

SAFA BARAN ÖCAL

Portfolio · Visual artist · Ankara, Türkiye · safa.ocal@gmail.com

STATEMENT

Photography is how I understand myself and my surroundings, and how I see and show the changes I go through. I try to make a documentary of my own life: the things I have been through, the sorrows and the joys, the small details I notice.

I use photography as a kind of therapy. I take pictures when I feel stuck, when a question keeps circling without an answer, when I want to understand what life is about. The act makes me stop and stay with the moment, because to understand something you have to stand in front of it and look closely.

My work usually starts from a question I cannot answer alone. I use art to meet people who ask the same questions: to hear their answers if they have found them, and to keep looking together if they have not. Art can show you the street you walk down every day as if for the first time. It can give you hope about the world, open a different possibility, and become a key to yourself, your life and the people around you. When I give a problem a visual form I understand it better, and I find out whether the world looks this way only to me. How else can anyone confirm they are not losing their mind?

BIOGRAPHY

Safa Baran Öcal (b. 1994, Diyarbakır) is a visual artist based in Ankara. Working with photography, video and installation, he develops a self-documentary practice that starts from questions about existence, the self and change, and has taken his work into public space.

He studied Photography at the Faculty of Fine Arts, Marmara University, Istanbul, and holds an MA in Communication, Art and Culture from the University of Minho, Portugal. His work has been shown in solo exhibitions in Istanbul and Amasya and in group exhibitions in Istanbul and Ankara.

Full CV: safabaranocal.com/about/#cv

arkhe

YEAR 2019–2021

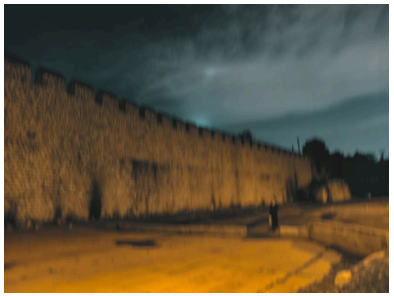
MEDIUM Photographic series

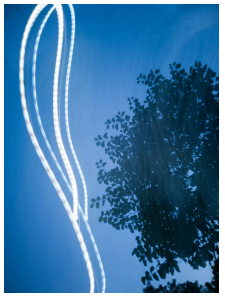
What sets photography apart from other art forms is that it is a projection of reality. When you look at a photograph you know the artist did not imagine it: the scene happened, and the image is its witness. You cannot photograph something that does not exist. So what if we wanted to photograph dreams? Arkhe, Ancient Greek for “beginning”, “origin” or “source of motion”, is the name early Greek philosophy gave to the fundamental principle from which everything is made. It can also be read as “first principle” or “first element” (Esenyel, 2014: 1).

safabaranocal.com/works/arkhe/









devinim

kinesis

MEDIUM Video performance

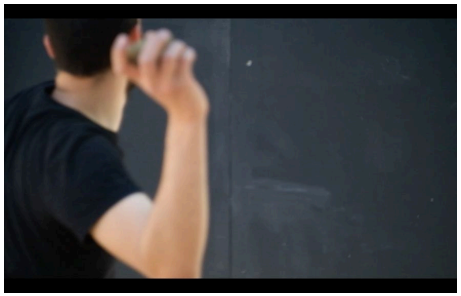
Newton's second law of motion says that the acceleration of an object is directly proportional to the force acting on it and inversely proportional to its mass. However great the darkness, if you believe in change with courage, persistence and strength, it moves toward the light: it sets off and gathers speed. Obstacles are cleared, every wall comes down, breaches open. No one can give you your freedom. No one can give you happiness, peace, justice or anything else. Not until you go and take it.

Video: vimeo.com/541308197 (1′56″)

safabaranocal.com/works/devinim/









entropi

entropy

YEAR	2019
MEDIUM	Public installation
DIMENSIONS	86 × 2 black-and-white photographs, 23 × 41 cm each
LOCATION	Halıcıoğlu, Istanbul
SHOWN	Solo exhibition, 2019

“In any closed system, disorder always increases.” — Second law of thermodynamics. Black-and-white photographs taken with a mobile phone, printed at 23 × 41 cm and glued onto the trapezoidal sheet-metal hoarding of a construction site, where they stayed in public space.

