

AK ANA

DENİZ KABUĞUNUN HAFIZASI




REPUBLIC OF TURKEY
MINISTRY OF CULTURE AND TOURISM



VIRGILE
FILM





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CONCEPT

Ak Ana Memory of Shell is an ecological fable inspired by the Turkish cosmogony : “a dreamlike dive into the ocean depths reveals a future in which humanity has disappeared. A key is offered to us to prevent this curse from happening”.

The user will explore this 6 degrees of freedom environment through the movement of hands, triggered objects and locations in the environment. The hands will allow us to swim to move in the water and grasp objects. Head movements will direct the beam of our headlamp to illuminate desired areas.

This is a 15 minutes immersive experience aimed at a family audience and particularly at the Z generation.



DIRECTOR'S NOTE

"The sea is the favorite symbol of the unconscious, the mother of all living things."

Carl Jung.

Dreams, in Jungian thinking, can help us become complete by offering us images that speak to us of our own possibilities for growth. It's an "eco-feminist story". We plunge into a dreamlike imaginary world under the sea that represents the collective unconscious. We use colors and symbols mainly to create an atmosphere of fable. The colors blue and turquoise are dominant, in all their variations. Under the sea, we encounter colorful sea creatures and damaged historical monuments and garbage. There are also black and white colors that represent darkness, illumination. For example: we have used blue for the hair color of mermaids, it often symbolizes freedom, inspiration, hope or wisdom.

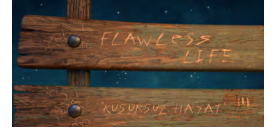
Technique: 3d animations for general scenes; 2d shadow animations on paper to reveal background scenes. We particularly prefer the cartoon style for our characters and environments. Because if we plan to enrich our story with a dreamlike world for children, we think this is the best way to keep it simple to offer an engagement with this story full of metaphors. Especially in the whale's stomach, the immersive "paper-shadow" animations will help us discover our mystical scenes. We are inspired by ancient cave paintings and the old Persian miniature style for the "revealing the legend" animations.

Özgül Gürbüz

Filmography of Özgül Gürbüz

Flawless life

[LINK TO THE FILM](#)



- award for best animated film, best screenplay, best visual at the Los Angeles Woman's Independent Film Festival in 2012

Playing house

[LINK TO THE FILM](#)



- first prize at the Seoul Guro International Kids Film Festival, The Monthly Film Festival, Neum International Animated Film Festival, Almaty Independent Film Festival, Anadolu Animation Festival, Festival de Cine Global Dominicano, Setem Akademi, Avanca Film Festival

- Jury Prize at the 8th Lions Shot Film Festival, International Festival of Local Television, Short Of The Year, Mice Festival

- 2nd prize at the Marmaris International Film Festival

- 3rd prize at The World Animation Celebration, honorable mention at the Asia Peace Film Festival

- nominated at the Dublin Animation Film Festival



WRITER'S NOTE

This project is first of all the story of a meeting with the Venice VR Expanded satellite program team in Istanbul during the 77th Venice International Festival. It is the desire to create together an experience that speaks about ecology to the greatest number of people, with the desire to anchor it in the seabed that is at the origin of all life on Earth. With the Turkish animation director Özgül Gürbüz, we immediately agreed to draw on a so-called "eco-feminist" thinking based on anthropology. She underlines the links between the exploitation of the living and the exploitation of women, the latter being culturally associated with nature. Another observation: the most equal societies are also the most respectful of the environment and human rights. The best balanced in sum. When we met, Ozgul had a mermaid character in mind that she had started to design.

Given her style, I immediately thought of the register of the tale, of the fable, which allows us great freedom to explore all kinds of symbolism. It then seemed natural to me to draw from the Turkish cosmogony, which offers us interesting representations of the Mother Goddess and in particular Ak Ana, the primordial goddess at the origin of life. She is represented by a curious horned mermaid, surrounded by fish or starfish.

On the other hand we did not want to fall into a dark dystopia that would be hopeless. We prefer to participate, at our level, to create positive imaginary worlds, full of meaning and solutions, without being "nice". The "childish" universe of the director does not prevent her from successfully dealing with intra-family violence in "Playing

house". It was this film that convinced me that a fertile collaboration between us was possible as well as her ability to make her character design evolve according to the directions taken by the story.

