

ZAMAN ZAMAN

ALİ KAZMA

TIME TO TIME

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CRYSTALS

An essay on *Time to Time*

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“Time is a creation, or it is nothing.”¹

—Henri Bergson

Curator Massimiliano Gioni had selected the theme of the 55th Venice Biennale organized in 2013 as *Encyclopedic Palace*. Gioni’s source of inspiration was an architectural design titled *Palazzo Encyclopedic*, which had been presented to the USA Patent Office in 1955 by Marino Auriti and had remained a model only. Auriti’s utopic project was a 708-meter-high, 136-story building, which would host with a progressive sensibility of museology all the innovations that humans have realized across all fields and the innovations they would make. Massimiliano Gioni, in turn, would include research-driven artists who focused on the infinitely diverse and rich ways in which knowledge was gained and presented in the exhibition. Ali Kazma, who had shown the videos included in the series *Obstructions* in numerous international art institutions, was the ideal person for the 55th Venice Biennale when considering the theme. Kazma presented various production processes ranging from crafts to mass production with an approach diverging from the documentary. This series made sense alongside Gioni’s exhibition that focused on the human who had a desire to know and see everything. However, Ali wanted to produce a new video series for the biennial. His proposed shooting plan comprised many countries, including Japan and the USA, and shooting permits had to be organized for each location. For a long time, a big part of my job at the gallery where I was working was to prepare DVD copies of the video series *Obstructions* to be added to the files sent out to receive the permits. When the permit process was completed, I had already begun to feel an affinity for the workers at the DVD copy store, which was located at a corner in Cihangir and which had become a popular shopping destination for those interested in festival films and which had never hosted any other business for too long, probably because I had begun to see them as my colleagues. The series produced by Ali Kazma for the biennial was called *Resistance*.

While this series did not deviate from his previous series, *Obstructions*, it included remarkable transformations within the artist’s videography. The artist examined the production processes in line with an archaeological method², as Paul Ardenne put it, in *Obstructions*. In *Resistance*, on the other hand, he directed his gaze to the subject, who is the agent of these processes. The presentation of this series at the biennial was structured within three layers: the things that the skin, which constitutes the physical limit of the body, points to or the marks on the skin, the practices in which this limit is violated, or the observance of these practices while penetrating under the skin and the boundaries they create and, finally, architecture as an outer shell that surrounds the body to keep it under control. Ali Kazma added new layers to the series with the videos he added later. By transcending the coordinates determined by the skin, *Resistance* became multi-dimensional research on biopolitics, bifurcated within a topology that included the forms in which biologic materials and genetic codes are preserved, the methods with which the body is included technologically and sociologically, the aesthetic that served as a shelter to the mind to protect and even the post-human. The artist’s exhibition at Imalathane consists of four videos that mark four stations from within the main body of this research: *Prison*, *Case*, *House of Letters*, and *L’Atelier Sarkis*.

Gilles Deleuze’s books on cinema help us gain insight into Ali Kazma’s videos. It is possible to transfer the concepts that the philosopher discussed within the framework of cinematography to analyses of Kazma’s videography. Through the concepts of movement-image and time-image, which were discussed in detail in *Cinema 1* and *2*, we could comprehend how Ali Kazma’s videos, which often accumulate and turn into series, are positioned far away from the documentary image. We could say that beginning with the video *Absence*, the artist sets his works within the field of time-image. In these works, we encounter many traces of opsigns and sonic signs among the time-image’s constituent elements. The time-image, which reveals time not through movement but only as itself, could also be revealed through many other signs and processes and those that pointed to the optic and sonic situations. We could consider the lectosign, the noosign, and chronosign among these, and we could seek their counterparts in Ali Kazma’s videos. However, thinking about the works included in the exhibition *Time to Time*, I would like to focus

¹ *Yaratıcı Tekâmül (L’Évolution Créatrice)*, çev. Mustafa Şekip Tunç, Dünya Edebiyatından Tercümeleler, Fransız

Klâsikleri: 137, MEB Milli Eğitim Basımevi, 1986, p.437

² Ardenne, Paul, *Ali Kazma: İşler, 2005-2010*, İstanbul: Galeri Nev & Galerie Analix Forever, 2011, p. 5

on crystallization, which is one of the processes that produce the time-image, which is analyzed extensively in *Cinema 2*, in addition to all these signs.

