



Fortunately I got disabled!

Dancer and choreographer Aysegul Guryuksel who started shooting films during her 9-month disability period is now an award winning director. Despite the indifference her first film 'Nobody's Pet' met in Turkey, the award she received from the New York Independent Film Festival seems to be changing the young artist's life in the future.

Dancer and choreographer Aysegul Guryuksel is just 27 years old. After 24 years of dancing experience, she suffered from a 9 month disability and decided to shoot films. Her first film 'Nobody's Pet' have been invited to many festivals abroad. After its premiere at the Film Casino in Wien, it received an award as Best Avant-garde Film at the New York Independent Film Festival. In the forthcoming days, it will have screenings at two film festivals in Australia and Germany. Here is what Guryuksel and I talked about cinema, dance, preferred solitude and the value of scars...

☞ You received the Best Avant-garde Film Award at the New York Independent Film Festival with your first film. Could you tell us about this experience?

800 hundred films were screened from all over the world and promotion campaigns were being held even for 30-second films. There were people impersonating film characters all around. As for us, we didn't have anything for advertisement except for flyers and posters for which an advertiser friend helped and made them possible.

☞ Does that mean you didn't have a budget?

I had already shot the film. The budget of 1000 dollars I was looking for was for the promotion of the film, but just one week before I went to New York, I learnt that the person to become the advertisement sponsor was looking for 1000 dollars. In other words, we had to work very long hours to find a sponsor and I didn't have that time. But, strangely enough, it no longer had any significance. Advertisement does not mean everything, proper energy transfer you have with people or the meeting of people with good energy is more effective.

☞ You had an unpleasant experience here as well...

We applied to Dance Camera Istanbul Festival. It was a couple of months ago. 'Nobody's Pet' could not even be listed among the first 20 there. After the award from New York, one of the jury members of that festival told me he/she didn't watch my film. I saw that two eminent jury members resigned from

Dance Camera at the end of the festival. For me, the fact that the film I shot could not be listed among the first 20 was a huge success; it meant that it was a right work to have produced.

☒ Are you talking like this out of offense?

No. We are closed, we don't want new things and besides, if it's possible, we destroy them. I didn't care about the prize or success, I did a film I believed in and I wanted it to be watched. Just after Dance Camera Istanbul, we received an invitation from Italy as Subvoid Physical Theater. Those who watched my film there told me that I should definitely send my film to certain international festivals. The rest of the story happened spontaneously...

☒ Could you tell us how Subvoid was born and how it started to receive invitations from Europe and America in do little a time; how did this process evolve?

I was experiencing a new process with the regular tempo of technical classes and rehearsals at Zeynep Tanbay Dance Project, the first permanent and professional modern dance company I could catch because of my generation, together with my personal background, experience and awareness. The flexibility of the mind works parallel with the flexibility of the body, but subconscious needs to reach a certain level in accordance with your own limits so that what you want to reveal and how you want to reveal it becomes clearer.. If you leave the story open to changes and let it adapt to "that" moment's conditions, the screenplay is finished with the right people and materials....

While I was in a process of taking notes on the work I was planning to create, researching on the corresponding responses to my ideas in terms of production and dwelling on editing programs with an urge to create my own videos, I met Ece Gozmen from ZDTP. The most important point in this process for me was to find a performance artist with such a character and movement quality that they would handle the atmosphere and the choreographic energy I create and individualize the material in a natural way making it a matter of their own mind and body; especially in art, it is very difficult for an artist to become "themselves". In the Istanbul art world, meeting someone who succeeded in doing this gave me the motivation to create Subvoid.

☒ What happened in New York?

After the first screening, I heard many encouraging things. For instance, I value

electronic musicians and I met eminent people from this field. Some of them wanted me to prepare choreography for them. There were people from the Cannes Film Festival and everybody was so supporting. After the third screening the General Art Director of IBLA Foundation, Dr. Salvatore Moltisanti said he was very much impressed from the film and that he would like to open as film screening part in his own festival after 17 years. The best thing about it was that he offered me the direction of that part.

📖 Like the Cinderella tale...

But I tried very hard before; both to stay as I am and to produce a good work. By "trying hard" I don't mean the process of constructing the film as an idea but technically speaking there were so many things going wrong that they could be the story of another film. As for the creating and editing process, it was like a fairy tale. It is like feeling that the result will support you and you know what you're going to shoot..

📖 What were you planning to shoot?

Dance is a limited art; there are limits of the human body and an infinite number of forms that is not possible to be realized within these limits. However, cinema is limitless because of its technical possibilities.

📖 They found your film to be "elegant and energetic". What did you receive the award for?

I applied for the Best Experimental Film category but I was given the award of Best Avant-garde Film. It was magnificent, you can name your first film as experimental but the concept of avant-garde is a name that should be attributed to you by the professionals in the sector as it covers all the pioneering experimental approaches in terms of cinematography. At the final screening I as together with the choreographer Michael Yassenak and dancer Anthony Philips with whom I got the biggest pleasure out of working while studying at Mimar Sinan University and I thought I would never see them again. Existing as an independent artist among them after 7 years.. Even this was enough for me.

📖 What was the story?

The story of a woman who discovers, in time, that there is no flowing time and therefore who can't even become "her own pet".

BEING ALONE IS SOMETIMES GOOD

🗨 Did you decide to make films after your disability?

One day I saw a film named 'Dreams That Money Can Buy'. It is the first collective film that started the history of Avant-garde cinema. Figures like Man Ray and Marcel Duchamp are in the crew. I watched it four times one after another. Actually, I'm a very impatient person and I leave many things unfinished. However, this film mesmerized me. It didn't include any worries and this absolute carefreeness attracted me. I saw that creations without worries existed and that I was on the right path.

🗨 Was it a kind of "I haven't been alone" feeling?

On the contrary, it was a kind of "how smart it is to be alone" feeling.

History of humanity is full of examples where strong, sincere and worriless contemporary creations are ignored or perceived to be insignificant through ages. Therefore, real success perhaps starts at that point when you discover you are in this position and alone.

🗨 Did this happen at the time of your disability?

Yes. It was a severe disability, if I had it 5 years earlier, I may have never recovered. I learnt that the cranial curiae ligament operation is a very sensitive issue, really. First I walked with crutches, and then I stood up by exercising. But, I do not complain; if I hadn't experienced that disability, I couldn't have shot a film, I never had time for such things.

🗨 Can you dance now?

Yes, I can both dance and shoot a film. Now I feel fine because I believe that bruises and scars in people's lives are forward experiences. Good or bad, everything ends and these ends are, at the same time, the beginnings of new things.

🗨 In the film, you say; 'A second chance is the chance to make the same mistake twice'.

To those who think that life is short; I want to say "life is not short or something", life is just like the way it has to be. Its duration, evolution, uniqueness... You wake up to each day the same and you shape it. And although you can escape, you voluntarily and continuously give a second chance to the things that pull you down, torment and destroy you. You do it because you have the time to.

MUSIC IS THE NEXT STEP

Music is among Aysegul Guryuksel' future plans: "Beyond working with electronic musicians, I want to be able to create my own music and if they had asked me what was next two years ago, I would have said music and not even think of cinema at all. Now that choreography is together with film and performance, music is the only thing to be dealt with next."