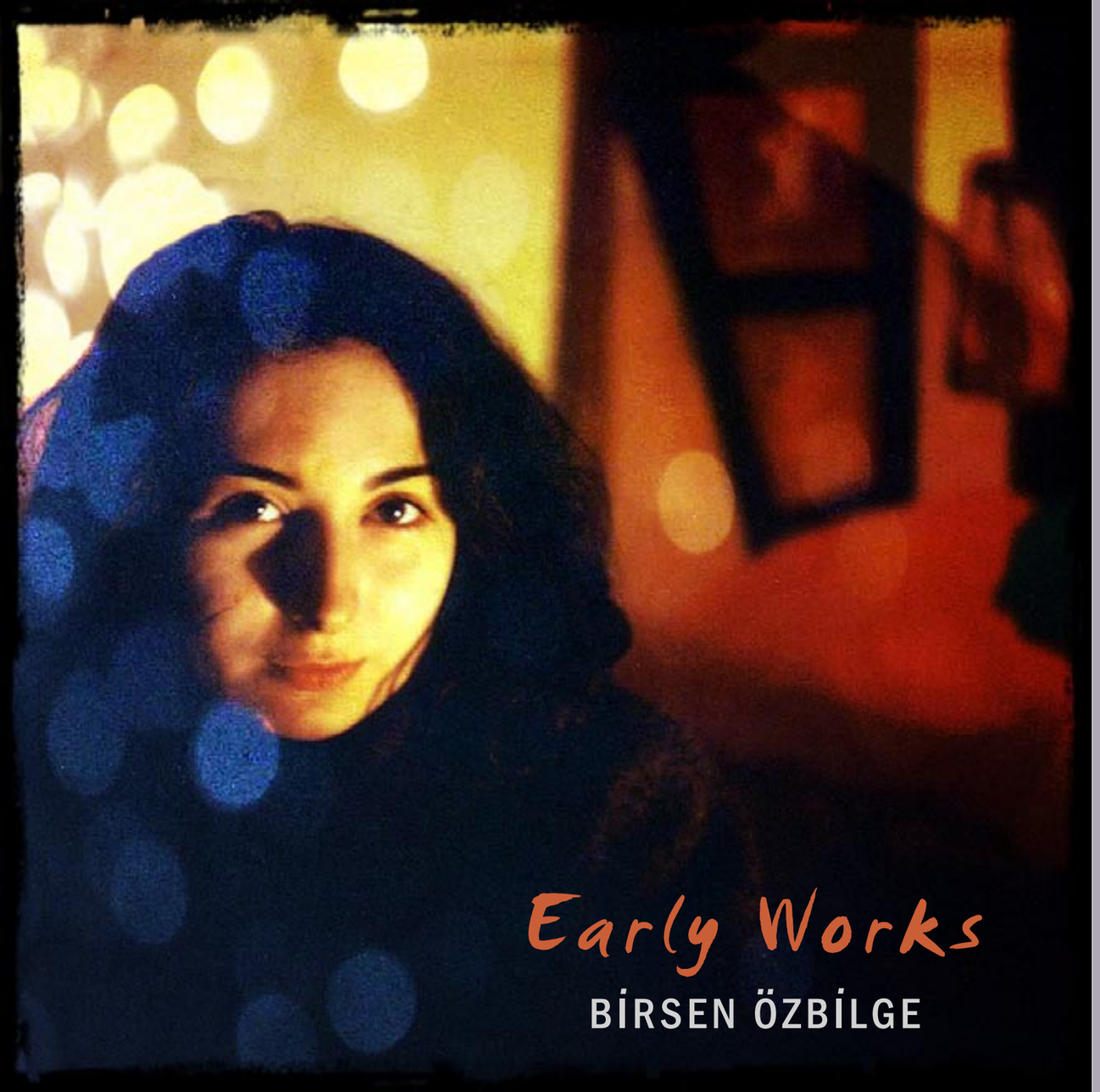

Early Works

BİRSEN ÖZBİLGE

Dedicated to the memory of
Berna Baydarlıoğlu
1968 - 2014

Early Works

BİRSEN ÖZBİLGE

many thanks
for your support

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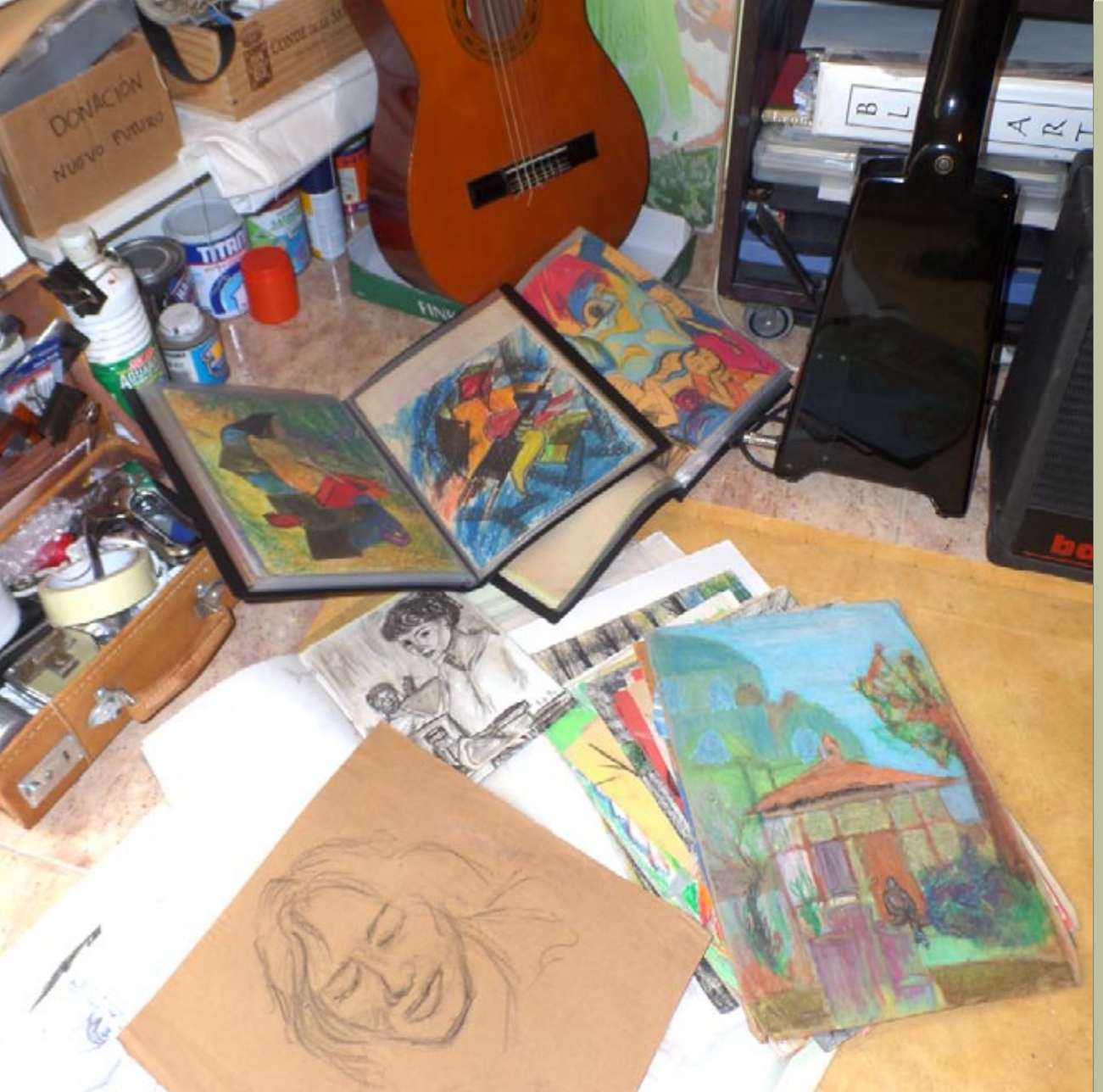
"Twenty years from now you will be more disappointed by the things that you didn't do than by the ones you did do. So throw off the bowlines. Sail away from the safe harbor. Catch the trade winds in your sails. Explore. Dream. Discover."

Mark Twain



Introduction

A few years ago, my mother found a painting folder (see left page) inside an old chest filled with my early works from the late 80's and 90's. They were totally forgotten for many years. I felt so happy to see them again, they really brought great memories back...