According to Deleuze, crystallization, in the simplest sense, occurs when a cinematographic image coexists with its repetition. This repetition may occur immediately, symmetrically, consecutively, or simultaneously³. The scenes of dreams, flashbacks, or recollections in films could be considered in the context of crystallization. An image that existed in the past or existed only in the mind is integrated with the image formed now in these scenes, and time first splits into two, then is made whole or vice versa. We do not come across such scenes in any of Ali Kazma's videos, as the artist has purged the aesthetics of the image he constructs from all strategies that can lead to storytelling, such as retelling the past or a dream. However, we encounter the mirror image, which is often used to explain the concept of crystallization, in the artist's videos. Deleuze examines the mirror image with a Bergsonian approach: While the actual object finds its reflection in the mirror image, the virtual object in the mirror simultaneously envelops and reflects the actual object. The mirror image functions like a circuit connecting the real and virtual objects, as in dreams or recollections.

Among Ali Kazma's videos, we see some of the most precise expressions of the mirror image in *Home*, which was included in the *Resistance* series in 2015. The house in this video is the Kuzguncuk house of Füsün Onur and İlhan Onur, who passed away recently. The mirrors in *Home* turn into brilliance generators that multiply the light emitted by lamps on the ceiling or near them. In his two-channel video titled *Finis Terrae* included in the *Time to Time* exhibition, Ali Kazma focuses his camera on the areas where lighthouses are densely located in northwest France. We watch distant and close-up views produced by paraboloidal mirrors and fresnel lenses used in lighthouses throughout the video. In these images, as in *Home*, the mirror appears as a mechanism that reflects light. We could consider the oblique, convex, concave mirrors (paraboloidal mirrors are also concave mirrors) and multi-part Venetian mirrors as circuits that produce crystal images⁴. Such mirrors in cinema reveal situations where the real and virtual images become indistinguishable. The circuit formed between these two images corresponds to the Bergsonian

understanding of time in which the present inevitably is also the past. What is happening in the present is always located within a present. But after every present comes another present, or in other words, the present always passes and turns into the past. According to Bergson, the present must transform from the moment it is presently, so it hosts its past as a virtual image.⁵ Bergson thought that these two structures were inseparable. For him, the present was multiple wholes, bifurcated backward and forwards from the moment, it was formed, containing its past and calling for its future. One of the essential pillars of the theoretical framework in *Cinema 1* and *2* is this Bergsonian understanding of time. Bergson's idea of the past realized simultaneously with the now finds its image in the mirror.

Crystallization gives birth to cinematographic expression, and the mirror becomes the seed.⁶ This seed contains the potential of the cinematographic image to create a new environment because cinema presents images and surrounds these images with the different worlds it creates.⁷ Mirror and seed become intertwined when the production process of the image created by painting, theater, or cinema becomes visible in the cinematographic image. A play, a performance, a painting, or another movie within a movie that we encounter in a film are examples of such situations. Such states of self-reflexion are located not only in cinema but also in many different arts, and these states have the potential to present a pure crystal-image, as in *Last Year in Marienbad*.⁸ In the context of videography, the equivalent of this pure crystal-image may be the video recording within the video. Such an image appears unexpectedly in Kazma's work called *The Prison*. In this work, the artist directed his gaze to the L-Type Closed Penitentiary Institution in Sakarya. In the video, we watch the corridors where the individual rooms of the convicts and detainees are closed at night, the ventilation gaps, the common living areas, and the courtyard surrounded by barbed wire fences. The depictions of landscapes that the prison residents paint on the walls of the interior spaces they are allowed to wander around point to the outside world and nature that they can no longer see. Despite the vividness of the colors used, these are sorrowful pictures in the eyes of viewers who do not live in prison. As in many

⁵ Ibid., p. 76

⁶ Ibid., p. 72

⁷ Ibid., p. 66

⁸ Ibid., p. 74

³ Deleuze, Gilles, *Cinema 2*, çev. Hugh Tomlinson, Robert Galeta, London: Continuum, 2005, p. 66

⁴ Ibid., p. 68

of Kzma's videos, this video also avoids showing human figures directly—we encounter the inhabitants of this “modern” prison only in the security footage the artist recorded. Watching the prisoners pacing in these video footage inside the video makes it clear what the prison is like and how time passes there.

