

Film Society Screens Seven Films by Breakthrough Turkish Director
Mental Minefields: The Dark Tales of Zeki Demirkubuz, Sept. 19–24

NEW YORK, August 17, 2007—Turkish director Zeki Demirkubuz will be onstage throughout the Film Society of Lincoln Center’s new series devoted to his work, **Mental Minefields: The Dark Tales of Zeki Demirkubuz**, running Sept. 19–24 at the Walter Reade Theater. All seven of Demirkubuz’s fictional features will be screened in the series, including the New York premiere of his most recent film *Destiny* and all three films that make up the director’s acclaimed “Tales of Darkness” trilogy: *Fate*, *Confession*, and *The Waiting Room*. On Saturday, Sept. 22, at 3:00 p.m., the Film Society will host a special panel discussion on Demirkubuz and the rise of Turkish cinema. The director will be in New York from Sept. 16 to Sept. 25.

“Together with Nuri Bilge Ceylan, Yesim Ustaoglu and a handful of others, Demirkubuz has been leading a revolution in Turkish cinema for the past decade,” says Richard Peña, program director at the Film Society. “This new cinema has offered us a far more complex, nuanced portrait of a society whose role as an arbiter of East-West cultural and political divisions grows each day.”

In conjunction with this film series, Altyazi, ArteEast and Moon and Stars Project have published a new book, carrying the exhibit’s title and introducing English-speaking audiences to the austere and brilliant cinema of Zeki Demirkubuz. With articles by international film critics, translated for the first time from Turkish and French, this collection places Demirkubuz’s work in the context of Turkish cinema and the wider world of international art cinema. Featuring a comprehensive critical essay and a new extensive interview with the filmmaker, the editors of

Altyazı, the cinema magazine published in Turkey, deliver a book designed as a guide for those intrepid enough to travel the minefields and dark tales of Demirkubuz's rich filmography.

Demirkubuz was born in Isparta in 1964. Politically engaged at an early age—even spending a term in jail as a teenager—he graduated from Istanbul University's Department of Communications and became an assistant to director Zeki Okten, who he has often credited as his mentor. Demirkubuz established a strong, personal style as a writer/director up front in his debut feature, *Block-C* (1994), a powerful exploration of a woman whose marriage is falling apart. His follow-up films, *Innocence* (1997) and *The Third Page* (1999), earned Demirkubuz his first notices among critics after screening at several international festivals.

A notably personal filmmaker, Demirkubuz has taken over nearly every major aspect of his productions, working at various times as the producer, actor, editor, cinematographer and set designer for his films. In 2002, he received the very rare distinction of having two films screened at the same Cannes Film Festival, *Fate* and *Confession*, for which he also won a pair of FIPRESCI prizes at the 2002 Istanbul International Film Festival. He added *The Waiting Room* to that duo to create the “Tales of Darkness” trilogy, “each a completely separate film but also part of an overall portrait Demirkubuz offers of the concept of morality in the contemporary world,” says Peña.

Destiny is Demirkubuz's newest film, a study in the parallel romantic obsessions of two characters—salesman Bekir for nightclub entertainer Ugur, Ugur for the disreputable Zagor. Demirkubuz won the 2006 Istanbul International Film Festival's Best Turkish Director prize for the film. It will make its New York premiere in **Mental Minefields**, screening at the Walter

Reade Theater on Friday, Sept. 21, at 6:15 p.m., with a second screening on Sunday, Sept. 23, at 8:15 p.m.

Additionally, a special panel discussion on director Zeki Demirkubuz and Turkish cinema will be held at the Walter Reade Theater on Saturday, Sept. 22, at 3:00 p.m. The discussion is free with the purchase of a ticket to any film in the **Mental Minefields** series.

Mental Minefields: The Dark Tales of Zeki Demirkubuz is co-presented by the Film Society of Lincoln Center, ArteEast and the Moon and Stars Project in collaboration with Altyazi.

The series has been made possible by generous grants from Turkish Cultural Foundation and the American Turkish Society. Additional support has been provided by Ayse Celem Design, Graphis Printing, Turkish Kitchen, FedEx Turkey, Ramerica International, Inc. and Turkish Culture and Tourism Office.

.Single screening tickets for **Mental Minefields: The Dark Tales of Zeki Demirkubuz** are \$11 for adults; \$7 for Film Society members, ArteEast members, and students with a valid photo ID; and \$7 for seniors at weekday screenings before 6 p.m. They are available at both the Walter Reade Theater box office and online at www.filmlinc.com.

The **Film Society of Lincoln Center** was founded in 1969 to celebrate American and international cinema, to recognize and support new directors, and to enhance the awareness, accessibility and understanding of film. Advancing this mandate today, the Film Society hosts two distinguished festivals: the New York Film Festival, which annually premieres the best films from around the world and has introduced likes of François Truffaut, R.W. Fassbinder, Jean-Luc Godard, Pedro Almodóvar, Martin Scorsese, and Wong Kar-Wai to the United States, and New

Directors/New Films, co-presented by the Museum of Modern Art, which focuses on emerging film talents. Additionally, the Film Society presents a year-round calendar of programming at its Walter Reade Theater and offers insightful film writing to a worldwide audience through Film Comment magazine.

