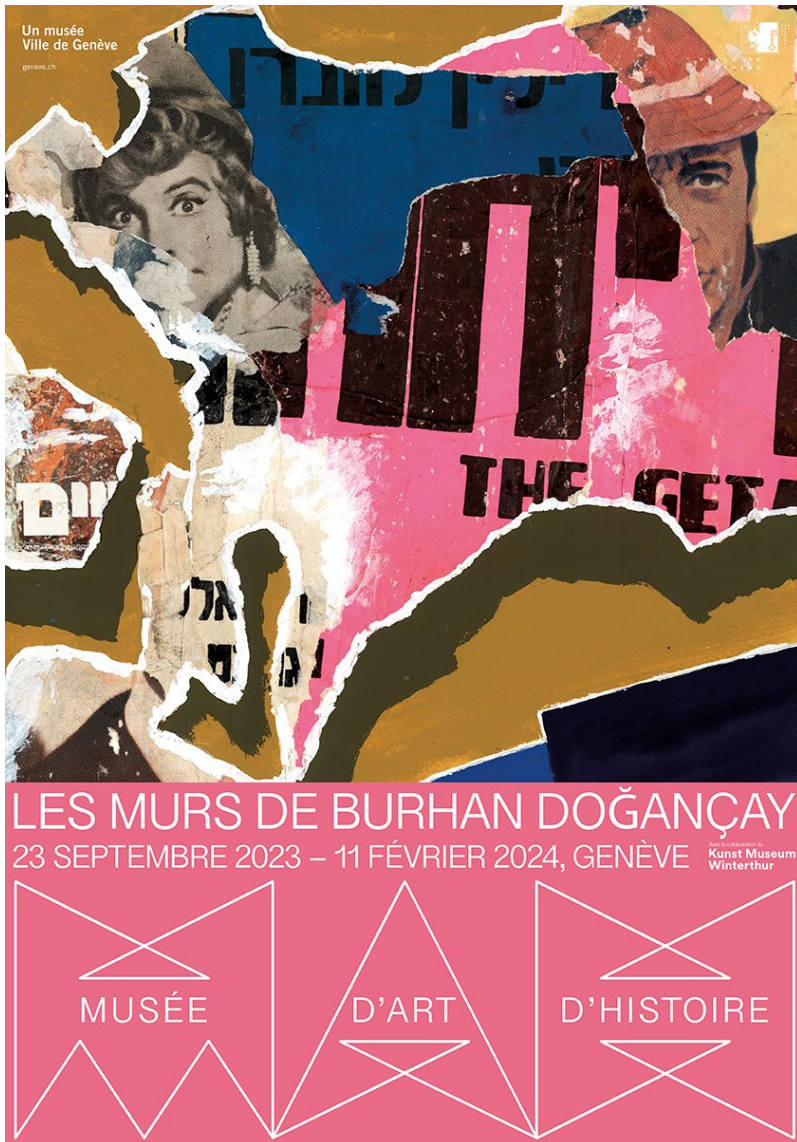


## PRESS KIT

# THE WALLS OF BURHAN DOĞANÇAY

SEPTEMBER 23, 2023 – FEBRUARY 11, 2024



In collaboration with:

**Kunst Museum  
Winterthur**

MUSÉE D'ART ET D'HISTOIRE  
RUE CHARLES-GALLAND 2  
CH-1206 GENÈVE

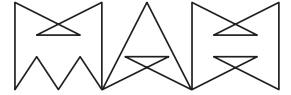
T +41 (0)22 418 26 00  
MAH@VILLE-GE.CH  
MAHMAH.CH

MAHMAH.CH/BLOG  
MAHMAH.CH/COLLECTION  
MAHMAH.CH

Un musée  
Ville de Genève

geneve.ch





*Geneva, July 2023* – Starting September 23, and exhibited for the first time in Switzerland, the Musée d'Art et d'Histoire (MAH) will present a group of drawings and paintings from the series *Walls of Israel* by the contemporary Turkish artist Burhan Doğançay (1929-2013).

