

## **BABAK GOLKAR / Notes on Erdem Taşdelen's** *A Petition of the Left Hand*

The research-based and conceptually engaged art practice of Erdem Taşdelen spans a wide range of media, and is grounded in examining and reflecting on notions of subjectivity. Central to a large number of Taşdelen's previous works has been critiquing ideas of the self as a discrete entity and investigating the ways in which it is socio-culturally prescribed and those prescriptions internalized. In his most recent works, presented in this issue of *TCR*, there seems to be a slight shift in methodology.

In 2014, Taşdelen produced and debuted a new body of work entitled *A Petition of the Left Hand* at Galeri NON in Istanbul. With this multi-platform project, he took on the task of examining socio-historical problematics surrounding left-handedness. The overarching title of the project is taken from a short, humorous letter from 1779 by Benjamin Franklin, written from the point of view of the left hand and asking that it be treated with the respect it deserves. Franklin's letter is presented by Taşdelen as a ready-made alongside seventeen instructional drawings based on tasks that are highlighted in Jan W. Van Strien's 1988 *Dutch Handedness Questionnaire*, all of which are drawn in the series as performed by the artist's left hand. It is worth noting here that Taşdelen is right-handed.

In the sculpture *My Father's Left Hand* the artist internalizes and channels the struggles of left-handedness projected by society through his father's experience of it. Taşdelen's father, who was born left-handed, was forced by his family to learn to write with his "right" hand, an act of correction that parallels many other socially-imposed discriminative practices. He cast his father's left hand in bronze, capturing it in the act of writing and, by extension, permanently fixing it in time.

There is a quality in all of Taşdelen's artworks that could be described as ethnographic realism. His research and un-archiving of historical treatments of subjects have an obsessive quality of "digging" in order to get to the bottom of a contemporary struggle. Inevitably, ready-mades get a special treatment in his works, especially in this most recent project. One such object is a 1950s miniature porcelain jug with a poem inscribed on it, a work of Delft pottery produced

specifically for left-handed individuals. The object in its regular form is one of many everyday items that are difficult to use with the left hand, as the pouring lip would normally be to the left of the handle. While objects that are either versatile or geared for left-handers are made more commonly today, this jug is noteworthy as an early example that shows concern for the left hand. Another piece uses ready-made text as its material; titled *All The Decisive Blows*, it is an artist book constructed by Taşdelen that features a quote by a well-known person on each page. The book is designed in reverse so that the pages turn from left to right.

It is no longer unusual to witness artists in our time practicing beyond medium. However, Taşdelen's methodologies are unique in ways in which the outcome and unfolding of his subjects form indexical traces of the social reality of the time and place in which we live. Systems that were once consciously human-made just exist in constative modes, now as conditions of our time. Taşdelen's art hits these conditions at their roots, wittingly and humorously subverting them.