

Özgür Kar

Implosion, 2023

Video

Courtesy of the artist

Education Resource (7-12)



Özgür Kar

Death with flute (from the *Storage | Drama* series), 2021

4K video with sound, 75" Samsung TV, custom flightcase, media player, speaker, 15min loop.

Photo: Stephen James. Courtesy of the artist, and Emalin, London



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Overview

Between the court jesters, noblemen, priests, and farmers who populate medieval art, dances a procession of the dead. This chorus line of skeletons, long-limbed and anonymous, is known as Danse Macabre, or Dance of the Dead; an allegory for what was a newly emerging understanding of universal morality in the Late Middle Ages.

Delivering a song of desire and despair, Özgür Kar's skeletons ruminate on the seemingly imminent demise of this life and world with the same unnerving nonchalance as the prancing spectres that have haunted the paintings, frescoes, manuscripts and nightmares of human beings since time immemorial.

Yet Kar's skeletons are as emotionally vulnerable as they are withdrawn, doing away with both the camp-ness of cartoon and the grotesqueness of death, their lilting songs and frank monologues lean towards existentialism; teetering, not yet falling in. Presented in the Boiler House of White Bay Power Station, where coal was once converted to heat, the work asks if what was meant to keep us warm might soon leave us cold beneath the same ground that it was hewn from.



Özgür Kar

Death with branch (from the *DAWN* series), 2023

2-channel 4K video with sound, 13min loop.

Commissioned by The Renaissance Society at the University of Chicago

Photo: Cody Schlabaugh. Courtesy of the artist.



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Discussion Questions

Kar's work draws on a **pastiche** of influences including **early 20th century animations**, **jazz** and **classical** music, **experimental theatre** and the artistic movement known as **Danse Macabre** popular in the 15th and 16th centuries, which reminded audiences of our **shared mortality**.

Does Kar's work feel **medieval or contemporary**? What can an artist achieve by **blending together references and styles** from different times?

How might this alter the **meaning of the signs** and **symbols** used in their art? What do you think Kar is trying to **communicate** in his works?

Many of Kar's animations also feature voice overs and scripted dialogue.

How do the **words change the meaning** of the visual element of the work? What is the **relationship between** the words, the music and the visuals?

Creating works of this nature often requires **collaboration** with other artists of different disciplines, including writers, musicians etc.

How might this challenge our **understanding of how artists work**? What is to be gained from a **collaborative approach**?

Practical Activities

Imagine a character of your own who is coming to realise something important to them. Think of what they might look like, how they might move, and speak.

Using pencils draw your character in a moment of contemplation. On the same page, write a monologue from the perspective of your character. Try to give them a unique voice and express their realisation.

When you're done, finish the vignette by choosing a song that suits the mood of the scene you've created.

Think of an animated film or cartoon with a style you enjoy. Study the way the animators depict their characters including body shapes, face shapes, movement etc.

Now create a self-portrait in the style of your chosen animation. Extend this portrait to a ten frame storyboard in which you go on a journey.

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