Recently, I had the challenge of publishing my first e-book ("CactuSueños" exhibition catalogue, free at LULU.com) and I thought it would be nice to put together my early works in an e-book, too. There are so many pieces to choose from, but since there was no curator helping me for this project, I selected my favourite ones for you... Besides sharing these artworks with you, I went through my photo and film archives and most importantly, to my old diaries which I have been keeping since 1996, so you will have a brief idea of my early years as a young artist. Some artworks' images have short audio clips with my voice which can be listened by clicking on the icon and selecting "Allow" on the pop-up window to visit SoundCloud.com

Maybe in the future you might have the chance to see the originals of my early works (from the 80's, 90's and early 2000's) in an exhibition near you. If you already have any of my early artworks and you wish yours to be added on to this e-book, please click on icon to contact with me.

Enjoy it...

Birsen Özbilge

Gran Canaria, Spain
June, 2014

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As far as I can remember, since I was little, I was pretty gifted for arts and crafts. Clearly, this gift was coming from my family. I mean, just look at the three paintings on the left page (see pics 1, 2, 3), considering that my parents and my brother got the typical very basic art education like anyone else... I think they are quite talented.

My strongest enthusiasm on painting started at my high school years. I enjoyed painting from nature and master painters (see pic 4). At the same time, I was very interested in social sciences. Actually, I wanted to study Psychology after high school, but my destiny changed when I didn't pass the university exam. In the last year of high school, my friend Tutku Günkut was going to take the qualification exam for an art school. Although I was planning to wait for a year and try again for Psychology, she talked to me about my painting skills and convinced me to get in to this art school.

Mimar Sinan Fine Art University is considered the best Fine Arts University in Turkey. Tutku and I started to learn how to draw artistically and studied many hours before the exam (see pic 5). We had to take a barrier exam and few more. Of course, there were many competitors. At the end of this entire exam marathon, I was fortunate to be selected for the painting department (see pic 6). Unfortunately, my friend couldn't make it, but later on she studied in another collage and became a successful painting teacher.

For the first two years, I took classical art education. So, I got better at drawing and painting with colours, backing it up with art history and other theoretical studies. The tricky part came at the third year, when I needed to choose an "Atelier" (the studio where the student builds up her/his own art style). I chose the most modernist one which suited my art style and my personality.

On the collage drawing (see pic 7), that smiley face is me; I was 19 years old and living by myself at the attic of this building in Ortaköy, Istanbul, in the late 80's. My family was worried in the beginning, as their little bird flew away from the nest at a very early age, but times were different and we had much better friendships back then... Inspiration was at the highest peak; love, music and dance were all around us. It is a great privilege being a Gen X'er, the fantastic MTV generation!

Sketch from Sculpture (Artist Collection)
Chalk on Paper, 32 x 29 cm
1987

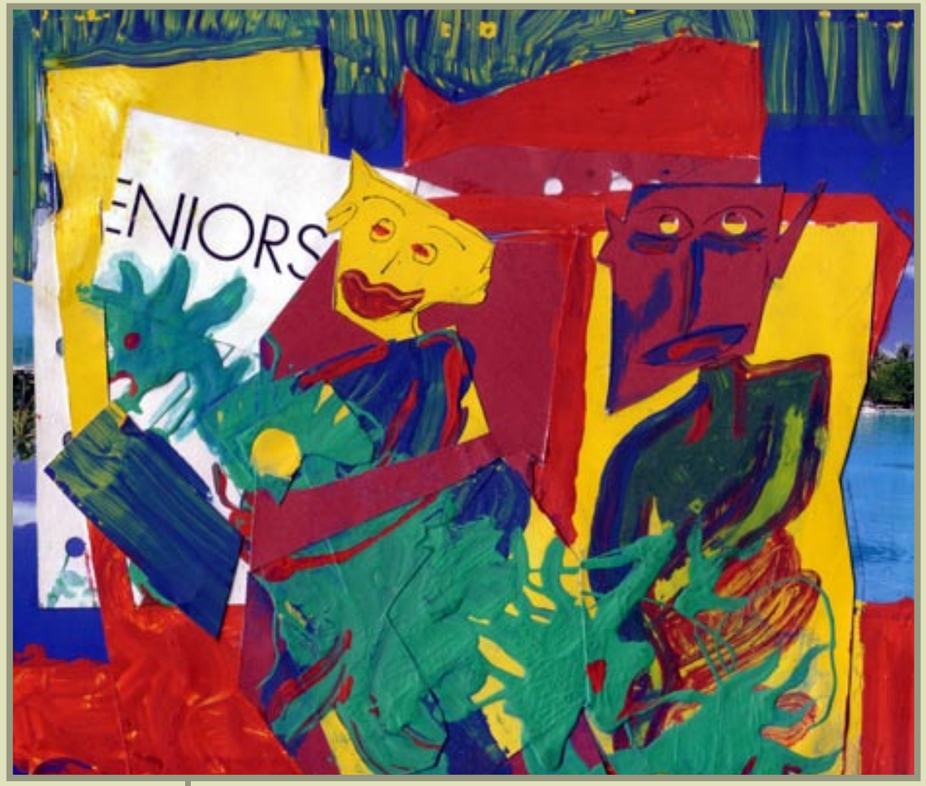
Sketch from a Model (Artist Collection)
Chalk on Paper, 25 x 17,5 cm
1987