The exhibition *The Walls of Burhan Doğançay* presents fifty-five works from the series *Walls of Israel*. This series dates back to 1975 and the artist's first trip to Jerusalem and Tel Aviv. Barely two years had passed since the Yom Kippur War (October 6–24, 1973) and the work reveals both the political context and the dominant mindset in the country at the time: Doves, symbols of peace, hearts, Stars of David, omnipresent, the famous anti-war slogan "Make Love Not War!" and the word "peace," in Hebrew and English repeat in the images the artist culled from these travels.

These pieces are the starting point of Doğançay's major artistic, photographic, and archival endeavour, *Walls of the World*, which was his focus until the end of his life. This unique archive, consisting of over forty-thousand photographs from 114 countries, is presently housed at the Weisman Art Museum in Minneapolis. Based on this material and sketches, Doğançay built an oeuvre of works on paper and paintings that represent, reframe, rework, and reinterpret walls from the four corners of the world, all while revealing shared aspirations and a universal language.

This exhibition is made possible by the generosity of Angela Doğançay, the artist's widow, who loved Geneva and who, in 2018, made a significant gift of fifty-nine works from between 1975 and 2009. In addition to the drawings, the gift includes an album of sketches made on-site in Israel in 1975, four paintings (*Gerber's Baby – Ben Zion St.*, 1975–2008; *Black Patches*, 1999; *Red Ada*, 2002; and *Mona Lisa Cracking Up*, 2009) and the assemblage *Five Interlocked Rings* from 1990.

This exhibition is organised by the MAH in collaboration with the Kunst Museum Winterthur, which received a gift from an anonymous collector who admired Burhan Doğançay's work. The museum will present these works along with the MAH's drawings from the series *Walls of Israel* from March 2 – June 2, 2024. A co-published catalogue of the two exhibitions is forthcoming.



**Curator** Bénédicte De Donker, curator, Works on Paper Department

**Staging** Edwige Chabloz, interior architect, Exhibition Installation Department (MAH)

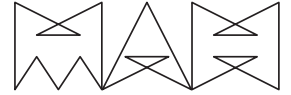
**Catalogue** This exhibition will be the subject of a catalogue produced in collaboration with the Kunst Museum Winterthur, which will host the second half of the presentation in 2024. Forthcoming, September 2023.

This exhibition is organised by the Musée d'Art et d'Histoire de Genève in collaboration with Kunst Museum Winterthur.

**Contact** Press Office  
Sylvie Treglia-Détraz  
Musée d'art et d'histoire, Genève  
T +41 (0)22 418 26 54  
sylvie.treglia-detraz@ville-ge.ch

**General informations** Musée d'art et d'histoire  
Rue Charles-Galland 2 – 1206 Geneva  
Open Tuesday–Sunday, 11:00am–6:00 pm  
Thursday 12:00 pm–9:00 pm  
Admission: Pay what you wish

Website: [mahmah.ch](http://mahmah.ch)  
Ticketing: [billetterie.mahmah.ch](http://billetterie.mahmah.ch)  
Blog: [mahmah.ch/blog](http://mahmah.ch/blog)  
Online collection: [mahmah.ch/collection](http://mahmah.ch/collection)  
Facebook : [facebook.com/mahgeneve](https://facebook.com/mahgeneve)  
X : [@mahgeneve](https://twitter.com/mahgeneve)  
Instagram : [@mahgeneve](https://instagram.com/mahgeneve)



## Introduction

The MAH and Burhan Doğançay were connected through an anonymous collector, a fervent admirer of the artist, who in 2015 donated the piece *Guru* and four lithographs from the series *Walls 77*. Later, in 2018 and 2019, he orchestrated a gift of six drawings, including *Colour Fields*, *Shadow Play*, and four others from the series *Heart*, which Hans and Jana Kaufmann generously offered.