Video: vimeo.com/381823888 (2′42″)

safabaranocal.com/works/entropi/









neyse ne

whatever

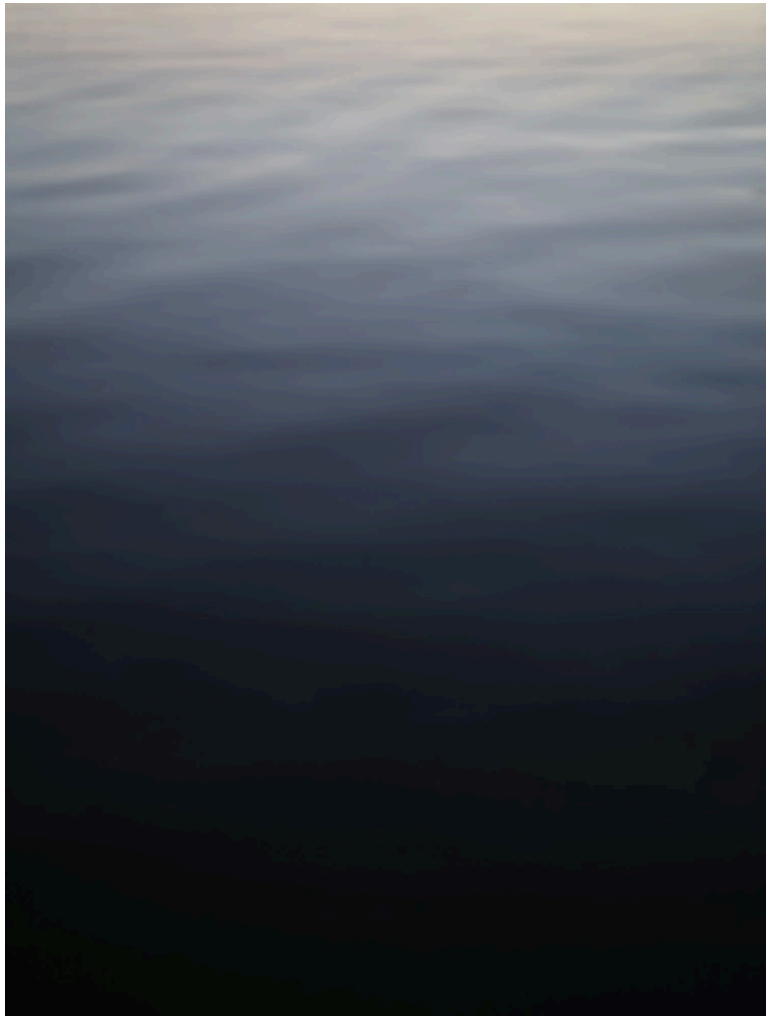
YEAR 2020

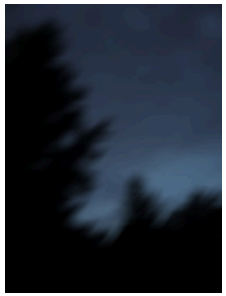
MEDIUM Photography

SHOWN İZOLE Project, Istanbul, 2020

On “not trying to know”, after a text by the artist Guy Laramée. Made during the COVID-19 quarantine.

