

Galeria **Francisco Fino**

***Ali Kazma: Lisbon-Istanbul. Two Portraits on the Edge.***

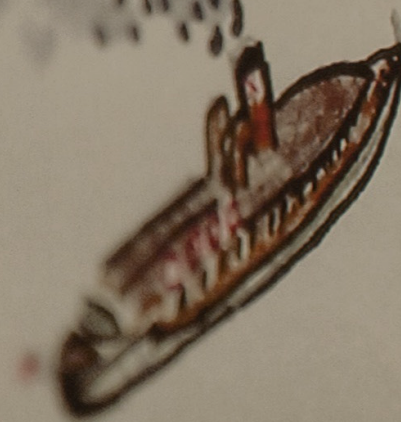
Curated by Maurizio Bortolotti

21.03.2025 – 03.05.2025

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Installation view of Ali Kazma: *Lisbon-Istanbul. Two Portraits on the Edge.*, Galeria Francisco Fino, 2025

Ali Kazma's exhibition presents a view of Europe seen from its two geographical extremes through the lens of culture in a crucial historical moment for the continent.

This exhibition establishes a dialogue between Lisbon and Istanbul via two recent works by Kazma. Although located at opposite ends of Europe, the two cities share a similar condition. At the westernmost corner of Europe, Lisbon has historically been a gateway to the Americas. On the other hand, located at the easternmost part of the continent, Istanbul has been a hub for cultural and commercial exchanges with Asia. In these two works, Ali Kazma explores the inner worlds of two major writers, Orhan Pamuk (Turkish), and now Lisbon-based Alberto Manguel (Argentina). The videos look at the writers' domestic lives and daily environments and bear witness to the complexity of European culture, especially in borderlands like Turkey and Portugal, where the infiltration and influences of other cultures are more visible. Given the changing political atmosphere in many of its countries, Europe, which seems inclined to closing its doors mentally and physically to others, is reminded of its own ideal which embraces the world's complexity and richness. Adopting Pamuk's and Manguel's view of the world, the exhibition offers a model to rethink the European cultural approach.

The exhibition starts and ends with two videos about water: the waters of the Bosphorus, and those of the Tagus flowing into the Atlantic Ocean, which are integral to Istanbul and Lisbon's landscapes. The liquid element of sea or ocean water powers both cities and offers a tangible representation of their conditions as margins and gateways; it represents a dynamic space of traveling and exchange. Through this natural element, culture acts as a portal through which visions of distant parts of the world connect. With these two videos, Ali Kazma's narration finds a point of intersection between the two cities.

A constant state of uncertainty and expectancy defines this moment of significant global geopolitical change, governed by new economic strategies and technological innovations, and marked by a pandemic, wars, and massive population migrations. These two frontier cities, as it were, present a model for addressing the current situation and illustrate how complexity can enhance our experiences and assist us in navigating a deeply changing world.

Ali Kazma's representation of the two writers' lives embodies an idea of openness to the world as a paradigm at the roots of European culture. Both writers inhabit the continent's peripheries. Their longing for hybridization between different worlds generates expansive visions of peoples' ordinary lives. At the same time, they create points of connection with other continents.

The artist believes complexity is central to his ongoing exploration of today's world. In the videos presented at the exhibition, he seeks to bridge the intricate landscape of the writers' minds and their external environment. Throughout his career, he has developed a meta-narrative that connects human lives and environments with their representations. Kazma focuses on the watershed between reality and its image, the moment reality is poised to become representation, as seen in *The Taxidermist*. He creates a circular relationship between individual life and its depiction, where one gradually fades into the other. His narrative is not epic; it reflects our present existence, starting from exemplary lives or symbolic locations like the Svalbard Island Vault (in the video *Safe*), which houses all known plant seeds on Earth. Kazma's filming methodology transcends all fictional narratives. He crafts a fluid and robust narrative that links distant points, which are the object of his inquiry. His narration explores the geographic relationship between living environments and cultural models in various world regions, from Europe

to South America and Asia. The interplay between ordinary life and its representation, seen through cultural habits, is one of the central themes in Ali Kazma's recent work.