How can we instill hope, a sense of responsibility and also keys to understanding the imbalance in our world? I then imagined a dreamlike dive to which the seabed lends itself easily. A dive through the eyes of a child, who speaks about our inner child to all of us. Like an exploration of our psychic archaeology which evokes the fall, a metaphor of what brought us to this chaos: the rupture of the balance between feminine and masculine. The whale represents this sacred temple that imposes itself on us to offer us a spiritual experience, a trance that leads us to a founding mythology and the sacred geometry of the living. Experience through which we must pass to be able to release the power of the shell. The solution is therefore not technological even if we must find concrete solutions. It is our relationship with the living that must change fundamentally. We must rediscover the sacred bonds that unite us to nature. Without this, it is us who will disappear, thus exploiting our environment indiscriminately. Nature will survive us.

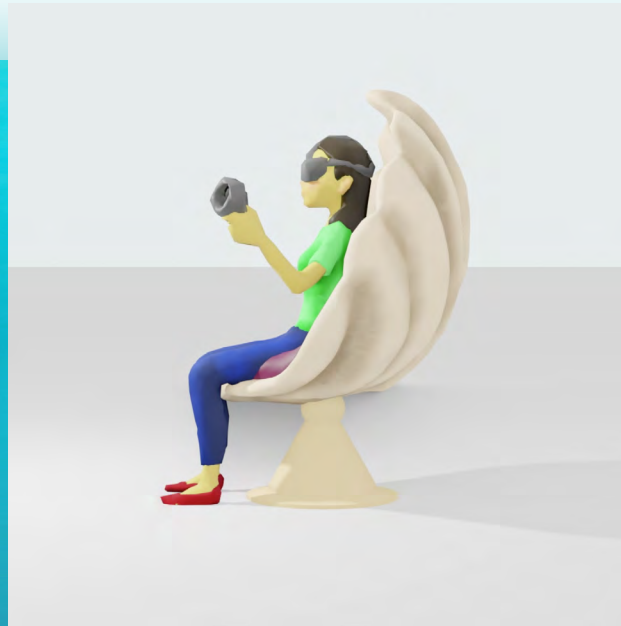
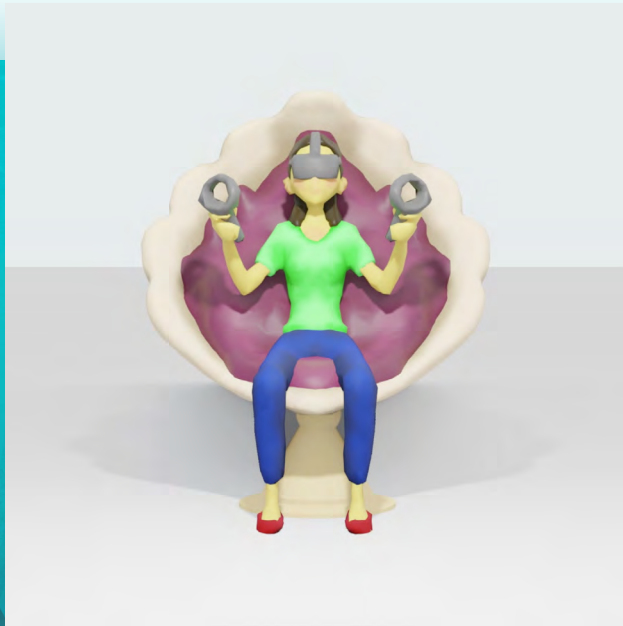
The power of interactive immersion sublimates the subject by putting us in a position of responsibility. We are at the same time the representative of a species that has self-destructed in an imaginary future, but also potentially the awakened being who can still change the course of things.

Sonia Delhaye



INSTALLATION

[LINK TO THE INSTALLATION VIDEO](#)





TREATMENT

In turquoise : interactive elements/actions.

