

Gezi - 10 Years After, Maxim Gorki Theatre, 26 May - 25 June, 2023

Gezinema World Cinema Documentaries

<https://www.gorki.de/en/gezinema>

Co-curated by Şirin Fulya Erensoy and Necati Sönmez

Screening: #direnayol, 3 June 2023

Synopsis: In 2013, Rüzgâr sets out to make a documentary about a close friend Şevval, a trans LGBT activist. The timing of the documentary coincides with a transformational moment in Istanbul during the 2013 Gezi Park protests and the subsequent Pride march.

Q&A with film director Rüzgâr Buşki, moderated by Şirin Fulya Erensoy and sound language translation by Gudrun Hillert

Rüzgâr Buşki, born in 1987 in Istanbul is a Berlin based artist. Their artistic practice focuses on printmaking, video and performance. They explore themes such as belonging, affect, identity, desire and tradition. Buşki hacks old media with contemporary topics, reclaiming materials such as wood and stone as exchangeable mediums. They produce and direct hybrid documentaries by empowering productions for and with marginalized communities, queering the rules of filmmaking. Their work have been shown in numerous spaces and institutions, which include documenta14 - Parliament of Bodies, Athens (2016), 59th International Leipzig Festival for Documentary and Animated Film, Leipzig (2016), Translations - 12th Seattle Transgender Film Festival, Seattle (2017), Queer Disruptions Conference, Columbia University, New York (2018), Museum für Fotografie, Berlin (2018), Schwules Museum Berlin (2018), Badischer Kunstverein, Karlsruhe (2019), Silent Green, Berlin (2020). 2020– 2021 they were Close-Up Program Fellow for NonFiction Cinema from the Middle East and North Africa, in 2019 they won the first prize of the Karl Hofer Society Grant, that same year they won the Zeliş Deniz Queer Cinema Award at Pink Life Queer Film Festival, 2015 to 2019 they were Fellow of Rosa Luxemburg Foundation. Buşki graduated with a Meisterschüler title from the class of Prof. Dr. Hito Steyerl at Berlin University of Arts. They continue their studies in Art in Context M.A. also in Berlin University of Arts.



Photos courtesy of Yasemin Erensoy

Şirin Fulya Erensoy: You were living in Berlin at the time of the Gezi Park protests. How did the idea of making a film from the perspective of LGBT activism at the time of Gezi come to you?

Rüzgâr Buşki: I know Şeval from the trans movement. Both of us could speak English so we kind of became the spokespeople for the foreign media - we always had to answer the same questions and talk about hate crimes, police violence and death. We were always disappointed and we saw the results of all these interviews. I really don't like films centering on trans people, made by cis people. Please stop it :) So I wanted to do a film about Şeval because Şeval is my kanka. She really likes to swim. She's like a mermaid. If you put her in the water, she does not come out. So I really wanted to make a film about this. I was very

inexperienced back then and I was already living in Berlin, so I really wanted to catch everything. We filmed as much as we could. We couldn't film the mermaid Şevval.

Şirin Fulya Erensoy: The film takes place in the post-Gezi Park occupation period, where we were trying to figure out how to organize ourselves and transfer what we learned during the two weeks of occupation into everyday life. I assume the production was a bit spontaneous as were those days. How did you organize your shooting schedule? What were some of the advantages of this spontaneity and how did this type of filming reflect on building the narrative of the documentary?

Rüzgâr Buşki: It was sort of spontaneous, and sort of not spontaneous. It was Pride week and there were a lot of neighborhood forums happening at the time. We were just following Şevval and going to the demos ourselves as well. I think we had only one planned shooting day which involved Demirören. We usually throw paint at Demirören, a shopping mall. We met up to prepare the paint balls. And then Şevval disappeared - it happens. Medeni Yıldırım was killed in Lice and there was a huge demonstration in Taksim. Usually this doesn't happen when someone is killed in Kurdistan. People from Istanbul usually did not go to these demos back in the day. We went out filming and I just asked Elif, "what happened in Gezi?", she spoke so nicely I thought to myself, "oh my god, why am I doing a Şevval documentary? Something else is going on here!" There were some things I planned filming. I really loved these censored graffitis. I think they have "painting quality". I am also a painter. For me it is like art without an artist so it's really juicy for me. It's even better than art with artists. So we filmed this and I wasn't sure how we would use it in the end. Gizem wrote a crazy code - she made a pool and linked recordings with it and different cranes. We had fun in the post also with the sound. We had some rules - like we did not want to film Turkish flags. So we had some rules but we were just on the streets filming. I mean, I didn't have a plan. I know better now...But it was also nice.

