

## POSTERITY HILL

The exhibition places itself within the programme theme of Wilfried Lentz: the dwelling. It does so however not only from the point of view of living but considering the living place as a source of belief. Belief in the sense that together with believing in something that is unseen, it considers the history of rituals, of spirituality that first started to become part of human life in the shape of artifacts inside homes. Many of my works refer to the sites of [Göbekli Tepe](#), a neolithic archeological site carbon dated B.C. 9500 and [Catalhöyük](#), dated B.C 7000. Many archeologists agree on the fact that they were one of oldest permanent human settlements anywhere in the world and were used not only for living but also for worship. Prehistorians link this Neolithic Revolution to the invention and the beginning of agriculture exactly 10.000 years ago. What is special to me and to many archeologists, especially about Göbekli Tepe, is that it was also speculated to be one the first temples: Many sculptures, figures, and the architecture indicates so. That it did not only serve as a home but had ritualistic functions.<sup>1</sup> It is however still an absolute mystery what this site is used for and what kind of events took place in it.

One piece of information is certain: this kind of ancient belief systems and artifacts were associated with the invention of agriculture. Together with settled humans, came growing their own food and keeping their own livestock. Humans invented many beliefs to keep them safe such as protective objects, prayers and rituals. Many small clay figurines of goddesses were found in food storage spaces, such as cellars, inside piles of wheat.<sup>2</sup> These were interpreted as these figurines were meant to protect the crop.

Not only figurines of goddesses but also depictions of animals played a big role in the art of such neolithic dwellings. For example the vulture. These figures are prominent in Çatalhöyük as ochre wall paintings but they are also seen on the pillars of Göbekli Tepe where they were carved on limestone as reliefs. They were believed to be spiritual animals that carry the souls of people and animals to the sky because they eat the dead. As it is stated in the text for 16th Istanbul Biennial which commissioned these works, in our current world these animals are so underestimated. *“Vultures (Gyps) are mainly divided between New World Vultures and Old World Vultures. They rarely attack healthy animals, but may kill the wounded or sick. Vultures are of great value as scavengers, especially in hot regions. They were believed to be carriers of bodies between the living and the dead which led to the ritual of sky burials. Vultures in South Asia, mainly in India and Nepal, had declined dramatically since the early 1990’s. It has been found that this decline was caused by residues of the veterinary drug Diclofenac in animal carcasses. The conservation status of vultures was of particular concern to humans. For example, the decline of vulture populations could have led to increased disease transmission and resource damage. After a griffon vulture and a black vulture were spotted in the Netherlands in late May 2019, many countries created reintroduction programmes for vultures.”*<sup>3</sup> And the fictional part of the text goes: *“With the rise of global temperatures and the change occurring in earth’s axis, vultures play a crucial role in keeping epidemics controlled and ecosystems in balance in the year 6019.”*

Plants also have played a major role in beginning and the continuation of belief systems. The exhibition refers to one specific plant that I have been researching for years: corn. It has been a sort of obsession to read about the history of this plant and its impact on folklore, culture and the survival of many populations. In 2021, we made a big scale project, cultivating corn in a 50m x 50m field in Nieuw West Amsterdam, on a plot that belongs to the municipality. Me and my colleagues brought seeds from our own countries, whereas I brought seeds from Turkey asking my whole family to find a variety of seeds. It was an act for

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/gobekli-tepe-the-worlds-first-temple-83613665/>

<sup>2</sup> Further research about these figurines can be found in the book *The Living Goddesses* by Marija Gimbutas

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.vultureconservation.org/>

creating a sense of connection and belonging as I discovered later in life that I was born in Ordu, north-east of Turkey where corn is the staple grain. It is embedded in the culture, traditions, games and the language. One of my pleas in this gesture was also to go after the question “When does a plant become indigenous to a geography?”. Many of the seeds I brought back from Turkey were called ancestral<sup>4</sup>. But according to history, corn was first domesticated by indigenous peoples in southern Mexico about 10,000 years ago.

To my surprise I found many unusual kinds of corn and grew them symbolically in various places in the Netherlands. The red corn was grown in a volkstuin garden plot in Amsterdam after finding the seeds in a seed bank near my grandma's house in Izmit. The black corn was also found in the same seedbank and was grown within the project Four Sisters<sup>5</sup>. The blue corn's seeds were found in a market in Çanakkale by my mom and I grew them in the backyard of Sint-Franciscus Xaveriuskerk in Amersfoort<sup>6</sup>. Beautifully, the garden of this church is named Frans & Hildehof, after Franciscus van Assisi en Hildegard van Bingen.

Posterity Hill therefore offers itself as an imaginary place of belief and ritual. Part of its meaning comes from the fact that corn fruit, what we eat are the seeds themselves. So each corn kernel is not only ready to feed but it is the seeds itself that can generate its own future generations.

Müge Yılmaz  
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<sup>4</sup> “Atalık” in Turkish

<sup>5</sup> <https://foursistersproject.nl/>

<sup>6</sup> It was in the context of exhibition *Hemelladder* curated by Jaap Velslerboer