

women on banknotes

bettina beranek

women on banknotes

Banknotes are not only money but also a national symbol. About 92 % of all banknotes worldwide show men. There are still many countries where bills are 100 % male.

Women often are represented as mythical or allegorical images, such as depicting liberty, justice, peace or victory. Only recently historical women began to appear on paper money. Comparing the times those women lived with the issue-dates of the banknotes shows that countries slowly chose to honor women's achievements in arts and sciences.

The choice on which banknote a person appears is also interesting. Although a high-value banknote indirectly tells us about the worth of the person shown, a banknote that is worth a smaller amount is used and seen by a lot more people.

My project is about making women on banknotes visible.

Technically this series is mixed media: encaustic, phototransfer and drypoint. Whereas I used the encaustic parts to make most parts of the images less visible, the drypoint parts gave me the possibility to focus on the portraits.

I chose nine banknotes, covering all continents:

Argentina - Eva Peron, Austria - Bertha von Suttner, Italy - Maria Montessori, Japan - Higuchi Ichiyo, Kamerun - unknown, Mexico - Frida Kahlo, New Zealand - Kate Sheppard, Turkey - Fatma Aliye Topuz, USA

Whereas the emphasis lays on the portraits, there is one exception. The USA never had a historical woman on one of their banknotes. In 2016 it was more or less decided that the abolitionist Harriet Tubman is supposed to be on the new 20-Dollar-note, which will be issued 2020. Under the current administration it is questionable if this will take place.

Eva Peron (1919-1952)

Argentina

First Lady

100-pesos-banknote: issued 2012





Bertha von Suttner (1843-1914)

Austria

nobel peace prize winner, novelist

1000-schilling banknote: issued 1970-1985





Maria Montessori (1870-1952)

Italy

physician, educator, philosopher

1000-lire-banknote: issued 1990-1998





Higuchi Ichiyō (1872-1896)

Japan

novelist

5000-yen-banknote: issued 2004





unknown

Kamerun

10000-francs-banknote: issued 2002





Frida Kahlo (1907-1954)

Mexico

painter

500-pesos-banknote: issued 2010





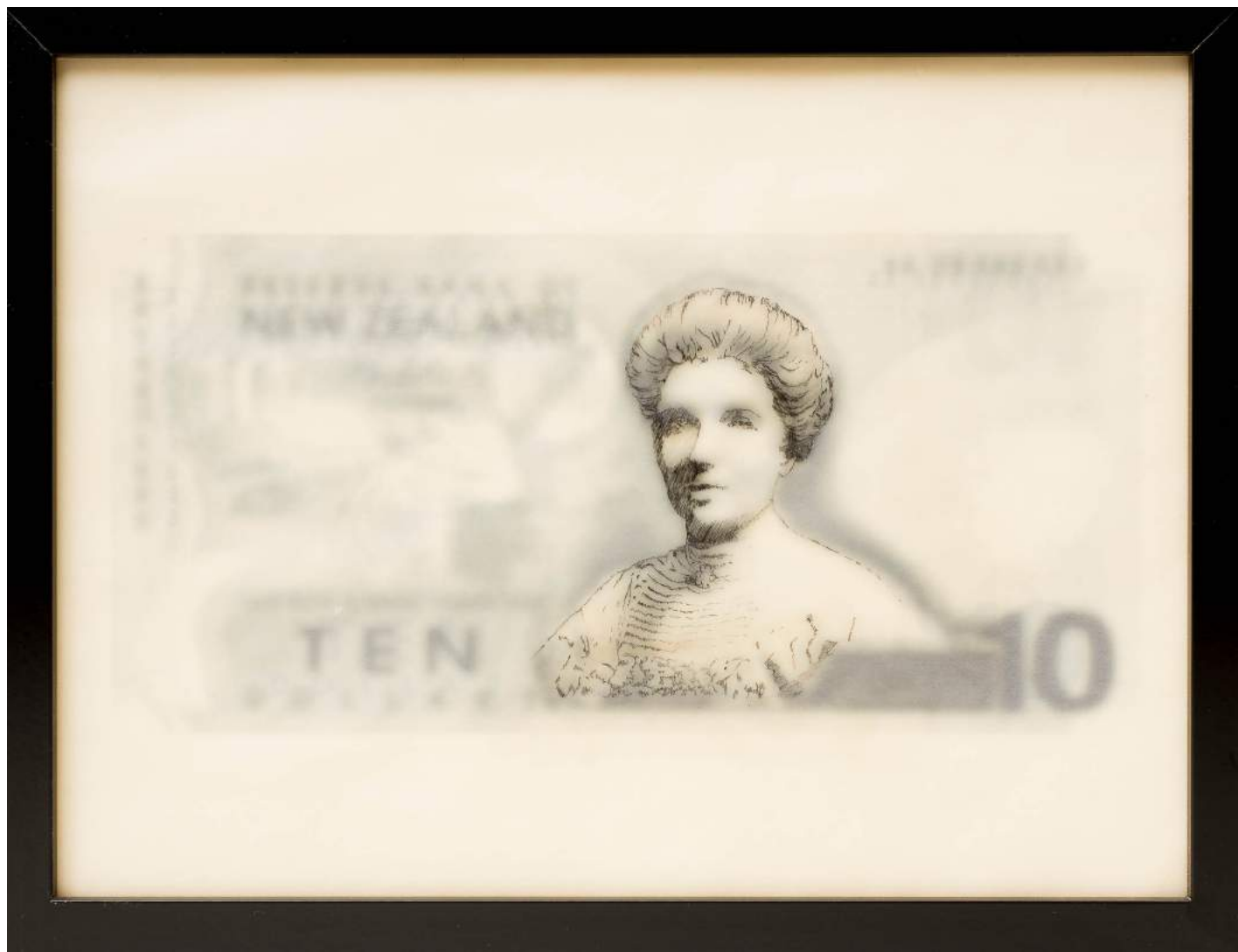
Kate Sheppard (1848-1934)

