

Art unlimited

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NICOLAS BOURRIAUD
Merve Akar Akgün and
Murat Alat met with
the curator of the
16th Istanbul Biennial

NİLBAR GÜREŞ
Nazlı Pektaş visited
the artist's home-studio
in the scope of
Unlimited Visits

MELİH FERELİ
Özlem Altunok interviewed
the founding director of Arter,
the new contemporary art
museum of Istanbul

NUR KOÇAK
Merve Ünsal interpreted
the artist's practice on
the occasion of her
exhibition at Salt

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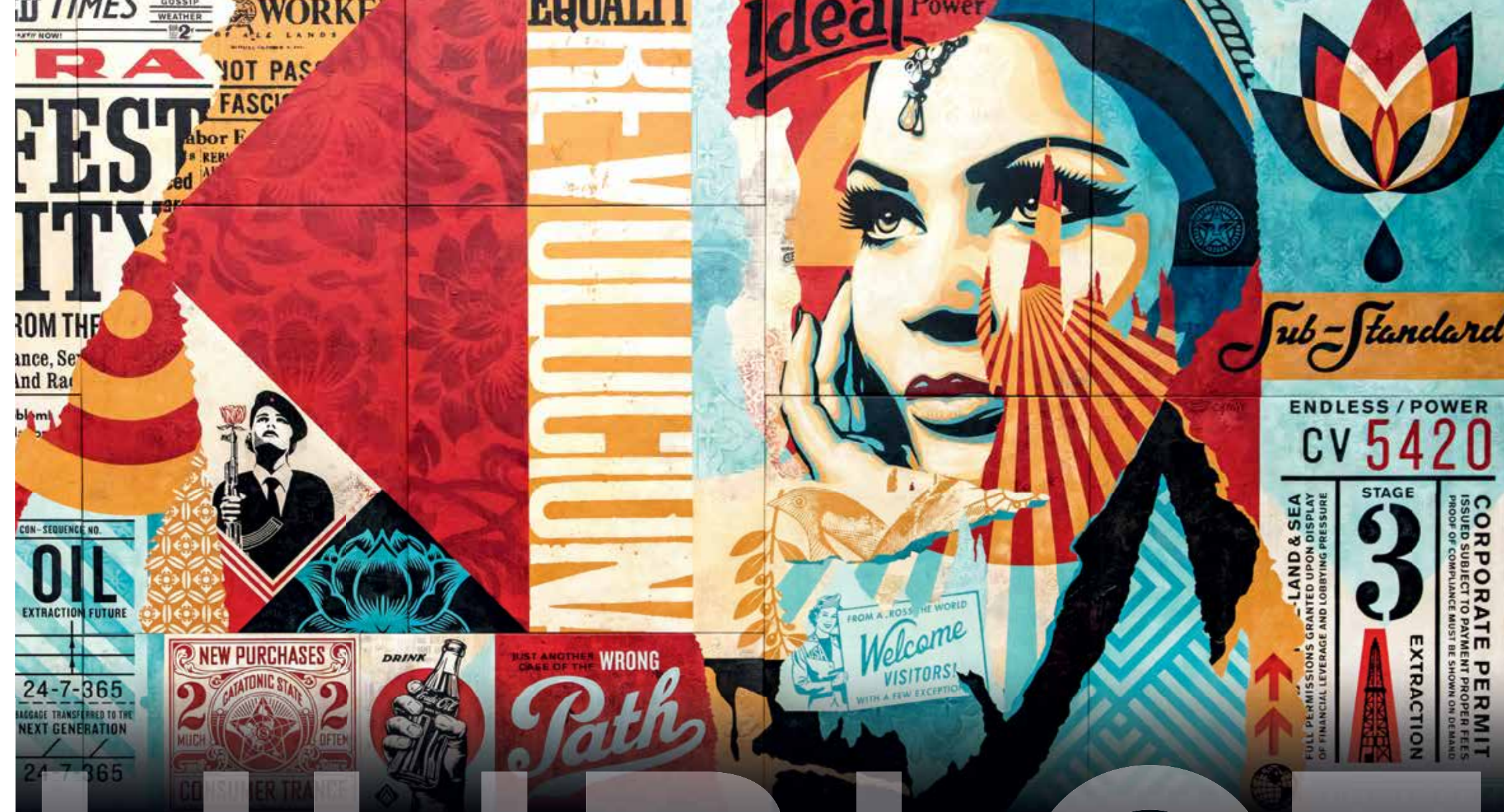
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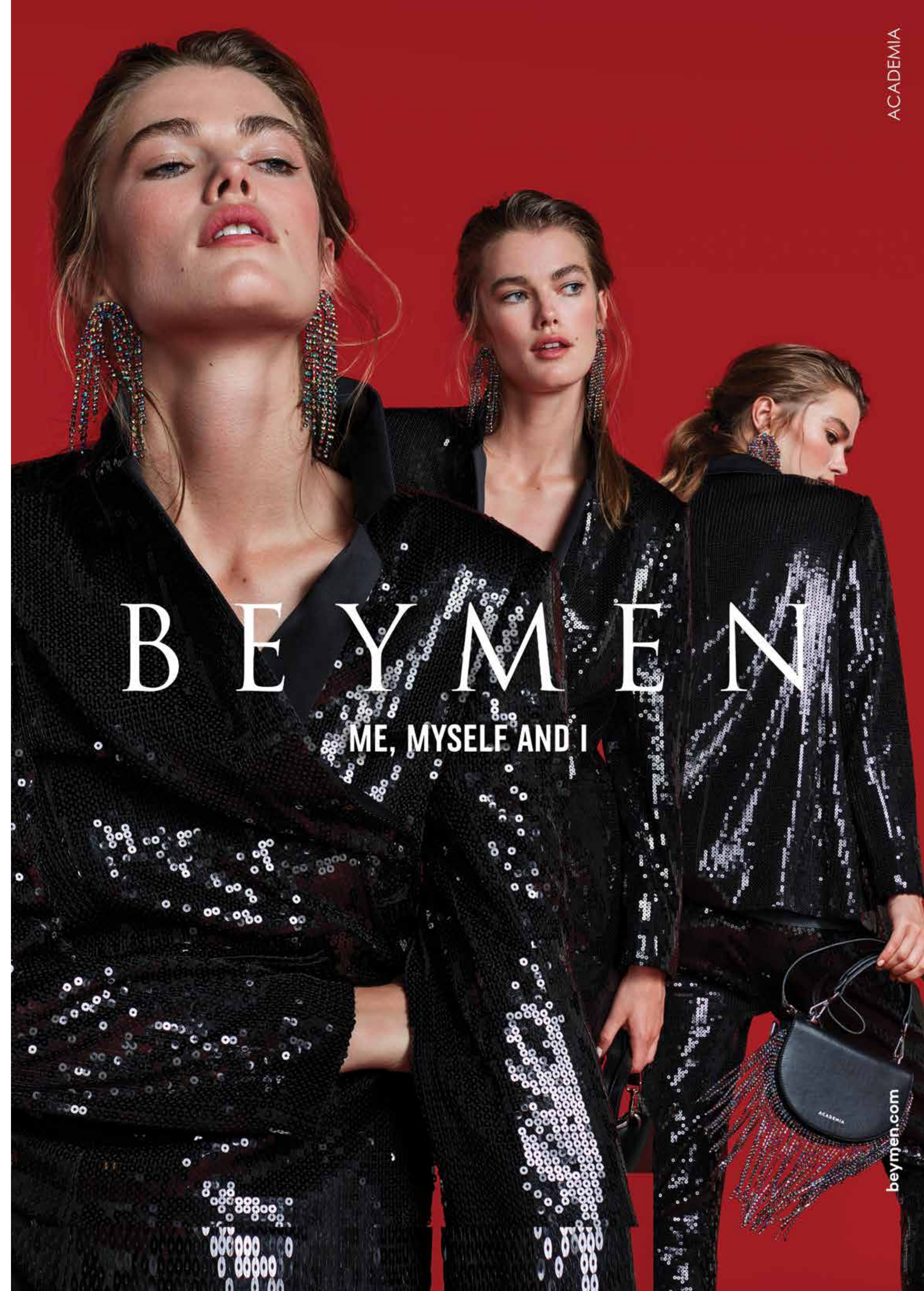
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Are we ready?

Merve Akar Akgün

CONTENTS

- 20 — Le Pli
İlker Cihan Biner
- 22 — 79th Whitney Biennial:
tear gas and
institutional critique
Nihat Karataşlı
- 28 — Arter: an area
of meeting and
discovering together
Özlem Altunok
- 38 — On Nur Koçak
Merve Ünsal
- 46 — Daily
re-mapped
geographies
Necmi Sönmez
- 52 — The partly-cloudy
hopes of memory
Sinan Eren Erk
- 56 — A modern museum
in Odunpazarı
Özge Yılmaz
- 62 — If you are interested
just know that it is
complicated
Merve Akar Akgün
- 68 — A different breaking
point in Italian design
Sami Kısaoğlu
- 72 — The Whole Planet
Was Inside
Nergis Abıyeva
- 78 — Part Whole,
on literature and art
Sami Kısaoğlu
- 82 — Producing beyond
the patriarchal network
Nazlı Pektaş
- 94 — Problematize and
invent new forms:
Welcome to Antropocene!
*Murat Alat &
Merve Akar Akgün*
- 105 — The sea in the
middle of the lands
Ece Naz Demirkale



unlimited

Editor in chief
Merve Akar Akgün
merve@unlimitedrag.com

Advertising and project director
Hülya Kızılırmak
hulyakizilirmak@unlimitedrag.com
0532 266 4474

Executive editor
Özge Yılmaz
ozge@unlimitedrag.com

Digital advertising director
Aydın Kızılırmak
aydin@unlimitedrag.com

Photography editor
Elif Kahveci

Performative arts editor
Ayşe Draz Orhon

Architecture Unlimited
Sena Altundağ

Asistant editor
Liana Kuyumcuyan

Contributors
Nergis Abıyeva, Murat Alat, Özlem Altunok, İlker Cihan Biner, Sinan Eren Erk
Nihat Karataşlı, Sami Kısaoğlu, Nazlı Pektaş, Necmi Sönmez, Merve Ünsal

Translation
Çağdaş Acar, Sinan Refik Akgün, Murat Alat,
Büşra Gündoğdu, Merve Ünsal, Züleyha Yılmaz,

Graphic design
Vahit Tuna

Graphic design and application
Ulaş Uğur

Interns
Selin Çiftçi, Ece Naz Demirkale, Suhan Sürmeli

Communication address
Meşrutiyet Cad. 67/1 34420 Tepebaşı, Beyoğlu, İstanbul
info@unlimitedrag.com
@unlimited_rag

Print
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A new *exhibition space*: Meşher

Celebrating its 50th anniversary this year, Vehbi Koç Foundation opens a new cultural and artistic institution under the name of Meşher in Meymenet Han building on İstiklal Street; the building that hosted Arter between 2010-2019



MEŞHER'S BUILDING MEYMENET HAN, İSTİKLAL STREET NO: 211

KIM SIMONSSON, MOSS BOY WITH A FEATHERED HAT AND STYLED JACKET, CERAMIC, NYLON LEAF, ROPE, READY MATERIAL, 125X50X 50 CM, 2018



CHRISTIE BROWN, FANCY SHEEP, CERAMIC, 50X32X27 CM, 2019



Meşher, which means an exhibition space in Ottoman Turkish, is preparing to open its doors on September 13th with its comprehensive programming and interdisciplinary approach ranging from the Middle Ages to the present, from ceramics to avant-garde painting, from the history of photography to design.

Meşher will continue its existence in Meymenet Han on İstiklal Street 211 - that will hosted Arter between 2010-2019- under the direction of Bahattin Öztuncay, and its first exhibition titled *Over Molds: Contemporary Ceramics from Europe with Myths, Legends and Tales* will trace the human history through the ceramic works inspired by those stories; clay and soil.

With its 500 square meters of exhibition space spread over three floors and 75 square meters of activity area for its activities, Meşher aims to become an important reference point in its program, which includes research-based academic exhibitions and publications. Visits, events and exhibition tours will take place free of charge everyday of the week except Mondays.

Curated by Catherine Milner *Over Molds: Contemporary Ceramics from Europe with Myths, Legends and Tales* is prepared in collaboration with Messums Wiltshire, an inspiring and innovative art center in England. Meşher team describes the exhibition as "a concise study of contemporary ceramics". 13 artists will exhibit and the focus will be on myths, legends and fairy tales. For the exhibition catalogue, the chairman of the Koç Holding, Ömer M. Koç says that; "I am particularly pleased by Meşher's first exhibition, *Over Molds*. It is a concise study of contemporary ceramics with pioneering artists, due to the special curiosity I have heard since the late 90s when I started collecting tiles and ceramics from İznik, Kütahya and Çanakkale. When the long history of the clay and the pottery of Anatolia and Turkey considered, personal hope and faith my personal wish is that exhibition to be a source of inspiration for the next generation of the young artists and artists who will work with ceramics."



