

**singapore
biennale
2025**

**pure
intention**



ARTIST FOLIO

(For Educators)

Ahmet Ögüt

SECONDARY:

Social Studies

Visual Arts

Geography

THE ARTIST

- Ahmet Ögüt is an artist living and working between Amsterdam and Istanbul.
 - Working across installation, performance and socially engaged projects, he has exhibited widely, with solo presentations at institutions including Chisenhale Gallery, Kunsthalle Basel and Van Abbemuseum.
 - His recent projects include the Singapore Biennale (2025), Sense of Safety at Yermilov Centre Kharkiv (2024) and Dhaka Art Summit (2023).
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THE ARTWORK



Detail view of Ahmet Ögüt's *Pleasure Places of All Kinds* (2014), as part of Singapore Biennale 2025: pure intention. Image courtesy of Singapore Art Museum.

*Pleasure Places of All
Kinds, Qingdao*
2014

*Pleasure Places of All
Kinds, Yichang*
2014

*Pleasure Places of All
Kinds, Zurich*
2014

Model, acrylic paint, sand, soil, polystyrene and wood
Collection of the artist

THE ARTWORK

- Artist Ahmet Ögüt presents a series of three scaled-down model houses of real-life “nail houses”.
- “Nail houses”, known in Chinese as 钉子户 (dīng zi hù), refers to private residences whose owners refuse to sell their homes to large real estate developers.
- Displayed within pristine white pedestals and surrounded by raw excavated earth, each house stands alone, a story on its own. The models remind us of the impending pressure of demolition. Like stubborn nails stuck in wood, these houses cannot be hammered down, representing symbols of resistance.
- By turning refusal into a political and economic act, the defiance of these owners leaves a visible mark on the built environment for future generations.
- For the artist, these houses represent acts of everyday individual resistance against the state or corporate control. They also highlight what remains of urbanisation processes and speak to issues of displacement.

DID YOU KNOW?

- These houses are 100 times smaller than the real ones.
- Scaled-down models of houses are often used in architecture to show what a building or place will look like in the future. In this case, the model shows a house that has refused to move and is being left behind. The artist finds it important to document and archive the house in its ruined state in a moment of defiance.

DID YOU KNOW?

- "Nail houses" exist in many countries around the world, including Singapore. Research and find out where "nail houses" are located and the stories behind them.
- The artist was aware of the phenomenon of "nail houses" but did not pay attention to it until a similar situation occurred in his own neighbourhood in Istanbul, Fikirtepe. A house there—similar visually to the one depicted in *Pleasure Places of All kinds*; Zurich—became a "nail house" when a large company, working with the government, purchased the entire area. One homeowner refused to sell, not for political reasons, but because he was dissatisfied with the compensation offered. The company proceeded to demolish the surrounding buildings, leaving his house isolated. They cut off electricity and water, making it extremely challenging to live there. Despite these conditions, the man remained in the house for three years.
- *Pleasure Places of All kinds*; Zurich has a sign that says "Hotel Resistance," a wordplay on Hotel Renaissance, which was beside it.

ACTIVITIES AND QUESTIONS

PRE-VISIT:

- How do you define home and what does it mean to you?
 - What attachments or connections do you feel towards your home?
 - Discuss how our memories are often tied to physical places.
 - What memories are tied to common spaces like the playground, parks, benches or local shops?
 - What memories are tied to our houses, bedrooms or living rooms?
 - Was there a time when something that you loved had changed? What emotions did you feel?
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DURING YOUR VISIT:

- Before reading the title of the artwork, look closely at the façade of the buildings. Where do you think these houses are located?
- Compare the features of the three sculptures and note down their similarities and differences. What are some questions that you may have from these observations?
- If you live in a “nail house,” what specific memory or part of your home would be the most difficult to leave behind?
- When one homeowner decides to stay, what message do you think they are sending to the big companies and to the whole city? Do you see it as a form of protection or rebellion?

Thinking Routines: See, Think, Wonder

1. What do you see?
 - What objects do you see?
 - What details stand out? (I noticed...)
 - What do you recognise? (I spot...)

2. What do you think about that?

- What do you think is going on? (I think this means...)
- What do you think is the story here? (It seems like...)
- What are you thinking about as you look at this artwork?

3. What does it make you wonder?

- What questions do you still have? (I wonder why...)
- What connections can you find?
- What are you curious about?

POST VISIT:

- In *Pleasure Places of All Kinds, Zurich*, the word “Resistance” can be seen on the side of the house. When you hear the word resistance, what feelings or associations come to mind? Do you see it as having a positive or negative connotation? Why?
- If a huge company wanted to build on the land where your house is, what types of social, economic and emotional pressures do you think your family would face? How does this pressure affect the bonds of a family or the strength of a local community?
- As for art making, the artist shared that he is “always thinking of the possibilities [of his work] in another site, in another part of the world; [as his work] should always remain meaningful and connect with the local audience”. What are some issues that might resonate with people locally while also being relevant to communities in other parts of the world? List specific examples.
- How does the visual representation of “nail houses” (in photos, models or art) influence the perception of power and resistance?
- Who holds the greater power in “nail house” disputes? Is it the government, the developer or the homeowner? Why?

Geography-related Questions

- In which countries are “nail houses” most commonly found, and why?
- How do “nail houses” change the spatial layout of cities under redevelopment?
- Why do homeowners of “nail houses” sometimes gain national or international media attention?

FIND OUT MORE:

ARTIST

- Ahmet Ögüt, “Ahmet Ögüt”, accessed February 12, 2026, <https://ahmetogut.com/>

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- Aaron Bogart, “Ahmet Ogut” in Art Forum, accessed February 12, 2026, <https://www.artforum.com/events/ahmet-out-2-239223/#:~:text=One%20model%20portrays%20a%20nail,lends%20the%20exhibiti on%20its%20title.>
- “Political Populism,” Kunsthalle Wien, accessed February 12, 2026, https://artviewer.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/Political-Populism_BOOKLET_en.pdf.
- Sarrita Hunn, “Welcome to the Dollhouse,” The Berliner, accessed February 12, 2026, <https://www.the-berliner.com/art/welcome-to-the-dollhouse/>.
- “Small Fortified Buildings,” in Living the City, accessed February 12, 2026, <https://livingthecity.eu/en/2020/09/07/pleasure-places-of-all-kinds/>.
- “Urban Stratification And Migration, Case Study Of Fikirtepe, Istanbul,” in Research Gate, accessed February 12, 2026, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/335444027_URBAN_STRATIFICATION_AND_MIGRATION_CASE_STUDY_OF_FIKIRTEPE_ISTANBUL.

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