It is the middle of summer, we are overlooking Patara beach in Turkey with its lighthouse and archaeological monuments. It is crowded with tourists and we can already see a sea polluted with rubbish. We are gradually getting closer to a pontoon deeply rooted in the sea, and then to a child in particular. **DENIZ**, a little boy, 11 years old, runs at full speed along the pontoon and has fun dancing with the wind in his long hair. Behind him stand his parents, they are happy and laughing at the scene. **We then become embodied in the child and his point of view.** The parents behind us shout laughingly to wait for them, but we continue our run towards the pontoon's edge. An almost imperceptible song is heard, like a distant mermaid chant calling us. Attracted by this sound, we then see among the waste a mermaid-shaped doll in the water, with a particularly glittering tail. A flash of light comes into our eyes and causes us to wobble. The voice of our parents in the distance can be heard, they are warning us. But it's too late, the mermaid's attraction is irresistible, and **we fall into the water in a splash.**

In a slow fall, we passively cross the waste barrier into which we have fallen. As we are drawn to the seabed, we see the doll from afar, slowly drowning in the sea. All around us, various plastic waste are floating, some of it brush against us and a plastic bag comes to cover our face. We can still perceive the doll's shadow through it. It seems that the toy is now moving and swimming towards us. A face appears and looks at us through it. **AYLIN**, that's her name, removes the plastic bag suddenly : **the doll has come to life !** She is staring at us, she seems extremely baffled by our presence. She looks at us from head to toe.

Three little fish are floating around her. One of them exclaims : "but it's a human, a human child, alive! ». The three little fish speak one after the other, all excited by their discovery. Aylin's face then lights up. She sees our presence as a sign. **She comes closer and hands us a headlamp to fix on our head with our hands.** The little fish now look like lantern fish as they also turn on their bioluminescent headlights. Aylin takes us with her deeper into the ocean.

She starts swimming ahead of us, exploring the deep water with the help of the fish's natural flashlights. **As viewers, we also have a ray of light at the top of our head that we can guide with our head movements.**

Gradually we discover the scenery of Patara beach which has been submerged under the sea. Remnants of human waste litter what was once the beach, including a number of pieces of digital garbage. Small shrimps are busy cleaning up all around us.



TREATMENT

Aylin goes towards the ancient parliament of Patara and places us at its center. A fresco is drawn on the floor with different paintings. Aylin's three satellite fish then begin to comment excitingly on the scenery, [unveiling the story accordingly to the movements of our lamp passing over it.](#)

A majestic mermaid is depicted, holding in her hands a shell glittering like a jewel. She is the Goddess Ak Ana. Legend says that humans trapped her spirit in a shell to diminish her power and use the waters as they wished. This outrage and the foolish behaviour of humans eventually led to their own demise. One of the fish draws near our ears and specifies that Ak Ana is the mother goddess, origin of all life on Earth and the protector of oceans.

In the next picture we see a white whale in which the shell is located. The next drawing represents a human child opening the shell. In the last painting the living world is reunited.

But our presence has brought turmoil to Patara's underwater micro-society. We are interrupted in our reading of the fresco by a shark, obviously annoyed by our arrival. He is accompanied by an octopus and a dolphin. Altogether, they seem to represent the local Council of elders.

We then witness a lively debate between them and Aylin about us. They do not all agree on how to interpret the frescoes nor on the fact we may possibly be the chosen child. At each intervention from one of the council sage, the audience of other sea animals gathered around them reacts in approval or disapproval.

The mermaid is one of those who believe in the legend. The shark, believing in their Goddess Ak Ana, does not think the legend is true and even less that we are the chosen one. The octopus and the dolphin are more divided. They believe in the legend but as a symbolic story, not as a truth. The shark is annoyed. He reminds us that humans are bad, harmful to the ecosystem and it doesn't want to reintegrate us into it. To prove it, he waves his hand and a krill rushes to bring him glasses picked up in the sea. He hands it to us from the tip of its flippers as if it were a disgusting piece of rubbish. [We put the glasses, triggering images in augmented and virtual reality all around us.](#) *Flashback scenes are presented to us: we see the beach of Patara but it changes quickly in time-lapse. Over time, the state of the beach worsens, leaving fewer trees and less water, more construction smoke and rubbish. Climate refugees are parked there in detention camps. The flashback sets in and brings us closer, we see the last drops falling from the taps and humans running out of water. The population fights, we see two humans arguing over a bottle of water. While they are fighting, they accidentally open the bottle, spilling all its content on the ground. The crowd watching the scene around them suddenly falls silent, in shock; the last drops of water have been wasted.*



TREATMENT

The glasses stop emitting. Aylin pleads our cause to the elder, affirming that Ak Ana sending us here is a sign of the prophecy fulfilling itself. The shark, on the edge of bursting from anger, retorts to her in a disdainful way that she is a mermaid, meaning half-human...