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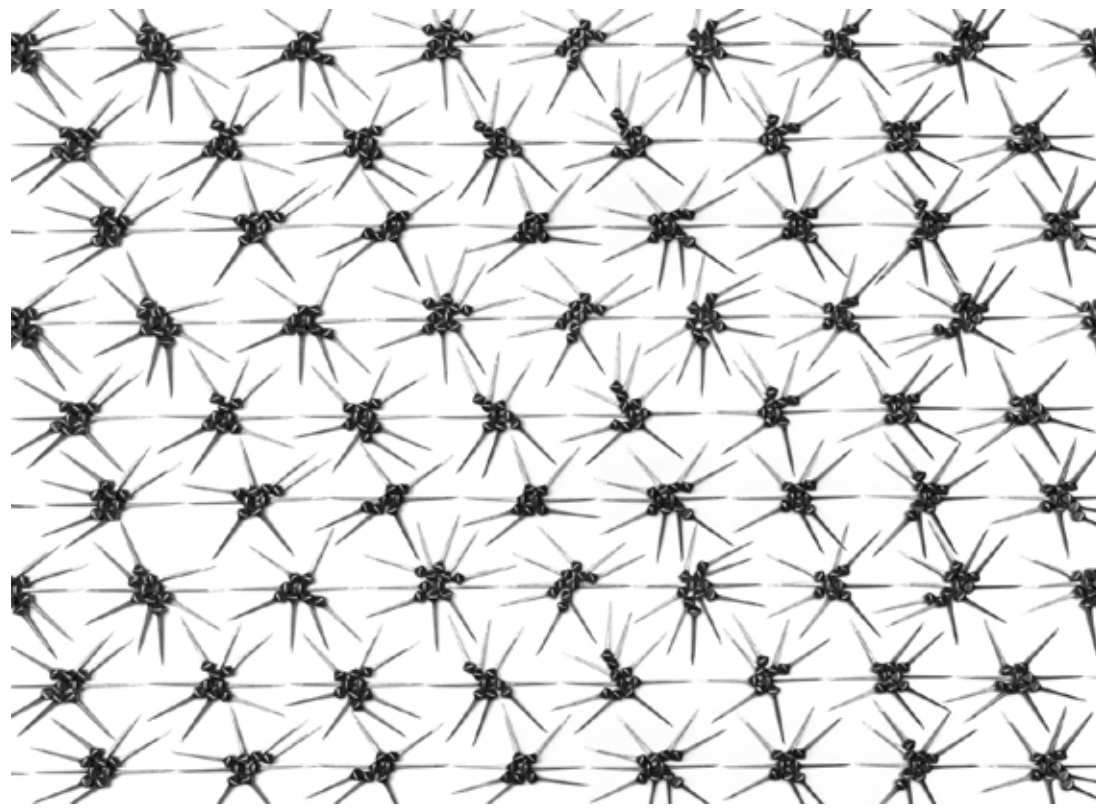
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At home with Baksı Museum

Baksı Museum is preparing to host Şakir Gökçebağ's solo exhibition called *Aşına*. Known for his sculptures and installations, Gökçebağ, for this exhibition, transforms familiar and accustomed objects of daily life into new forms. The exhibition promises to be the most comprehensive exhibition of the artist in Turkey

Words: Selin Çiftçi



ŞAKİR GÖKÇEBAĞ, CUNEIFORM SCRIPT (DETAIL), 75X100 CM, PHOTOGRAPY, 2019

Şakir Gökçebağ, focuses on the transformation potential and transitivity of daily objects in his practice, for his new exhibition at Baksı Museum he also presents new site-specific works. These artworks consist of items that local people use personally or familiar with. In this respect, the exhibition establishes a powerful connection with the geography where Baksı Museum is located, and also defines a moment of reunion and a sense of belonging for both the artist and the visitors.

Gökçebağ, who reinterprets chosen objects by snatching them away from their own patterns, follows the traces of the ordinary ones. In this journey, which extends from the plane of time and space to different dimensions and forms, he presents to the audience the ways of analysing the relationship between himself and the object. In his creation process, he works with ready-made objects such as pegs, brooms, carpets and walls, as much as simple materials such as stone, scissors, paper and paint, and questions that are "pure".

In his sculptures and installations, Gökçebağ separates the objects that he transforms by simplifying and abstracting from their familiar features with the touches of humour and poetry and he allows us to rebuild our own creativity area. In this context, he leaves the visitors alone with questions about daily life.

Aşına, on the one hand, will be an exhibition, which touches the soul of Anatolia and on the other hand, will expose the connection that Gökçebağ has built up between the local and the universal for many years, with strong words. We asked the artist, what are wondered about the exhibition:

In terms of where it is exhibited with the new artworks, does *Aşına* take a stand against the daily life in the city? In this context, do you think that the relationship between the exhibition and the countryside defines a reunion and a belonging rather than an encounter?

This exhibition is basically not very different from my other exhibitions. Those are artworks what we call site specific... Baksı Museum is different from the others in terms of its location in the countryside, but it is not strange for me. Besides, I spent my childhood in a village. From this point, yes, we can talk about a reunion, a belonging. When we look at the artworks, there are mostly local materials. The works have a closer relationship with the region. Although my materials are familiar objects, I used the items that the local people use or know well. Therefore, they also belong to the audience. So visitors will join an environment they do not find strange and they will not leave their own world. In addition, there is no critical comparison of daily life in the city or in the countryside.

When we speak of daily life, in fact we are talking about a cyclical order, a routine, repetitive time. From this perspective, where do you think "time" stands in this exhibition located in village? Are we going to feel it?

Concept of time is very relative. Maybe it has the same speed in everywhere, but there are differences in how we realize it. The relation of the familiar and accustomed images with the time is also interesting. These images can give us the impression that time is progressing slowly. Therefore, we can say that the perception of time in rural life is much more pronounced than the city life.



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MASERATI



BAKSİ MUSEUM, BAYBURT, TURKEY



PHOTO: MARCO FERRACUTI

Times of war and *peace*

Each year attracting glass artists and designers from all over the world, the Venice Glass Week takes place between September 7th and 15th this year. Glass artist from Turkey, Felekşan Onar, participates the event with her short film *ESMA*. Here is an interview with Onar on the upcoming festival

Interview: Merve Akar Akgün

You are an international artist today. Can you tell us about your first steps into your journey abroad? Do you feel that you also represent Turkey?

As I furthered my career in glassmaking, I started producing works abroad. At the very beginning I visited those key centres for glassmaking for an in-depth knowledge on various techniques. As per my artistic style I pursued presence in Northern Europe and in 2008 I was offered my first solo exhibition in Berlin. To me, this was an important leap. To further myself, I had to move beyond the borders of Turkey. My modus operandi is known as studio glassmaking, which is an internationally known technique in Northern Europe, New Zealand and Japan among others – and it is a privilege to be one of those artists following this movement. There comes a moment when you are recognized not “a glass artist from Turkey” but simply as “a glass artist”. Yet my greatest source of inspiration for my works has always been the geography and history of Turkey. The expressions I create in glass and my works echo them.

You are a glass artist for long, but is this your very first short film? How did you decide to make a film on the story of 900 glass oil lamps that Ismihan Sultan ordered from Murano for the Sokollu Mehmed Pasha Mosque?

I have never worked with any material other than glass until today. Glass has been my only passion and no other material could equal it. It is an exception here. In this short film, I narrate the story of glass oil lamps that Selim II's daughter Ismihan (Esmahan) Sultan ordered from Murano for the mosque that she commissioned Sinan the Architect for her husband Sokollu Mehmed Pasha. The story is narrated from Ismihan Sultan's perspective and it is very interesting to me. On the one hand Sokollu is at war with Venice for Cyprus, on the other hand they order 900 oil lamps from them. Plenty of similar stories exist in history. I take defining and researching art as a bridge between societies during times of war and peace as my mission. It is the embodiment of this approach. There I also realized that I narrate stories through glass. And this film is its natural consequence.

Last year in the first edition of the conference *Murano-Istanbul: A Glass Making Journey* you exhibited glass bridges. What do you think about the cultural interactions between the Venetian Republic and the

Ottoman Empire? How are the ongoing relations today? Have those stories influenced your mode of thinking?

Constantly changing the relations of power over centuries in the Mediterranean through war, Ottomans and Venetians also engaged in trade and triggered key cultural exchange. While it connected the Ottoman Empire with the rest of the world, the West was able to reach the lands of wealth. Since the Ottomans desired to create those beauties at home and adopt similar life styles, they re-introduced and furthered the techniques of the West that were originally imported from the East. I am thrilled by those adventures in art. It gives me a purpose. Expressions through art establishes a dialogue that politics and diplomacy fail to achieve. And I feel honoured to take responsibility and act.

What makes the Venice Glass Week special for you?

Venice, as we all know, is a heaven for glassmaking. Artists from all over the world visit Venice to practice it. This festival is supported and sponsored by all stakeholders engaged in glassmaking in Venice – be it an association or an institution. Throughout this week one can find a mix of exhibitions, performances, a conference and experience which champion the art of glassmaking. The jury itself invites the participants and they require artists to produce in Murano. Through this “requirement” artists meet on this island and it engenders a new form of life. My workspace as an artist now extends to Murano after Istanbul and Berlin. And it brings me a whole new level of diversity.

Which international glass artists do you follow?

To be honest I deliberately try not to follow any, since influence might involve a great risk. Yet I have been collecting glass since I was young. They belong to artists whose work shares almost no similarity with mine. Borek Sipek from Czech Republic, Amber Cowan from the US, Yann Perrier from France, Cristiano Bianchin from Italy and Bertil Vallien from the Switzerland, among others. And I personally know those who are still with us. We visit each other's exhibitions and I keep adding new pieces to my collection. I do my best to follow all sorts of art events and attend annual or seasonal expositions and exhibitions. Wherever I visit, I make sure to visit museums of ancient glass and museums of Islamic art since they culturally nourish my knowledge.

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Meandering again: *Palimpsest* texts-1



LE PLI
İlker Cihan Biner

In this issue İlker Cihan Biner starts discussing the texts by Barış Acar based on Sarah Dillon's *Palimpsest: Literature, Criticism, Theory*. Biner reviews Acar's *Eksphrasis Trilogy* and *Neverending Modernization* through the metaphor of *palimpsest*

1.

A crisis can put certain constraints in our lives. Those morbid conditions that block the air we breathe, hinder our intellectual processes and force us into inaction keep re-appearing rather than fading away. How we deal with the constraints that we are confronted with today or in the future, however, depends on how we equip ourselves to fight them. The power in our vision, then, depends on the context in which we render this world meaningful.

If we can draw our borders or make them visible the moment we talk about the problem or see it, this can solve only part of our issues. Constant focus on one single problem leads us into a mere vicious circle. The pain that borders create runs the risk of ending up as a fetishized subject. If we can better explain the world we live in and create more meanings regarding this life, then we can take a deeper breath – which is why one should not simply underline our impossibilities. Here is an example: we live under an oppressive regime. We are surrounded by networks of power. Instead of continuously complaining about this, we should consider starting new initiatives and engender new perspectives.

The abovementioned arguments do not suffice to create a space of freedom that I earlier referred to. I rather wonder and ask myself: Can our experience move beyond the reach of power? Can we act against domination and extend our own field?

Yet I already intend to draw borders for a framework. Right now, words are all I have. Can different works that inquire these issues help us understand the world? I can't really tell. Still it's worth trying.

2.

I've already said that words are all I have. Although I implied the existence of certain borders, the power of words should not be underestimated. Once we see them as living and physical objects, our productivity flourishes. Words become seeds. You can plant and grow them. Compared to humans, their survival is more likely. They cannot be confined to a single meaning. Growing with metaphors, words gain new meanings through multi-layered structures and they can potentially take us into a new universe. Having a closer look at the distance words make, one realizes that their meaning physiologies can easily derail us. When Sarah Dillon's *Palimpsest: Literature, Criticism, Theory* was translated into Turkish by Ferit Burak Aydar and published in 2017, I realized that it attracted little attention and was not able to influence readers as much as it could. Contemplation on the metaphors that the word *palimpsest* presents can potentially nurture our intellectual lives. Yet I'll not confine this writing to an analysis of Dillon's book.

Barış Acar has been writing criticism on visual arts and literature for long and publishing short stories and poetry; and I've been following the novel paths he opened. Here again I observe that the discussions on his works which extend to a myriad of fields and the creative experiences that can emerge from them are far from being sufficient. One should especially note here that his works underline how important it is for interdisciplinary fields such as cinema, literature and contemporary art to relate to life itself. Since it's practically impossible to discuss his texts that overlap with the metaphor

of *palimpsest* here, I'll be writing a series to explore the universe that those books present. Let me now start this series where I stroll through his texts, interact with his arguments and question them when necessary.

3.

In the previous fragment I claimed that no word can be confined to a single meaning. Let me elaborate on this: words are introduced to us with a one meaning. As we are forming sentences, familiarity plays a key role. Many words like pencil, apple and bottle seem to have fixed meanings. Once you see them as living objects, however, the area they occupy suddenly expands. Metaphors come to your help and they introduce huge varieties by breaking the restricted boundaries of meaning. *Palimpsest* is one such curious word, of which meaning has been transformed. The word was of interest up until 1845 only to those who study ancient manuscripts. Archimedes *palimpsest* refers to the philosopher's treatises on mathematics that belong to his *Method of Mechanical Theorems*. Homer and Cicero are also known to have produced their texts in similar techniques.

While the word originally referred to methods of storing historical texts, during the second half of the 19th century it transformed. Following the essay by Thomas de Quincey, the word *palimpsest* acquired a new meaning – now it also refers to expanding instead of being confined to a single realm. In this vein, Sarah Dillon argues that the metaphorical meaning of the word is a "figure of interdisciplinarity" (the productive violence of disciplines over and among each other as they overlap, intersect, interrupt and co-habit) and underlines a form of relation.

The encounter in a *palimpsest* inescapably triggers an interaction and engenders new objects. In the texts by Barış Acar, one observes similar interactions. *Eksphrasis Trilogy* published by Corpus Yayıncılık, in Acar's own words, stands as a collage. His texts on different branches of art such as cinema, literature and theatre immediately remind readers of the metaphor of *palimpsest* through their permeating natures and intertwined relations. The compilation of articles that deal with film analyses and the visibility of art pieces in a trilogy owes much to interdisciplinary transitions. In Barış Acar's *Neverending Modernization*, this dynamism does not entail a search into roots. Issues such as the conditions under which aesthetic forms emerge, ruptures between artistic movements and power networks, and the transformation of cinematographic images rather imply a genealogical historiography. There he records excursive art practices that went unnoticed and important subjects that his overlooked literary books refer to. Taking critical nuances into consideration, he opposes the linear understanding of time. His call does not place itself into the end of history, Barış Acar carefully builds passages between the visible and sayable just like the metaphor of *palimpsest* implies.

According to the author, all arts into which *ekphrasis* permeates tend to overlap as in collages, form new layers and attempt to form new arguments by complementing each other. Each one re-visits the same concept in a different branch of art. At times this initiative helps a work to acquire a new form, while it can also make its related concepts transparent. *Neverending Modernization* published by Manos Yayınları displays a certain rupture from *Ekphrasis* Trilogy. The book is composed of lengthy articles that deal with the understanding of literature in the 90s, discussions on modernism and post-modernism, formal issues regarding the genre of short story and the idea of democracy that is summarized by "literature is plastic". *Neverending Modernization* also refers to the issue of intertextuality.

Here I should pause and take a deep breath. The relation between the metaphor of *palimpsest* and the concept of decadence as discussed in the book, as well as how this issue relates to the texts by Barış Acar is the scope of another writing. See you in the next piece.

