NUX 9. This process seems to continue even after the exhibition. The word *Nux* is derived from the name of a homeopathic remedy produced from the seed of the blackthorn tree, *Nux Vomica*. Like many other herbal remedies, *Nux Vomica* possesses both poisonous and therapeutic properties. This dual nature, which can have both calming and healing effects, is especially used in the treatment of Type 8. These qualities mirror the inherent contradictions and complexity of NUX 9.

I realized that some of the unhealthy traits of Type 9 mirrored subtle traits I frequently observed in individuals within my community and close circle. Over time, I began to notice these traits becoming more prevalent as despair spread on various scales. This is why I was drawn to Type 9 and decided to include it in the process.

As with other types, the potentially risky aspects of Type 9 can evolve into strong traits and inner richness when nurtured in the right environment, ultimately leading to self-actualization. This process resembles two sides of the same coin—an ongoing journey of development where both risks and strengths coexist.

FE: It seems you're hinting at the possibility of a social transformation. In the book, we can see a narrative of transformation, but it remains uncertain whether it concludes in a private realm or within a "colony." Each of our stories of individuality is unique and arduous. On top of that, you are dealing with the construction of an identity without memory, language, future, or any definition. No wonder it's experimental, exquisite, and chaotic. In this story of becoming, where do concepts like memory, past, community, language, and self, stand?

AS: In the book, the mind wandering through different memory spaces is, in fact, wandering through its own story. To make visible the colony it nurtures and feeds on in its mind, it transforms the memories inherited from the society it lives in, attempting to redesign its past. Sometimes it becomes trapped in false memories, disassembling itself into pieces and revealing the surreal transparency between them. At other times, it tries to make these fragments soar in the sky, only to reassemble them a moment later in different forms and variations. In the distance, the colony, "floating slowly and flapping its wings in the white mists," now carries a piece of it.

FE: Usually, when we edit a text, we take responsibility for the text we see. In this text, however, there are also blanks flying around as a colony. It was an interesting experience for me to take responsibility of the non-existent. The gaps had the potential to both flow together and to become a whole on their own. What do these gaps in the book mean to you?

AS: The gaps in the text represent erased memory, the suffix "-less," lack deprivation, redundancy, and sometimes error. These gaps symbolize the mind's lost memories, missing pieces, or erroneous perceptions. Perhaps they are not only a void for the mind but also a space that can be reconstructed, much like the process by which a lost memory is pieced together.

FE: At first, these words were hidden behind the cursor, but with the design proposed by Kibele Yarman, they became vaguely visible. You two have discussed to what extent they should be seen. In a sense, they were freed from the editor's responsibility and transformed into free-floating words, taking their place in print. Perhaps they are like Toby's mark now—a fleeting trace from the past.

AS: One of the right decisions in the book emerged through Kibele's on-the-spot intervention, which was never part of the original plan. With your subtle analogy, these words will now wink freely at anyone who wants them, liberated from invisibility and the complete covering of white. I believe this intervention opens a space of both awareness and freedom, overcoming secrecy and silence, giving these spaces new meaning and existence.

FE: The possibilities are endless, depending on how much we choose to squint. The meaning here is not one-dimensional. This is also reflected in the polyphony that pervades the book more broadly. We tried to cherish this plurality when working with you. While walking us through the formation of a personal memory, the book simultaneously whispers us to always keep colonies and communities in mind. I think your own story also influences this polyphony.

AS: Growing up in two different languages, cultures, and geographies may have caused the definitions of foreignness and familiarity to constantly shift, never remaining fixed for me. I believe the state of not knowing where the sense of belonging begins or ends is especially reinforced through language. The effort to bring at least two different identities together in a single self may have triggered my desire for polyphony.

Since I tolerate and cannot ignore my own ongoing story as an element of randomness in fiction, I incorporate polyphony into both the production methods and content of my works. As a result, it is inevitable that my works often bear autobiographical traces.

FE: I think that maybe through the very process you mentioned, there is something reflected to the reader here: The book does not aspire to be a product or a conclusion. The narrator's perspective removes it from being merely a report or a testimony. In my opinion, *Colony Vatos* is a thinking process. How would you see it—is it a process of confronting something?

AS: In the formation of *Colony Vatos*, the effects and roles of communities and colonies on the superego become evident, while the unconscious occasionally reveals itself. This process, starting from the subjective memory of the wandering mind, might present the internal confrontations and remind us of normalized, commonly accepted false judgments.

In addition, it does not shy away from its concerns about the “reality” of any concept of death, and this is perhaps where it reserves his greatest reckoning. Your observation that the book is a process of reflection defines the exact point at which it settles. The reader can only surrender oneself to this experience without expectation. Afterwards, I think the reader can forget what they have read and be content with a vague aftertaste on their tongue.

FE: Until it craves the same food again. I think there is also the smell of an intergenerational life and death issue coming from the kitchen of the book. Again, it is a smell that transforms as it cooks. In addition to a place left behind, which has become the residue of the past generation, it is another neverland that represents the imagination of the future. And we hear a fresh spice that calls out “mother” right in the heart of the smell.

AS: Reflecting the revitalized face of death, this voice approaches the distant landscape to construct the future with the information codes it carries from the past, while diving into hidden cities under the seas. In the process, it seems to have already figured out how to navigate between dimensions and minds and how to handle encounters. The ropes left from the body it emerged from are about to break, and the broken ones are hanging from its wrists. But it doesn't care about all these narratives. Because whatever it is in its codes that makes it say with calm indifference, “We are here, in this story.” has drunk the same elixir centuries ago. As also the one who answered the question “How long have we been here?” says with a ridiculous seriousness, “Since we arrived!”

FE: “While you wait, you feel that the darkness sees you and hides from you,” you say in *Colony Vatos*. I wish for us all a darkness with which we can play hide and seek.

AS: Every time I look at the darkness, I think of it as both an object and a consciousness that draws my gaze. Perhaps, if our days are long enough, we will remember the game we used to play with the little black ball on the bright, white grass.