Founded in 2001 by a group of cinephile friends, **Altyazı** (www.altyazi.net, www.filmcenter.boun.edu.tr) is one of Turkey's leading monthlies on cinema. As an independent magazine with nationwide circulation, Altyazı's mission has been to offer original and critical coverage of current cinema for Turkish audience. Keeping a focus on both mainstream and art cinema, Altyazı covers not only theatrical releases and festivals in Turkey, but also the international festival scene for its readers. In 2004, Altyazı was integrated into Bog̃aziçi University as Mithat Alam Film Center's publication. Since then Altyazı has started to play a more active role in the film culture scene in Turkey. The Zeki Demirkubuz retrospective is Altyazı's first international collaboration.

ArteEast (www.arteeast.org) is a New York-based international nonprofit organization that supports artists from the Middle East and its diasporas, raising awareness of their most significant and groundbreaking work through public events, exhibitions, a dynamic online gallery and a resource-rich website. Its mission is to present contemporary Middle Eastern artists to a wide audience in order to foster more complex understanding of the region's arts and cultures and promote artistic excellence. It accomplishes this mission by creating, presenting and touring art and film programs, producing publications and through the arteeast.org website, which contains news, articles, arts features and program information.

The Moon and Stars Project (www.moonandstarsproject.org, www.nyturkishfilmfestival.com)

is a not-for-profit, tax-exempt organization established in 2002 to highlight the changing face of Turkish arts and culture, and to establish a two-way cultural interaction between the United States and Turkey through arts and culture festivals, concerts, performances, film events, exhibitions, grants and residency programs. We are dedicated to supporting and encouraging the finest in traditional and contemporary forms of artistic expression, and providing artists with the support and funding required to stimulate their artistic development while facilitating interaction between Turkish and American artists, professionals, and institutions.

Please Note: Due to construction work taking place around Lincoln Center, access to the Walter Reade Theater is at 165 West 65th Street close to Amsterdam Avenue. Once there, take the escalator, elevator or stairs to the upper level.

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Mental Minefields: The Dark Tales of Zeki Demirkubuz
Press Screening Schedule

Please join us for an advance press screening at the Walter Reade Theater, 165 W 65th St. at Broadway between Broadway and Amsterdam on the upper level of Lincoln Center.

RSVP to iaslan@filmlinc.com or 212-875-5625.

Wednesday, Sept. 12

10:30 a.m.

Destiny / Kader

Zeki Demirkubuz, Turkey/Greece, 2006; 103m

Mental Minefields: The Dark Tales of Zeki Demirkubuz
Schedule at a Glance (Detailed Program Information Follows)

Wednesday, Sept. 19

6:30 pm *Confession*, 91m

9:00 pm *Block-C*, 90m

Friday, Sept. 21

6:15 pm *Destiny*, 103m

8:45 pm *Fate*, 119m

Saturday, Sept. 22

1:00 pm *Block-C*

3:00 pm Panel Discussion

4:45 pm *Innocence*, 105m

7:00 pm *Confession*, 91m

9:15 pm *The Waiting Room*, 94m

Sunday, Sept. 23

1:00 pm *The Third Page*, 92m

3:00 pm *Fate*

6:00 pm *The Waiting Room*

8:15 pm *Destiny*

Monday, Sept. 24

6:00 pm *The Third Page*

8:00 pm *Innocence*

Mental Minefields: The Dark Tales of Zeki Demirkubuz

Detailed Program and Schedule Information

Block-C / C Blok

Zeki Demirkubuz, Turkey, 1994; 90m

Wed Sep 19: 9:00pm; Sat Sep 22: 1:00pm

Zeki Demirkubuz's first feature film in many ways established the style and themes that would mature in his later work. Tulay lives in a smart, modern apartment development. While her marriage falls apart, a neighbor, Halit, begins spying on her, following her every move. Gradually, Tulay's experience of the everyday reality around her blends with her fears, desires and memories. Her relations with her maid Asli, her husband and Halit are always uncertain and contradictory, potentially existing only in her mind. Demirkubuz (who would later take over as cinematographer on his films) uses a cool, hard photographic style that—together with the rigidly geometric set up of the apartment complex—provides an effective counterpoint to the emotions raging beneath Tulay's placid exterior. A provocative modern parable about the desire to control your own destiny in a world that seems to have a mind of its own.