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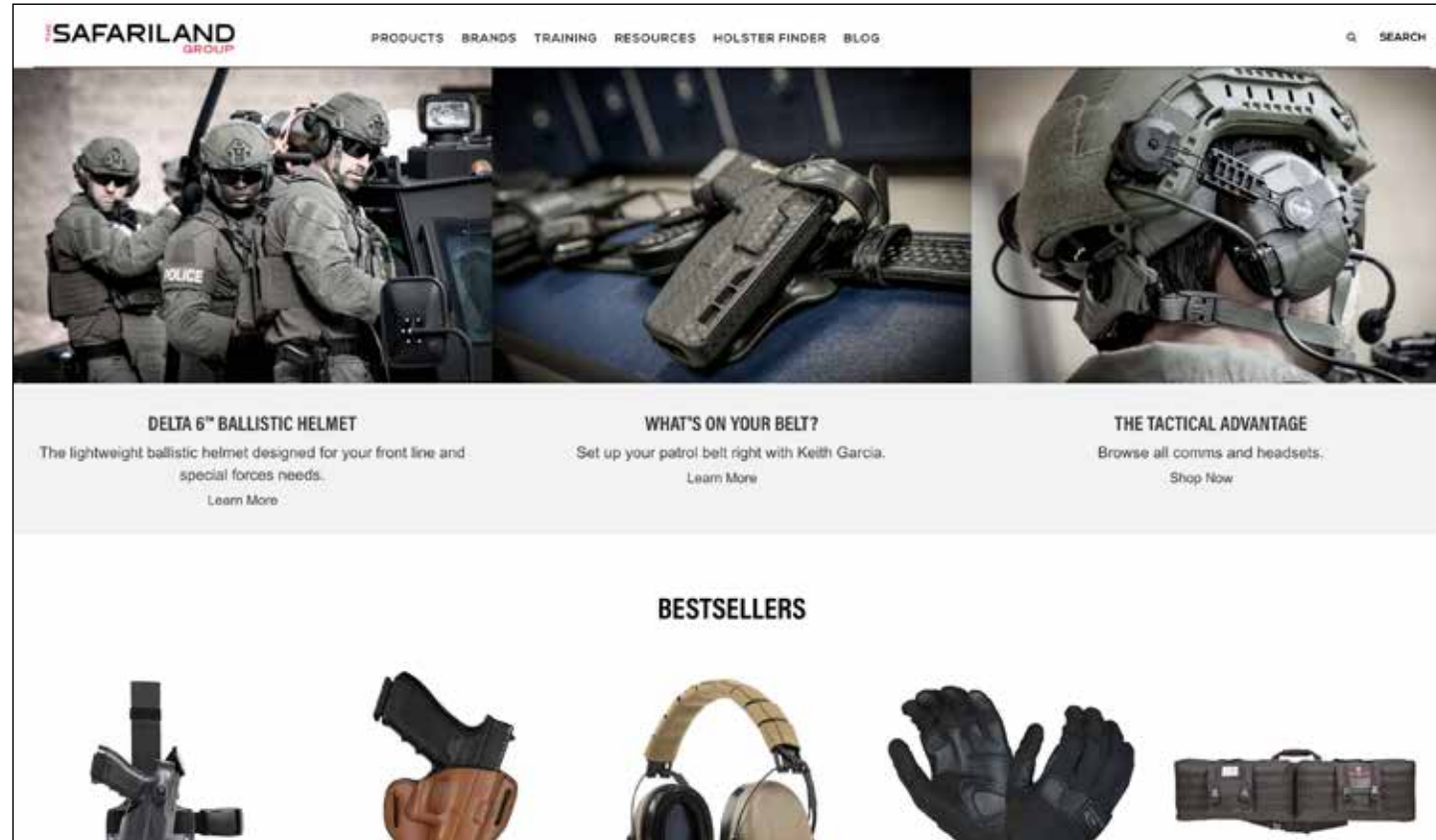
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79th Whitney Biennial: *tear gas and institutional critique*

We're publishing an article about 79th Whitney Biennial and the resignation of the vice president of Whitney Museum's board of trustees, Warren B. Kanders, as a first part of a series of three articles days before the biennial ends

Words: Nihat Karataşlı



A SCREENSHOT FROM SAFARILAND WEBSITE

Backdrops of the tear-gas scandal and resignation of Warren B. Kanders

2019 has been an empowering year for institutional critique that made it possible for many institutions, including the most prestigious museums all over the world, to finally take reparative actions against the toxic philanthropy funding them. Beginning this March, owners of Purdue Pharma, the Sackler family, has been taken out of the board of trustees of The Met, Guggenheim, Tate and Louvre, due to the OxyContin scandal tied to the opioid crisis that killed hundreds of thousands. Although the controversy around Sacklers' misleading promotion of OxyContin was a proven fact by several law-cases, Nan Goldin and the activist group PAIN's wide protests in the Guggenheim was one of the biggest catalyzers that led museums rejecting Sacklers' drug money. In June, Yana Peel, the ex-head of Serpentine Galleries, resigned after The Guardian revealed that she was the co-owner of an Israeli cyber weapons company. Peel's company, Novalpina, produced spying software used by Saudi Arabia and many oppressive regimes. It is also good to note that Novalpina's software Pegasus was also claimed to be used to spy against the Washington Post journalist Jamal Khashoggi, who was murdered last year in the Saudi consulate in Istanbul.

Warren B. Kanders: State-Violence and Art-Washing

These fortunate events of institutional cleansing were recently followed with one more resignation, the resignation of multi-millionaire Warren B. Kanders from his position as vice-chair of the board of trustees of the Whitney Museum. Although this resignation took place in July 2019, Kanders and his global defense company Safariland has been the center of controversies for long. Safariland, along with many companies under its name, manufactures military supplies and riot control equipment, including tear-gas canisters and munitions. Kanders' products have been used in the US, Turkey, Palestine, Venezuela, Egypt and many others against civilians. Knowing that Safariland sells to Turkish Law Enforcement Forces, it wouldn't be a wild guess that his tear-gas canisters were also widely used during Gezi Protests.

Kanders' estimated fortune is more than 700 million US dollars. He began investing in the defense industry in 1996 and acquired Safariland in 1999, long before he joined the museum's board of trustees in 2006. His business profited hugely from the polarization and nationalism of the aftermath of 9/11 attacks. Assuming Kanders' business was not unknown by the leadership of the museum and the

DÜNYANIN HER YERİNDE NEFİS TÜRK KAHVESİ



1930'lu yıllarda üretilmiş bir reklam çalışması.

1871'den beri kalitesini ve titizliğini hiç bozmadan evlerimize nefis Türk kahvesini getiren Kurukahveci Mehmet Efendi, bugün 50'den fazla ülkede tüketiliyor. Kurukahveci Mehmet Efendi, Türklerin dünyaya armağan ettiği Türk kahvesini, her yudumda aynı kalite ve keyifle dünyaya ulaştırıyor.

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“Every time we speak of the ‘institution’ as other than ‘us’, we disavow our role in the creation and perpetuation of its conditions. We avoid responsibility for, or action against, the everyday complicities, compromises, and censorship-above all, self-censorship-which are driven by our own interests in the field and the benefits we derive from it. It's not a question of inside or outside, or the number and scale of various organized sites for the production, presentation, and distribution of art. It's not a question of being against the institution: We are the institution.”*

Andrea Fraser



members of the board, there's still no explanation whether they investigated or questioned the source of Kanders' wealth before his inclusion with the museum's affairs. It is also unclear if any questions rose within the board before Warren B. Kanders and his wife Allison Kanders donated more than 10 million US dollars along with many artworks to the museum over the years.

In 2015, Anna Feigenbaum published an article in Al Jazeera America that underlined the problematic connection of the Whitney Museum and Kanders' Safariland. In her article, "the profitable theatrics of riot control", Feigenbaum underlined that Kanders' smoke grenades were used to suppress the Baltimore riots, which took place after the death of a young black man, Freddie Gray, under police custody. She also underlined that Warren B. Kanders, the vice chair of the Whitney Museum, profited from riot control and criminalization of disobedience.

This article of Feigenbaum was followed by another article in Hyperallergic,

pointing out Kanders' problematic relationship with state violence and the Whitney Museum, to which the museum did not offer a reply. The museum not bothering to reply to this critique can be read, as though the art world and the Whitney Museum was very much inclined to show works against critiquing state-violence, the institutions did not feel any pressure against funding themselves with money that was made from state-violence. Or one might say, this was how things have worked in the arts for long and the social critique somehow did not apply to institutions' millionaire funders.

In February 2018, four Brown University alumni published an open letter in the Brown Daily Herald against the green washing of Kanders and his business by the Brown University. This letter pointed out that Warren B. Kanders, who is also a Brown graduate, is sitting at the advisory board of the Institute at Brown for Environment and Society, which claims to work for the creation of a "sustainable

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world". It wouldn't be unfair to assume Brown University did not take any action against this claim either, as Warren B. Kanders can still be seen in this advisory board. Brown University also held the Warren and Allison Kanders Lecture Series funded by Kanders, it is unclear if they will keep on holding these lecture series under Kanders' name. Thus, Brown University, while holding a research initiative under the name of Palestinian Studies, could not take the risk of putting its own principles into practice against Kanders' philanthropy, which still benefits from its sales of munitions to the Israeli Army.

The Whitney Staff Stands Against Kanders

The resilience against Kanders being a war profiteer brought us to the recent past and the protests which arose within the Whitney Museum. On November 25, the US border agents, charged by the current anti-immigrant politics of Trump, tear-gassed hundreds of asylum seekers, including children, at the border of Tijuana and San Diego. Safariland again, manufactured the tear gas canisters, which were used at the US-Mexico border. This incident of state-violence caused an undeniable unease within the staff of the Whitney Museum, and they published an open-letter addressing issues around Kanders' and the museum's involvement with his toxic fortune. "We felt sick to our stomachs, we shed tears, we felt unsafe" were the words the Whitney staff wrote to describe how they felt about Kanders' involvement in the events of November 25. This letter demanded that the leadership of the museum asked for Kanders' resignation and a public statement. The staff made demands from the leadership to define a moral compass for the funding of the museum. They demanded "positive peace", a pursuit that can never be achieved if the institution did not maintain its political stance for social-justice while picking funders "who are knowingly complicit in the injustices committed".

This heartfelt letter came from the Whitney staff was, unfortunately, did not cause any action to be taken either by the board or the leadership of the museum. Kanders himself responded to the board of the museum with a letter, stating that he is not the problem and his company works for the safety of the public. Kanders said; "While my company and the museum have distinct missions, both are important contributors to our society. This is why I believe that the politicization of every aspect of public life, including commercial organizations and cultural institutions, is not productive or healthy."

Although not properly replied, the letter from the Whitney staff, signed by nearly 100 current staff of the museum, was a very brave act of resilience to say the least. In an art scene where a position in an institution like the Whitney seems like a dream job, the risk that the staff of Whitney took for keeping their political stance is worth applauding. Along with other examples like the recent worker unionization movements in the New Museum, MoMa and Guggenheim, Whitney staff's letter stands a great example of museum workers banding together, suggesting that the workers of the art world have the power to initiate positive and reparative change.

Director of the Whitney Museum, Adam Weinberg, also offered a generic response to the letter of the staff, mostly mentioning how diverse, democratic, inclusive and challenging the Whitney is. Not even mentioning the name of Kanders in his response and Weinberg briefly stated "the Whitney is first and foremost a museum. It cannot right all the ills of an unjust world, nor is that its role." This statement was seen inadequate by many, since the staff did not demand the Whitney to restore the world peace. The letter of the staff, very clearly, demanded an ethical way of funding arts and explanation on institutional decisions. It was more than fair for the workers of this institution to demand that the museum complied with its own ethical principles.



ALL IMAGES (P 24-16):
DECOLONIZE THIS SPACE

*Andrea Fraser, *From the Critique of Institutions of an Institution of Critique*, 2005



Islands
PEDRO GÓMEZ-EGAÑA

11 Eylül/September – 8 Aralık/December 2019
ZILBERMAN GALLERY—ISTANBUL

Pedro Gomez-Egana, *The Voice of Jacob at Dawn*, Yerleştirme/Installation
Munchmuseet on the Move, 2019, Munch Museum, Oslo için üretilmiştir
Commissioned for the Munch Museum, Oslo, for *Munchmuseet on the Move*, 2019



WHAT IS THE FUTURE
IN THE PAST?
AND WHAT IS THE PAST
IN THE FUTURE?

ISAAC CHONG WAI

6 Eylül/September – 9 Kasım/November 2019
ZILBERMAN GALLERY—BERLIN

Isaac Chong Wai, *Neue Wache*, 2015, Arşisel pigment baskı/Archival pigment print, 22,5 x 40 cm (detay/detail)

I Made a Boat in Prison - A Journey to the Shore
Isaac Chong Wai



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Zeynep Kayan

Zilberman Projects—İstanbul

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12-15 Eylül/Sept 2019

12-15 Eylül/Sept 2019

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Heba Y. Amin, Selçuk Artut, Alpin Arda Bağcık, Janet Bellotto, Burçak Bingöl, Başak Bugay, Guido Casaretto, Isaac Chong Wai, Antonio Cosentino, Elmas Deniz, Memed Erdener, Pedro Gómez-Egaña, Manaf Halbouni, Zeynep Kayan, Azade Köker, Jaffa Lam Laam, Mahen Perera, Erinc Seymen, Yaşam Şaşmaz, Simon Wachsmuth, Eşref Yıldırım

Arter: An area of *meeting* and *discovering* *together*



Interview: Özlem Altunok

Photography: FluFoto

We listened to the story of Arter that incarnated at Dolapdere as the result of a 14-year plan, from Melih Fereli, who took the first step in building permeable relationships with other disciplines as a contemporary art center since he first started working as the arts and culture consultant at the Vehbi Koç Foundation in 2005

Melih Fereli, who takes Arter to a new level with his personal story and know-how, summarizes his motivation about music and the long-term project that progressed step by step with these words: “Art is synonymous with life for me: art exists everywhere, always, and under all circumstances. All we have to do is to move away from the priorities that our ego dictates us and to open up our senses. The rest will find you and *Pulsanti aperietur!* (The door will open for those who knock)”

The story of Arter is the story of a long journey that has been planned step by step. It won’t be easy to summarize, but perhaps we could cover some of the milestones in order to reach the door of the new museum, the “new Arter”. There will be lots of dates and numbers that will be important in this story. The museum will open in the 50th year of the Vehbi Koç Foundation and we know that it has been based on the 14-year strategy plan, which you launched when you became the arts and culture consultant for the foundation in 2005. We’ll move onto the more detailed questions to talk about the phases, but first I’d like to ask: the Koç had existed in the artistic and cultural fields before this long-term effort in 2005 (the first private museum in Turkey, Sadberk Hanım Museum, was founded by the Koç Family), but now Arter opening in Dolapdere takes this presence to a new level. It is a first in the field and it also points to a new existence that brings together different disciplines. What lies behind this major decision? What were the reasons that motivated you and the Koç Family?

While Koç Family and Group contributes to the development and improvement of cultural and artistic life and, it has been continuing its efforts for the recognition of the historical heritage in our country on a universal scale and taking a deserved place among the global cultural treasures. Vehbi Koç Foundation, which celebrated its 50th anniversary this year, is not satisfied with the achievements of Koç Family and Group in the field of economy. It should be remembered that the 2007 Hadrian Award was won by the Koç Family, having insisted on the sensibility of “it is our job”, becoming pioneers in corporate social responsibility with strength and determination. I think this summary answers the first part of your question on “reasons for incentives”.