Kazma's work is rooted in reality observation processes, which began many years ago in videos like *Clock Master* and *Brain Surgery*. He went on to develop this approach further, moving from the process of reality transformation to the exploration of cultural habits in specific life-environments, having investigated cultural models as points of connection between the symbolic and the real world across different locations worldwide.

Ali Kazma is part of a generation of video-makers who explored the narrow territory between cinema and contemporary art since the early 1990s. For artists like Doug Aitken, Matthew Barney, Pierre Huyghe, and Alfredo Jaar, it is not only about moving images; the installation in the exhibition space itself is part of their practice and enhances the meaning of the artworks.

Films are based on a plot; for this reason, they are often associated with literature. Artworks happen here and now in front of the spectator. This lineage of video-makers, including Ali Kazma, connects the essential features of the two genres, developing a new type of installation for videos, which contains a narration, even if often non-linear, and happens 'here and now' in the presence of the spectator who activates it. This means a video installation can only be experienced in its presence. In a way, we could say these artists spatialized the time of the narration through the video installation.

For this exhibition at Francisco Fino Gallery, Ali Kazma created a unique environment for viewing his videos. This environment is the ideal physical space for connecting the two European cities. Two videos about the waters of Lisbon and Istanbul open and close the exhibitive

trajectory. The videos on Orhan Pamuk and Alberto Manguel are at the centre of the exhibition. On opposing walls, two colours symbolise the cities of Lisbon (yellow) and Istanbul (blue). Two entire walls are dedicated to a series of stills from Ali Kazma's videos in a combination made of lightboxes featuring a non-linear narration.

The exhibition is a site-specific installation that spatially represents a cultural dialogue between the two cities. It presents a common social imaginary evoked by Lisbon and Istanbul through the eyes of the two writers, whose similarities and differences reveal a web of shared roots.

Maurizio Bortolotti





Talk with Ali Kazma, Maurizio Bortolotti, Alberto Manguel, moderated by Grazia Quaroni, Galeria Francisco Fino, 2025



Ali Kazma

*A House of Ink*, 2023

Triptych HD video with sound

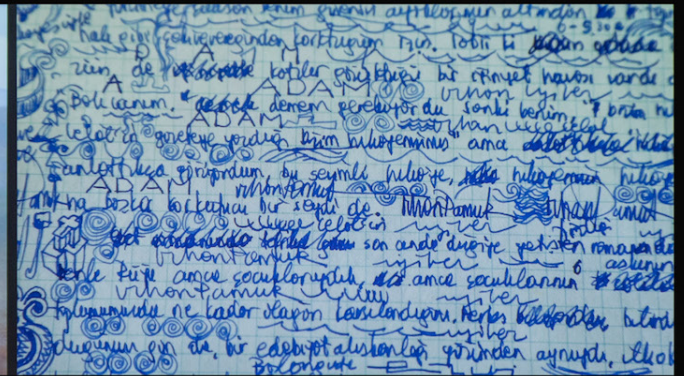
47', 48', 46'

Ed. 5 + 2 AP





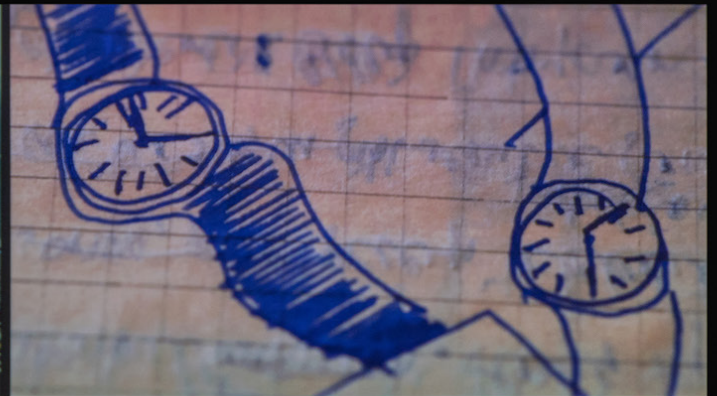
Installation view of Ali Kazma: *Lisbon-Istanbul. Two Portraits on the Edge.* Galeria Francisco Fino, 2025