The anonymous collector's dedication and the enthusiastic reception at the MAH of his first gift led to an exchange with Angela Doğançay, the artist's widow. The artist died in 2013. In 2018, she made a significant gift of fifty-nine works made at the artist's New York studio between 1975 and 2009.

While other renowned institutions, including the Los Angeles County Museum, the Albertina in Vienna, the Art Institute of Chicago, and the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, have already benefited from her generosity, none have received such a significant group of works. Angela Doğançay has a particular fondness for the city of Geneva, which she cultivated throughout her career as a translator.

The exhibition *The Walls of Burhan Doğançay* presents fifty-five works from the series *Walls of Israel*, all part of a gift made to the MAH in 2018.

Urban walls became the heart of Doğançay's work starting in 1963. While walking across 86<sup>th</sup> Street in Manhattan, he was struck by the abstract beauty of a piece of wall:

"It was the most beautiful abstract painting I had ever seen. There were the remains of a poster, and a texture to the wall with little bits of shadows coming from within its surface. The colour was mostly orange, with a little blue and green and brown. Then, there were the marks made by rain and mud."<sup>1</sup>

He then translated this visual impression onto canvas in his studio, launching his series *General Urban Walls*, to which the works in the exhibition are related. He developed the project until his death.

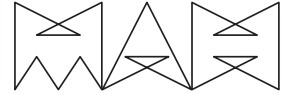
His creative process did not change thereafter. He would walk the streets, "hunting" for walls where chance had accumulated form, colour, and text and in which juxtaposition had created striking images. He took photographs and made sketches—one of his notebooks is presented in the exhibition—and sometimes tore off poster elements or even bits of wall, which he brought back to the studio. Based on this material, his impressions, and his memory, he created a drawing or painting, slightly recomposing a real strip of wall or, instead, combining various elements of various walls at times from different cities. In this way, he attained a balance between documentation and re-creation.

His carefully composed work combines naïve children's drawings with the most sophisticated forms of advertising and political slogans; he also used words written on walls—jumbled together, crossed out, cut, etc.—which can shed light or obscure the meaning of the composition as a whole.

Doğançay developed this series using a wide variety of techniques (painting, collage, assemblage, smoking, photography, printing, sculpture). Each individual piece in a particular series is a variation on a theme, and each series is a variation on the larger one of urban walls.

---

<sup>1</sup> Burhan Doğançay mentioned in Eleanor Flomenhaft, "Doğançay: A Heroic Quest" in *Doğançay: Doors & Walls*, New York, Nicholas Alexander Gallery, 1994, p. 29.



### *Walls of Israel*

His series *Walls of Israel* dates back to 1975 and his first trip to Jerusalem and Tel Aviv. Barely two years had passed since the Yom Kippur War (October 6-24, 1973). It is not surprising that there are repeating motifs from this voyage in that political context: doves, symbols of peace, hearts, stars of David, omnipresent, the famous anti-war slogan “Make Love Not War!,” the word “peace,” in Hebrew and English. There are even UN cars responsible for supervising buffer zones

The works presented in the MAH exhibition thus reveal the country’s state of mind in the 1970s. Doğançay expressed it in this way:

“No matter where we went, what we were looking at, we found walls. Graffiti, philosophical and political slogans, children’s drawings, and words of humour, tragedy, and love all revealing the social, political, economic, cultural, historical, and commercial personality of a country, city, or village.”<sup>2</sup>

### *Walls of the World*

Doğançay’s travels to Israel proved to be supremely important to the artist’s oeuvre. It was there he launched his systematic approach to photographing walls around the world. This documentation, carried out in 114 countries, inspired him until the end of his life and consists of more than forty-thousand photographs and a unique archive, presently housed at the Weisman Art Museum in Minneapolis. His drawings and paintings could not exist without this stock of photographed motifs in which he searched for models and compositions to create new work. However, the opposite is not true, and his *Walls of the World*, as a group, constitutes an autonomous documentary work, which he sees as neutral:

“The selection of my photographs has no other goal than to show the aesthetic and documentary aspect of walls; it carries no ideological or political message.”<sup>3</sup>

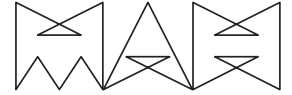
From this observation of walls and their appropriation emerges (above all) a paradox and humanist message: Walls, made to divide and separate, support a language shared by all humanity. And this has been the case for a long time, as the political graffiti on the walls of ancient Pompeii shows, as do the handprints on the walls of prehistoric caves. Each piece presented at the MAH further attests to this truth. Doğançay’s creations, therefore, reveal a graphic language and subjects common to every country in the world:

“Everywhere I went on my travels, I noted that the same signs and the same slogans returned. Words could change from one city to the next but the emotions they translated were identical. For example, a heart pierced by an arrow, the symbol of love, can be found almost everywhere in the world.”<sup>4</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Burhan Doğançay in Mullender Jacques et al., *Les murs murmurent, ils crient, ils chantent*, cat. exp. Paris, Centre Georges Pompidou, 1982, p.54.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

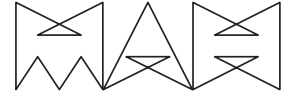
<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 55



### Biographical highlights

- 1929 Burhan Doğançay is born on September 11 in Istanbul.
- 1933-1948 Rudiments of drawing as early as age four, encouraged by his father, an amateur painter.  
Classes with the painter Arif Kaptan. Higher education in Ankara. Degree in law in 1948.
- 1950-1955 Studies economics in Paris and takes art classes at the Académie de la Grande Chaumière.  
Travels to Denmark for his doctoral research in 1955: “The Role of the Cooperatives and the Progress of Danish Agriculture.” Works at the Ministry of Commerce in Turkey. First of three exhibitions with his father (1957, 1959) at the Club of Amateur Artists in Ankara.
- 1958 Director of the Turkish Pavilion at the Brussels World Fair, *Expo 58*.
- 1959 Director of the Turkish Department of Tourism.
- 1962 Director of the Turkish Bureau of Information in New York. His watercolours of urban landscapes are well received.
- 1963 Represents Turkey in *World Show* at Washington Square Gallery in New York, which notably includes work by Andy Warhol and Willem de Kooning.  
He definitively decides to make urban walls the central theme of his work and begins the series, *General Urban Walls*.
- 1964 Decides to dedicate himself solely to his art. Meets and befriends Thomas M. Messer, the director of the Guggenheim Museum
- 1965 Begins his series *Doors*, based on the doors he notices in cities (completed in 2010).
- 1966 Thomas M. Messer acquires *Billboard* for the Guggenheim Museum collection.
- 1967 Begins his series *New York Subway Walls*, capturing the marks and traces left on them.
- 1972 Begins his series *Breakthrough* (1972–1977), *Ribbons* (1972–1989), inspired by Arabic calligraphy, and *Cones* (1972–1990).
- 1975 Begins photographic documentation for the project *Walls of the World* (more than forty-thousand photographs from 114 countries, housed at the Weisman Art Museum in Minneapolis).
- 1976-1977 Moves to Switzerland. His first exhibition at the Yahss Baraz Gallery in Istanbul is a great success.  
Produces four lithographs from *Walls 77* at the Wolfensberger studio in Zurich.
- 1978 Returns to New York, where he marries Angela Hausmann, whom he met in 1972.  
Important works from the *Ribbons* series are shown for the first time in an exhibition at the Gimpel & Weitzenhoffer Gallery.
- 1979 Becomes an American citizen while retaining his Turkish nationality.