When it comes to the second part, summarizing the elements that guide me and the Koç Family, in your words towards “this big decision”, will not be easy. With your permission, I would like to take this opportunity to give a detailed answer. To trace back what I would call, without any hesitation the biggest and most important work of my career, I’d have to go back a long time, when my uncle Mazhar Akgün, through his business partners and people I’d call my mentors in formative years Nirun Şahingiray and Demet Erginsoy, presented me to some members of the Koç Family (Suna Kıraç ve Çiğdem Simavi) when I was only 17 years old in 1965. I’d also like to touch on my years as a youngster and my childhood, which defined my passion for the arts. What drove this passion and which still gives me the energy at an age when others think I should be retiring, still keep me actively engaged and the seeds were sown at a very early age.

I come from a family of Macedonian immigrants. The values I was taught are love and authenticity. Being just, sustaining a critical yet fair attitude when dealing with other people were important rules in our family. I was a smart, well-behaved, hard-working and curious child. With my skills with languages, my ability to imitate, my natural skill in math, my parents saw the “engineer of the future” in me. It was obvious.

On the other hand, both my mother and father (and my grandmother) were *meloman* people—I think music was the element that triggered my hereditary skills at a very young age. My father, a very romantic forest engineer, Mehmet Fereli, cared for us to recognize plants from leaves and to memorize their names in Latin. He said, “the sound of nature is the most beautiful music: try to listen!” Even today it rings in my ears. I was five and a half years old when he took me by the hand to the Istanbul Radio Children’s Choir exam, and it was him who taught me what it means to be a boy soprano. While my teachers Halil Bedii Yönetken, Fikri Çiçekoğlu planted the seeds of my love of music, Radio Child hour manager Nadide Arcan caught on to my witty side.

The most influential teachers with whom I have been studying at the Istanbul Boys’ High School since the prep year were those who put in my head that in addition to love, art and science, as well as mathematics, are the most important components of life: Gerhard Kopp, PhD, and Horst Weström. Unfortunately, my part-time conservatory experience was short-lived as a result of academic pressure. But the summary of all this is the cornerstone of my passion for art.

My relationship to all artistic disciplines was through my training in classical western music in London, where I lived for over twenty years and thanks to the Philharmonia Chorus—I proudly still serve on the board. When I returned to Turkey from the UK in 1993, there were no institutions whose activities were on par with an international standard, except for Istanbul Foundation for Arts and Culture. When I became the General Manager of IKSİ, I made an effort to form a structure that was institutionalized in the arts and culture. While working here, I gained experiences in the organization of the festival and my decision to focus on the biennial helped me learn more about the artistic field, test my own potential and to describe the needs in this field.

My belief that contemporary art can offer an important opening in the direction of critical thinking, freedom of expression and democratization has solidified in this process: the urgency of the question”. How do I create an institutional structure in this field in a sustainable way?” became more obvious at this time.

While I was appointed as the Culture and Art Consultant of the Vehbi Koç Foundation in 2005, I was very excited to see that the family, especially Ömer M. Koç, shared my belief in contemporary art, and the focus of the future strategy adopted by the foundation’s artistic. The short-term goal of the action plan we have established was to ensure that the name Koç would become a reference point. In the medium to long term, Koç would become a global player in contemporary art, identifying and applying the steps to carry us to that stage: we agreed upon the decision to form a collection and to construct a structure that would introduce this collection to the public.

We may consider the phases of the next process as our interview proceeds, but to sum it up, art is synonymous with life for me: art is present everywhere, anytime and under any circumstances—all you have to do is move away from the priorities your self tries to dictate and open your senses. The rest finds you and *Pulsanti aperietur!*

Of course, this is a new identity that is inspired both by personal and institutional know-how, but it has always been essential to maintain integrity and continuity while creating this new identity. It is a road map that we are not accustomed to in Turkey, we can say with the applica-

tion process and renewal, an identity that moves forward. Moreover, how would you assess the 14-year period in the tumultuous climate of Turkey, realizing this project and how would you assess this through the existence of VKV?

I am a fast-moving person in the areas where I am determined in life, but I am cautious in practice. In my opinion, the important thing is to reach the speed at which we will achieve its sustainability. Establishing Arter under the roof of the Vehbi Koç Foundation was a guarantee of its sustainability. As the patron, founder, and director of such a powerful institution of contemporary art, the foundation would provide Arter with the basic elements, but it would also free Arter to act on its own footsteps. We foresee that this freedom of movement will also improve the reflexes of the foundation in an institutional sense—indeed it was. There has been a certain synergy in the field of culture, which is now spreading to other institutions.

Vehbi Koç foresaw these needs from the very first day as a business person who knows very well what foundations and sustainability mean, and has structured VKV, taking into account both the establishment phase and the long-term financing of all future formations. With the funds from family members, the necessary investment financing is provided for the realization of the new institutions; the annual support from the profits of the companies is used to cover the continuous expenses of the organizations. In all projects, financial plans are made with a minimum ten-year perspective, thus enabling new initiatives to be transformed into sustainable institutions.

The cornerstones of the contemporary art scene before Arter came to life are as follows: in 2007, the international contemporary art collection was launched and in the same year, Koç becomes the main Istanbul Biennial sponsor. In addition, TANAS opened in Berlin between 2008-2013, exhibitions of *İstiklâl Adventure* was organized at Yapı Kredi between 2007-2010 and monograph books accompanying them were published. Sponsoring the Pavilion of Turkey in Venice Biennial since 2011 is another one. These are all steps that open up the way for the other. How was this chain of relations established, and what steps were taken through thinking and planning? How did this long experience process feed this institutionalization? How would you define Arter's institutional identity within the museum today?

The collection was, of course, the most important and long-term move towards the establishment of a contemporary art museum, the ultimate goal. At the same time, we took faster steps for Koç to position itself as a strong actor in contemporary art. The main sponsorship of the Istanbul Biennial was a strong and important message of Koç's determination to support the development of contemporary art, with an agreement extending first to 10 years and then to 20 years. Turkey Pavilion at the Venice Biennial, the TANAS sponsorship as a 5-year project, has contributed to increasing the international visibility and awareness of production from Turkey. The *İstiklâl Adventure* exhibitions and monograph series aimed to support local art production, creating new works, instrumental in displaying unprece-

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Vehbi Koç foresaw all the needs from the very first day as a business person who knows very well what foundations and sustainability mean, and has structured VKV (Vehbi Koç Foundation), taking into account both the establishment phase and the long-term financing of all future formations. With the funds from family members, the necessary investment financing is provided for the realization of the new institutions; the annual support from the profits of the companies is used to cover the continuous expenses of organizations. In all projects, financial plans are made with a minimum ten-year perspective, thus enabling new initiatives to be transformed into sustainable institutions.



ARTER, DOLAPDERE, İSTANBUL

dented works. This is some of the works produced for exhibitions by giving our growing collection yet we have taken a strong step towards our goal to keep the archive of contemporary art in Turkey. Contributing to the production of new artifacts and continuing to develop the collection with the selection made from these productions has formed and will continue to be the core of Arter's mission.

With our new building, Arter's program extends beyond our collection and outside of various exhibitions to include various learning opportunities that support visitors to connect with art through activities from different disciplines such as performing arts, music and film, and our specially designed workshop. With this new corporate identity, Arter will function as a cultural center that will bring audiences together with current production in all disciplines of art.

Arter on İstiklâl Avenue was the experience of a key word that you always say with its hosting of the "fresh" exhibitions of contemporary art, its contribution to the production of new works, and its publicity: a laboratory. It must be an instructive, experimental, experience-making process that is open to errors. How do you think will be the transference of these experiences from Arter on İstiklâl to the museum? Now, when you look back, what function did the Arter on İstiklâl perform?

The last nine years Arter on İstiklâl Avenue provided us with valuable opportunities for trial and error. This was a unique opportunity to form, expand and gain harmony by working together. Of course, we made mistakes, but we knew how to learn from them. Our team, working with the awareness and dedication of preparing the birth of a large cultural institution, organized 35 exhibitions together, supported the production of 183 works within the scope of these exhibitions and prepared bilingual publications meeting world standards. In addition, we were able to perform speeches, performances and screenings as far as the constraints of our space allowed. In this way, we started collaborations with many people and institutions; We also had the opportunity to identify needs more deeply by conducting

preliminary studies with different groups of visitors such as children and disabled people. To sum up, Arter in İstiklâl not only allowed us to construct the future in the way we imagined, but even more importantly, it enabled us to form a team to realize those dreams.

In addition to Turkey being relatively weak in terms of the tradition of museums, Arter is also a first in contemporary art here. Furthermore, making this investment at such a time, although culturally meaningful, it is unclear if there would be economic returns. Taking on a mission between these two poles is ambitious, but also risky. What was indispensable in taking on this project?

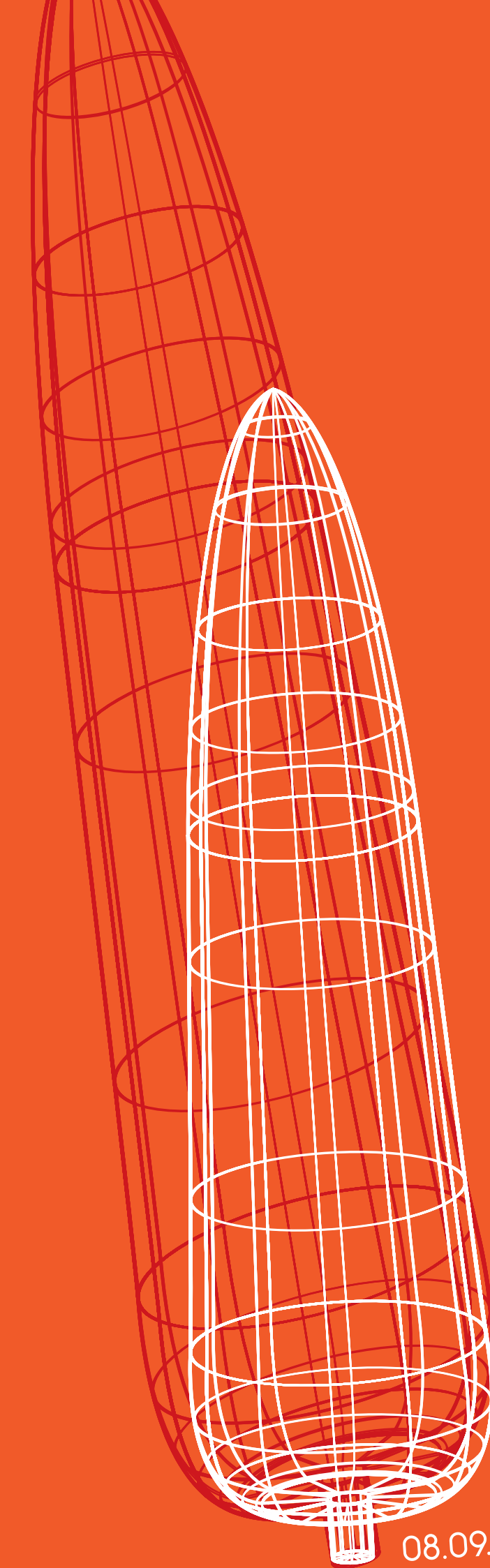
You're right, but when your goals are big, the risks involved are inevitable. Determination, combined with passion, can lead you into the mine field, so it is important to use your mind, define and assess the risks, so that you have solution alternatives for possible scenarios, before these risks have even formed. Isn't that the truth of life? When you consider your birth within the odds of possibility, it is a miracle and you can start thinking that those statistics apply to the world of risks as well and you need to let your mind reassure you.

The inevitability of our taking on these projects is concealed in our reasons for existence and our claim to make an impact. In short, Arter was founded with the goal introducing today's art with larger masses. We wanted to create an area of encounter and discovering together around Arter. In particular, the most indispensable aspect of our ecosystem is helping new generations grow with art, asking questions, enjoying creative production.

In terms of the impact of Arter on the city and on society, it would be important to open up what this would mean bit by bit: more people encountering art in Turkey, for those who already follow artistic events, helping them engage with the arts more deeply, getting rid of the prejudices and barriers around contemporary art, spreading critical thinking and promoting creativity are among these goals. As I emphasized before, the most difficult aspect is to make sustainable the institutions, the processes that you launched to realize your claim of impact.

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The competition for the design of the new building was launched in 2013 and the building project for the museum that Grimshaw Architects designed started in 2015 in Dolapdere. The museum encountered various mishaps and many bureaucratic obstacles. It is possible to observe this in numerous projects across Istanbul. How was this delay reflected in your traffic? Did the delay help structure the museum, turning into an advantage?

The meticulousness required by such a complicated and high-tech structure is of course reflected in the approval and application processes. Constructing very close to the city center, in a residential neighborhood, in a narrow and deep area, is very challenging, as I'm sure you can imagine.

Seven companies, three of which were foreign, participated in the project competition that we launched in 2013, which was by nomination only. The conceptually driven project of Grimshaw Architects from the UK had to be revised to accommodate the construction plan of the city and finally, the construction of the 14-floor building was launched in 2015. The opening date for our building was the fall of 2018, but there were issues related to the retaining walls as well as the channeling out the water in the foundation of the building, which was more extensive than initially believed, delaying the opening.

In our country, people look for a "bureaucratic obstacle" behind everything that goes wrong, but it would not be correct to assess the relatively "short" delay in Arter's construction in this regard. On the contrary, despite the difficult approval processes, we have been supported and facilitated by the Beyoğlu Municipality at every stage, led by the esteemed Demircan and I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who helped move along the process. In reality, the process of our new building project was launched a long time ago. When we opened Arter on İstiklâl Avenue, we had conceived of that building as a "laboratory" and a "learning" space. As I mentioned before, the years that we spent in this building, we were experimenting, making mistakes, learning, gaining experience and preparing for a larger activity field in our new building, making plans. In this sense, as we were working towards a goal, a short delay did not make a big difference in terms of shaping the institution.

Before we started forming our collection, René Block and I had set the goal of focusing on the resources of the local artistic production, without being limited by the local, transcending the local to make a claim internationally and working in this direction.

More than 1350 works form the collection of Arter. What are your efforts in exhibiting, preserving, lending to other exhibitions this "contemporary art collection"?

Initiated under the Vehbi Koç Foundation in 2007, today's Arter Collection was launched with the idea of forming the foundation for a contemporary art museum that we were already thinking about. At the beginning, René Block and I made the decisions for the acquisitions and later, Emre Baykal and Selen Ansen joined our acquisition committee—all decisions for the acquisitions are through the assessment of this committee. Before we started forming our collection, René Block and I had set the goal of focusing on the resources of the local artistic production, without being limited by the local, transcending the local to make a claim internationally and working in this direction. The works in our collection are being included exhibitions, as we lend them to museums and institutions across the world. Furthermore, conservation is an issue that we deeply care about. In our new building, we have a laboratory that focuses on conservation. Digital conservation is an area that we are equally invested in.