New Zealand

suffragette, women's rights activist

10-dollar-banknote: issued 1990





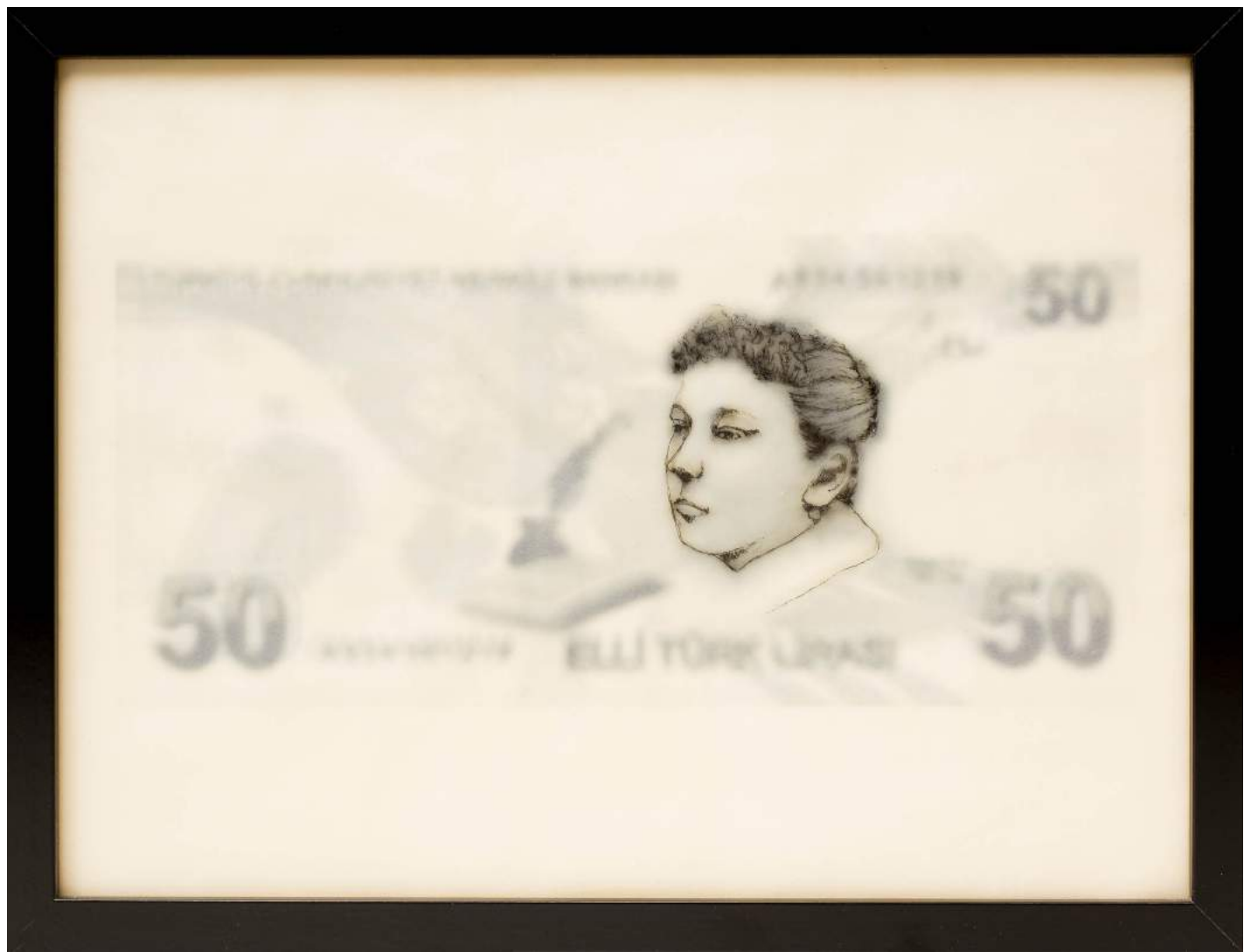
Fatma Aliye Topuz (1862-1936)

Turkey

novelist, women's rights activist

50-lira banknote: issued 2009





Harriet Tubman

USA

abolitionist

20-dollar-banknote: planned to be issued 2020



Bettina Beranek
lives and works in Deutschkreutz, Austria

more infos: www.b-beranek.net

Impressum

editor: Bettina Beranek

photography: Robert Davis

translation: Robert Davis

layout, setting: Bettina Beranek

© 2018 for the images and text with the artist

all rights reserved