Another work in the *Time to Time* exhibition presents the seed metaphor's most direct and striking form. The Global Seed Safe in Svalbard, located halfway between Norway and the Arctic, is a genetic data bank that preserves the seeds of many different plants grown worldwide. This structure was built in such a remote corner of the world to ensure that it would survive any disaster or war. In the *Safe*, we see the seeds that will make it possible to recreate life on earth, categorized in sheltered boxes. This structure reminds us that the most frightening disaster with the potential to destroy the world is more likely to be caused by man than by nature. The Global Seed Safe in Svalbard was designed to survive even a full-scale nuclear war. In Kzma's video, the ice crystals that line the concrete underground passages of the cellar and the doors of the warehouses where the seeds are stored become guardians that protect the genetic material needed to reinvigorate nature when the world as we know it comes to an end. Although the stunningly beautiful Arctic landscapes are pleasing to the eye, the *Safe* is one of Ali Kzma's darkest videos. The world shaped around the footage of this video reminds us that in Dante's *Divine Comedy*, the last circle of hell is a vast frozen lake. Traitors are located in that circle. We do not yet know whether the human being, who continues to betray the world in which they share life with other living things, will suffer the fate predicted by Dante.

Tea Time, exhibited on the ground floor of *Time to Time*, shows the audience that one of the metaphors that set up the exhibition is heat. Considering the constantly repeated statements of nuclear war from Russia's most reputable foreign officials over the past few months, as if they were talking about any random possibility, the introduction to an Ali Kzma exhibition should have been Tea Time, which would best reflect the spirit of the time. Produced in a factory that produces teacups, these images evoke hellfire as we know it. After watching this video, you could begin to look at the steaming hot tea in a thin glass from a different perspective. The contrast between *Tea Time* and *Safe* requires considering heat alongside movement.

Deleuze also talks about situations in which the movement-image, which does not show time directly but only indirectly through movement, contradicts its principles. These are the situations in which a movement continues, and the sequence recording the movement hosts its montage. There are intense movements of heat and light among the examples given for these situations in *Cinema 2*.⁹ This confusing determination of the French philosopher, who has been trying to distinguish the movement-image from the time-image throughout two volumes, is resolved in the book's conclusion. There are cases when the movement-image and the time-image coexist.¹⁰ This possibility provides essential clues for continuing to analyze Ali Kzma's videography before his work called *Absence* in the light of the concepts put forward in *Cinema 1* and *Cinema 2*. The rhythm intersects movement-image and time-image and allows them to coexist. Ali Kzma's video *Clerk*, which does not belong to any series, shows the clerk's work as the rhythm is most clearly visible and perhaps almost alone determines the form of the video. In this video, the sonsigns that emerge with the clerk's movements as he stamps every page in the stack of papers standing in front of him reinforce the sense of rhythm.

At this point, it is worth remembering that Kzma's sonsigns are versatile and make the different dimensions of the artist's videography audible. Crystal image appears in sonic forms as well as optical forms. Félix Guattari points to ritornello in Baroque music as one of the most prominent examples of crystal time, described as the repetition of a melody with different instruments.¹¹ On the other hand, Deleuze considers the sounds of galloping horses and the chirping of birds together with ritornello. These opsigns, like sonsigns, host their repetitions and ultimately serve a kind of crystallization process. In Ali Kzma's work titled *House of Letters*, bird sounds that we continue to hear in the background crystallize the images in the video for a long time. A similar situation applies to *L'Atelier Sarkis*. The video opens with one of the baroque pieces Sarkis loves to listen to while working in his studio in Paris.

Sarkis's artistic practice, always rooted in painting, and the chromatic layout in his studio provide Ali Kzma with a rich array of resources to highlight

⁹ Ibid., p. 35

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 259

¹¹ Ibid., p. 88

the pictorial approaches in Kazma's videography. Unlike Clerk, the *L'Atelier Sarkis* video is dominated by an atonal rhythm, and this particular understanding of rhythm is also dominant in Kazma's other works. Because the artist does not arrange his videos in a clear and predictable flow as in the cinematographic image, it is possible to think that this is also true for Kazma's photographs, which make up his videos and are sequenced at twenty-five frames per second. Stories do not connect these photographic frames, and each one has a painterly tendency. In both his moving and static images, the artist's way of thinking about the photographic frame is predominantly painterly. This approach sustains Kazma's images in the forms that take shape in the flow of each video. The artist creates these forms during the shooting and the editing phases and selects them by separating them from other possible forms. The ordering of forms in Ali Kazma's photographs and videos reveals a concern with the very thingness of that which he refers to, rather than showing a process from beginning to end. In the videos presented by the artist in *Time to Time*, heat, speed, and light are exhibited through their rhythms and states of being, without becoming a part of a story or a documentary narrative.

