



TUZDAN KAİDE

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Synopsis

A reclusive woman in her thirties leads a life frozen in time in a cave-like room. In her rare trips to the city, she chats with an oarswoman haunted by the devils. She searches for her twin sister in unfrequented corners of the city. In this journey in which time and space are out of joint, a same dream is recounted time after time.

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2018 | Turkey | 70 minutes | Color | DCP



DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

Tuzdan Kaide is a story of pursuit. A pregnant woman, frozen in time, searches in rather unfrequented places in Istanbul for her twin sister, with whom she lost contact long ago. It's a film that evokes questions about dying, not being able to die, giving birth to a human being in the chaos of this world.

I believe cinema possesses its own reality. With this film, I desired to execute a film that brings its own unique world into being with the unique tools of cinema. Different women seeing the same dream, devils haunting humans, table tennis players in a damp basement... All these intend to take us to another unfamiliar world. Time is out of joint and spaces are out of the ordinary. All the world closes in on itself. This can only be represented through sound and vision. My pursuit was to bring a different world to light. Artistically and production-wise, this aspiration was the hardest part of the project.

The places traversed in the film are spaces that I accumulated and which made a strong impression on me. With the director of photography, we made a particular effort to make the sense of space strong. Moreover, usually dialogue in film is used to convey information. While writing the script, I wanted to overturn this. In the film, although every

character speaks at length about either themselves or their occupation, they don't engage in dialogue. Everybody talks with themselves. Playing with the principal elements of cinema such as space, dialogue and framing, I endeavoured to find a novel manner of narrative.

The main matter driving me to realise this film was the medium of film itself. When Henri Bergson talks about the cinematographic illusion, saying a second in cinema is composed of twenty-four frames and we perceive them as moving due to an illusion, he concluded cinema is evil. In a way, I tried to come to terms with myself about this as well through this film. In a similar way, the story of Lot recounts how God turns Lot's wife into a pillar of salt when she looks back at Sodom. Then, I believe, the greatest curse of God is to freeze humans in time. Something photography and certainly cinema do.

CONVERSATION WITH THE DIRECTOR

Where did the original idea for The Pillar of Salt come from?

As a film curator who exhibited films through 16mm and video, I was constantly thinking about the medium of film all the time. These reflections brought me an essential riddle: Cinema, operating through still but seemingly moving frames [be it 24 or 18], works through an optical illusion and is itself based on an illusion. Then the question was: how could such a medium based on ontological illusion bring forth goodness? While I was considering to abandon curating and making films completely, what happened was the exact opposite. I decided to do this film with those riddles in my mind.

So, this film for me was an effort of thinking about cinema through cinema. That's how the protagonist emerged. A woman who doesn't age and is frozen in time. A devil, a vampire or Shahmaran? Who knows.

What was important for me in the film were places and faces of actresses coming into the foreground. That's why the story was grad-





ually constructed by locations and characters. A TV repair shop, a botanical garden, a basement for table tennis, old city walls –they were not present during scriptwriting at all. They were fused into the film during location scouting. In this sense, *The Pillar of Salt* is not a result of conventional filmmaking as practice. It wouldn't be possible at all to make it in that manner. The film continually evolved during the shooting schedule spread out over long period with numerous breaks and editing the materials in between shootings, and with new characters added to the story upon finding a new location. So the stages of scriptwriting, shooting and editing, intertwined with each other, were complex and exacting.

Why did you choose this manner of acting, different than conventional acting?

The first time I watched Jean-Marie Straub and Danièle Huillet's films, I found acting devoid of gestures really strange. This method was foregrounding text while subduing acting. You can't mess with acting in the conventional mainstream cinema. But this idea enchanted me as it were. I tried to render acting more and more bare of gestures for alienation of the world I endeavored to establish.

How was the production phase of the film?

The film was shot within the span of two years in bits and pieces. The shooting took eleven days in total. The majority of the crew and all actresses worked voluntarily. The film is the result of a collective work with its intermingled phases of scriptwriting, shooting and editing. We tried to keep production long but small-scale and independent. Because we thought it's only this way we could produce a different cinema capable of taking risks. I think the practice of filmmaking changes films.

Why did you cast only women characters?

That decision serves the world we attempt to establish in the film. In this world, there are men, of course. They are only present as sound. Sometimes as the sound of an answering machine, sometimes as a song played live. Sometimes they're present in the memories recounted. At the same time, this choice makes the audience feel that there's some other details left out of the narrow frame. A different world which is felt but stays out-of-frame, left for the audience.

While Turkey is going through turbulent times, how did you conceive such a film that touches abstract themes?

The film is about dying and not being able to die, about coming to terms with, about giving birth to a human in the chaos of the world or not. When I started to write the script, ISIS captured Raqqa. There were bombs going off all around the world. I believe that cinema is an act of resistance. I think *The Pillar of Salt* is a film open to different interpretations.

As a 25-years-old young director, what were your inspirations and influences on the way that led to *The Pillar of Salt*?

I am one of those who learned cinema through a cinephile background. Apichatpong Weerasethakul, Straub & Huillet, Tsai Ming-Liang, Jean-Luc Godard, Chris Marker, Hollis Frampton... And many others I can't remember now. I learned a lot from all of them. I don't know what cinema is. I collect places, characters, moments and I contemplate why I collect them and why they attract me. I consider filmmaking as a practice of thinking about myself and the world around me. An effort towards making sense. A relation with the world.





BURAK ÇEVİK

Director

Burak Çevik was born in Istanbul in 1993. He completed his BA in Film & TV department at Istanbul Bilgi University. He founded Fol Cinema, a community devoted to experimental cinema in 2014, and curated many screenings in cooperation with Istanbul Film Festival and !fistanbul. He was one of the producers of Meteors, directed by Gürcan Keltek and premiered at Locarno Film Festival in 2017. The Pillar of Salt is his first feature film.



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CAST

Zinnure Türe, Dila Yumurtacı, Esmâ Madra,
Banu Fotocan, Elit İşcan, Nihal Koldaş,
Reyhan Özdilek, Ayşe Demirel, Bahar Çevik,
Nazan Kesal, Nalan Kuruçim

CREW

EDITOR, WRITER & DIRECTOR Burak Çevik

PRODUCERS Cem Celal Bilge, Arda Çiltepe,
Semih Gülen, Burak Çevik

CO-PRODUCER Selman Nacar

LINE PRODUCER Öykü Canlı

1st A.D. Sinan Kesova

2nd A.D. Ozan Yoleri

CINEMATOGRAPHER Burak Serin

GAFFER Sinan Gencal

ART & CONCEPT DEVELOPMENT Billur Turan

COSTUME DESIGN Cansu Tabak

SOUND Ömür Müldür

SOUND DESIGN & MUSIC Ozan Tekin

SOUND DESIGN SUPERVISOR Yalın Özgencil

FINAL MIX Sertaç Toksöz

COLOR GRADING Cenk Erol

POSTER DESIGN Ali Emre Doğramacı

PRESS KIT