Each screen of this triptych video flows at its own pace, making it virtually impossible for the viewer to catch the same threefold configuration twice. The asynchrony of the flow of images creates a perpetual renewal of a unique combination, composition and narration. Every element of this layout – in which Ali puts the viewers' gaze to work, compelling us to draw connections – make us witness the tortuous process of creation, while uncovering the writer's tireless effort to find the right word from time to time. Concurrently, under the magnifying glass of this study of a space, we are granted access to the writer's most vulnerable moments, obsessions, customs and

peculiarities. *Disjecta membra*, scattered fragments from Pamuk's body of work, seem to expect us to reassemble the methodically scattered pieces of an extensive mind and imagination. According to the writer himself, "Novels are second lives." As we witness how these second lives are conceived and lived – first in the mind, then within the space of a notebook – and see how the writer travels between times, spaces and personalities, we take a step towards meeting that expectation. — Nilüfer Şaşmaz, excerpt from the essay written for the exhibition *Sentimental*, at New National Museum of Monaco





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Ali Kazma

*Alberto in Lisbon, 2024*

Diptych Synchronized HD video with sound

14' 43"

Ed. 5 + 2 AP





Installation view of Ali Kazma: *Lisbon-Istanbul. Two Portraits on the Edge.*, Galeria Francisco Fino, 2025



In *Alberto in Lisbon*, I have revisited Alberto Manguel's library which I had filmed in its previous home a decade earlier in Mondion, France for my dyptich video *House of Letters*. This library, in the meantime, has been uprooted from its home in France due to some administrative hassle from French authorities. One country's loss is another's gain, in this case, for the city of Lisbon has made a generous offer to Manguel to relocate his library to an 18th-century villa in the city centre. Under Manguel's directorship, this villa will host the library and develop into a library/research/ art space, or "a centre for intellectual subversion", in Manguel's words.

I have followed this process in Lisbon, filming for a few days every 6 months for three years as the preparations for the centre continued. As the project developed, the film became much more than just documenting the groundwork; it evolved into a kind of a portrait of Manguel, the writer, the puppet maker and much more as he adjusts to his new home and city. — Ali Kazma, from the interview with Guillaume de Sardes for the catalogue of the artist's solo exhibition at the New National Museum of Monaco.





Installation view of Ali Kazma: *Lisbon-Istanbul. Two Portraits on the Edge.*, Galeria Francisco Fino, 2025



Ali Kazma  
*Bósforo-Tejo*, 2025  
Díptych HD video with sound  
13'00", 12'00"  
Ed. 2 + 1 AP







**Ali Kazma**

*Lisbon-Istanbul Series I-II, 2025*

Light boxes in oak, printed on laminated vinyl

38,5 x 66,6 x 6,5 cm (each)

Ed. 3 + 1 AP

I. An installation from the studio of the Armenian Turkish artist Sarkis whose works often deal with Istanbul and the city's cultural heritage.

II. As a writer who uses historical background often in his books and as a visual artist interested in the heritage of the land he lives in, Pamuk studies and knows a lot about the art of the miniature. This miniature is from one of his favorite collections.

**Ali Kazma**

*Lisbon-Istanbul Series III, 2025*

Light boxes in oak, printed on laminated vinyl

82,5 x 55,5 x 6,5 cm

Ed. 3 + 1 AP

A woman technician repairing a printing machine from the early 20th century in Geneva, Switzerland.