Şirin Fulya Erensoy: But the film goes beyond simple documentation of a series of events. What are the aesthetic choices you made during the shoot? In the post-production phase, you added elements that embodied another form of aesthetics. Can you tell us about this creative process?

Rüzgâr Buşki: No Turkish flags was my biggest rule because when I was watching footage of Gezi when in Germany, I don't want to say terrorized - but I had some sort of disgust towards the flag. With Begün (Özden Fırat), we had a discussion about the flag a couple of years ago, where she said that people did not have any political symbols so they took the turkish flag and went on the streets. But I still don't like flags - I don't like the Ukrainian flag, I don't like the turkish flag, I don't want to have to see flags. For me it doesn't work - showing solidarity by waving a flag. There are other ways, so we tried not to film Turkish flags.

I'm obsessed with sound. I hear the sound or I have an idea of the sound. And then the visual comes later. And I worked with two sound designers. We focused on getting very good sound recordings from the field. Much of the music of the film is also sampled by all the recordings we did in the field by Gizem.

I had what we call in German a FLINTA team: so my camera woman also made very conscious choices to film women, to film older women. We wanted to give an honest picture of who is on the street and not only the men throwing stones at on the streets...And Şevval had to look beautiful. This was an issue And she will have to look beautiful. I mean this issue on the editing also.

Audience Question: I would like to ask a question in relation to the people you have dedicated the film to. If it's alright, can you please share with us who they are?

Rüzgâr: Two of the three people to whom the film is dedicated to can be seen in the film. Ali appears in the film, he was a cancer patient then and we lost him to cancer in 2015. There is Boysan as well who appears, the one who says "I hope my sex life will be better". I can imagine it is good "there"...Actually, Zeliş can also be seen shortly during the demonstrations. Boysan and Zeliş passed away together after a car accident in 2015. Ali was a pioneer in the trans-masculine movement in Turkey. They were really pioneers; they brought movements together and many more people together. They are very strategic in their activism, like Zeliş would make links with the feminist movement and city movements. Boysan was into politics and was elected in local parliament. Ali did a lot of theory, he wrote a lot. He wrote a lot and would work with Ulaş, our sound recorder for the film. They had a mutually caring relationship. Ali created a lot of awareness about access to health care, particularly gynecology for trans-masculine people. I for example went to the gynecologist for the first time after Ali passed. So yes, they were very influential....

Audience Question: So would you say the documentary is some sort of memorial to them?

Rüzgâr Buşki: It is a memorial to them. We have another film which is also a memorial to them. Zeliş, Mert and Boysan had a car accident while we were editing. They knew about the film; with Boysan I had a lot of exchanges, And then they passed. The accident took place in September and the film was first screened in February in Turkey. So it was a moment where all of us were still grieving. So everybody also was waiting just to see them on the screen also, and to sort of celebrate their legacy.

Şirin Fulya Erensoy: #direnayol is an important document that shows us Gezi through the perspective of LGBT activists in Istanbul. It remains one of the key visual documents of the time and has significance for the visual memory and history of both the Gezi and LGBT movement in Turkey. But beyond a document, it is a celebration, a window into a community and its members, their friendship and energy of resistance. At the time, did you feel responsible in telling your community's stories and sharing it with the wider audience, also in light of the way in which trans people are depicted in mainstream media and cinema?

Rüzgâr Buşki: I felt a responsibility to the movement because I felt like it was my graduation film, because I sort of studied in Lambda¹. In terms of representation, like the, I tried so hard, just to work with our crew, for example, I have a trans color corrector.

¹ Lambda Istanbul is an LGBTQ+ rights organization based in Istanbul, Turkey. It was founded in 1993 and advocates for the rights of the LGBTQ+ community in Turkey, working towards equality, non-discrimination, and social acceptance.

I don't know, I don't have to do it consciously in a way. But the film is so strong, I can't believe we are still watching this film after so many years. It has so much power about what one can imagine. Unfortunately, I can't see the film as a viewer. In September, a 20-year-old from Turkey saw the film. They were *vitamin*² when these things were happening. But if you can see something on a screen, which enlarges your imagination of what your life could be then that's cool. But if you just sit around in bed and you have to do sex work, and you're a drug addict, and the police hates you, your family hates you, your neighbours hate you...It's part of reality, but it's not the entire reality. And I really don't want to do a film like this. We sat for long hours editing and we had to make it fun also for us. All of this, it's real. Pride is still happening, I don't think Gezi was a failure, I don't know why you are saying this...The only real pride I experienced was in Istanbul. And it's still happening. Being trans is great. We have a great community. So it's good also. I guess everybody's life sucks a bit but...