What do the opening exhibitions tell us? Included in the opening exhibitions are artists such as Sarkis, Altan Gürman, Ayşe Erkmen and İnci Fırtın, who come from different generations and identities in contemporary art in Turkey and there are also two curated exhibitions, as well as installations by Rosa Barba and Céleste Boursier-Mougenot—what do these exhibitions tell viewers about the upcoming exhibitions?

There are traces of our upcoming program in our exhibition plans: while we encourage new production, we are also going to pay attention to taking art historic positions that retain our contemporaneity through group and solo exhibitions from both from our collection and outside it.

There are multi-dimensional works that require a gallery of their own in the Arter Collection. Thus, among the exhibitions that we will make from within our collection and outside it are "single work-single artist" presentations and we will continue to form public and educational programs that will raise awareness around them. I would not want this to be perceived as an immodest or selfish statement, but I do believe that the *Sound Series* that I initiated will serve as a lane where Arter will create a different and evoke excitement.

We are also going to be open to innovative works and project proposals in the future. We are going to work extensively with other institutions to collaborate, just as we have done in the past, and formulate structures and projects that bring different disciplines together.

One of the issues that Arter has worked on extensively has been the training of young artists and curators and their becoming more visible. Arter Programming Council that I chair plays an influential role here, selecting artists and curators.

Curators that we invite, selected from our own team or from the outside, prepare a conceptual framework that they worked on freely and after they have defined their general approach, they present to the Arter Programming Council. We are going to insist on this free environment so that different ideas and dialogues can be formed.

And of course, dance, theater, music, cinema, interviews, performance... With a comprehensive program, you are also presenting how the museum will progress into the future. In addition to the Sound Guide that you just mentioned, the Learning Program, Sign Language Tours, Youth Council also draw attention to the progressive nature of what you are doing. What was your departure point when you were preparing all of this diverse content?

With our new building, Arter's programming goes beyond our collection and exhibitions to include stage arts, music and film and through our custom design studio, we are going to be able to offer various learning opportunities that help viewers relate to art. In this sense, Arter will function as a cultural center where viewers from different disciplines can meet contemporary production.

I'm neither an art historian nor a curator. Through working with the masterful Sarkis and the very talented young artist/composer Erdem Helvacıoğlu, I have made two exhibitions that helped reveal different modes of relating art with music and my background in arts administration centered on classical western music trigger me to construct expression and meaning forms that create transitions between disciplines, looking at all art forms through the lens of music. This trigger is reflected in my ideation and emotional world as well as the flow of my life strongly and has also helped determine my vision about Arter. If it were someone else, I'm sure our new building would be constructed in a different way.

While forming our learning program, we have been motivated by the idea to create a creative process that would enable everyone to be a part of the creative process. Relating to art means relating to our own inner world. As Arter, our goal in relating to viewers and users is to trigger their already-existing feelings of curiosity and involvement. Included in the new building are the learning studio, which we have been able to organize with this approach, a percussion room, applied production studio where users who would like to partake in artistic production can work and the digital laboratory. We also have learning rooms spread across the exhibition floors where our visitors can encounter content, where they can rest and participate in small discussion groups or screenings.



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The programming includes guided tours (and sound guides), artist talks, panels, workshops, and podcasts. In addition, we are also interested in long-term processes. We have the goal of forming long-term relationships with artists, visitors, and stakeholders. Arter Research Program and the Youth Council are efforts to serve this goal.

These two programs are going to be activated over eight months through the participation of participants, formulated through their needs and interests. The Youth Council aims to help 11-14 year-old children from the Beyoğlu-Şişli regions discover new artistic disciplines to form their own languages of expression. Arter Research Program, which has already started, is directed towards professional and cultural producers. The approach in this program is based on self-organization, emphasizing processes, stemming from the participants' research topics and practices. Arter Research Program aims to support cultural producers as they develop languages of expression, research methodologies, as well as their own perspectives on the times we live in.

Finally, how do you see the contemporary art scene in Turkey? The contemporary art market, which gained momentum in the 1990s, rose in the 2000s, and after certain saturation, slowed down or perhaps became "normalized"—what kind of an influence do you hope for Arter to have in this context?

When I returned to Turkey from the UK in 1993, there were no institutions whose activities were on par with an international standard, except for Istanbul Foundation for Arts and Culture. When I became the General Manager of IKSIV, I made an effort to form a structure that was institutionalized in the arts and culture. In the following years, I unfortunately saw that our city was subjected to a rural aesthetic and an extreme conservatism was being imposed on us. I'm still experiencing how the values that I gained in the 1950s' Istanbul are being emptied out and how saving the day, crude bullying are valued in the scene.

Although numerous organization companies and new entities emerged, Istanbul still has not resolved its main deficiency: infrastructure. And it's possible to say that there have been regressions. The disappearance of spaces where art had been realized has also dissatisfied many viewers.

Art being accessible to different factions of society is an issue that needs to be prioritized by both central and local administrations. The function of art spaces is really crucial to turn back the loss of momentum that has been experienced recently. The process of forming Arter and the responsibility that it has taken on will serve as an important example for private entrepreneurs to invest in the artistic and cultural fields. Furthermore, as you can imagine, Arter is not an institution that will create a "market", but in general, its ability to keep art on the agenda and its energy will definitely impact the market positively.

While I wrap up, I need to say that I'm looking into the future with hope, because hope is the starter for the evolution of life.

Çarşamba Topluluğu

Meret Oppenheim, Rebecca Horn,

Natela Iankoshvili, Gülçin Aksoy, Tony Chakar

Beral Madra'ya Saygı | Kùratör: A. S. Bruckstein | House of Tasvir

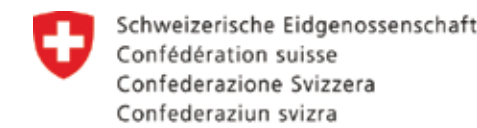
19 Eylül – 18 Ekim 2019



Rebecca Horn

Madame Bovary, 1997

(Photo: Gunter Lepkowski
Courtesy Peter Raue Collection)



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On *Nur Koçak*

I have recently been thinking about the kinds of relationships that artists can build with art movements, how these relationships can transform over time, just like human relationships, their interruption, and the potentials of expressing all of these. This is perhaps why my entry point to Nur Koçak's practice was what she said during a short video-interview she gave on the occasion of the exhibition *Past and Future* (2014) at Istanbul Modern: "The movement that I am a part of is photo-realism." As an artist who moves between media—while constantly having stomach aches about it—, and as someone who considers all options and all materials before being able to move forward with anything, this statement by Koçak made me feel relieved. When I look at Koçak's work over half a century, I saw how intellectual concerns and personal interests, observations moved along side by side; the results of her persistent inquiries opened up my mind...

Words: Merve Ünsal

NUR KOÇAK,
FAROUCHE OR FETISH
OBJECT 2, 1975,
COURTESY OF THE ARTIST

When Nur Koçak went to Paris in the 1970s with a state scholarship, she decided to use her life and her surroundings as a departure point; she was particularly drawn to women's magazines, advertisements, using their depictions of women and the women's bodies in her works. The appeal of the objects that were marketed to women, the women transforming themselves into consumption objects by using these very things were striking for Koçak. The notion of "appeal" was transformed into a state in which the artist deciphered the relationship between the art object and appeal, colliding these ideas with the appeals of the female body and consumption objects. This appeal that art objects could not subvert within their own delineation became one of Koçak's materials.

The first painting from the artist's *Fetish Objects / Object Women* is an appropriation of a picture of a perfume bottle from an advertisement. Koçak used the advertisement photograph as a source and took these details out of the final painting, pointing to the gap between the photograph and the painting as well as the area that she created and claimed through using photography. Koçak problematizes the use of women as objects and while it is possible to trace feminist discourses of the day in her works, she states that she encountered feminism only after she had invented the visual language and thought pervasive in her works. It is thus possible to interpret Koçak's works through shared concerns of the time, which seems to have been in and of the times.

When Koçak returned to Turkey, artists were prevalently working on expressionist painting. Koçak employed photography as a departure point for painting, leaving expression out of her paintings on purpose. She created paintings showered with light, producing a sharp, provocative visual language. Koçak's works were so detailed that her paintings could be scrutinized using a magnifying glass; her large-scale paintings related to the human body through their scale. The decontextualized images become strange, bigger than life. Koçak was critical of the mental impact of these images.

*NUR KOÇAK, A POSTCARD FROM
THE SERIES MÜDAHALE EDİLMİŞ
KARTPOSTALLAR [MANIPULATED
POSTCARDS], 1981,
COURTESY OF THE ARTIST*

Koçak employed photography as a departure point for painting, leaving expression out of her paintings on purpose. She created paintings showered with light, producing a sharp, provocative visual language.



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The artist used images from the *Kelebek* newspaper as a source material for her series, *Pictures of Happiness*. Koçak noticed photographs of women were not included in the newspaper. She used photographs from the newspaper and produced 36 postcard-size drawings; together with these postcards, she exhibited 18 real postcards. The postcards that she collected were produced for men doing their military service. Koçak “re-organized” these postcards using collage and cutting techniques. Soldiers who were posing with their lovers in open air, the blue sky, and backgrounds with flowers. It seemed like the postcards depicted the dreams, while the drawings revealed “reality”. The postcards were hung from the ceiling so that the viewers would wander through them, thinking about the contrasts they were confronted with; differences between real flowers and artificial flowers, artificial colors and colors in nature are all part of her images that underline the constructed nature of representations in photographs.

Koçak began her *Vitrines* series in the 1990s, adding large-scale photographs to her oeuvre. Koçak noticed the tension between what is being shown in windows and what was happening on the street. The underwear worn by the women in *Object Women* was now being worn by plastic mannequins, combining the reflections on the artificial bodies with real human bodies using photography as a tool.

Koçak's *Cahide Sonku's Story* is a combination of the artist's interest in cinema and popular cultural references. Koçak states, “I'm a child of mass media tools” and Cahide Sonku can be defined as perhaps the first star, working both in theater and cinema in Turkey. The portraits of Sonku from 1996-2003 focus on her person to draw attention to the consumable nature of the female image. Each portrait is a different color, making visible Koçak's attitude that what is being seen in mass media is artificial. When they are shown side by side, Sonku's image appears to be concealed behind a color palette. Sonku is every woman and each woman interprets herself through Sonku's one-dimensional images that have been made equal.



NUR KOÇAK, ANNEM,
BABAM, ABLAM VE BEN 2
[MY MOTHER, MY FATHER,
MY SISTER AND I 2] 2000-2003,
COURTESY OF THE ARTIST

The technical skill that Koçak adapted through the photo-realistic movement is to draw attention to processes of production in our visual world and to approach reality. The artist prefers studio photographs to photographs that capture a “moment”.

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NUR KOÇAK,
CAHİDE - BEFORE, 1995-1999,
COURTESY OF THE ARTIST

Koçak states, “I’m a child of mass media tools” and Cahide Sonku can be defined as perhaps the first star, working both in theater and cinema in Turkey. The portraits of Sonku from 1996-2003 focuses on her person to draw attention to the consumable nature of the female image. Each portrait is a different color, making visible Koçak’s attitude that what is being seen in mass media is artificial.

The technical skill that Koçak adapted through the photo-realistic movement is to draw attention to processes of production in our visual world and to approach reality. The artist prefers studio photographs to photographs that capture a “moment”. Koçak’s primary material is how people try to show reality or what is deemed to be real. Koçak paints the photograph of a constructed situation, working with the gap between the signifier and the signified. Her manipulation of the scale of objects could be seen as a renegotiation of her own position as a maker of images. Koçak includes the viewers in the confrontation with the surfaces that she creates being a means of representation and her works are important statements as touching images and photographs through the objectification of photography means something completely different today.

I recommend looking at this interview that is available online as a resource on Koçak’s work: Turkish Women Artists and Feminism: Tomur Atagök in conversation with Gülsün Karamustafa, İnci Eviner and Nur Koçak, n.paradoxa international feminist art journal, volume 10, July 2002 (Rethinking Revolution).