But a new event cuts off the discussions at the Patara parliament and brings about another type of nervousness. We start to hear sounds from another sea animal, and it's coming closer. A bottom wave begins to shake the waters, however the animals act as if they recognized the situation. The whole assembly is in awe, as if dumbfounded. Everyone looks in the same direction, inviting us to do the same.

A whale approaching the parliament makes its appearance, huge and majestic, its presence is imposing. While drawing itself closer, its mouth begins to open, making some sounds. Aylin stares at us, excited, worried and impressed at the same time. Aylin exclaims: she is coming for you! I knew it! Pushing all the other marine animals away, the whale then swallows us, its mouth wide open.

We find ourselves in the dark. But very quickly Aylin's companion fish enlighten us. [One of them brings us our torch back and we can then put it on our forehead once again.](#)

We are standing at the entrance of the whale's esophagus. The whale's mouth is now behind us, closed. Drops of whale saliva fall on us and blur our vision. Aylin bursts out laughing to hide her nervousness behind her excitement. "Let's go! We have to find the shell!". She drags us into the esophagus which turns into a slide. We then land in the belly of the whale. We can hear its muffled heartbeats from afar.

We then start to explore the belly's cavity, which looks like the spiritual temple of the goddess Ak Ana. Turkish lamps made of fish scales illuminate the place with a soft, subdued light. Surprising frescoes are drawn on the whale's flanks, reminiscent of cave paintings. Aylin seems to be discovering at the same time as us the mermaids drawn on these representations. Laying on the ground, a geometric shape is engraved. This shape can be found everywhere in the living world and easily recognisable thanks to the shell's spiral winding. Strange ancient inscriptions accompany it. The fish are laughing because they recognise the writing, it's ancient mermaid's writing! They start to turn around our heads in a frenzied dance, like in a ritual. Aylin then seems to be seized by a trance which overtakes her and starts to turn like a dervish. Our sight becomes blurry, we are now immersed in a trance in which this shell-shaped sacred pattern, or a flower of life is outlined with waves. Some bits of this trance transform in a dream-like story where we learn more about the mermaids' story. The images follow one another like a mythological comic strip. One of her mermaid sisters appears, she is in love with a human being, who is watching her from a rock.

The voice of the Goddess Ak Ana begins to comment with a bewitching and gentle voice. *The archaeologist, although in love, made a mistake revealing the existence of the mermaids.*



TREATMENT

The men then began to hunt them in order to exploit them in every possible way. We see images of mermaids in chains, exhibited like fairground beasts, their tails becoming objects to be possessed and they are also sold as pets. Ak Ana's voice: Out of grief, the archaeologist turned to stone. The story comes to an end but in a final whirlwind of sea trance, the voice of the Goddess now speaks about us. "The child, only the child will be able to reveal the power of the shell"....

The trance ends, the fish stop circling around us and we find Aylin on the ground, overwhelmed by what she learned in her trance: "the shark was right". Aylin starts to cry, so hard that the cavity begins to be flooded with her tears. In panic, the fishes offer her their tails so that she can use them as a tissue and wipe her tears. She blows her nose with one of them but cannot stop sobbing. The water level of Aylin's tears rises and rises until it becomes a small sea that makes us drift in the belly. It seems that we are getting closer to the whale's heart as its beating gets louder. The flow leads us to a small cave at the top of the cavity that the rising waters have allowed us to reach. At the bottom there is an altar. We approach it. The whale's heartbeat gets stronger and stronger. There stands the sacred shell, enthroned like a jewel. It turns out to be a necklace with a shell. **We take it in our hands.** **We open it.** This action triggers a flow of light, like a powerful whirlwind: lines of a feminine and a masculine face are drawn and merged: we are at the heart of the reunited feminine and masculine, in a last jet of light.

We are now lying on the sand of Patara beach, as if we were coming out of a dream. Have we had a near death experience? Back to the present on the beach full of tourists of Patara. Adults are running towards us, it seems to be our parents. Their worried faces are leaning over us, we have avoided drowning. We then leave the child's point of view in the same manner as we entered it at the beginning of the story.

