



“Gathering”(Unfinished)

same way. It draws you up in the same manner. The rhythm, the turning, the journey to the beyond, the taking, the giving... It is cem (or djem, religious assembly). It is something you sometimes experience in other rock concerts. A concert is a communal ritual. Of course there is a difference between a rock concert and sama in terms of conduct and etiquette. You enter into the other side during the cem ritual, but you return within the same frame of conduct.

**Does Radiohead take you to the beyond?**

I sometimes feel close to Radiohead. But at times their music is very closed, it descends to the level of the individual. With Radiohead, you are alone. Go and sway in a corner. With the Stones, the Grateful Dead or other blues groups, there is a collective aspect.

**The White Stripes have a special place for you, right?**

The White Stripes are very important, because they are like a history of rock. I find something in their music that I liken to myself: They are a band that goes to the source of a tradition, a flow, and they are also a band in their own right. I hear something that flows from the '50s and the '60s in their music, and they connect it to the present. It is not cut-and-paste in a postmodern sense. They are in the water. But there is also the source of the water, it flows, and they come and go in the water. And that is also how I think of myself, there is a river that flows from centuries past; and if that river still flows,

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and I am in it, then I have a connection to that source. It is a connection through feeling. Knowledge is a state that is felt, especially in the Eastern tradition, you learn through feeling. **In your studio, there is a picture of Dylan on one wall, and a picture of Bowie on the other. Do they have a connection to the context we have talked about?**

Although they seem very different, I think they are two rings of the chain that cannot be separated. They are different, but close. There is a deep undercurrent, a very mysterious feeling that they invoke, that also takes us to the other side, something that opens the door. I was painting in the middle of the night, and I was listening to Neşet Ertaş. I wanted to change the scene. I put Keith Richards on. I realized then that things sped up a bit, and the jingle-jangle became a bit noisier, but the

undercurrent, the water that flows is the same. The former sings his words to Anatolia with a single-stringed saz; whereas the latter sings from within the noise. They both sing the blues; they both sing a song of mourning. **What did you listen to most when you were painting these paintings?** Neşet Ertaş... Keith Richards came into it later. Musa Eroğlu at times... And every now and then my favourite psychedelic bands... Niyaz and Azam Ali were also very important. They have been here in Turkey several times. She lives in Canada, but

wherever she lives, the water she bathes in is the same. Whatever she sings, she makes you feel encapsulated by it. I became a fan the first day I listened to her. Another singer I listened to a lot was Tenekeci Mahmut Güzelgöz from Urfa. A singer from Urfa, he sings folk songs with his oud. Very beautiful, too. Something emerges from between, from behind these folk songs; and I find myself immersed in that thing that flows. And when that happens, I am filled with joy, I know I belong there. The Hurufi tradition is very important in Anatolian folk songs and poetry. “Elif” (both the first letter of the Arabic alphabet, followed by be; and a girl’s name) is a perfect Hurufi song: “I said Elif, I said be / Girl, what did I tell you / A full stop came after my Elif / And my few troubles multiplied.” He is actually singing to Allah. As his troubles multiply, he gets closer to the One. Multiplication is the only path to unification, to attaining the One. And what I do when I superimpose figures is not a multiplication but a reduction to one. One plus one does not equal two. **There is a recent tendency of referencing Hurufism in the world of visual arts. What is the attraction of Hurufism?**

I came to Hurufi knowledge through the Alevi-Bektashi tradition, custom and practice. Today, the largest community of Hurufis resides in Macedonia. With Bedreddin, they go as far as Macedonia. Hurufism is also related to Alevism. 14th century Hurufism, led by Fazlallah Astarabadi was very different, it contained the Islamic system of thought. In Hurufism, mystical values are attributed to the letters of the alphabet. There are two alphabets used by Hurufis. The Arabic alphabet that has 28 letters; and the Persian