My Mother Sewing at Night (Artist Collection)
Oil Pastel on Paper, 30 x 22 cm
1987

Sketch from a Model (Artist Collection)
Chalk on craft Paper, 32 x 19 cm
1989

click to listen

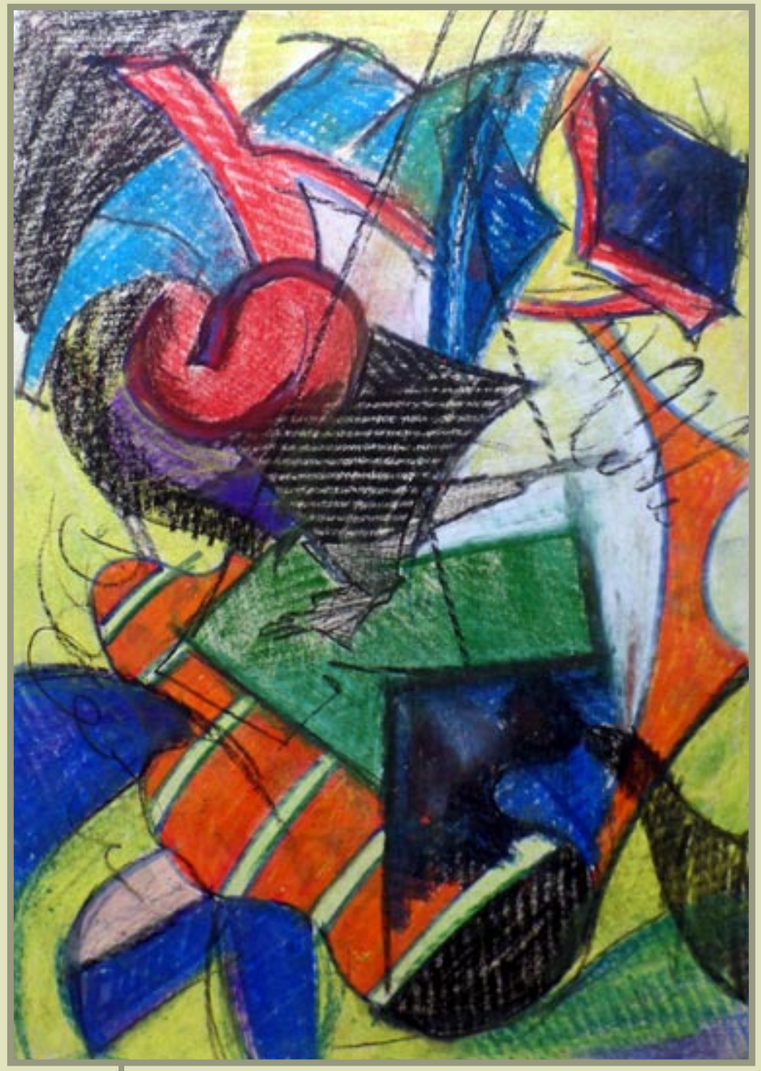
Halley after 5 Years (Artist Collection)
Mixed Pastels and Marker Pen on Paper, 18,5 x 12 cm
1991



Happy Family on Vacation (Artist Collection)
Collage and Mixed Media, 25 x 20 cm
1990

The room (Artist Collection)
Marker Pen on Paper, 18,5 x 12 cm
1991

Solo man (Artist Collection)
Mixed Pastels and Marker Pen on Paper, 18,5 x 12 cm
1991



Abstract Portrait (Artist Collection)
Oil and soft Pastel on Paper, 29 x 21 cm
1991