**Ali Kazma**

*Lisbon-Istanbul Series IV-V, 2025*

Light boxes in oak, printed on laminated vinyl

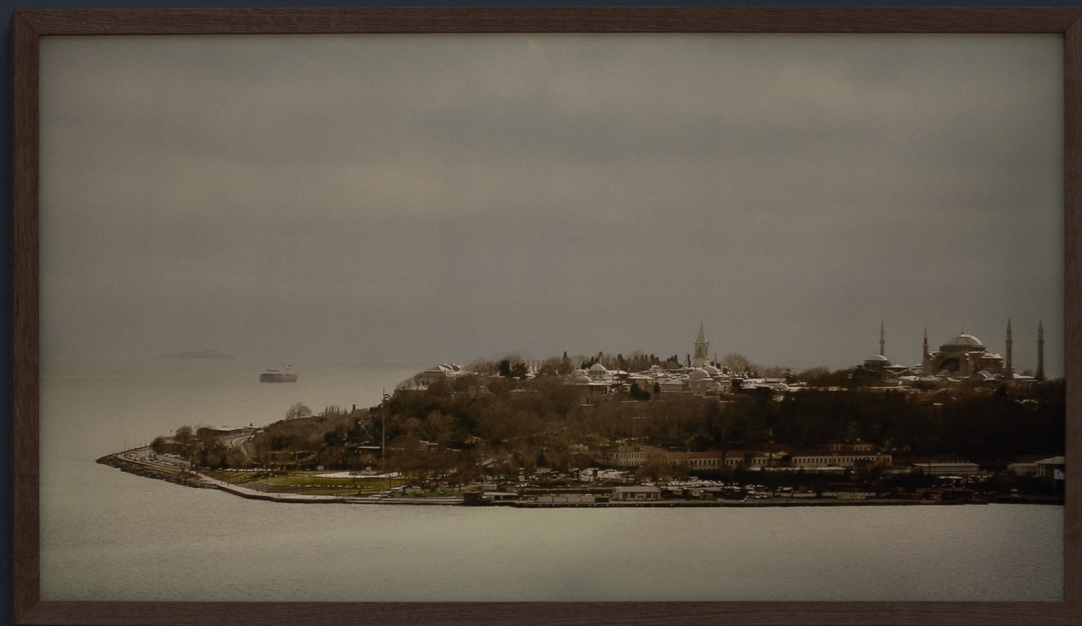
38,5 x 66,6 x 6,5 cm (each)

Ed. 3 + 1 AP

IV. The room which will become the office of Alberto Manguel features many framed wall paintings.

V. A detailed painting of an old coffee serving tray from Orhan Pamuk's apartment. Paintings of famous Istanbul buildings and scenes were often depicted on trays as well as wall paintings during the Ottoman times. This tray is placed at the entrance of the writer's living room.





**Ali Kazma**

*Lisbon-Istanbul Series VI, 2025*

Light boxes in oak, printed on laminated vinyl

47,5 x 82,5 x 6,5 cm

Ed. 3 + 1 AP

A view of the historical peninsula from Pamuk's apartment. You can see Topkapı Palace, Hagia Sophia, and Blue Mosque.





Installation view of Ali Kazma: *Lisbon-Istanbul. Two Portraits on the Edge.*, Galeria Francisco Fino, 2025



**Ali Kazma**

*Lisbon-Istanbul Series VII, 2025*

Light boxes in oak, printed on laminated vinyl

29,5 x 50,5 x 6,5 cm

Ed. 3 + 1 AP

A room from the Villa Palacete de Pombal where Alberto's library will eventually move. The building will become a municipal cultural center.





**Ali Kazma**

*Lisbon-Istanbul Series VIII-IX, 2025*

Light boxes in oak, printed on laminated vinyl

29,5 x 50,5 x 6,5 cm

Ed. 3 + 1 AP



VIII. A reference to Dante from the manuscripts of *The Black Book* by Orhan Pamuk.

IX. A puppet of Dante made by Alberto Manguel. The writer made puppets of all the important characters in Dante's masterpiece and have exhibited them in Casa Pessoa in Lisbon in 2021.