safabaranocal.com/works/neyse-ne/







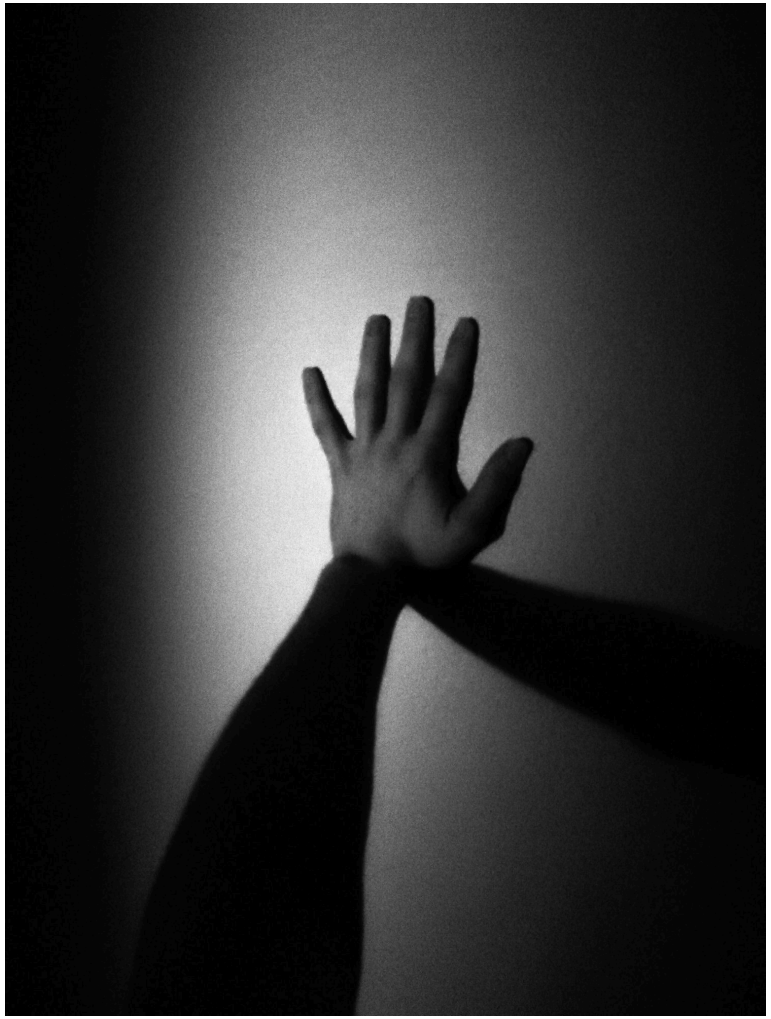


birhan

MEDIUM Photographs, triptych

Three photographs for three lines from Birhan Keskin's poem “Kargo” (Cargo).

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sebep

why

MEDIUM Photography

“I took everything very seriously, as if I were immortal.”
— Jean-Paul Sartre.

safabaranocal.com/works/sebep/









gedik

breach

MEDIUM Self-portrait series

Life is like an amusement park. A friend once told me you learn by crashing into things. Bump by bump, you find your opening. Now I turn and look at myself. Like a phoenix, I make myself again from my own ashes.

safabaranocal.com/works/gedik/









her şeyin başladığı yer

where it all began

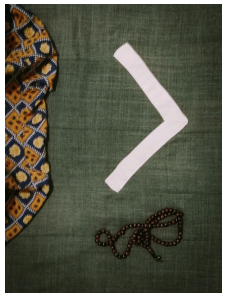
YEAR 2021

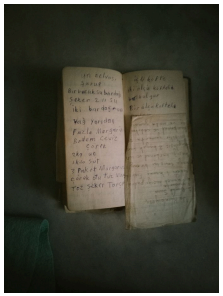
MEDIUM Self-documentary photography

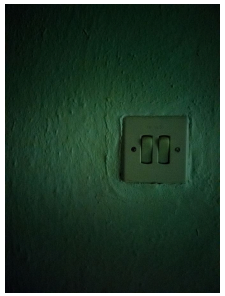
I am back where it all began: the place where I spent my childhood, where I drifted into long daydreams, where I watched myself and life, where I grew up. Now I am starting over by going back to the very beginning, growing up again. Following the images of my childhood, I remember forgotten dreams and dream new ones.

safabaranocal.com/works/her-seyin-basladigi-yer/









eski bir hesap

an old account

MEDIUM Photographic series with text

Ever since I was a child I have been afraid of being stranded. In a city, in a house, in someone. Unable to act, unable to resist, forced, stuck. Besieged, surrounded, closed in. Now I feel that grip everywhere in my life, down to the bone. In moments like these I can't just take my coat and leave. I want to fight and win, and every time I lose I isolate myself and drown in melancholy. I have only just learned that I am not a superhero and cannot win every time. Sometimes you have to admit defeat, say no from the start and walk away. It is time to make peace with myself. I am walking away from the old me. I am closing this account here. I made this work as a dedication to the relationship I could not leave, the job I could not quit despite being mobbed, the engineering…

safabaranocal.com/works/eski-bir-hesap/









harem

YEAR 2019

MEDIUM Photography

LOCATION Harem Bus Terminal, Istanbul

Istanbul, Harem February 2019 5.50 pm the poyraz, the north-east wind, was blowing.

safabaranocal.com/works/harem/









osman abi

YEAR 2020

MEDIUM Photography and recorded conversation

LOCATION Galata Bridge, Istanbul

I met Osman abi (abi: “big brother”, a warm form of address in Turkish) on the Galata Bridge one September evening. His equipment caught my eye, and so did his price: photo paper costs a fortune now, so how could this man print a photograph for 5 lira? That is how we started talking. We took each other's pictures and talked about life, photography and other things. “I've been doing photography for twenty, twenty-five years. Made my living from it. It's not like other jobs, no boss, no worker, you work as you please. Hotel work was the best, there were nights I made seven or eight thousand. Now? Honestly, look, I've been here since morning and sold nine. I don't much care, I come to pass the day. I bought myself a plot in Mudurnu, I'm going to raise cattle. Back home…

safabaranocal.com/works/osman-abi/