Untitled (Artist Collection)
Oil and soft Pastel on Paper, 29 x 21 cm
1991

Trip Planner (Artist Collection)
Pencil on Paper , 29 x 21 cm
1990

Model (Artist Collection)
Mixed Media on Paper, 21 x 29 cm
1992

click to listen

Mystery of E (Artist Collection)
Soft Pastel on Paper, 29 x 21 cm
1991

Drummer (Artist Collection)
Soft Pastel on Paper, 29 x 21 cm
1991

Drummer (Artist Collection)
Oil Pastel on Paper, 29 x 21 cm
1992

Games with Bass Guitar (Artist Collection)
Oil Pastel on Paper, 29 x 21 cm
1992

SOUNDCLOUD
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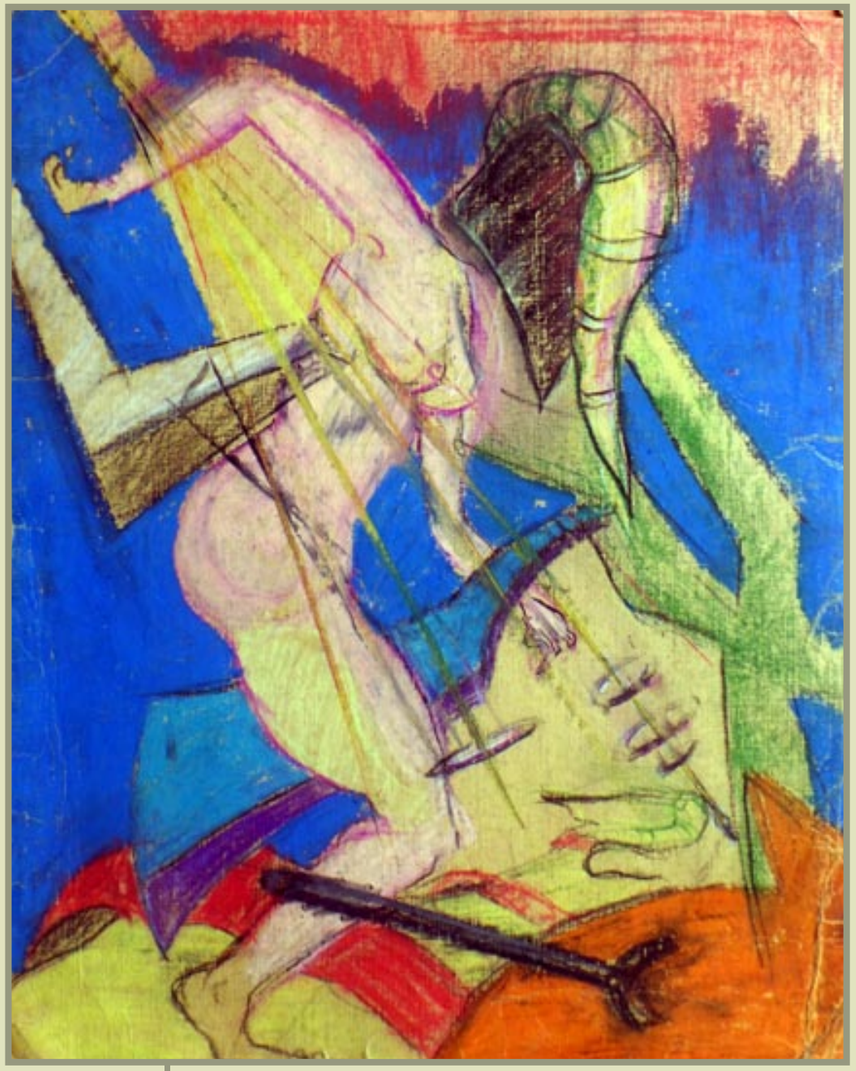
Robin Hood (Artist Collection)
Oil Pastel on Paper, 25 x 17,5 cm
1994