**Ali Kazma**

*Lisbon-Istanbul Series X, 2025*

Light boxes in oak, printed on laminated vinyl

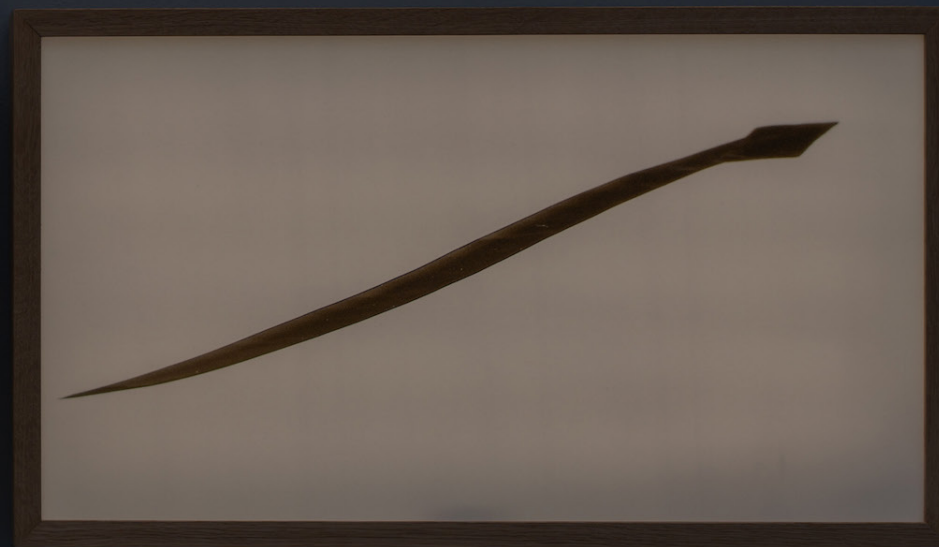
82,5 x 55,5 x 6,5 cm

Ed. 3 + 1 AP

X. A box of calligraphy tools from the calligrapher Omer Faruk Dere's studio.







**Ali Kazma**

*Lisbon-Istanbul Series XI-XII, 2025*

Light boxes in oak, printed on laminated vinyl

38,5 x 66,6 x 6,5 cm (each)

Ed. 3 + 1 AP

XI. A detail from the making of the Japanese Calligraphy ink, Sumi, in Kobaien company, Nara, Japan. One of the oldest manufacturers of ink in the world.

XII. A perfect rendering of the letter Aleph by the Turkish Calligrapher Omer Faruk Dere. Aleph also ties into the famous book by Borges whom Alberto knew and read to as a young man.



**Ali Kazma**

*Lisbon-Istanbul Series XIII, 2025*

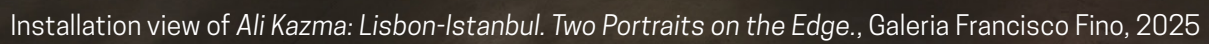
Light boxes in oak, printed on laminated vinyl

29,5 x 50,5 x 6,5 cm

Ed. 3 + 1 AP

Pessoa memorabilia on the manuscripts of Pamuk.







Installation view of Ali Kazma: *Lisbon-Istanbul. Two Portraits on the Edge.*, Galeria Francisco Fino, 2025





**Ali Kazma**

*Lisbon-Istanbul Series XIV–XV, 2025*

Light boxes in oak, printed on laminated vinyl

38,5 x 66,6 x 6,5 cm (each)

Ed. 3 + 1 AP

XIV. A view of a municipal ferry passing by Pamuk's apartment.

XV. Pamuk's apartment overlooks the Bosphorus and one can watch countless ferries of Istanbul sailing during the day. The ferries feature very often in the drawings and books of Pamuk.