05.09 —
20.10.2019

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*Rocks and Winds,
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26.09 —
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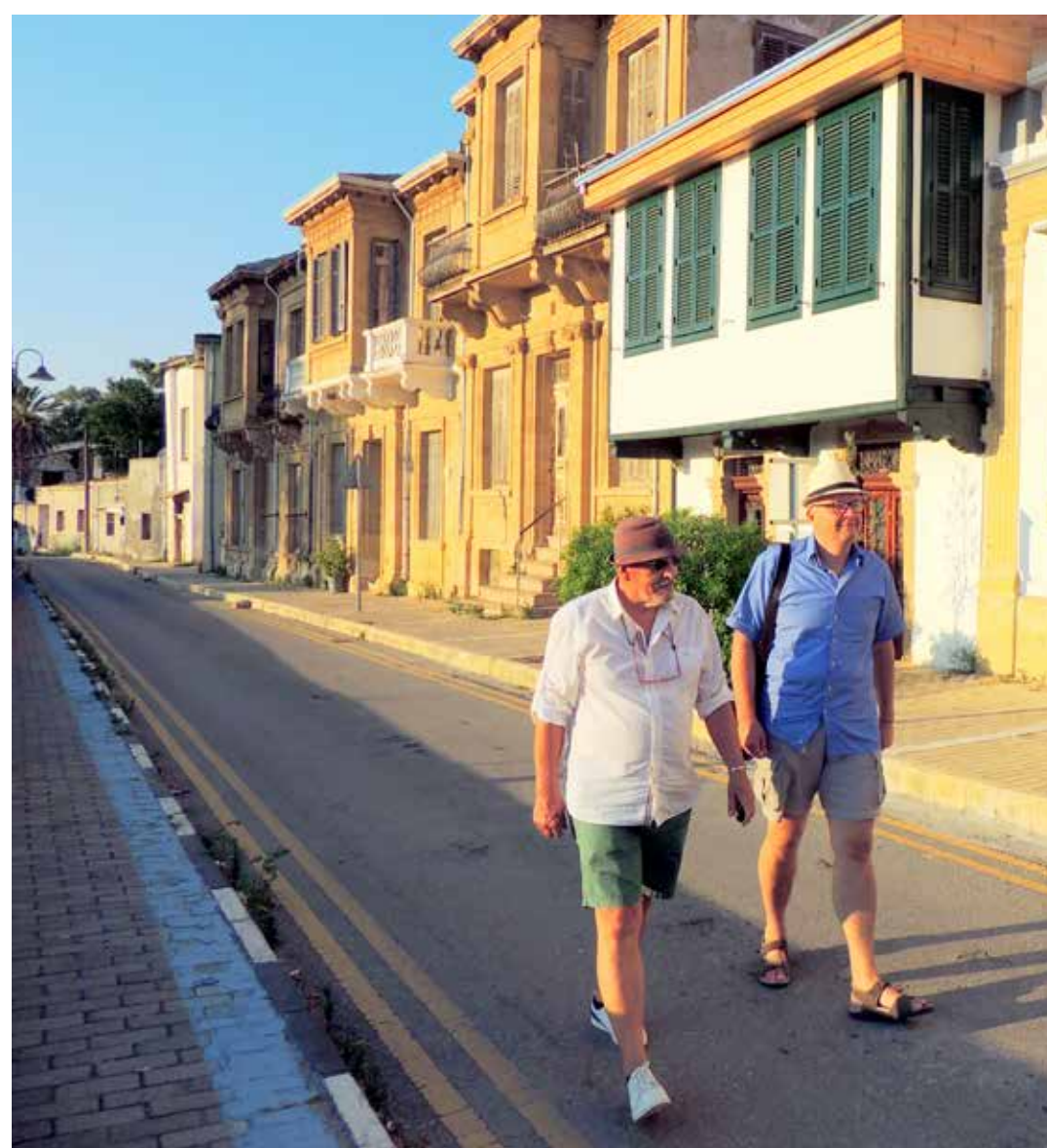
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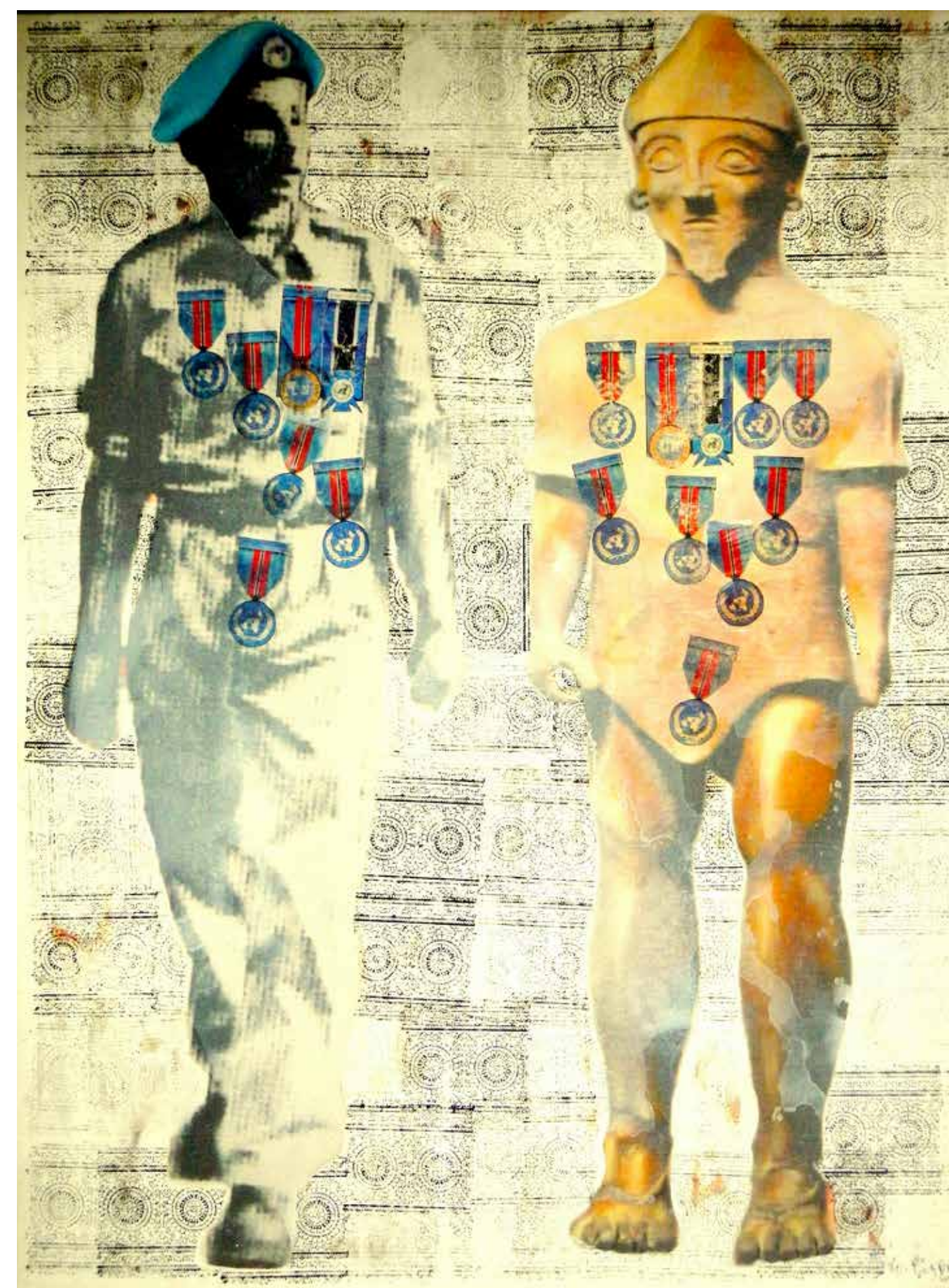
Daily *re-mapped* geographies

In his interview series titled *Peripatetic*, Necmi Sönmez meets the Cypriot artist Emin Çizenel. Visiting Çizenel in his studio, Sönmez talks about the artist's approach towards the concepts of migration, belonging, identity and the life on the island as they walked through various historical spots in Cyprus



EMİN ÇİZENEL & NECMİ SÖNMEZ, PHOTO: ANBER ONAR

Interview: Necmi Sönmez



EMİN ÇİZENEL, PEACE PRIZE ANTIQUES, OIL ON CANVAS, 120 X 160 CM, 2010
(NICOSIA MUNICIPALITY COLLECTION)

I've been following Emin Çizenel for years. After I met him in İstanbul in May, I wanted to go to Cyprus, see his works, and walk with him along the borders of this separated island. This was my first time on the island, and it was a nice surprise to start talking while swimming rather than walking. Çizenel often uses the word "i(sla)n(d)teresting" (adasantrik) and I was able to have a visual and physical sense of that feeling as we were talking in Nicosia on a long and narrow street that used to be called Victoria. We were constantly surrounded by that "different" identity that is neither Greek nor Turkish during our tours, as we swam and while climbing the mountains of Bellapais and Kozan.

I reviewed your works from the last 30 years. One tendency of yours seems to be unique among your generation: forgetting what you know and adopting new and varying techniques.

I repeatedly express my desire to start every day as an amateur, as a newbie. My profession requires re-building myself from scratch every day. Creating my own surrounding, I'm always after new expressions and novel paths. Creativity is dumbstruck by ex-

perience and gets weary, if you ask me. Throughout my youth I had this feeling. I'm coming from a family which had to migrate twice due to political reasons and re-start twice after losing everything. Chasing novelty seems to be the only path for survival. This feeling of "re-establishment" emerges as a defence mechanism in my works.

Migrating twice... When exactly did that happen?

It first happened in 1964. Ten thousand fully armed soldiers attacked where we used to live: Malya. This was a wealthy region that attracted much attention due to its vineyards. Grapes of the famous Cypriot wine used to grow here. My family used to own a vineyard. Four days after the attack, all was destroyed. My family and I fled into a safer area taking little with us and leaving everything behind. Later in my youth and during high school I was part of the militia. That was the case for everyone back then. The second wave of migration arrived in 1974. It was a definite rupture. Leaving everything behind, re-starting a separated life and taking shelter in it have become a schizophrenic reality. These two migrations naturally created in me a sense of rootlessness.

One can say that my desire to start a new journey every day is partly derived from this personal history. My painting defies the repetition of one single style. Experience shouldn't force you to repeat certain habitual movements.

During my visit in your workshop, I realized that your latest works contain fabric, which proves what you have just said. The frequent appearance of a triangular pattern immediately attracts attention there. How did you start this series?

Tailors from the villages in Cyprus used to keep every little piece after sewing a dress. They rather used to fold them into a triangle and then sew together in some sort of a *patchwork*. They remind me of people sitting at a stadium. Each triangle becomes a memory of someone and bears a trace. Years later these patterns are used in my works. My initial idea was to create giant and three-dimensional forms; yet, in the series titled *Unofficial Teams* each triangle appears as a portrait. This series contains autobiographical aspects. Unofficial records of instances from different lives... Albeit unofficial, they belong to a reality.

Then they emerge as some sort of a collage or an assemblage. It is remarkably difficult to define how sewing, kerchief printing and painting techniques meet in those works.

They are not simply kerchief printing, but woodblock seals that the orthodox used to imprint on bread during the Easter. In *Unofficial Teams* I used them as well as even older kerchief print-

ing. Employing different techniques on the same surface, a feeling of rhythm inescapably emerges. This artistic intervention was critical to the success of those works. This series needed a different intervention. And I realized that kerchief printing enabled some sort of harmony between those triangular fabrics.

During my visit in your workshop, I realized your focus on the political and social history of Cyprus no matter what it is that you experiment with. They all appear as metaphors in your works. Can we argue that your approach to Cypriotness is often political?

One must be extra careful here. I don't intend to exoticize this. Rather than creating slogans or narrating stories, my works intend to be an integral part of this island. Just like drawers where one can find multi-layered structures and dig into the private history of an artist... Rejecting exoticized expressions, these drawers contain visualized and metaphorical pieces. "The other side" of my thoughts on this island is the form of act that I chose for myself. Destiny as it might look, these adventures in my life emerge as images in the form of a second "island/insula" in my body and soul. And they expect explanations: They will form those familiar crowds with great, mysterious, agonizing love stories – and they live lonely on distant lands surrounded by dark waters. The most difficult bit is to stay strong among everyday problems.

Spaces, fictional characters, a whispering sea, all sorts of smells, those that chase principles in tales, daily re-mapped geographies, books that are thin or thick, coward heroes...



EMİN ÇİZENEL, UNOFFICIAL TEAMS, OIL ON CANVAS, 25 X 25 CM (EACH / 16 PIECE), 2018

MUTLULUK RESİMLERİMİZ NUR KOÇAK

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3 EYLÜL - 29 ARALIK

It should be that “i(sla)n(d)teresting” feeling that resides between the past and the present. I have this curious sensation since my arrival to Cyprus that every corner is occupied by layers of mythologies. Is that connected to Cypriotness?

A calendar spatialized by the concept of time seems to be our destiny. Spaces, fictional characters, a whispering sea, all sorts of smells, those that chase principles in tales, daily re-mapped geographies, books that are thin or thick, coward heroes... They are all ironically

interrelated. Just like those “i(sla)n(d)teresting” artists, politicians, dealers, fanatics enraged at their neighbours, peace corps in their fancy uniforms, carnivores turning their back to the sea... It's like looking at those mortals struggling with worldly “issues” from above where the immortals live. I believe that we look for paths following a physical map; I often continue from where I previously missed and then create a space where time cannot fly away once again. It has certain humour in it, yet it also tastes quite bitter.

**My painting defies the repetition of one single style.
Experience shouldn't force you to repeat certain
habitual movements.**



EMİN ÇİZENEL, PEACE PRIZE ANTIQUES - LOG BOOK, OIL ON CANVAS, 120 X 160 CM, 2010
(NICOSIA MUNICIPALITY COLLECTION)



EMİN ÇİZENEL, SYNCOPATION (DIPTYCH), PIGMENT ON FELT,
80 X 130 CM (EACH), 2005

ÖZ ÇEVİRİ-M SELF/ TRANS-LA TION SUDARSHAN SHETTY



Küratör / Curator
Hasan Bülent Kahraman

10 Eylül / September 2019

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The *partly-cloudy* hopes of memory

Aret Gıcır's new exhibition, *Waiting for Life*, opens at Öktem Aykut on September 6.

We visited the artist at his studio in Tokatlıyan Han just before the opening of his exhibition and took a closer look on his latest works

Words: Sinan Eren Erk

Photography: Elif Kahveci

A few hours had passed since the night crowd had dispersed and the municipality's sanitation team had cleaned the roads with their small vehicles when something that no one had expected happened. A deafening, sudden explosion with dark reds, oranges, and yellows—some unlucky people were running in all directions within seconds and some who were even unluckier had collapsed in pain within a few seconds. The silence was replaced by screams and life was replaced by fear and death. The terrorist attack on March 19, 2016, had killed four people, not including the suicide bomber, and had caused injury to 36 more.

The visual images from the attack were quickly shared on TV channels and on social media, right at that short time period before the agenda would shift completely. We saw the ball of fire that ruthlessly swallowed those who lost their lives, fragments that dispersed all over the place—we did not know whether these “fragments” belonged to human bodies or to objects—, people running, not knowing what they were trying to protect themselves from, fearful. We saw these images countless times across different media. We felt lucky that disaster had not struck us, but despite the horrible nature of the images that we saw, we did not feel nauseous. The anxiety evoked by the attack dissipated as quickly as it had arrived and it was replaced by other things. All of us, buried underneath the layers of daily information, forgot all about it within a few days or until similar things had happened.

Aret Gıcır is one of those people who did not forget that day. Gıcır is an artist who places such socio-cultural ruptures, history and observation at the center of his practice. By reconstructing the social context of testimony, as he has done in his previous exhibitions, he brings together noumenon with the phenomenon and thus initiates communication with his viewers from within the same world. He lets his intuition to guide him towards notions of belonging, identity, perception, memory, coincidence, observation, control, and process. In his own words, he catches “what’s in the air” and relays it. One of his primary motivations is scrutinizing social change meticulously, with a detective-like attitude, tracing transformation, questioning and producing. Conceptual diversity is reflected in his style—he mixes the abstract with the figurative to varying degrees. A “trigger” towards the figurative within his multi-dimensional and complex production process made up of various elements was the terror attack on İstiklâl Avenue.

Although he uses side streets to get to his studio, located not too far away from where the events had taken place, he took the main road that day to run an errand and he passed by the explosion site 15 minutes prior and survived serendipitously. As that day left a deep impact on him, he rewatched the camera footage: “I noticed something strange when I viewed the camera footage: There was a cloud of color rather than blood or horror. You see a lot more than just blood. Then I started thinking about what I could do with all of these. I wanted it to be something that also spoke to the process.”

