

**singapore
biennale
2025**

**pure
intention**



ARTIST FOLIO

(For Educators)

Özgür Kar

SECONDARY:

Music

Visual Arts

THE ARTIST

- Özgür Kar (b. 1992, Turkey) is an artist based in Amsterdam, whose works blend theatre and visual art, creating immersive scenes where objects and sound function as characters within a non-linear narrative.
 - Kar is an artist is known for his black and white animations with minimal movements.
 - His pieces have been featured in major international events, including the 8th Yokohama Triennale (2024), 24th Biennale of Sydney (2024), and the 16th Lyon Biennale (2022).
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THE ARTWORK



Installation view of Özgür Kar's *Death with Clarinet*, *Death with Flute* and *Death with the Little Bell* (all 2021), as part of Singapore Biennale 2025: pure intention. Image courtesy of Singapore Art Museum..

Death with clarinet

Death with flute

Death with the little bell

2021

Custom flight case and video (black and white, sound), 15 min

Collection of the artist

THE ARTWORK

- The Hundred Years' War started in 1337 between France and England and ended in 1453. The Black Death — a bubonic plague that took place between 1346 and 1353, coincided with the war and wiped out close to half the population in Europe. The period of unrest fostered a sense of hopelessness, which contributed to the rise and popularity of the artistic genre, *danse macabre* or “Dance of Death.” The dead in these scenes take both the rich and the poor to their graves — highlighting that death (and the plague) impact everyone regardless of their station in life.
- He is inspired by *memento mori*, a Latin phrase which translates to “remember you must die” and addresses the serious topic of death with dark humour.
- The artworks each include a screen, fitted inside a custom flight case. The flight case functions as a coffin, ossuary or reliquary for the skeletons. Flight cases are mainly used to store and transport fragile or valuable equipment, such as audio equipment for large-scale concerts. The flight case is made using strong materials that can withstand impact, with options to include customised foam inside to prevent shock to the equipment. The exterior is reinforced with metal edges to protect the case.
- The artist has chosen skeletons as his subject. He animates the three skeletons, with their leg bones bent and cramped within the screen. It looks as if they are trapped in the flight cases.
- Repetition is key and there are two clear examples of repetition in his work. Firstly, one of the skeletons repeatedly mentions “the vibe,” which is an internet slang. Secondly, the video is looped, making it hard to identify the beginning or the end.

THE ARTWORK

- The artist uses music to create an unsettled and spooky atmosphere. Musicians who played the different instruments when examining questions from the afterlife, one is detached from the worldly issues and reminded of the temporality of everything.
- The artist also worked with other professionals, such as a voice actor to include dialogue and questions to the audience as the skeleton ponders its existence and purpose in “life”.
- With this artwork, the artist is updating the *danse macabre* theme with animation and simple lines, a vast contrast from the medieval imagery people are familiar with.

DID YOU KNOW?

- According to an old French legend, “Death” appears at midnight every year on Halloween to call upon the dead (skeletons) to dance for him while he plays his fiddle.
- The artwork is sited in the Band Room at 20 Anderson Road, the former Raffles Girls’ School. Students used this room to practise and play musical instruments when the school was in session. Kar’s artwork takes over this space during the Biennale, with animated skeletons playing the instruments—performing or practising like a band.

ACTIVITIES AND QUESTIONS

PRE-VISIT:

- *Danse macabre* (Dance of Death) transcends time periods and can be found in
 - Art:
 - Hans Holbein
Dance of Death (c. 1523–1525)
 - Music:
 - *Danse Macabre*, composed by Camille Saint-Saëns, featuring Eva Zavaro on violin, performed by Orchestre de Paris.
 - *Totentanz*, composed by Franz Liszt.
 - Dance:
 - *Danse Macabre*, choreographed by Jenna Lavin, performed by Ballet Academy East (featuring advanced students).
 - *The Dead Dance*, from Wednesday Season 2, choreographed by Corey Baker.
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DURING YOUR VISIT:

Thinking Routines: What makes you say that?

- Kar uses three musical instruments in these artworks: clarinet, flute and little bell.
 - After experiencing the artwork, use three words to describe the sound of each instrument.
 - Clarinet:
 - Flute:
 - A little bell:
 - If you could replace one of the instruments, which would it be? Why?
 - What instrument would you choose? Why?
- Do you get the “vibe”?
 - What do you think the skeleton is talking about? Why do you think so?

POST VISIT:

- In music theory, there are tried-and-tested ways to engineer a sense of “foreboding.”
 - A *dissonant interval* is a combination of two notes that makes you feel uneasy. These intervals create a sense of tension that composers often use to build suspense or convey specific emotions.
 - The artist uses the diabolus in musica (devil in music) chord, a combination of at least three notes played together to evoke a sense of uneasiness. It is also known as the devil’s interval or the *flatted fifth*.
 - The chords are commonly found in films and in music genres such as classical, metal and jazz.
- Do you think it is possible for the skeleton to “play” the instruments? Why?

Possible explanations:

- Flute:
 - The skeleton does not have lungs and is unable to produce air to create a sound (and therefore cannot play the notes at a higher octave).
 - The skeleton is unable to blow air across the flute’s mouthpiece to create a sound.
- Clarinet:
 - The skeleton is unable to produce air.
 - It has bones for fingers; hence, it is unable to fully cover the holes to play different notes on the clarinet.

FIND OUT MORE:

ARTIST

- Özgür Kar, “Özgür Kar”, accessed 12 September 2025, <https://ozgurkar.com/>
- Özgür Kar, “ozgurkar”, accessed 12 September 2025, <https://www.instagram.com/ozgurkar/?hl=en>

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- Anonymous, “The Dance of Death,” *The Metropolitan Museum of Art*, accessed 12 September 2025. <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/334871>
- Marie-Madeleine Renauld, “What Does the Dance Macabre Symbolize? An Allegory of Death,” *The Collector*, accessed 12 September 2025. <https://www.thecollector.com/danse-macabre-middle-ages-danse-of-death/>
- MasterClass, “Dissonance in Music Explained: Consonance vs. Dissonance,” accessed 1 October 2025. <https://www.masterclass.com/articles/dissonance-music-explained>
- Naaman Zhou, “Vibe check: what does the most overused word of our era actually mean?” *The Guardian*, accessed 21 October 2025, https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2023/mar/22/vibes-definition-slang-language-meaning_
- The Editors of Encyclopædia Britannica, “dance of death,” *Encyclopædia Britannica*, accessed 12 September 2025. <https://www.britannica.com/art/dance-of-death-art-motif>

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