**Ali Kazma**

*Lisbon-Istanbul Series XVI-XVII, 2025*

Light boxes in oak, printed on laminated vinyl

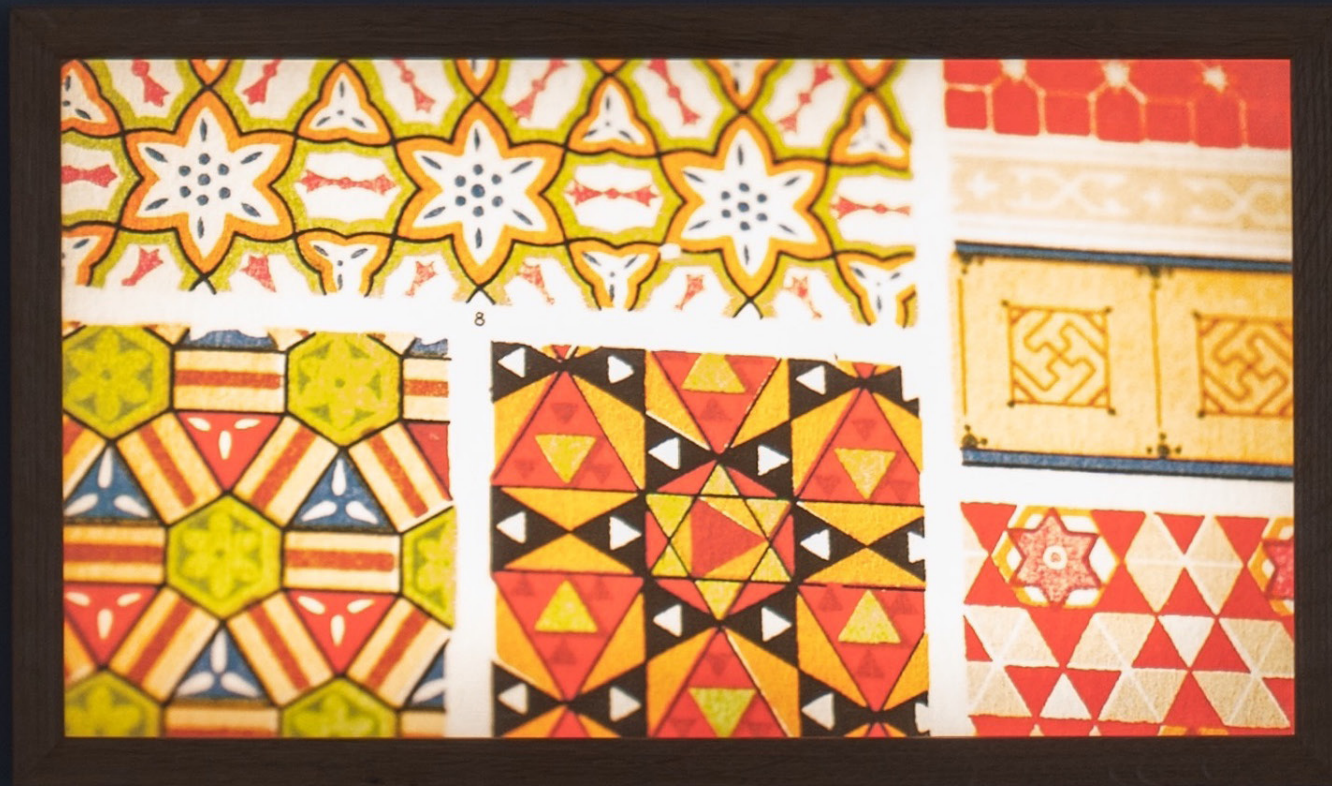
29,5 x 50,5 x 6,5 cm (each)

Ed. 3 + 1 AP

XVI. A detail from the run-down Greek Orphanage building in the Princess Islands in Istanbul. Orhan Pamuk spends his summers on this island.

XVII. A detail from the Cinemateca Portuguesa in Lisbon, where Alberto was filmed for a TV series featuring books about current affairs.





**Ali Kazma**

*Lisbon-Istanbul Series XVIII, 2025*

Light boxes in oak, printed on laminated vinyl

29,5 x 50,5 x 6,5 cm

Ed. 3 + 1 AP

Islamic motifs and symbols feature often in Pamuk's books, most notably in his novel *My Name is Red*. This image is from one of the books the writer used as he was writing the novel.



