



# MEETING WITH MEHMET ALI UYSAL



Born in Mersin, Turkey in 1976, Mehmet Ali Uysal studied architecture and sculpture in Bourges and Ankara. He now lives between Istanbul and Paris and is one of the major figures on the Turkish contemporary art scene. Exhibited in museums, galleries and private collections around the world, his works are characterized by their ability to deconstruct the space of the places they occupy and to upset our bearings.

Meeting!



## Hello Mehmet, could you define your relationship with water?

It goes back to childhood. I was born facing the Mediterranean Sea. For me, the sea is one thing, water is another. I find water sublime for two reasons: its incessant movement and its perpetual change. My village was opposite the island of Cyprus. You can see the island when the weather is clear, but it is invisible when the weather is humid. We always scanned the horizon to see Cyprus appear, the idea of a shore beyond the immensity was reassuring.

Looking at the ocean made us happy. The ocean and more generally water is a crucial element of our ecosystem at bien levels.

**“I almost drowned at sea when I was 4 years old. I learned then that the sea was both magnificent and frightening.” - Mehmet Ali Uysal**

## What do icebergs evoke for you?

I have never seen an iceberg, but these blocks of ice fascinate me. I read scientific articles, I watch documentaries, I hope to have the opportunity to see one someday. This research made me aware of climate change and the regulating role that icebergs play. I try to understand their shape, to imagine how it was made. It's much more than frozen water!





## How did your awareness of the environment, global warming and melting ice manifest itself?

Personally, like many city dwellers, I have not been directly confronted with the effects of climate change. This summer, I experienced it for the first time, it was intense, palpable. I was in Turkey where I have a workshop located in the forest. For about twenty days, we were surrounded by forest fires. It was unimaginable, the forest caught fire under the effect of the hot and arid climate. At that moment, I realized that something was changing, in the world and in my personal life too. Everyone will quickly notice these changes in the near future, it will not happen in 15 years, it is imminent...

I am not an activist, but I have become more aware of the situation in recent years.

**“Little by little, I am more directly measuring the consequences of climate change. I am learning and trying to act on my own scale.” - Mehmet Ali Uysal**

## Can you present the project designed for Le Bon Marché Rive Gauche?

When I received the invitation from the Bon Marché Rive Gauche, I was very happy! It is an iconic place, which presented technical constraints, I did some research on the history of a first department store. I presented several projects to the Bon Marché teams who gave me great freedom. This is how I came the idea of flooding le Bon Marché Rive Gauche by wishing to mix the natural element that is water with a cultural element built and organized by men: the department store. Impressing this iconic architecture is very symbolic.

The inspiration came by itself. I imagined this project during the first lockdown of the Covid 19 epidemic. I was becoming aware of the links between this chaotic global situation and the environment and I was trying to understand what was going on.







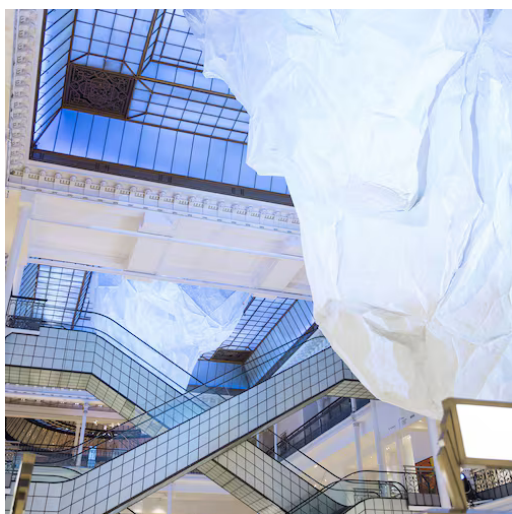
## How do you see your role as an artist?

In truth, I'm afraid to use the word artist to define myself. Because I've never considered myself an artist. For me, an artist is something else. Some artists consider themselves as such with certainty, others not at all. I'm in between. It's hard for me to say that what I do is art. Every time I meet people who are self-confident, I wonder: can we be certain of everything? If you are sure of everything, there is something wrong. I create installations primarily for myself and for the people around me, I like to play with my perception of things and those of others. I don't really dare to say this kind of thing, but if I were a collector, I wouldn't buy my works. Because these are not creations that you put on the walls of your house, but rather in your head. It's the ideas that interest me, I feel closer to the poet than to the artist. Poets are also artists, I play with the ideas that come to me. I don't want to decorate places, I want to beautify minds, shift ways of thinking whenever I have the opportunity.

For Le Bon Marché Rive Gauche, I play with the idea of consumption. I am very impatient to discover the installations in-situ, to see how it will affect me and if it will have an impact on the people who will come to see them.

**"These are the ideas that interest me, I feel closer to the poet than to the artist." - Mehmet Ali Uysal**

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