I have thus far discussed Ali Kazma's videography within the framework of optical and sonic signs, crystallization processes, and the possibilities of the moving image coexisting with the time-image, and I tried to show that the artist's videos are open to rich readings in the light of the concepts produced by Deleuze. These analyses were based on the assumption that transferring the concepts proposed in cinematography to videography is possible. Deleuze states that this assumption is correct but also claims that the video image is inherently separate from cinema in the conclusion of *Cinema 2*. Videography's field is open to rediscovery with new concepts such as tele-image, electronic image, and numerical image. The plurality that I tried to underline throughout my analysis arises from the possibilities offered by these new images. Deleuze assumes a neutral position towards this new image regime that developed due to technological transformations. These new images, as in the time-image, could help us comprehend the world, re-believe in it, and mediate the birth of new spiritual automation. For all this to be possible, these new images must transform the perceptible content of the image, as in the transition from moving-image to time-image. This transformation must be accomplished without subjecting the image

to business, pornography, or a totalitarian approach.¹² Just as the time-image has become able to point to the destruction caused by the Second World War and the existential crises caused by this destruction and produce the spiritual tools needed to establish a new world, the electronic image must act in line with similar responsibility. Do the authoritarian tendencies, which seem to have gained momentum in the last decade across the world and which got out of hand with the shock of the pandemic, reveal that we are moving towards an irreversible historical rupture, as in the times when the time-image started to emerge? Could we consider this breaking point separately from the constant denial of environmental destruction due to human activities? Could the electronic image play a functional role in the context of our belief in the world Deleuze speaks of?

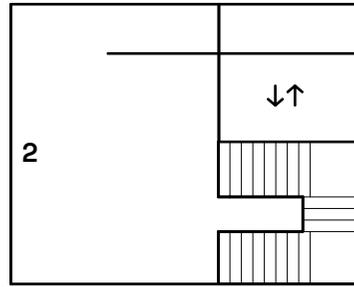
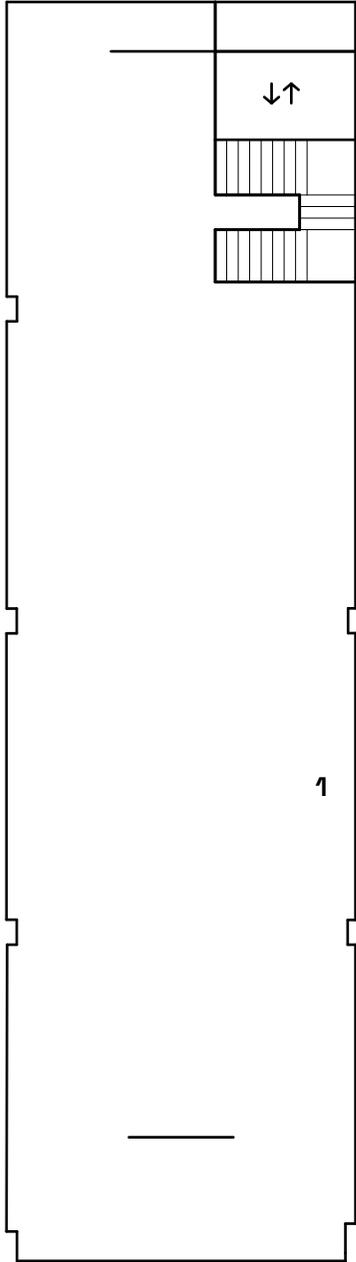
Ali Kazma's text-based works looking at the relations between authoritarianism and image production reveal that he is thinking about these questions. At this point, I would like to return to the beginning of my text, that is, to the text's past. Ali Kazma's Resistance series was exhibited at the Pavilion of Turkey at the Venice Biennale in 2013. Gezi Park protests broke out during the preview days of the biennial, and probably no one, except those who burned the tents, expected the events to blow up to such an extent. It was a coincidence that the videos in the biennial were shaped around the theme of Resistance and that this screening took place during perhaps the most comprehensive protest actions in the history of Turkey. However, sometimes coincidences divulge something crucial about the spirit of the time they occur. With the *Resistance* series, the artist examined how the body could become a source of Resistance after the Occupy Movement's actions sustained across dozens of countries for about two years within the broad context I mentioned earlier. This is how the past, in its simplest form, was shaped beyond the mass-paranoid readings. A protest took place in Venice's San Marco Square similar to those held in 79 provinces of Turkey on June 1, 2013, and the biennial visitors from all over the world participated in this action in the same way as 2.5 million citizens of Turkey participated in the protests from their own homes.¹³ The international press inevitably analyzed the Gezi Park protests and the videos in the *Resistance* series together because, at that time, the Venice Biennale Pavilion of Turkey was capable of being presented in the press with other kinds of photographs. At the point that we have arrived at today, the need to rethink the concept of Resistance is as sharp and clear as a crystal.