Installation view of Ali Kazma: *Lisbon-Istanbul. Two Portraits on the Edge.*, Galeria Francisco Fino, 2025



**Ali Kazma**

*Lisbon-Istanbul Series XIX, 2025*

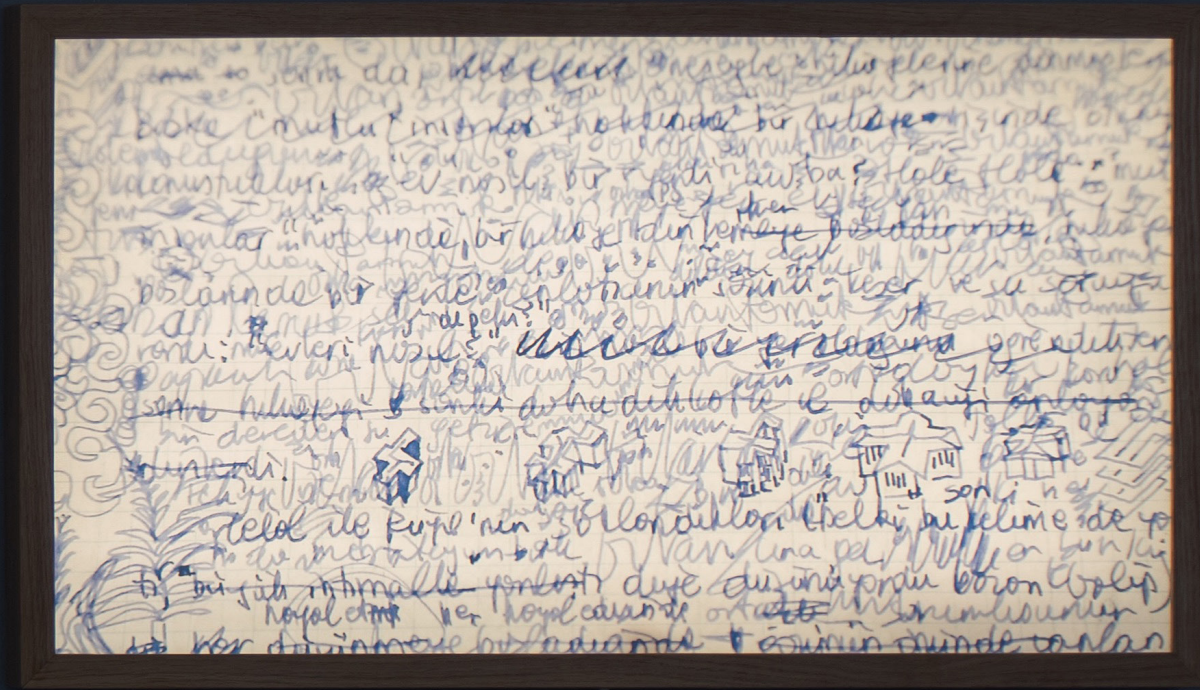
Light boxes in oak, printed on laminated vinyl

82,5 x 55,5 x 6,5 cm

Ed. 3 + 1 AP

A taxidermist's award-winning red fox.





Ali Kazma

Lisbon-Istanbul Series XX, 2025

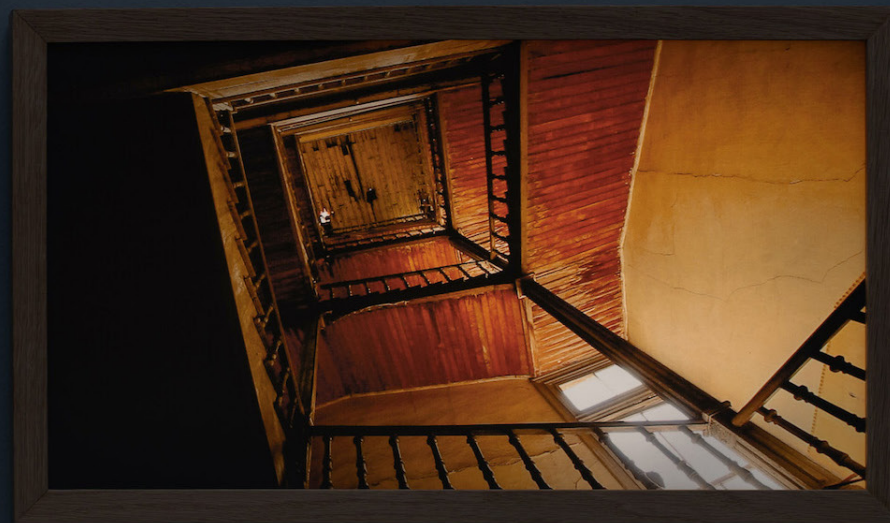
Light boxes in oak, printed on laminated vinyl

38,5 x 66,6 x 6,5 cm

Ed. 3 + 1 AP

A page from *The Black Book* manuscripts of Pamuk.