Confession / Itiraf

Zeki Demirkubuz, Turkey, 2001; 100m

Wed Sep 19: 6:30pm; Sat Sep 22: 7:00pm

Screened (along with *Fate*) at the 2002 Cannes Film Festival, *Confession* brings a chilling, Dostoevskian feel to its searing look at the disintegration of a marriage. Harun (Taner Birsell) and Nilgün (Basak Köklükaya) have been married for seven years. Their relationship seems uneventful enough, with little outward strife. Then Harun suspects his wife of having an affair. Little signs appear of her unfaithfulness, as he begins to draw apart from her. Yet he fears that confronting her might actually bring the affair into the open—or end the marriage. With excellent performances from his two leads, Demirkubuz makes *Confession* a deeply moving study of people living with unhappiness and the toll it takes on their daily lives. There are neither heroes nor villains here, just victims.

Destiny / Kader NY Premiere

Zeki Demirkubuz, Turkey/Greece, 2006; 103m

Fri Sep 21: 6:15pm; Sun Sep 23: 8:15pm

Zeki Demirkubuz's most recent film, a co-production with Greece, studies the parallel emotional obsessions of two characters. Bekir, a relatively modest carpet salesman, develops an uncontrollable passion for nightclub entertainer Ugur. For her part, Ugur is obsessed with Zagor,

a ne'er-do-well constantly in and out of prison. When Zagor receives a stiff sentence for his involvement in the murder of two policemen, Bekir is hopeful that his rival's imprisonment will open up a possibility for him with Ugur.

While many of his films deal with moral issues and concerns, Demirkubuz never sets himself up as arbiter of his characters' actions. He rarely takes sides, preferring instead to show how each character has his reasons for doing what he does. Here, Demirkubuz treats the twin obsessions of Bekir and Ugur with respect. They might be self-destructive or even delusional, but there's a kind of innocence to their passion.

Fate / Yazgi

Zeki Demirkubuz, Turkey, 2001; 119m

Fri Sep 21: 8:45pm; Sun Sep 23: 3:00pm

A loose adaptation of Camus' *The Stranger*, *Fate* is the story of Musa (a wonderful performance by Serdar Orçin), a customs clerk who lives quietly with his mother. One day, when he goes into her room to wake her up, she's unresponsive. Nevertheless, he leaves for work. When he returns later, he becomes involved in an altercation with a neighbor and winds up being arrested. An austere tone poem, *Fate* attempts to capture a very modern variety of spiritual deadening. Musa feels so little connection to anyone or anything around him that actions and events appear to have little consequence.

Innocence / Masumiyet

Zeki Demirkubuz, Turkey, 1997; 105m

Sat Sep 22: 4:45pm; Mon Sep 24: 8:00pm

Demirkubuz's second feature, *Innocence*, thrust his work onto an international stage, screening in Venice and a number of other international festivals. Led by a trio of top-notch Turkish actors—Güven Kiraç, Derya Alabora, Haluk Bilginer—*Innocence* chronicles the tense development of an unsettling live triangle. Yusuf (Kiraç), released from prison after having served a ten-year sentence, goes to an address given to him by a fellow inmate. It turns out to be a run down, cheap hotel, and, with few other prospects, Yusuf checks in. Soon, his path crosses with that of a strange family—a couple with a child—who become the focus of Yusuf's life. *Innocence* marked an impressive leap in Demirkubuz's work. He comes to rely much more on his actors, allowing them the space to really show off their skills.

The Third Page / Üçüncü Sayfa

Zeki Demirkubuz, Turkey, 1999; 92m

Sun Sep 23: 1:00pm; Mon Sep 24: 6:00pm

Isa (Ruhi Sari), a movie extra living from job to job, is roughed up by tough guys who accuse him of stealing 50 dollars. They threaten to come back and do worse if they're not paid. Searching everywhere for the money, Isa instead finds a gun, which he decides might best be used on himself. Suddenly, his circumstances change: the movie extra gets transformed into the true protagonist of his own story, as he links up with a beautiful but mysterious woman. As seen in his previous films, Demirkubuz challenges the audience to discern whether what is being shown on screen is truly happening or if it exists on some other level of his characters' realities. As the threat of death envelops him, Isa begins to live life more fully than ever before.

The Waiting Room / Bekleme Odasi

Zeki Demirkubuz, Turkey, 2003; 88m

Sat Sep 22: 9:15pm; Sun Sep 23: 6:00pm

Probably Demirkubuz's most personal work—he produced, directed, wrote, shot, edited and even stars in the film—*The Waiting Room* is the story of Ahmet (Demirkubuz), an internationally respected film director facing a creative crisis. He has signed on to do an adaptation of Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment*, but he simply can't work up any enthusiasm for the project. Meanwhile, his relationship with his girlfriend is clearly in trouble. When he catches a burglar in his apartment, an idea dawns on him: to cast the burglar as Raskolnikov. Demirkubuz faces the dilemma of the modern artist: in a time in which the artists' lives are even better known than their artworks, how much must these artworks reflect their authors? Can the ideas expressed in a film be separated from those of the filmmaker—and how should the ideas expressed in a film affect that author's life? Deliberately unsettling, *The Waiting Room* offers no easy answers, just sincere self-reflection and criticism.

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