Şirin Fulya Erensoy: I know you have been away from Istanbul for some time, and living in Berlin since 2011. But can you evaluate how solidarity with the LGBT movement since Gezi has evolved? How has your connection with the movement changed/shifted over the years and what do you make of remote activism from Berlin/how has your activism shifted to focus on your immediate locality?

Rüzgâr Buşki: My activism shifted, of course, I grew up a bit. This is a question I ask myself also. I don't know if I have a certain set answer. I don't know if I know the answer, but I don't call myself an activist anymore. I'm an artist, and my work is considered political, but I do art. I don't like bullshit, so my work is about stuff which bothers me and I'm bothered about a lot of stuff. I do art and my art is political. I do some sort of community work. But I just continue a legacy which was here before me. When I lived in Istanbul, I had contact with activists from GLAAD. There is a long lasting solidarity between the movement in Turkey and between the Kanakan queer movement in Germany. Now, if I can manage, I send cash. Economic support right now for me seems like the type of support that makes the most sense. This is going to be too political maybe. But, back in the day, there were people like Claudia Roth coming to Pride and all these politicians were creating political pressure. But now they are kankas with Erdoğan because Erdogan prevents refugees from crossing over to Europe. That has become the norm. So LGBT, Kurds and everyone else can suffer as long as refugees are prevented from coming into Europe.. So we send cash so people can buy food...

Audience Question: I have a lot of family and friends in Turkey. How do you navigate being here and knowing there's trouble over there? How do you navigate your relationships? Maybe it is a private question that relates to your relationship with Turkey but because you talk about it a lot and you also do it a lot. I find it very hard...

Rüzgâr Buşki: My family here also has a lot of struggles. I convinced my family in Istanbul to move here. So now we struggle here together. I mean, it's not that my family here is chilling. It's not like this, unfortunately, it's a struggle but I try to be "here", to be honest, because if I'm "there" all the time, I literally feel like I have hooks behind my back. I try to be here - it's really physical. But yes it is a struggle....

² In Turkish slang, *vitamin* means "very young".

Audience Question: I was born here, so the majority of my relationships are here. I just see it with my father, who's the only one who moved here and trying not to give up his identity, not as a Turkish citizen, but as a person that is a brother, a friend, maybe an ex-lover or whatever. Relationships are still in Turkey and you're in the privileged situation of enjoying a more liberal country and I find that hard to navigate.

Rüzgâr Buşki: I understand what you are conveying. For me, Berlin is not heaven. Economically, I can survive here but there is Hanau happening.³ There is the police happening. I studied at UdK, and the security did not believe I was a student there. So it's not heaven for many people here. I am OK - I have a German passport now. I really want to be German and have 3-months of holiday in South America every year. I really want to embody the complete German experience. But, it's not letting me. I am willing to have this identity change; I am ready. I have been living here for 12 years. I have amazing relationships here, I have my family here. I am from Berlin. No one has to give me a passport or convince me. I am Berlin. You are lucky I am here (applause).

Audience Question: I moved to Germany a year ago from Turkey. I am Kurdish. I am very concerned about the LGBT+ community in Turkey because they are targets of the government - Kurds are also targets. There are Kurdish LGBT people. So we see intersectionality here. When Gezi happened, I was very small. It's very hard to protest now; now the media is occupied by the government. Do you think this affects representation/ how can we have more visibility about this? Gezi was perfect for this, people from different political backgrounds came together and supported each other.

Rüzgâr Buşki: There is huge censorship in Turkey. In terms of the LGBT community, I am not worried because I trust the LGBT community. I am worried about all the other communities, who don't dare to stand with the LGBT community.

I read the Pride press release in 2008, I remember saying "There is no Pride in Istanbul, when there is war in Kurdistan." So queer people are in all the movements. But who is going to stand with us? Who is going to take risks for and with us? When I made this film, I didn't even have Instagram. In terms of image production, now, almost everyone has a phone. So you can do a film and share it. The tools of production are much more accessible. It is a pain in the ass to do a film. In terms of resources it is hard to make a film in Turkey but in terms of creating visibility, I have no worries.

Audience Question: In every film about Gezi I have seen there are penguins. What does that symbolize?

Şirin Fulya Erensoy: That's Gezi 101!

Rüzgâr Buşki: The night of the 30th, the big night when everyone first went to the park. CNN Türk did not report on the events, instead they showed a documentary on penguins - The March of the Emperor. So the next day, we brought the penguins to Gezi. We got very creative with it.

³ The Hanau shootings occurred on 19 February 2020. The gunman was a far-right extremist, Tobias Rathjen who specifically targeted immigrants from Turkish and Kurdish descent.

Şirin Fulya Erensoy: Yes, in essence, the penguin is the symbol of media complicity and a symbol of resistance for us.
Thank you all for coming.

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