Knight (Artist Collection)
Oil Pastel on Paper, 25 x 17,5 cm
1994



Untitled (Artist Collection)
Mixed Pastel on Paper, 30 x 25 cm
1992

SOUNDCLOUD
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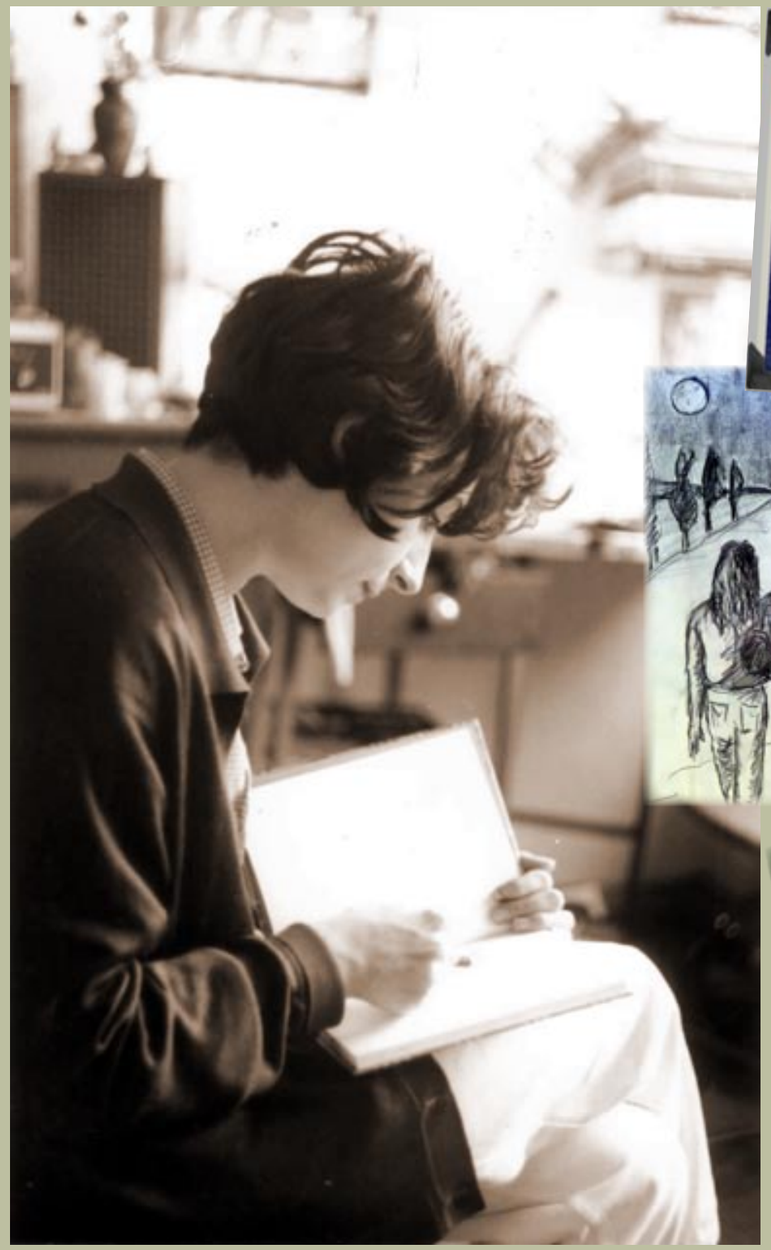
He Died for Love (Artist Collection)
Paper Cut and pastel, 29 x 21 cm
1991

Mirror Eye (Artist Collection)
Soft Pastel on Paper, 29 x 21 cm
1994

Complicated Affairs (Artist Collection)
Oil Pastel on paper, 29 x 21 cm
1994



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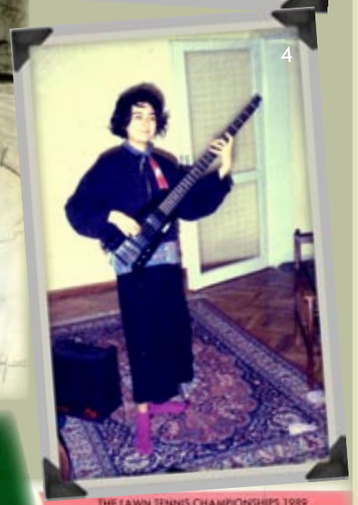

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In the Summer of 1988, I did a great trip with one of my very best friends from school, Berna Baydarlıoğlu (see pic 1) hitch-hiking from Bodrum through the antique Lycian coast (South of Turkey) to Side, Antalya. Before the road trip we prepared handmade painted jewellery and knitted bracelets to sell to cover expenses. Our favourite place was Olympos, a small antique city by the beach side. This place was so virgin you could swim even naked in its waters. We met with fantastic people from all around the world, having an unforgettable trip...