- 1982 First exhibition from the project *Walls of the World* at the Centre Pompidou in Paris and later at the Palais des Beaux-Arts in Brussels and the Musée d'Art Contemporain in Montreal, among others.
- 1983 *Shadow Sculptures* in Alucobond® at the Research and Development Centre at Swiss Aluminium, Ltd.  
The Atelier Raymond Picaud in Aubusson, France, commissions tapestry cartoons (fourteen are executed, with one entering the collection of the Musée d'Aubusson in 1993).  
Named Painter of the Year in Istanbul.
- 1984 Travels to Northern and Western Africa.
- 1986 Publishes the first monograph on the occasion of the exhibition *Two Decades of Walls* at the Hamideh Bayley Gallery in New York the following year.  
Participates in the first International Asian European Art Biennial in Ankara.
- 1987 Participates in the first international Istanbul Biennial of contemporary art in Istanbul.
- 1987-1988 Travels to Australia, Southeast Asia, the Far East, China, and Eastern Europe.  
Begins his series of paintings *Grego Walls* (1988–2007), after the name of a New York street artist.
- 1989 Participates in the IX Bienal Internacional de Arte in Valparaiso, Chile.  
Travels to Central and South America.
- 1991 Travels to Africa and Russia.
- 1992 Mounts an exhibition at the Russian State Museum in Saint Petersburg, as the first living Western artist invited by the Ministry of Culture (*Walls and Doors*, 1990–1991).
- 1995 Receives the highest award for an artist in Turkey by the president of the country.  
Travels to Asia and the Middle East.  
Begins the series *Alexander's Walls* (1995–2000) after the name of the department store in Manhattan. The walls surrounding the site of its demolition are covered in posters and graffiti.
- 1997 Travels to Azerbaijan, Ukraine, and Macedonia.
- 1999 Begins the series *Double Realism* (1990–2009) and *Formula 1* (1990–1991).  
Purchases an old building in Istanbul with the support of several patrons to create a museum dedicated to his and his father's art.
- 2000 The Museum of the City of New York exhibits one of his photographs of the Brooklyn Bridge in its centennial exhibition.  
Travels to Kazakhstan, Kirghizstan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan.
- 2001 First retrospective at the Dolmabahçe cultural centre in Istanbul.
- 2003 Moves to Istanbul to supervise the completion of his museum.
- 2004 The Doğançay Museum opens in Istanbul.  
Travels to Cyprus, the 114<sup>th</sup> and final country visited for his *Walls of the World* project.
- 2008 Begins his series *Framed Walls* (2009-2013).
- 2012 Opens *Fifty Years of Urban Walls*, a retrospective at the Istanbul Museum of Modern Art.
- 2013 Dies in Istanbul on January 16 at the age of eighty-three.



### 3. Selection of works



Burhan Doğançay (1929-2013)

*Great Lady*, 1975

Collage, gouache, acrylic, and pencil on paper

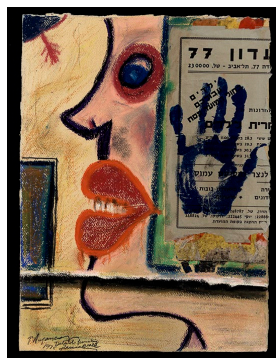
Gift of Angela Doğançay, 2018 ; inv. D 2018-83

© Estate of Burhan Doğançay

© Musée d'art et d'histoire de Genève

8/13

The great lady at the centre of this piece is Golda Meir (1898-1978), the Prime Minister of Israel from 1969 to 1974. Nicknamed the “iron lady” during her political life, she lost her re-election after the Yom Kippur War, October 6–24, 1973, which pitted Israel against a coalition of Arab states led by Egypt and Syria. Doves, the symbol of peace and a recurring motif in the series *Walls of Israel* serves as a halo, while the word truth in Hebrew (אמת) stands out in red at the bottom. The piece reflects the admiration the United States had for Meir in the 1970s. The trompe-l’oeil elements popping off the wall are characteristic of Doğançay’s artistic practice



Burhan Doğançay (1929-2013)