The child spits out a little water as he comes to his senses. The shell necklace is next to him, much less glittering than in the dream. As soon as he sees it, he takes it as a precious possession. The parents are upset, is it because of this shell necklace that he fell into the water? The child answers by putting it around his neck. "It was Ak Ana who entrusted it to me". The parents are confused yet don't insist, they are way too happy to have found their son safe and sound.... The child then gets up and carries it proudly. The whole family walks away along the beach while the credits roll by.

VISUALS

ENVIRONMENT DESIGN

[LINK TO THE FILM](#)

A : Under the sea diving scene, Patara Beach Ancient Theater and Ancient Lighthouse

B : Scene of mermaid and child being swallowed by a whale: Patara beach, ancient theater and ancient city

C : Alternative scene : Göbeklitepe



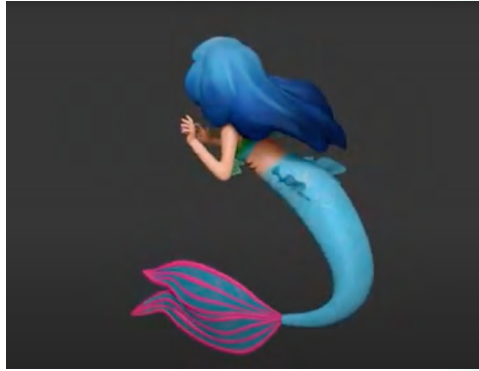
A



B



C



A



B



VISUALS

CHARACTERS DESIGN

[LINK TO THE 3D MERMAID](#)

A : Mermaid

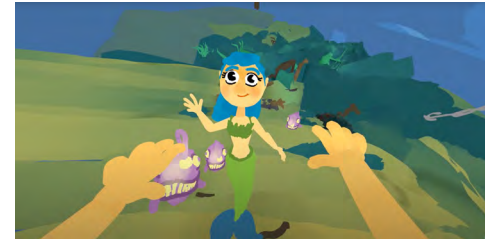
B : Boy



VISUALS

STORYBOARD 3D

[LINK TO THE 3D STORYBOARD](#)





TEAM



Özgül Gürbüz
Director



Sonia Delhaye
Author



Amo Kannika
Art Director



Asya Sagiroglu
Author



Michael Barngrover
Technical Director



Murat Yazar
Concept Artist



Virgile Mangiavillano
Producer



Can Koç
Producer



TARGET AUDIENCE

TARGET AUDIENCE

- Primary direct target audience : generation Z
- According to survey published in [Forbes](#) before the pandemic, climate change is the main preoccupation of generation Z, a vital challenge on top of the priority list of concerns, well aware about the warning from the World Health Organisation : pollution is the first cause of mortality worldwide since 4 years.
- Secondary direct target audience : male + female gender in order to bring more harmony between genders thus giving a higher value to the human rights.
- Indirect target audience : more widely all audience on one hand interested into ecology and feminism plus already aware of those causes, on the other hand persons we would like to bring awareness to.

MARKET RESEARCH

Preliminary market research has identified the following potential opportunities for an online strategy regarding audience engagement :

- Online XR international communities such as ZeroEvent, ZeroEventArt, Kaleidoscope, and local XR communities like Euromersive Turkey.
- NGO networks of young people about environment like [Youth and Environment Europe](#), [CliMates](#), [Generation Climate Europe](#), or the Youth Board for Climate directly connected to the Secretary of the United Nations.



- Local Turkish schools, universities having a VR lab or a VR club.
- Related hashtags on Twitter, Instagram and Tik Tok such as #ClimateChange, #ClimatofChange, #feminism #animation, #environment, #ecology, #climate, #SavethePlanet, #freewoman, #ProtectourPlanet
- #ClimateChange video on YouTube.

STRATEGIES

- Profiles and post with relevant hashtags.
- Online contest, some winners having the right to watch the movie without any fee, others being in touch with our film ambassador.
- Engagement of young online influencers within the feminist and/or ecology field.
- Participation in panels and online conferences within the XR online communities.
- Key youth representatives engagement as ambassadors of our film, coming from independent organizations like [YEE](#), [CliMates](#) or [GC Europe](#).
- Online ads on social medias.



DISTRIBUTION

“Environmental” museums, Festivals
Art galleries and artistic locations in Istanbul





CALENDAR





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Mentorship by