This is how Aret Gıcır began to work on his exhibition *Waiting for Life* almost two years ago, due to open on September 6 at Öktem Aykut. First he produced a series of images where the image of the explosion was at the center, but as he worked on what he had in mind, the ideas shifted and the process transformed both the artist and his works. The first canvases that emerged from the process, the artist believes, did not correctly reveal what he had in mind and so he began a new series. These new works that were more abstract were rooted in the same tragedy, but he purposefully changed the elements that would recall gloom and inertness; he used what is not readily definable, colors and movement. Sometimes he used objects from the explosion images, changing them in the process as he changed the human faces not to have eyes or noses and sometimes he just focused on the process and the emotion. While pulling out the abstract from within the worldly, he left behind death, horror, and fear in the pulp of the image. Gıcır thus took the hope that was his share from the pain of





this attack and let that hope blossom. He included himself in the states of becoming that he was painting and he started to wait with them in the works and he transformed alongside them. The ideas that surpassed the images became visible on the canvas with hopes of transcending their own images, as Brochard articulated the state of representations gaining a presence. "No matter how talented you are, you need to spend a lot of time thinking about what you are going to do. Otherwise, it doesn't work. You need to know what you are going to paint and what you are not going to paint," says the artist when talking about the story of the exhibition; he has a pensive air, reflecting the mood of the books in his studio, mostly on subjects of art and philosophy.

In this exhibition, the artist uniquely relates the boundaries of the act of waiting to that state of going back and forth between existence and the void, just like Schrödinger's cat. The sentences on the walls of Öktem Aykut point to hope with the open-ended sentences installed on the walls of Öktem Aykut, thus making sure that we are not separated from the reality of the event, pulling us into reading the process and moving back and forth, just like a pendulum. Emotions overflow from the fluid and chaotic space and create a new universe in the canvases where space, perception, and being are bent. Through his works and with a unique method, Gıdır softly deconstructs and transforms visually areas of certainty that people today have flooded with today's lifestyle promises—humans who Nietzsche defines as the strangest of animals, deformed, injured to, removed from their intuitions.



*Translator's note: Both citations were translated from the Turkish translations of the cited texts.

¹⁹As long as I assess my perceptions as simple sensations, they are personal, they only belong to me. If I consider them to be acquired by the intellect and if perception is an inspection of that mind and if the perceived object is an idea, then you and I would be talking about the same world and we have the right to communicate."

Merleau-Ponty, Maurice (2017). *Primacy of Perception*, Alfa Publishing, trans: Yusuf Yıldırım

²⁰"If the object can change, then I know that the image is not equal to my concept. Concept, if we were to use (William) Hamilton's articulation, holds a universal identity. Thought has to take on a form that can be sensed, revealing itself to be an object or a particular example; it takes a breath here, but is not imprisoned within. It exceeds the images that articulate it and it can be fleshed out in different images just a bit later."

Brochard, Victor (1943). *Essay on Mistakes*, Ankara University Language History and Geography Faculty

KARMAN

Gonzaga / Luca De Bona & Dario De Meo, Matteo Ugolini



Gonzaga'yı incelemek için kodu okutunuz.

TEPTA
AYDINLATMA

A modern museum in Odunpazarı

The Chairman of Polimeks Holding and collector Erol Tabanca brings together his long-standing collection to the public through the museum he has founded in his hometown, Eskişehir. Odunpazarı Modern Museum's (OMM) first exhibition is *Vuslat*, curated by Haldun Dostoglu. For this occasion we met with Tabanca and Dostoglu to talk about the collection, Eskişehir and the museum, which is due to open on the September 7th



HALDUN DOSTOĞLU & EROL TABANCA, PHOTO: ELİF KAHVECİ

Interview: Özge Yılmaz

Erol Tabanca has been continuing his collection, which he started to create with only passion, for 17 years without seeing it as an investment tool or a financial source. At one point Tabanca decided to present his collection to the public. Thus, the idea of Odunpazarı Modern Museum emerged, whose preparations have spread over the last few years and which will be opened this month in Odunpazarı, Eskişehir. Tabanca, despite being an architect himself, chose to work with an international name in this museum to be opened in his hometown, so the project was entrusted to the Japanese architecture office Kengo Kuma and Associates (KKAA).

Among other cities of Turkey, Eskişehir has a high quality of life. Perhaps even the highest. With its high population university students and long-standing concept of successful municipality, Eskişehir is becoming a leading light as days go by. I believe that Odunpazarı Modern Museum will make an important contribution to the cultural and artistic life of the city. Moreover, with the exhibitions, speeches and education programs in Odunpazarı Modern Museum's program, it is underlined that culture and art are not just a privilege of metropolises; and contemporary art will become more accessible not only for Eskişehir but also for all the surrounding cities. OMM's first exhibition *Vuslat* includes selected works from the collection and it is curated by Haldun Dostoglu, who is a friend of Tabanca for many years. The opening exhibition will also feature the special installation of Japanese bamboo craftsman Tanabe Chikuunsai IV and Marshmallow Laser Feast's virtual reality experience called *In the Eyes of the Animal*. I recently met with Erol Tabanca and Haldun Dostoglu, and listened to the museum's story and goals from them.

Mr. Erol, you are a successful architect. Does your interest in arts date back to your school years?

ET: You're right, architecture is an art, as well. Therefore, I saw the other elements of art throughout my school life and I was impressed by them. My education has a hundred percent effect on my interest in the arts.

Have there been any particular themes or periods that you've focused on in your collection? Or, with a holistic view now, can you say, "The collection is taking form around these particular axes"?

ET: I think it's been 16 or 17 years since I started the collection. In fact, the starting point was never like "Let's make a museum, we're going to be collectors." As you say, in the course of life people have some inclinations. Starting with my education, there was something about fine arts: an approach, an appreciation within me. But years after I came to Istanbul, my friend was buying some paintings at an auction, so I wanted to buy one, too. That was the very beginning. The point where I could take the piece of work in my hands and say, "It's mine." Then, it continued: "Well, that's good, we can put this in the house. Let's get another one, it's also fine." I think I had no collector's consciousness then. Afterwards, of course, these numbers started to increase. In this process, I have realized one thing: I rather have an interest and appreciation in modern and contemporary art. We met Defne Casaretto five or six years ago. Defne, thankfully, approached it differently with her knowledge to date. I mean, "We could shape our collection in this direction," or "We could enrich our collection like this," she said. Mr. Haldun and I have actually known each other for a very long time. Therefore, we collaborated with him, as well. Every now and then, I asked his ideas about what we should do about the collection.

Eskişehir stands in a very different place today. It is a university city that has become more and more popular in recent years. What's more, it tops the lists of the most liveable cities in Turkey. What contributions will OMM make to the cultural life of the city?

ET: In the view of my childhood experiences, friendship is very prominent in Anatolian cities. When we were kids in Eskişehir, we used to meet each other without making appointments. There was a Hamam Yolu Street, you would definitely meet someone on that street in the afternoon. Education was very good at that time, too. There were always good schools. Eskişehir has always been a highly intellectual city. Now, of course, the student population has grown dramatically. And indeed, Mayor Yılmaz Büyükerşen contributed a great deal. They have provided a great service to the cultural life of Eskişehir. I hear a lot, there are people who have moved from Istanbul to Eskişehir and started working at the university there. Those who come to study often don't want to leave. It is a great pride... The city has such a texture, and I hope it doesn't become tainted, because people enjoy it.

HD: Of course, if we are looking at culture in general, culture is not consumed only in metropolises. The culture is also consumed in cities with rather secondary, tertiary populations. But İstanbul has so persistently taken the lead for years that it was not easy to break it. İzmir tried a lot, Ankara a little, but Eskişehir is a unique place. The cultural infrastructure of the city is already established and a new era will start with a museum designed by an international architect with such an important collection. In fact, I'm really curious about the consequences of this. What kind of fluctuation will there be, how will it be perceived, how will the art community watches this excitement? I also wonder the answer to that. If the culture and arts scene in our country will develop more and we will reach to a climate where people can feel better, this museum will be one of the very important triggers of this.

The project of Odunpazarı Modern Museum belongs to Kengo Kuma and Associates. Architect Kengo Kuma is a star architect. Also, Odunpazarı is a very special area. How did your cooperation take shape? How does the museum building relate to the fabric of the city?

ET: I am an architect; we have a very successful architectural group. But as the idea of such a museum began to develop, we decided to add another meaning to it. To tell the truth, we were inspired by Guggenheim Bilbao and Frank Gehry, because the Bilbao effect is something that needs to be underlined and delved into. Eskişehir is an Anatolian city, it has a potential in itself. At that time, one of the ways to take that forward was to come together with a world brand. With our friends' advices, we reached Kengo Kuma, with whom our friends were already in touch. He also looked very positively. I contacted him, then he visited Eskişehir and agreed to work with us.

That was actually a radical attitude on its scale. Otherwise, we can open a museum and we do the project ourselves, of course. And besides the museum is located in a neighbourhood like Odunpazarı, where there are important examples of our civil architecture. As a matter of fact, we get questions like, "Oh, why doesn't it fit in there?" Because it's mediocre to construct a similar building next to the ones from the 1800s and early 1900s. We wanted to create a contrast, which is also a radical attitude. Because we want to make people realize, make people feel; so when the project came out, it made us all very excited. Kengo Kuma proved his respect for the material in his design.

From its architecture to its management, I see that there is a "new generation museum" aspect of OMM, and I am pleased to see that this is a conscious choice.

ET: By the way, I don't know if Mr. Haldun is aware of it, but I think he performed a very radical curation. We're probably the museum with the youngest artists. All these radical attitudes will turn the museum into something unique. My daughter İdil studied arts abroad, and now she is the chairwoman of the museum, and she has some radical attitudes in her own way. Of course, it's not like we don't have generational conflicts. For example, when İdil said that she was considering having Dilara Fındıkoğlu design the clothes of the museum staff, I said, "Where did that come from, there are a lot of places selling uniforms near Spice Bazaar. We can buy the uniforms of the workers and the guards from there." But those designs were made and I'm very happy now. Besides, we think such surprises will excite visitors, as well.

Mr. Haldun, I know you have architectural background, as well and you've worked hard for the museum. What do you think about Kuma's design and the relationship between the museum building and Odunpazarı?

HD: We know that Kuma was inspired by Seljuk architecture when he designed OMM. Because if you look at the building from the top you can notice various levels it bears. Of course, in today's museum architecture, the outer shell has become very important. The most photographed part is the facade of the building,

ODUNPAZARI MODERN MUSEUM, KENGO KUMA AND ASSOCIATES (KKAA) ESKİŞEHİR, 2019, PHOTO: BATUHAN KESKİNER





ODUNPAZARI MODERN MÜZE, KENGO KUMA AND ASSOCIATES (KKA), ESKİŞEHİR, 2019
FOTOĞRAF: BATUHAN KESKİNER

whether you like it or not. After all, I think OMM has an extraordinary shell. But of course, it's not the outer shell that matters. The part that interested us most was how this architectural space gives opportunities to artists and exhibition organizers for exhibiting their works inside. At the end of the day, an organic structure emerged where spaces were intertwined with one another at variable volume and variable ceiling heights.

Such an organic structure does not offer a circulation like a usual modern architecture building. It does not say "Enter here, exit here", you discover the building yourself. You get surprises as you explore. We set up the exhibition in almost four months. I mean, we always thought about how we could adapt this architectural opportunity easily by trying the 90 pieces in different spots. I think the most important part here was the decision on Tanebe's work because it's been exhibited in very difficult hall with a ceiling height of ten meters.

Tanebe is a internationally acclaimed third-generation bamboo artist who has collaborated with very important institutions but he is not well known in Turkey. He came to the museum, dreamed for two days, then did an extraordinary job in 15 days, and it almost became the museum's trademark work. Tanebe's work is a very good example of the meeting of architecture and art.

We see an unfamiliar museum architecture in here, OMM. I would like to ask how this choice of architecture -no white cubes- affected you positively or negatively while curating *Vuslat*. And I wonder how you decided on the exhibition title.

HD: Sure, let me start with the latter. Now, when we took responsibility of such an exhibition, we actually worked a little bit to see if we could do it with someone else, and then one afternoon Mr. Erol called, "Mr Haldun, you are doing this job," he said (laughing). You know, there's over a thousand works. I looked at that pool first. What are the parameters now? There is a collector, he has a collection, and for the first time a museum will open in an Anatolian city. The selection made from that collection will be exhibited for the first time in a museum to be opened in an Anatolian city. And it's being designed by an international architect. So, a few such things are brought together here. At first, the collector didn't think at all, he didn't say, "I'll open a museum in the future," but finally he came up with the idea of opening a museum 15 years later. So, he had a dream, that dream is coming true. Let's look at it from Eskişehir's perspective, perhaps Mr. Yılmaz was thinking about it. He said, "How nice would it be if such a museum was opened in this city." Thus, the city was expecting something like this. There are so many students, indeed, the ability and potential of Anadolu University Faculty of Fine Arts here are not negligible among the fine arts faculties in Turkey, they are teaching at a very high standard. The education given by many other fine arts colleges is very bad, on the other hand. In addition, some stayed in warehouses for years, some hung on office walls, very few met the audience. When we think about it in terms of artworks, they will also meet the audience. So, when he said "to meet, meeting" like this, the name *Vuslat* (meeting) came out of there. I'm from the generation that loves Yahya Kemal, and I love his poetry named *Vuslat*. So that's where the idea came from. Then when we were thinking about whether or not this exhibition should be thematic, I realized that we shouldn't feel under the pressure of doing a thematic exhibition. And I summarized it as follows: "*Vuslat* is a reunion exhibition, an exhibition of meeting dreams with reality, an exhibition of coming to light in terms of works and sharing with the public, an exhibition of meeting with the audience."

That's the main idea which shaped us. A collector, he has given away his almost 20 years, given his energy, given his passion and wants to meet his dreams. It comes from the heart, I'll use that word a few times. In fact, he also said earlier, he didn't buy them with thoughts like "I'll make a collection, and a museum in the future," he created with his heart. So we wanted to reflect that, not to set up a tiny thing here in five minutes. This is the collection of a man of heart, bought with his heart, which we will witness for the first time. While the audience is watching, they should be able to see how the collector developed his vision in the process of creating that collection. As Mr. Erol has just said, the works of both a newly graduated person and an artist who died 50 years ago are exhibited in the same hall. Different visions, different generations under the same roof. Thus, we can see how a vision develops and changes through that. Both the artist's vision and the collector's vision. *Vuslat* is an exhibition that gives us the opportunity to see this. And it is a multi-voice exhibition, which brings together the works of artists who work in different mediums such as sculpture, painting, pattern and video. In our sector, I am very uncomfortable with always looking at the monetary side of the business or, seeing them as investment or something... I think the opposite, none of the collectors do collections for investment purposes, if they do, we do not call them collectors. Therefore, I have an expectation that the audience will engage with the works in this exhibition, with an affair of heart.

