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Protocinema Is Bringing Hale Tenger's Historic Installation to New York for Frieze Week

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In 1995, Turkish multimedia artist Hale Tenger created *We didn't go outside; we were always on the outside/We didn't go inside; we were always on the inside*, an installation piece consisting of a dilapidated wooden guardhouse encircled by a fence of barbed wire.

The work was presented at the 4th Istanbul Biennial, and was designed to invite the viewer, like a child, into a microcosmic representation of the isolated world of Turkish people. Since the founding of the Turkish Republic in 1923 through 1994, the country's government severely restricted access to all radio and TV broadcasting, a censorship of press which has flared up again in the years since *We didn't go outside* debuted. Now, twenty years later, Tenger has recreated the piece in collaboration with Protocinema, an Istanbul- and New York-based arts organization, and will be displaying it in the basement of the Westbeth Building during Frieze Week in New York. (In contrast to Turkey's technological reclusion, the Westbeth building was the home of Bell Laboratories from 1868-1966, and the birthplace of the first talking movie, the condenser microphone, the first TV broadcast, and the first binary computer.) No alterations were made, Tenger assured me via email; this New York version will be as close as possible to the original, to emphasize both the stagnant state of human rights in Turkey and the growing violation of human rights around the world.

The area inside the fence including the guardhouse is known as the "isolation zone." A small, empty seat inside is meant to create the feeling of a stage for the viewer, as though they had entered the security guard's booth without permission. A tiny radio plays popular Turkish folk songs from the 1990s that were on air most of the time during state-sanctioned radio and television days—a significant detail, as 1995 was only the first year after Turkish radio was released from state control.

The inside of the guardhouse is filled with printed images of nature from around the world: fields, waterfalls, bays, and other idyllic scenery. "The printed images of sceneries of nature are in contrast with what is seen to be outside, and since they are only reproductions of nature, they are only replacements of nature in very confined space," Tenger said. "However, compared with the reality of what is surrounding the guardhouse, they [are] isolating in a positive sense. They help to enhance the atmosphere of safety created in the confined limits of the guardhouse. The images in the guardhouse are a metaphor for the positive inner nature of human beings, as well as being symbolic of the great beauty of the interior of the country."

When asked if she felt hopeful about Turkey's near future, Tenger responded frankly, "Not much for its near future, but I'm hopeful about *the* future."

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Hale Tenger.