# WE REMEMBER

by Almudena Escobar Lopez

*Camera and event. Since its invention, film has seemed destined to make history visible. It has been able to portray the past and stage the present. We have seen Napoleon on horseback and Lenin on the train. Film was possible because there was history. Almost imperceptibly, like moving forward on a Moebius strip, the side was flipped. We look on and have to think: if film is possible, then history too is possible.*

— Voiceover from *Videograms of a Revolution* (Harun Farocki and Andrei Ujică (1992)

When we tell a story, a little piece of ourselves travels with our words, to be shared with those who are listening. By telling, we reimagine and project ourselves into the narrative, creating a living archive in constant flux.

belit sağ's archival practice works in a similar way: it allows the stories to exist. This doesn't mean that what we hear are direct testimonies of the voiceless, or that the camera changes hands in a participatory documentary mode. Instead, fiction and personal reflection create a tangential line that cracks open the surface of the present. By disrupting the circulation of images and questioning their meaning, sağ reminds viewers that there are responsibilities involved in the act of looking and that our field of vision is determined by political parameters of visibility. As an alternative to visual passive consumption, sağ proposes a focused and receptive mode of watching that requires awareness and an alert attitude towards media. This "expanded viewing" is more than seeing, it is a personal meditative exercise that invites the viewer to defocus their knowledge, amplifying it to things that are overlooked, left on the side or simply ignored. By carefully describing what is actually in the images, speculating about their contextualization, or by explaining the field of vision of the attendees of a courtroom, sağ explores the margins of historical documentation.

In cut-out (2017/2018) the viewer is confronted with the composite image circulated in the press which included the portraits of the ten victims of the National Socialist Underground (NSU) murders. These were a series of hate crimes perpetrated by the far-right terrorist organization between 2000–2007 throughout Germany. Since the murders started, the German government ignored the racist nature of the crimes, treating them as isolated attacks or as mafia related assaults. sağ shows the victims as they were presented in the press in a group of small portraits, and describes them, one by one, focusing on the material details of each image. What do we see when we look at the portrait of a murdered victim in the media? sağ wonders around the margins of these images, speculating about the personal relationships between the subject in the photograph and the image itself. Did the victim see this portrait? Where was the image taken? Is it a photograph? Is it a silhouette separated from a group photograph? Is it a passport image? The images that before were operating within certain pre established historical parameters, start to expand, proposing different functionalities.

In aksama (disruption) (2016) sağ composes a collage with found materials that gradually communicate with each other. The footage is both from popular films and from the Turkish news during the failed coup attempt in July 2016. The composite image is superimposed on first-person footage of sağ's feet while walking from point A to point B. Here all the images are operating independently from each other, while also exploring their mutual relationships by means of the subjective position of the filmmaker. Likewise, the intertwined relationship between the found images and sağ's pacing relate to the overwhelming feeling that the saturation of images in the media provokes. aksama (disruption) creates an open playground where knowledge is generated through the friction between facts and subjective fictional production.

sağ's "expanded viewing" invites audiences to develop close relationships with events in which they did not participate. The re-telling becomes a live activation of the archive, an invitation to perform in unison with the images cohabitating the space with sağ herself. sağ envisions an open concept of archive where affective connections between subjects and objects are central. Her storytelling and the storytelling of others, becomes an act of resistance against the linearity of history, and its predetermined contextualization of images. For sağ archival images are durational points in time that can be rewinded and forwarded. This temporal flexibility explores the hierarchical structures of image production questioning the intake of images, their impact, and their later processing by the subject.

(Against) Randomness (2017) was made for the People's Tribunal against the NSU attacks. In this case, the purpose of the narrative is to create solidarity among the victims. Their discourse in the shape of textual quotes takes over in an attempt to disrupt the enclosed public image tailored by the state around the murders. Quotes appear and disappear on the screen over a background of enlarged details from digital images borrowed from personal and public archives related to the case. The words do not include the references, avoiding the hierarchy that they create. It doesn't matter where they are coming from, all the elements of the narrative are equally important and function as a network. Functioning on a similar connective level, overexposed (2017/2018) is an installation piece that combines transcriptions of the NSU trials made by local activist organizations, with images of the crime scenes from the press. Edited in between are schematic drawings of the courtroom where the trials took place, explaining how each of the parties were allocated and what their field of vision was. The personal narrative of the victims in this case is spatially situated in the courtroom. The viewer did not participate in the trials but now is able to glimpse over the spatial interrelations of the stories that are heard. overexposed is a temporal collapse between the images of the murders, the courtroom, the transcription, sağ's voice reading the transcriptions, and the viewer. Suddenly the images that before were functioning within certain preconditions of knowledge, start to transform themselves into spaces of reflection and mirroring. Memory displays itself as a modular space of interconnections, and storytelling becomes a closer look at facts.

This treatment of the archive as an open space–shareable and autonomous– differs from the enclosed static idea of the public archive as a repository of knowledge. Here the archive is both lived and conceptual. sağ's independently open archive is based on contextualization, interpersonal relationships, and the redistribution of information. Her "expanded viewing" is more than simply reorganizing the archive through reappropriation,it is about cultivating a critical approach to knowledge that recognizes the importance of the emergent and the residual.