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MERİÇ ALGÜN RINGBORG
Becoming European

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meessendeclercq.com

The young Turkish artist based in Stockholm, Meriç Algün Ringborg (Istanbul, 1983) got herself noticed in the last Istanbul Biennial with a piece highlighting her personal situation in a dreamlike way: born in Istanbul, she lives in Stockholm.

For her exhibition in Brussels, she is showing in the Wunderkammer *Becoming European* which takes the form of a list of dates recorded meticulously. The period covered runs from 21 December 2007 to 3 June 2012. These dates correspond to different stays by the artist in a country of the European Community. The gaps left correspond to times when she left the European area, for example, to spend time in Istanbul. This way of working is both indicative of the *modus operandi* of the European administration in relation to non-European residents but can be interpreted as a symbolic representation of any administration since one instantly perceives a kind of rigour and repetitiveness inherent in any management system. Nevertheless, from a formal viewpoint, she displays an economy of resources that is appropriate for the minimalism and can be observed in some works by artists of the '60s (for example, *poems* by Carl Andre). The colours of the stamps represent different legal statuses: blue for *tourist*, red for *temporary resident*, purple for *awaiting legal status*, black for *permanent resident*.

With this seemingly simple work, Algün Ringborg opens up various issues. The accumulation of numbers (which look like dates once examined more closely) is obviously an absurdity that seems Kafkaesque. These dates correspond to moments in life, events that we cannot know, unless we adopt them and relate them to our own personal story.

Beyond the aridness of the information, this work can also be interpreted with the illusion and hope that any medium to long term travel in a country arouses. At the same time, any departure is accompanied by a fear or at least apprehension about leaving one's roots behind. One leaves one's roots to try and connect with those of other people, those of one's new country, even if in the case of Turkey where many of its citizens are living elsewhere in Europe.

The artist questions her status as an immigrant. What rights does she have? How much freedom does she enjoy? Beyond that, other issues arise, more political, concerning Turkish accession to the European Union, the impossibility of finding a European consensus on the issue of immigration from Africa or Eastern Europe or, a more worrying development, the radicalisation of public opinion in many countries.