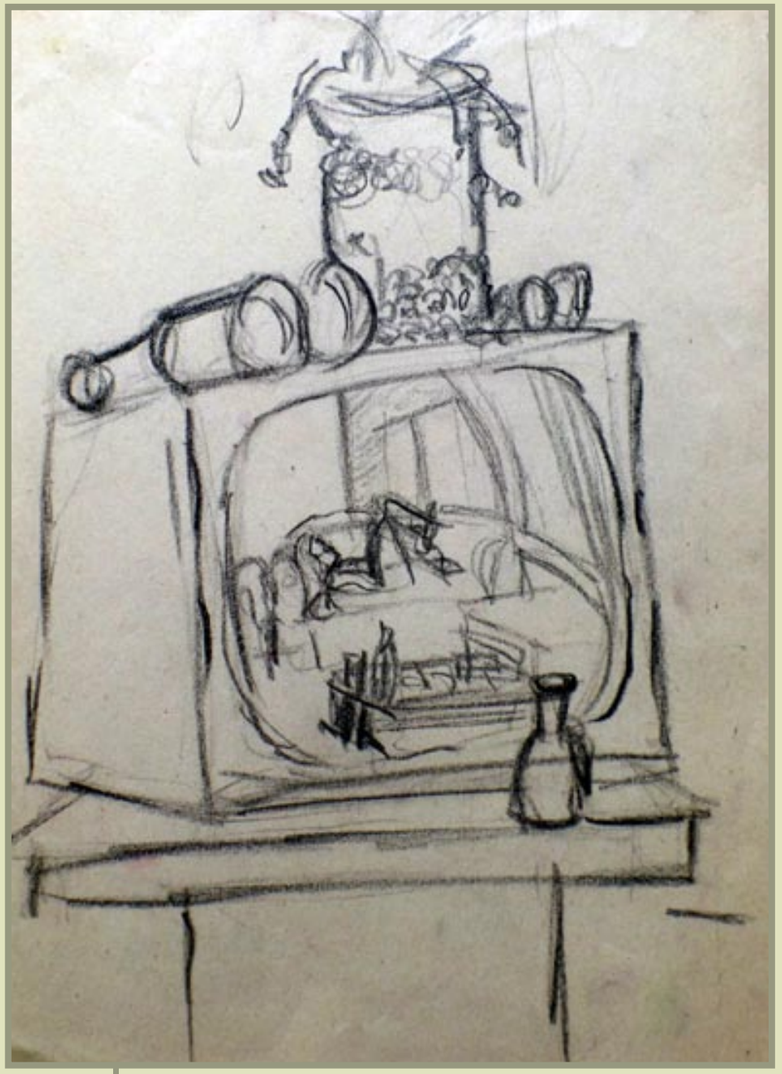
I used to have many musician friends and most of them were playing at the music venues those days. Sometimes, I used to join on rehearsals to play with them. I was picking it up quickly, so I bought a Hohner Steinberger bass guitar (see pic 4) and took some lessons from Ahmet Güvenç. Later on, “Zarpatan Muma’s” music band formed with four members. We were playing punk music cover songs.

In the Spring of 1989, I spent a few weeks in Oxford, England. The purpose of this trip was improving my English, but I took advantage of being very close to the Wimbledon Tennis tournament and waited all night on the queue to get tickets (see pic 5).

In 1991, my father got his retirement pension and gave me some money. This was a great opportunity; I took a month break from school and travelled with Interrail by myself. On the road I visited my two cousins in Graz and Nice and stayed at a friend’s place in Rome, Paris and Madrid. I visited Florence, Venetia and Budapest, staying at convents free of charge. I never forget meeting with wonderful people in trains. It was a marvellous trip.

In the Winter of 1992, I was on the road again crossing the Turkey - Greece border with my friend Troy Smith. A week before the trip came up out of nowhere saying to each other “Let’s go to Paris by hitch-hiking!”, so we did it. We were both highly free spirited adventurers. We took the bus to Edirne, and from Edirnekapı we hitch-hiked through Alexandropolis, Athens, then Patras to Brindisi by boat, later on straight up crossing Mont Blanc to Paris. We met with incredibly nice truck drivers from Turkey that drove us little by little closer to our destinations. It was a great experience for both of us.

Studio Room (Artist Collection)
Chalk on Paper, 29 x 21 cm
1993



The Girl on the Sofa (Artist Collection)
Chalk on Paper, 29 x 21 cm
1993

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