



Naneci Yurdagül, *Gesicht Zeigen* (2024) © Motif: Studio Naneci Yurdagül. Frankfurt am Main / VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn 2024

MADE IN GERMANY Naneci Yurdagül

From July 12 to October 6, 2024, the Munich Documentation Center for the History of National Socialism will show the art intervention **MADE IN GERMANY** by Naneci Yurdagül in the foyer and outside on Max-Mannheimer-Platz.

The intervention comprises two installations in which Yurdagül asks fundamental questions about human co-existence: How should we treat one another? What makes a person human? Inside, in softly radiating neon lettering, the work *Ohne Titel – a mentsh is a mentsh* (2020) proclaims the unconditionality and inviolability of the dignity of every human being. Outside, on Max-Mannheimer-Platz, the site-specific intervention *Dunkel Deutschland* references the complex history of German national symbols and reflects on the current threat to social cohesion in a democracy. The two works are complemented by the visual motif *Gesicht Zeigen*.

In his artistic practice Yurdagül undertakes a critical inquiry into the themes of origin and national and religious identity and their associated attributions. He often uses markers anchored in the collective consciousness—for example, religious and political symbols, cultural practices, and above all language—as means of expression. Yurdagül changes or combines them in subversive ways, so that they become charged with new meanings and associations.

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Naneci Yurdagül *Dunkel Deutschland* (2024)

The flag of the Federal Republic of Germany has a long and complex history. It symbolizes unity, freedom, and democracy and yet it has been abused time and again by those advocating nationalism and exclusion. Its colors—black-red-gold—date back to the 19th century and are closely linked with the German freedom and unity movement. In 1919 these colors made up the flag of the first German democracy, a fact that the founders of the Federal Republic of Germany recalled in 1949 when, following the end of the Nazi regime, they designated these colors for the flag of the new state to symbolize values such as freedom, justice, and solidarity. Today they are intended to represent Germany national unity.

In his latest work *Dunkel Deutschland* Naneci Yurdagül questions the state of our democracy today.

The installation consists of three flags, hoisted on a flagpole outside on the Max-Mannheimer-Platz. However, in Yürdagul's work the three national colors have been altered: black-red-gold become gray-gray-gray, yet the gray tones have been matched to the original colors so that they differ only minimally. Like in the work *B.G.M.* (2019), in which Yurdagül covered the rainbow flag in a gray wash, in *Dunkel Deutschland* he endows the German flag with a sinister quality.

The alteration of the colors corresponds with the current mood in Germany, where the democratic majority is becoming increasingly unstable. The work can also be read as a political commentary on a present in which right-wing extremist parties are winning large numbers of votes, and racist and antisemitic acts of violence are on the rise.

The site where Yurdagül's *Dunkel Deutschland* is being shown for the first time is also significant. Located in the middle of the former Nazi Party quarter, the flags allude to antidemocratic continuities in German history.

In the year when Germany is celebrating the 75th anniversary of the adoption of its Basic Law, the intervention reminds us that the values the flag symbolizes must be defended and lived in practice by each and every one of us.

Dunkel Deutschland represents a continuation of Yurdagül's examination of the socio-political state of Germany, which began in 2001 with the art installation *DEUTSCH MICH NICHT VOLL* and marks the continuing relevance of this topic in the artist's work.

Naneci Yurdagül *Untitled – a mentsh is a mentsh* (2020)

What does it mean to be human? What characterizes human beings? And what exactly is humanity? The word *mentsh* comes from the Yiddish. It refers to the essence of what it means to be human: a “true” *mentsh* shows compassion, is fair, honest, and kind. Jewish children have always grown up with the imperative: “Sei a Mentsh!” In the meantime, *mentsh* has come into US American as a colloquial term.

Yurdagül created this artwork in response to the far-right terrorist attack in Hanau on February 19, 2020. By translating the saying into “yinglish,” as Yiddisms are known colloquially in English, he formulated a universally valid statement. It reminds us that being human has nothing to do with gender, origin, religion, or age. “A *mentsh* is a *mentsh*,” no more, no less. That is also why human dignity stands as a first principle in Article 1 of Germany’s Basic Law. Everyone is obliged to respect and protect human dignity.

A biography of Naneci Yurdagül

Naneci Yurdagül (b. Frankfurt am Main) is a sculptor and performance artist. He studied Theater, Film, and Media in Frankfurt am Main and Arts & Performance in Paris. During his studies he wrote, acted in, and staged productions at various German theaters. He has worked with René Pollesch, Christof Nel, and Peter Greenaway among others.

Yurdagül participated in *Kanak-Attak* at the Volksbühne theater in Berlin, where he also staged *OpelPitbulAutoput* (2001) and *konkret konkrass* (2002). In this context Yurdagül showed his first major public art installation in 2001: a 15-meter-long sign mounted on the roof of the Volksbühne on Rosa-Luxemburg-Platz, reading “DEUTSCH MICH NICHT VOLL.”

In 2005 he began studying Fine Arts and sculpture at the Hochschule für Bildende Künste – Städelschule in Frankfurt am Main. He graduated as a master student in 2011. The same year he was invited, as the first German artist in the history of the state of Israel, to show his work *UNTITLED – MADE IN ISRAEL* in the Israeli Contemporary Art Collection at the Tel Aviv Museum of Art. The same year, he staged his renowned performance *LADY GAZA* in Tel Aviv.

Since then, his works and performances have been shown in many solo and group exhibitions, including at the Bundeskunsthalle, Bonn, the Germanisches Nationalmuseum, Nuremberg, the Staatliche Kunsthalle, Baden-Baden, the Schauspielhaus Frankfurt, the Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt am Main, the 14th Istanbul Biennale, the Jüdisches Museum Rendsburg, and the Kunstmuseum, Wolfsburg. Yurdagül is represented by the Knust Kunz Gallery in Munich. He lives and works in Frankfurt am Main and Athens.