*Crimson Lips*, 1975

Collage, gouache, acrylic, oil pastel, and pencil on paper

Gift of Angela Doğançay, 2018 ; inv. D 2018-80

© Estate of Burhan Doğançay

© Musée d'art et d'histoire de Genève



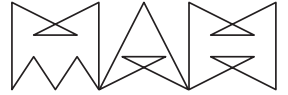


The striking image of a person's profile with disproportionate, crimson lips is partly masked by a poster that Doğançay, in all likelihood, collected in Tel Aviv. The poster invites children to a show that will take place at Club 77 over Easter. A blue handprint partially covers it. Two of Doğançay's photographs housed at the Weisman Art Museum in Minneapolis show that all the piece's elements were already on the wall the artist photographed. However, the handprint was considerably enlarged. One of the photographs presents a view of the wall as a whole: There's an invitation for young people to the annual festival in Gan Sacker, one of Jerusalem's public parks. The rectangular element in the lower left-hand corner turns out to be a piece of an arrow pointing towards the festival, while the arrow on the top left of the painting was originally part of the person in the profile's stylised hair. And so this piece tells us about Doğançay's approach, a re-creation with the unity of composition of the original wall surface for the most part retained, but with a poster from Tel Aviv replacing the Jerusalem poster.



Burhan Doğançay (1929-2013)  
*Look Little Lion*, 1975  
 Collage, gouache, acrylic, and oil pastel on paper  
 Gift of Angela Doğançay, 2018 ; inv. D 2018-90  
 © Estate of Burhan Doğançay  
 © Musée d'art et d'histoire de Genève, photo: F. Bevilacqua

The layering and re-composition work in this piece is more significant, based on a wall photograph presenting two thick, pink arrows, one containing writing in Arabic, while the other is peeling off from the bottom of the wall. The Arabic word painted inside the arrow on the wall means "look!" and the one underneath might mean "eyeball" and seems to be part of a longer graffiti. Doğançay's interest in Arabic calligraphy was already evident in his painting series titled *Ribbons* (1972-1989) and is more aesthetic than semantic, even if it seems that the graffiti here has inspired the title of the piece. It is, nevertheless, the formal harmony of the text combined with the Hebrew poster pasted backwards that draws his interest.



To whom it may concern,

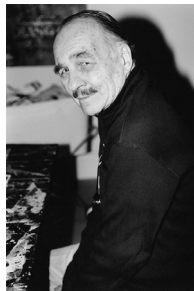
The images are copyright-free for the duration of the exhibition.

Any reproduction must be accompanied by the following information: name of museum, artist(s), title of work, name of photographer, and copyright. Other information (dimensions, techniques, date, etc.) is encouraged but not required.

We would be grateful to receive a copy of the publication at Musée d'art et d'histoire's press office.

Thank you very much.

Musée d'art et d'histoire  
Service de presse  
Rue Charles-Galland 2  
CH-1206 Genève



**Burhan Doğançay in 1996**

© Estate of Burhan Doğançay  
© Musée d'art et d'histoire de Genève,  
photo: C. Dosembet

11/13



**Burhan Doğançay (1929-2013)**  
*Gerber's Baby – Ben Zion St., 1975 – 2008*

Mixed media (collage, acrylic, sand, coffee, newspaper, metal plate, smoke, among others) on canvas

Gift of Angela Doğançay, 2018  
Inv. BA 2018-16

© Estate of Burhan Doğançay  
© Musée d'art et d'histoire de Genève,  
photo: F. Bevilacqua

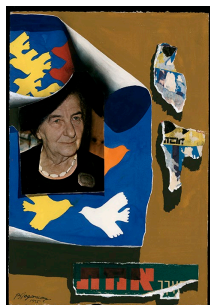


**Burhan Doğançay (1929-2013)**  
*Sketch Book J : Walls of Israel, 1975*

Graphite and coloured pencil on paper

Gift of Angela Doğançay, 2018  
Inv. D 2018-117-14

© Estate of Burhan Doğançay  
© Musée d'art et d'histoire de Genève,  
photo: A. Longchamp

