

Teaching Women's Filmmaking

REMEMBERING THROUGH FILMS: WOMEN DOCUMENTARY DIRECTORS IN SEARCH OF A LOST PAST

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ABSTRACT

Since the 2000s, there has been a growing presence of women directors in documentary field, compared to fiction films in Turkey. The reasons behind the rising power of female directors in documentary cinema depends on various factors such as democratization of filmmaking with digital technologies or independence of the documentary genre from the male dominated mainstream cinema. Women directors' films about gender issues (e.g. violence against women, working conditions of women), ecological destruction, memory and contested histories are also much more visible at film festivals. Some of these female directors deal with controversial issues that their own families can not speak out publicly, and which are not accepted as a part of the history of the nation-state.

The paper will discuss some of the most relevant examples of recent memory and postmemory films such as *Saroyan's Land* (Lusin Dink, 2013), *I stayed, You Flied* (Mizgin Müjde Arslan, 2012), *Fragments* (Rojda Akbayır, 2018), among others. As similar to the conceptualization of postmemory by Marianne Hirsch, these directors engage with trauma and past that they inherited from their families through stories, images, and behaviors. Touching upon issues such as the Armenian Genocide, the Kurdish-Turkish conflict in Southeastern Turkey since the late 1970s, and the Dersim Massacre (1938-39), women documentary directors, as silence breakers, do not only represent a different cinematic perspective, but also open up a new space for women documentary filmmakers and teach us new possibilities for history making and writing.

Short Bibliography

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Short Biography:

Esra Yıldız studied Environmental Engineering (BSc) and Art History (MA, PhD) at İstanbul Technical University. During her doctoral studies, she was a visiting scholar at Technische Universität Berlin. She pursued her postdoctoral studies at Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin and EHESS (Paris). She is recently teaching at İstanbul Bilgi University and director of Cultural Management MA Program. In 2013, she curated Hartmut Bitomsky Film Program at İstanbul Modern. She is also director of several documentary and short films.