

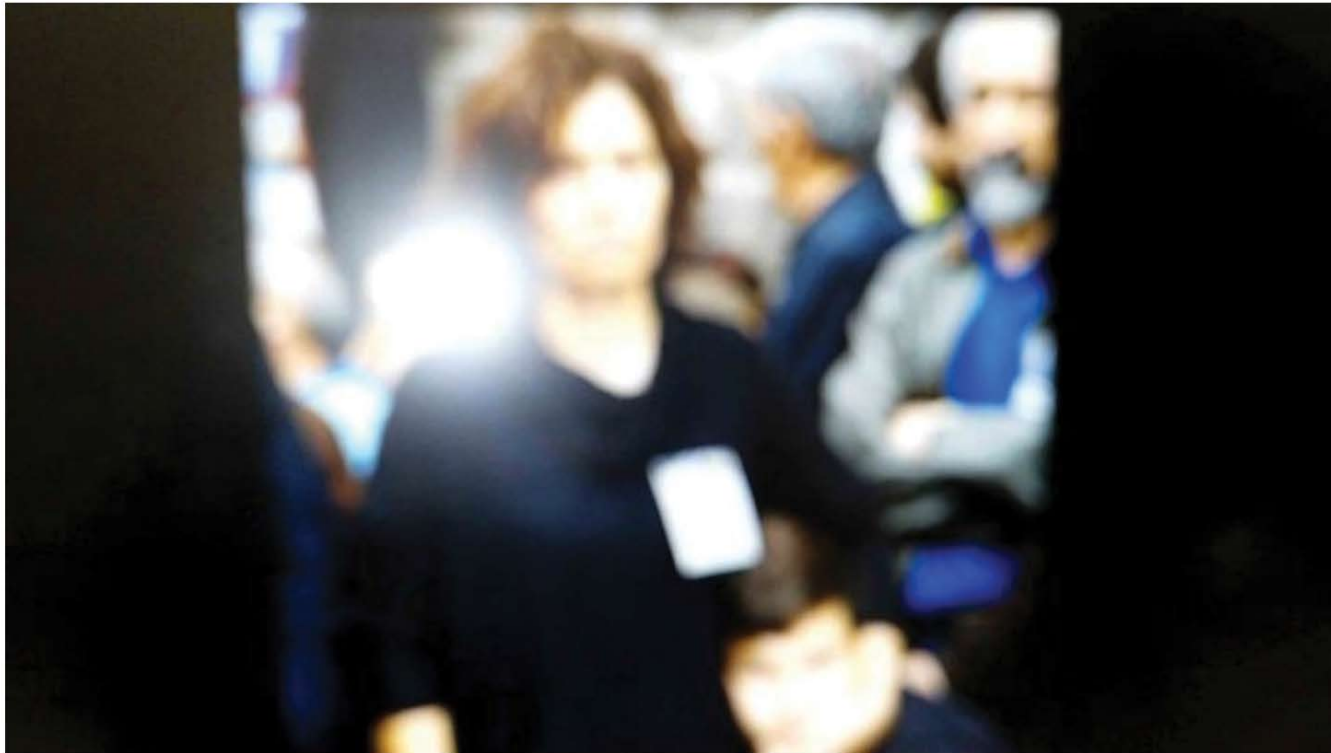
Questions to belit saĝ

belit saĝ, my camera seems to recognize people



Q Can you tell us a bit about the situation which brought about *my camera seems to recognize people*?

A I guess one of my main questions is about how I, as a video-maker, position myself in situations like war and conflict, with images of those conflicts, particularly when other people are present in my videos. This is an ethical question, and I want to approach it from a purely human perspective with simple questions. As someone with a video-activist background who now has an art practice, I keep going in-between these two practices, try and try again to situate myself in between those fields, one foot in each of them, without either having a defining or central role. Art helps me reflect on images, while my background in video-activism and political engagement pushes me to define my practice and position myself. Since 2014 my work is very much reflecting on several issues including the role of the camera, the role of images and how they are used, the nature of activist images, and whether it is possible to be open, honest and transparent with images while being aware of their manipulative nature – the manipulative nature of editing, framing etc. My practice is increasingly a practice that reveals its own processes and especially its relationship to its subjects, and attempts to make sense of conflicts through their images. I realized that I can't make images without talking about these relationships that form around the camera, I can't take these relationships for granted.



belit saĝ, my camera seems to recognize people, Three-Channel-Video, 2015 © belit saĝ

Q Somewhat paradoxically, absence is very present in this video. You write about the invention of 0 as a way of accounting for, or representing, absence. Could you expand about this? Is it related to the limits of representation, and to the haunting absence – in itself a sort of presence – of violence in your images?

A In the first two screens of my camera seems to recognize people, I'm filming still images and asking questions around death: what images do in case of such pain and absence, what does it mean to film such grave issues, and how does one talk about these issue through images? The video takes images of dead people, images of people who lost their loved ones, and images of people who survived. In the first section still images of dead people are recorded in a room during a funeral in Cizre, a Kurdish village, after attacks by Turkish Security Forces in 2015. In the second part we see the still image of the widow of an anarchist who was killed in a bomb attack in Ankara during a peace march in 2015. That image goes in and out of focus. The third part doesn't include any still images, it shows a little girl who approached the camera and revealed her scar. She recognized the camera and asked the camera to recognize her scar. Her mother interrupts this moment and makes fun of the girl, 'we have seen your scar long enough', she disrupts the moment where the victim figure is created in front of the camera. Humour is the best way to address such moments. I love that moment. All three reflect upon presence and absence. All three are talking about a certain revealing process.

Q Much of your work seems to deal with the violence of representation, rather than the representation of violence. But as an artist and filmmaker, you deal nonetheless primarily with images, and with modes of representation. How do you approach this challenge?

A Even though my practice deals with our exposure to violent images, at the same time it is very much interested in expanding the definition of violence, and also thinking not only about the violence of representation but also how that can be challenged. Uluş Baker once said something like: you can counter an image only with an image. I'm taking that challenge, and it is a failing game, there is definitely no such thing as the right image, I don't think it works like that, but I find it extremely important to find language/s - visual and verbal - to talk about these issues. So, I'll keep talking about these issues and also keep making images, I think it is very important to keep these two close to one another. These are not entirely new thoughts, but I think they are still extremely relevant at this moment.



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