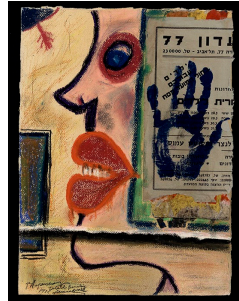


**Burhan Doğançay (1929-2013)**  
*Great Lady, 1975*

Collage, gouache, acrylic, and pencil on paper

Gift of Angela Doğançay, 2018  
Inv. D 2018-83

© Estate of Burhan Doğançay  
© Musée d'art et d'histoire de Genève



**Burhan Doğançay (1929-2013)**  
*Crimson Lips, 1975*

Collage, gouache, acrylic, oil pastel, and pencil on paper  
Gift of Angela Doğançay, 2018  
Inv. D 2018-80  
© Estate of Burhan Doğançay  
© Musée d'art et d'histoire de Genève



**Burhan Doğançay (1929-2013)**  
*Look Little Lion, 1975*

Collage, gouache, acrylic, and oil pastel on paper  
Gift of Angela Doğançay, 2018  
Inv. D 2018-90  
© Estate of Burhan Doğançay  
© Musée d'art et d'histoire de Genève,  
photo : F. Bevilacqua

12/13



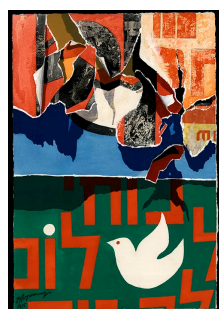
**Burhan Doğançay (1929-2013)**  
*Love-Smiling Star, 1975*

Gouache, acrylic, spray paint, chalk, and pencil on paper (two sheets)  
Gift of Angela Doğançay, 2018  
Inv. D 2018-92  
© Estate of Burhan Doğançay  
© Musée d'art et d'histoire de Genève



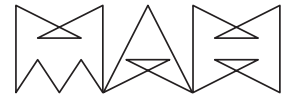
**Burhan Doğançay (1929-2013)**  
*Some Torn Posters, 1975*

Collage, gouache, acrylic, and pencil on paper  
Gift of Angela Doğançay, 2018  
Inv. D 2018-107  
© Estate of Burhan Doğançay  
© Musée d'art et d'histoire de Genève



**Burhan Doğançay (1929-2013)**  
*Lonely Bird, 1975*

Collage, gouache, and pencil on paper  
Gift of Angela Doğançay, 2018  
Inv. D 2018-88  
© Estate of Burhan Doğançay  
© Musée d'art et d'histoire de Genève



**Burhan Doğançay (1929-2013)**  
*Red Hand, 1975*

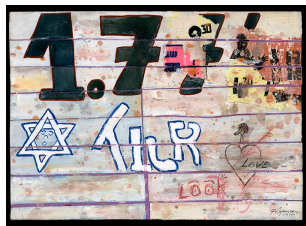
Collage, gouache, acrylic, spray paint, and oil pastel on paper

Gift of Angela Doğançay, 2018

Inv. D 2018-101

© Estate of Burhan Doğançay

© Musée d'art et d'histoire de Genève



**Burhan Doğançay (1929-2013)**  
*1.7, 1975*

Collage, gouache, acrylic, oil pastel, and pencil on paper, mounted on cardboard

Gift of Angela Doğançay, 2018

Inv. D 2018-64

© Estate of Burhan Doğançay

© Musée d'art et d'histoire de Genève



**Burhan Doğançay (1929-2013)**  
*Make Love, Not War, 1975*

Collage, gouache, acrylic, aluminium sheet with smoke on paper mounted on cardboard

Gift of Angela Doğançay, 2018

Inv. D 2018-93

© Estate of Burhan Doğançay

© Musée d'art et d'histoire de Genève,  
photo : F. Bevilacqua



**Burhan Doğançay (1929-2013)**  
*Belgian Colors, 1975*

Gouache, smoke, and pencil on paper

Gift of Angela Doğançay, 2018

Inv. D 2018-71

© Estate of Burhan Doğançay

© Musée d'art et d'histoire de Genève