

THE SEQUENTIAL III

STAY SAFE

Volkan Aslan

August 4 - October 17

SALT Galata

Published for the first time in *Varlık* magazine on January 15, 1936, renowned short story writer Sait Faik Abasıyanık offers a glimpse into the world of an orphan named Trifon in his story *Stelyanos Hrisopulos Gemisi* [The Stelyanos Hrisopulos]. The twelve-year-old Trifon lives on an island with his fisherman grandfather Stelyanos. He doesn't like the earth but respects it since it protects many of his loved ones. Instead, he finds refuge in the sea. Not going to school, his everyday occupation is making a new toy ship with whatever material he has on hand. One day, Trifon builds a ship almost the size of himself and names this masterwork after his grandfather. Even though the ship that he floats for days eventually sinks due to stones thrown by a group of jealous children, Abasıyanık highlights the importance of never giving up hope to find happiness and freedom.

Picking up where Abasıyanık left off in his story, *Stay Safe* presents a multifaceted narrative about water both as an element and an image. In *Stay Safe*, the third exhibition of SALT's *The Sequential* program, artist Volkan Aslan refers to the challenges facing Istanbul, and the volatile moods shaped by the contemporary political climate. In the works, which extend from the roof of SALT Galata to the exhibition space on floor -1 and from there to the street, water indicates the desire to resist being still and to be free. It is also associated with the heavy legacies that the past imposes on the present.

At the center of the exhibition are the films *Sağlıcakla Kal* [Stay Safe] (2021) and *En İyi Dileklerle* [Best Wishes] (2019), based on an imaginary correspondence between two friends. Despite their monophonic nature, these letters, whose author and mailing address are unknown, describe an inner voice that oscillates between "holding on" to the lost and "leaving behind" the losses. Telling a short road story, *Best Wishes* is about the hustle and bustle of Istanbul, and the danger of being deprived of green space. The camera records the intolerance and anger visible on the streets, the violence that has become commonplace, personal space violations, and forms of resistance. Shot inside a home, *Stay Safe*, the sequel to *Best Wishes*, is shaped by the image of a huge wave that will swallow all the depressions that suffocate people.

The installation *Ölüye ağlayamayan insanların huzursuzluğu içindeyim* [I am troubled like the people who cannot weep for the dead] (2018-2021) takes its title from a sentence in another story by Abasıyanık, *İzmir'e* [To İzmir], included in the book *Mahalle Kahvesi* [Local

Coffee Shop], from 1950. The videos that make up this installation represent the constant state of unrest—an uncontrollable cycle of mourning and eternity—that Aslan hopes to pass through by using water.

While the artist's collages *Şehir Senin, Deniz Senin* [The City is Yours, The Sea is Yours] (2021) and the mock-up *Manzara* [Scenery] (2021) draw attention to the high panels that cut off the coast's connection with the land at various points in Istanbul, they are also reminiscent of the following lines from Abasıyanık's *The Stelyanos Hrisopulos*: "But how odd were the people on the surface, running here and there in circles, hoping to make a few kuruş. How insipid, when they said that they had not a moment to stop and look at the sea."* Bathing the interiors of SALT Galata from the roof to the atrium partly in blue light, the intervention of *Su* [Water] (2021) promises a peaceful state that symbolizes hope, which remains despite the difficult conditions.

Stay Safe will be on view at SALT Galata until October 17. Workshops and trips, to be organized in parallel to the exhibition in collaboration with Urban.koop, will be announced at saltonline.org.

Programmed by Amira Akbıyıköğlü and Farah Aksoy from SALT, *The Sequential* features independent exhibitions by artists Barış Doğrusöz, Deniz Gül, Volkan Aslan, the duo Fatma Belkıs & Onur Gökmen, and Aykan Safoğlu, taking place at SALT Galata from January 2021–January 2022.

Supported by SAHA, *The Sequential* will be included in the 2021–2022 public programs of three member institutions of L'Internationale—Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía (Madrid), Muzeum Sztuki Nowoczesnej w Warszawie (Warsaw) and M HKA, The Museum of Contemporary Art (Antwerp)—following the initial presentations at SALT Galata.



*Sait Faik Abasıyanık, "The Stelyanos Hrisopulos," in *Sleeping in the Forest*, ed. Talât S. Halman, Jayne L. Warner, trans. Nermin Menemenciöğlü, (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2004).

IMAGES

1.

Still from *En İyi Dileklerle* [Best Wishes] (2019) by Volkan Aslan (courtesy the artist)

2.

Still from *Sağlıcakla Kal* [Stay Safe] (2021) by Volkan Aslan (courtesy the artist)