¹² Ibid., p. 265-266

¹³ see. <https://hyperallergic.com/72413/resistance-to-turkeys-bloody-protests-reach-the-venice-biennale/>

GROUND FLOOR

MEZZANINE



- 1** Ali Kazma
Tea Time
2017
Three channel synchronized HD video
8'
Courtesy of the artist
Kemal Servi Collection



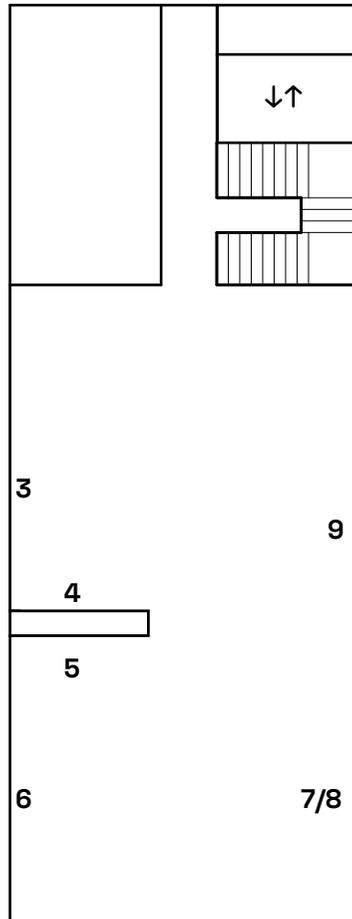
Established by the state in 1935, the Paşabahçe Glass Factory transitioned to the mechanical production system in 1955. Today, the group of companies with more than 22.000 employees under the umbrella of Şişecam seems to be in second place in the world in “glassware” production. Examples of the energy that emerges during the production of different glass forms that we are familiar with through grasping them with our hands are seen through the artist’s lens.

- 2** Ali Kazma
Clerk
2011, Single channel HD video, 3' 30"
Courtesy of the artist and Vehbi Koç Foundation
Agâh Uğur Collection



The manual skill acquired over the years by a clerk working in the Beyoğlu notary public, who participates in the functioning of bureaucracy, is recorded by the artist, who we could claim is a craftsman of the video. The clerk’s labor is realized in a mechanical rhythm in his body; the remaining validated/ stamped evidence flows into our system.

UPPER FLOOR



3 Ali Kazma
Safe (Resistance Series)
2015
Single channel HD video, 3'
Courtesy of the artist



The construction of the Svalbard Global Seed Vault began in 1983, opening in 2008. It was built 130 meters below a mountain. It is located in the Longyearbyen city, Svalbard Island. It aims to host and preserve the seeds of all the plants in the world, protecting them against a global catastrophe or the apocalypse. The first opening of the Svalbard vault, which contains more than 860,000 seed samples, was made possible by the call of the "International Center for Agricultural Research in Dry Areas (ICARDA)" in Aleppo to revive the depleted seeds of the ecology of the region damaged by the Syrian war in 2015.

4 Ali Kazma
Taxidermist (Obstructions Series)
2010, Single channel HD video, 10'
Courtesy of the artist and Fondation d'entreprise Hermès



Thomas Bauer lives as a taxidermist in Germany. Baeur, who is world-renowned in his field, is known as an expert in the taxidermy of medium-sized mammals. Baeur, who considers reconstructing the bodies of dead animals in his workshop as a craft, states that he has pets and loves animals in his daily routine.

