ERGIN ÇAVUŞOĞLU
Letzte Nacht hatte ich einen Traum... von Felsen, die majestatisch von einer Landzunge aus sich erheben.
I thought of this. I came into this world, okay. As all people, it is natural, we eat, we get married,
In contemporary artists’ film and video practices there are, perhaps, two distinctive and contrary approaches. One strategy is to make your work as much like mainstream, or art-house, narrative film as possible, in its look, its sound, in its editing, its attention to story, in its imagination and use of time. Indeed, the artist might even aspire to make their own feature films—as Julian Schnabel, Steve McQueen, and Sam Taylor-Wood have all done. The other move is to try and remove film from the register of cinema, to redeem it from linear temporality, melodramatic narrative and plot, and spectacular scale.

The first tendency I have outlined accords with the general trajectory of art under the aegis of late-capitalism since the mid 20th century, in which the history of art is no longer as significant to the making of art as the history of advertising and popular culture—so that art is nothing more than part of the entertainment industry. The second tendency is, perhaps, the path of a subaltern, dissident art that has inherited the lineage of modernism and its utopian notions of art’s critical responsibilities towards subjectivity and history. Ergin Çavuçoğlu is amongst the artists who are making this move: in his case turning towards the theatrical and the gestural.

The narrative feature film uses the theatrical as a narrative code that always produces a particular ending; its typical three-act structure of stasis, disruption, and recuperation, inherited from 19th century
Typically we label artists who make time-based image work as “filmmakers” or “video artists”. These appellations are misnomers, lacking any reference to medium specificity and reflecting the inability of most critics and curators to recognise the difference between media. Some artists do still shoot on film, almost as a matter of principle, but also for a particular quality of the image: Tacita Dean is a good example. Certainly few people edit manually by cutting and splicing a processed film today. Ergin Çavuşoğlu belongs to the majority of artist-filmmakers who shoot on HD video and edit off-line: scanning all the shot material into digital format, editing on computer, and then returning the finished edit to the original medium.

Çavuşoğlu, however, in other ways works like a “filmmaker”: his projects revolve around close collaboration with a scriptwriter – Arnold Barkus – and begin with detailed storyboards, just as scenes in a feature film would be sketched out. The artwork, then, is imagined well before it is shot, and there is a process that moves between concept, sketch and realisation that’s oddly akin to the way painters once worked. But the modern filmmaker leads a creative team—he or she doesn’t work alone. For Çavuşoğlu this process of development, scripting, and storyboarding, is where the greatest creative input takes place.

Chris Townsend
Ergin Çavuşoğlu (born in Bulgaria, 1968) studied at The National School of Fine Arts "Iliya Petrov", Sofia in the early 1980s. He consequently received a BA in painting from the University of Marmara, Istanbul, MA from Goldsmiths, University of London, and a PhD from University in Portsmouth.


Ergin Çavuşoğlu currently lives and works in London, United Kingdom.