**Ali Kazma**

*Lisbon-Istanbul Series XXI-XXII, 2025*

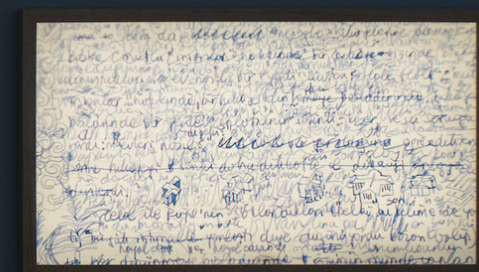
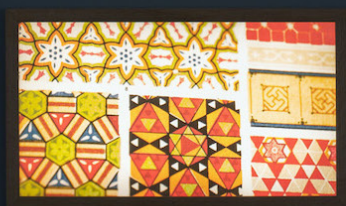
Light boxes in oak, printed on laminated vinyl

29,5 x 50,5 x 6,5 cm (each)

Ed. 3 + 1 AP

XXI. Main staircase from the Palacete de Pombal.

XXII. A view of the main staircase from the run-down Greek Orphanage building in the Princess Islands in Istanbul.



Installation view of Ali Kazma: *Lisbon-Istanbul. Two Portraits on the Edge*, Galeria Francisco Fino, 2025



# Ali Kazma

Born in 1971 in Istanbul, Turkey, Ali Kazma is a lens-based media artist living and working in Istanbul and Paris. He has a master of arts degree from the New School in New York City.

Questioning social organisation and the value of human activity, he highlights the relationship between the visible and the invisible aspects of reality by looking closely at the management of labour, time, bodies, gestures, space and processes. Kazma's attentive eye collects specific activities in a broad range of economic, industrial, scientific, medical, social and artistic spheres.

He has an interest in spaces of social significance, places of production, in industries and handicraft, as well as in the details of machinery and ritualistic, repetitive daily tasks.

The artist, who represented Turkey at the 55th Venice Biennale - Pavilion of Turkey in 2013, had a comprehensive solo exhibition at Jeu de Paume, Paris in 2017. Ali Kazma's other solo exhibitions include Nouveau Musée National de Monaco (2023), Albergo Diurno Venezia (Milan, 2018),

MUNTREF (Buenos Aires, 2018), Arter (Istanbul, 2015), Hirshhorn Museum (Washington, 2010), and the upcoming solo exhibition at Istanbul Modern in 2025.

Group exhibitions and biennials include 6th Kuandu Biennale (Taipei, 2018), 7th Moscow International Biennale of Contemporary Art (Moscow, 2017), MAXXI (Rome, 2016), Musée d'Art Contemporaine de Lyon (Lyon, 2013), 30th Sao Paulo Biennial (Sao Paulo, 2012), Istanbul Biennial (Istanbul, 2001, 2007, 2011) Muzeum Sztuki Lodz (Lodz, 2012), Istanbul Modern (Istanbul, 2011), Museum Kunstpalast (Düsseldorf, 2010) and New Museum (New York, 2010).

He has received the UNESCO Prize for Promotion of the Arts in 2001 and the Nam June Paik Award in 2010. The artist's works have been included in a number of institutional collections including CNAP (Paris), Istanbul Modern, MEP (Paris), Nouveau Musée National de Monaco, MONA (Tasmania), Sztuki Museum (Lodz), Tate Modern (London), Fondation Cartier (Paris), TBA21 (Vienna), and VKV Foundation Collection (Istanbul).

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