5

Ali Kazma

Prison (Resistance Series)

2013, Single channel HD video, 5'

Courtesy of the artist and Istanbul

Foundation for Culture and Arts



Established in 2005, the Sakarya L-Type Closed Penitentiary Institution houses between 900 and 1000 convicts and detainees. The Sakarya Penitentiary, Turkey's first L-Type Closed Prison, consists of 6 buildings built on 132.000 m2 and employs more than 200 personnel.

6

Ali Kazma

House of Letters (Resistance Series)

2015, Two channel synchronized HD video, 5'

Courtesy of the artist

Ayşe Umur Collection



In 2000, the writer Alberto Manguel permanently moved to and transformed his house in the Poitou-Charentes region of France, which includes his library, hosting more than 40,000 books. The images seen through the artist's lens are from a week before the house was abandoned. Local authorities announced that Manguel donated his library to the City of Lisbon in 2020. This donation launched the construction of a contemporary public library (Intellectual Subversion Center) under the name "Center for the History of Reading." All books written by Alberto Manguel are published in Turkey by Yapı Kredi Publishing.

7

Ali Kazma

L'Atelier Sarkis (Resistance Series)

2015, Single channel HD video, 7'

Sanatçı izniyle | Courtesy of the artist



The studio of artist Sarkis Zabunyan holds a prominent place in the history of art in Turkey and abroad with his body of work he has created since the 1960s in Paris, where he has been working for more than 50 years; this studio with an area of 450 m2, built as a printing house before, was recorded by the artist.

8

Ali Kazma

Home (Resistance Series)

2015, Single channel HD video, 5'

Courtesy of the artist and Vehbi Koç Foundation

Leyla-Şevki Pekin Collection



Füsun Onur, one of the pioneers of contemporary art in Turkey, and her elder sister İlhan Onur, who passed away a few weeks ago, had their home in Kuzguncuk at the "Hayri Onur Mansion": The house became part of the Vehbi Koç Foundation with the desire to open it as a museum in the future and host residency programs, as donated to Arter, the Museum of Contemporary Art.

9

Ali Kazma

Finis Terrae

2019, Two channel synchronized HD
video, 5'

Courtesy of the artist and Galeri Nev
İstanbul



Footage of lighthouses on the Ouessant Islands in the Finistère region of France, Finis Terrae, which can be translated as “end of the land.” The area, dominated by the harsh climatic conditions, is of strategic importance for the trade between Northern and Southern Europe. After the disappearance of 30 ships from 1888 to 1904, many lighthouses were built in the region.

ALİ KAZMA

Ali Kazma is a lens based artist. Kazma's works raise fundamental questions about the meaning and significance of contemporary human presence and activity. The artist shoots and edits all the works himself. He lives in Istanbul and Paris.

Ali Kazma (b.1971, Istanbul) completed his BA in the University of Colorado at Boulder and received his MA from The New School University in New York City. The artist, who represented Turkey at the 55th Venice Biennale- Pavilion of Turkey in 2013, had a comprehensive solo exhibition at Jeu de Paume, Paris in 2017. Ali Kazma's solo exhibitions include Galeri Nev Istanbul (Istanbul, 2019), Albergo Diurno Venezia (Milan, 2018), MUNTREF (Buenos Aires, 2018), Arter (Istanbul, 2015), CAPRI (Düsseldorf, 2015), Hirshhorn Museum (Washington, 2010). Group exhibitions and biennials include 6th Kuandu Biennale (Taipei, 2018), 7th Moscow International Biennale of Contemporary Art (Moscow, 2017), MAXXI (Rome, 2016), Musée d'Art Contemporaine de Lyon (Lyon, 2013), 30th Sao Paulo Biennial (Sao Paulo, 2012), Istanbul Biennial (Istanbul, 2001, 2007, 2011) Muzeum Sztuki Lodz (Lodz, 2012), Istanbul Modern (Istanbul, 2011), Museum Kunstpalast (Düsseldorf, 2010) and New Museum (New York, 2010). He has received the UNESCO Prize for Promotion of the Arts in 2001 and the Nam June Paik Award in 2010. The artist's works have been included in a number of institutional collections such as CNAP (Paris), Istanbul Modern, MEP (Paris), MONA (Tasmania), Sztuki Museum (Lodz), Tate Modern (London), TBA21 (Vienna), Foundation Louis Vuitton Collection (Paris) and VKV Foundation Collection (Istanbul). Ali Kazma lives and works in Istanbul and Paris.

Cover image:

Ali Kazma | Tea Time

2017, Three channel synchronized HD video 8', courtesy of the artist



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