Apart from *Vuslat*, the museum's first program includes the work of Tanabe Chikuunsai IV, who will use bamboo -a traditional material-. We also know that he designed the bamboo work with the inspiration he received from the museum building and Eskişehir. Marshmallow Laser Feast will take part as the work he will create using virtual reality, with the opposite perspective. How these two names were scheduled to take place in the inaugural program?

ET: Sure, we should talk about this as well, but first, there have been very special situations with each artist, I want to explain that. I want to share this because it's actually a story of humanity. Tanebe has already been in our minds for a long time. And when we were looking for an artist that would fit into that very special place, we thought of him, and we wanted to get in touch with Tanebe. Of course, in the building of a Japanese architect, we also thought that a work of a Japanese artist would make sense at the opening. He came to explore the interior of the museum and he was very interested in the subject. He, then, came with him team and started working. I went once during this process, but I was always in touch. Our staff there also loved the team. Later, they sent me a video. They were done, Tanebe and his friends were leaving. They were repeatedly hugging the coordinator of the project working there, the engineer working on the site, the watchman of the construction site and the workers in tears, leaving. This was incredible. We made five people from the far end of the world and friends with five people from our country. There's no greater task than that.

**"Eskişehir is a unique place.
The cultural infrastructure
of the city is already established
and a new era will start with
a museum designed by an
international architect with
such an important collection"**

Haldun Dostoglu

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VERSUS ART PROJECT

Second, it's about Marshmallow. When my daughter İdil was in London one day, she phoned me and told me that she saw a very nice work at the Saatchi Gallery and wanted to exhibit it at the museum. When she met the artists the next day, she found out that one of them (Ersinhan) was from Turkey and, moreover, from Eskişehir. In fact, his birth certificate says Odunpazarı. For him, it was just a name written on his ID. Yet, after he came to install the work and the time he spent in Eskişehir, now he describes himself as someone from Odunpazarı. Life gives everyone tasks, but I think there are great human stories that we sometimes notice and sometimes don't. We also want the museum to have a whole different connection with digital arts.

HD: Now a story of humanity has come to my mind. They worked there for 15 days, and I was there for one or two days. From the first day of the museum's construction to today, there is still a 24-hour team working there. The guards are there, the construction crew, the housekeeper... Our team watched how the Japanese worked for 15 days and they said they learned a discipline of work. They saw Tanebe working and admired his discipline, his diligence. I would also like to explain a symbolic side of it: Tanebe, who uses traditional material, is the choice of Mr. Erol; and Marshmallow Laser Feast is the choice of the younger generation.

Marshmallow Laser Feast's projects *Treehugger* and *In the Eyes of the Animal* are not included in the collection. There will be a periodic cooperation, won't there?

ET: Yeah, right. But I think there's something out there that the public needs to learn about the Marshmallow Laser Feast. It doesn't start as "art," it starts

as "environmental consciousness". So all of Marshmallow's works is about making people ask "What in the world should we do in the coming period?". They study forests in the San Francisco area, west of the United States. There are trees that are three thousand years old, and when they look historically, they see that most of these trees were cut down and used to build structures during America's westward expansion. The most important reason why trees last for three thousand years is that they don't burn. It can last for three thousand years because it doesn't burn, but when they cut down the trees, the trees begin to decompose after a certain period of time. Ersinhan said that 75 percent of the land creatures live on those trees. Therefore, we care a lot about projects that will raise this kind of environmental awareness.

Will we continue to see a part of the collection as a permanent exhibition when *Vuslat* ends? How will be the balance of temporary and permanent exhibitions? What is the annual program of Odunpazarı Modern Museum?

HD: The museum staff is working on the answers to exactly what you ask. They are preparing programs, what will be displayed after *Vuslat*, what will be performed in the program, etc.

ET: Of course, I would like to add a few things. Mr. Haldun mentioned a little while ago; there are over a thousand works, for example, we have worked on how to place 90 works at the moment. Which means, at the moment, only 10 percent of the collection is on display. So, if we exhibit even 10 percent of our collection every three months -which is likely to save room for other exhibitions- then we have a few more years to exhibit the entire collection. That is, unless we're going

to add nothing new to our collection in the meantime. We have built a boutique hotel next to the museum, hopefully you'll see when you visit. The main purpose of the boutique hotel is to provide accommodation for artists from outside during the *workshops*. They're going to stay there and work in workshops, sort of like an artist *residence*.

HD: There will be intertwined exhibitions. They are to be exhibited both as the permanent collection, and in accordance with the architecture of the museum.

ET: However, one day, even this may happen, a very big exhibition may come and all the works may be removed. Ultimately, the range is wide.

Making exhibitions is not the only task of museums, side events and educational programs are vital as well. Are side events such as panels, film screenings and education programs also included in the program of OMM?

HD: Yes, the team is already working on it, even my speech date is already set. The education team is also working. The museum will periodically invite the architects and collectors as well as artists whose works are on display. The museum is an organism, after all. You have to keep that organism alive, and the organism needs to constantly refresh itself.

ET: Now there is a wax museum of Mayor Büyükerşen there, there are queues of 250 meters in winter, which reach 500 meters in summer. Because the city receives a lot of local tourists, especially from the surrounding provinces. Indeed, I am very satisfied by Eskişehir. Odunpazarı Modern Museum will enrich it with all its programs.



TANABE CHIKUUNSAI IV, INSTALLATION, 2019, PHOTO: KEMAL SEÇKİN

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If you are interested just know that *it is complicated*

Founded by Okay Karadayılar and Ali Taptık, Onagöre carries out some very exciting and satisfying projects. We met with the duo that also designed the visual identity of 16th Istanbul Biennial, in order to look over their works closely and get to know their working universe better



OKAY KARADAYILAR, ALI TAPTİK

Interview: Merve Akar Akgün

Photograph: Elif Kahveci



A DETAIL FROM 16TH ISTANBUL BIENNIAL VISUAL IDENTITY DESIGN

Could you please tell us about your relationship with IKSÜ?

Okay Karadayılar: First we got acquainted during the 3rd Design Biennale while I was designing Beatriz Colomina's and Mark Wigley's book *Are We Human?* Taking the advice of Esen Karol a group of designers took the initiative so that designers from Turkey. Then, we did the visual identity of Vardiya, the project that took place in Pavilion of Turkey for the latest Venice Architecture Biennale. Next year, we were amongst the designers who were selected to design Venice Art Biennale. We have done YAY-POP (a publication on publishing) parallel to the exhibition with Merve Ünsal as the editor.

What comprise a visual identity project?

Ali Taptık: It is about producing a design that will mark the exhibition in people's head visually and showing the topics that the event wants to discuss.

OK: It can also be understood as an institutional identity. We are working so that we can express everything from one language. We are designing from file and the content of the press release to the website and social media content. It is a work that we do to tell the language of the exhibition without seeing the language of the exhibition. When we first started the design for this year's exhibition in Pavilion of Turkey at Venice Biennial the content of the show was unclear. We have thought about how to represent the atmosphere that Ms. İnci narrated us. Our approach was to distil the message of the exhibition and make it ingestible.

What do you do for the Biennale now?

OK: Biennale is a very large scaled activity. There are three main venues and we have prepared three different announcements. These emerged after the discussions that we held with Nicolas. Since it has three different designs it gives the sensation that this is a trivet. We thought about how to take a closer look and a reverse look to the plastic garbage, which forms the seventh continent. These express graphics that are isolated versions of the gathered from pieces gathered from the ocean and that they are above the writings express that they are slowly dominating everything.

AT: It was a multiplexed and multi-layered work. We have this situation of not being sufficient to ourselves... A continent that constitutes of plastics, ecology... However, these key words were not sufficient for us. We questioned ourselves about what we know and what more we can share with people.

OK: We believed that this was a topic to be expanded in many different areas, in the situations that are believed to come true in the future. Then we watched a video on the Internet: Space Garbage. Indeed, this was on the verge of becoming a problem. There is a theory that with the trigger of a chain reaction, old, unused satellites would be exploding one another while staying in the orbit and in time they would form a cage around the World and lock us in. Space is infinite. How come do we have garbage in there? Obviously human beings pollute space too. We are just showing what is there without making any comment. If we proceed from there, we will see the environment among human beings that is gradually polluted, that is crowded and shouty.

AT: They say that in order to watch the videos that are uploaded on YouTube in a day, one must spend four years. We have this website that we like a lot and it opens YouTube videos that no one watches. (<http://astronaut.io/>) There is this data pile that is mistakenly recorded and accumulated and unwatched videos. You can also call it a garbage.

BAHAR [SPRING] 13TH SHARJAH BIENNIAL OFF-SITE PROJECT IN ISTANBUL, 2017



OK: We have the biennale just to ponder these.

Did the change in the venue impact your design?

OK: We remade our venue diagrams from scratch. Biennial has two publications. One is the guide that will accompany the visitor and the other is an accumulation called *Field Report*. It has a long article by Nicolas on art in global warming times. And it also has a project that he exclusively made for this book: *Reply to All*. Curator sent an email in which all of the artists are cc'ed. Everyone responded to the question and the conversation continued from the subjects that are mentioned. Just like a forum...

Global warming is now called global heating.

OK: Yes, even instead of climate change it is called climate crises.

Greta Thunberg has created a huge awareness around the vocabulary that we use. We all have a duty, although sometimes our individual sensitivities remain meaningless when compared to this big scale... The theme of *Seventh Continent* is sounds really good to me. What is your take on this issue?

OK: It is a very recent topic. It is discussed much less in Turkey though. But everyone is aware. Even there is pessimism about what we do not having an effect beside what big companies do, we always have a choice: not to eat meat or not to travel on an airplane. Acting as groups may wake up bulky structures. I think biennales are necessary to convey those messages.

It also is striking... What is your take on the impact of the biennale's communication programmes on the society?

AT: During a discussion we talked about "Which biennale, when did it take place and what were the topics and how were the the topics approached?" For example, it is easy to narrate the *Seventh Continent* but it is not as easy as it seems. There is this system of network that creates the theme. That you cannot change everything by blaming someone or changing one single thing, that in this global communication era everyone has way more information, that fake information and alternative realities complicate the topic and human beings get squashed under this... How do we get out of this? How can we be not scared of this? We set out from the cities; cities that are ever-growing. We were thinking whether we should be placing the seventh continent within the city but Nicolas told us not to belittle the topic more and leave the topic big and abstract. Or at least that was my understanding of it. It is hard to tell what it is from far but you see that there is a pollution and dirtiness as you get closer.

Big scale exhibitions such as biennale has the objective of reaching out to more people by the end of the day... I am talking through my father or a person such as my father who is not so much interested in art. The communication model that you designed is crucial. What is the responsibility that you undertake?

AT: Within the scope of Biennale's communication, we also are part of the space yet we don't have control over it. IKSİV owns the advertisement campaign.

Last year's Biennale's *A good neighbour* themed advertisement campaign was successful... Well, how concerned were you about my father's possibility of comprehension of Biennale?

AT: We work with the conviction that people we address are as smart as we are: our aim is not to narrate a concept without narrowing it down and to construct something within an order if it is complicated.

OK: It is as if conveying the complexity and telling them "if you are interested in this subject, come knowing that this is complicated..."

Keep afraid of contemporary art.

OK: This is an issue that we always discuss but cannot resolve. I think the problem lies in the fact that we discuss this at different levels. It requires effort to get into this discussion. Nicolas' whole idea revolves around the fact that; he invites us to approach to the issue from different angles and profoundly. For us, this was the approach that would address this invitation correctly. In the end these works are not advertisements. They don't have an appeal but they are interesting. They make you question "What is this?" They attract people inside but they don't immediately sell anything. They are not trying to convey their messages through reminding other things, through sex or alluring you into the temptation of other things. Rather than thinking about the things you desire, this could serve as a steppingstone. Indeed micro plastics garbage and social media garbage are things that can be connected at similar levels. We always claim that if you can establish these connections, you can go places and see other connections too.

So, apart from biennale what else do you do nowadays?

AT: We still do works of visual identity and book design. We worked for Ara Güler Museum for Sinem Dişli's new exhibition. In Beirut Art Centre a series of mine about the tropic of Capricorn and censorship is exhibiting as well as YAY-POP. We're designing a book for a client architecture office that works between New York and Beirut. HEY! Imaginable Guidelines is an on-going project that we work with Şanal Architecture.

OK: Our main focus is on designing books. For us this means meeting all of the needs as a content meets the audience. This could be a raw word document or an idea... Most of the time the books are not ready finished materials. We arrange these things as we are on our path. If there is claim for a deadline, that pushing is always reflects negatively to the book. This is a problem that we face very often. You know it closely...

It is not easy to produce a project in a short period of time. This, usually develops as a chain reaction. I can not stop thinking if last minute manner of doing things is a cultural approach or not.



İSMAIL SARAY, 2018, BOOK DESIGN



FÜREYA, 2017, IDENTITY, BOOK AND LOGO DESIGN

OK: I don't know the reasons but I know how to solve: making plans and going by them. In our case Ali does the plans since I am not a very organized person myself. Calculating the time something requires, not belittling it, predicting is really important. All of this comes with an experience. We have this problem. We are not after projects that can be understood only with two images on Instagram. Cover of the book will not be enough to express its content. A books narrative consists of how these elements come together.

You are constructing an identity through this brand. This is particularly important. Ok, lets talk about art publishing in Turkey. We can do comparisons based on your experience in abroad.

OK: I think we clearly state that rather than the book, prestige that comes along with the book is appreciated more in Turkey. However, there are people who say "even though we know about the most basic things to be done, we don't do them; on the other hand there are people who say, "they do." As in everywhere... There are a thousand and one ways to talk about a chair. It is one thing to go and say "Here is the chair, go sit." Or you can get into the history of sitting and claim that it is a wooden thing that supports your waist. It is another thing. We think that especially something that narrate/introduce the venue of a complicated thing such as art should definitely construct a visual world. This equals to the time. It means working for a long time on things that are maybe rubbish.

AT: I mean the museums abroad start working three to four years before. Art magazines usually offset and publish nearly one or two months ago. Geographical complexity impacts that planning. Here we have a big mistake. These can only be achieved through planning more profoundly, with a more developed and calm publishing understanding. Institutions that are specialized about art publishing are still very young. The oldest one is Istanbul Modern and it is fifteen years old. Also Proje4L (now Elgiz Museum)...

OK: Publishers who know what they are doing very well and who has a profound history have certain toughness. There are situations where we want to say: "Ok, we get it, you are the defenders of the same idea." As a positive side to this, in Turkey everything is rediscovered from scratch and this causes the emerging

16. İSTANBUL BİENALİ PARALEL ETKİNLİĞİ 09.09.-17.11.2019

TEK BİR USTA SEÇ-DOĞA* CHOOSE ONLY ONE MASTER-NATURE*

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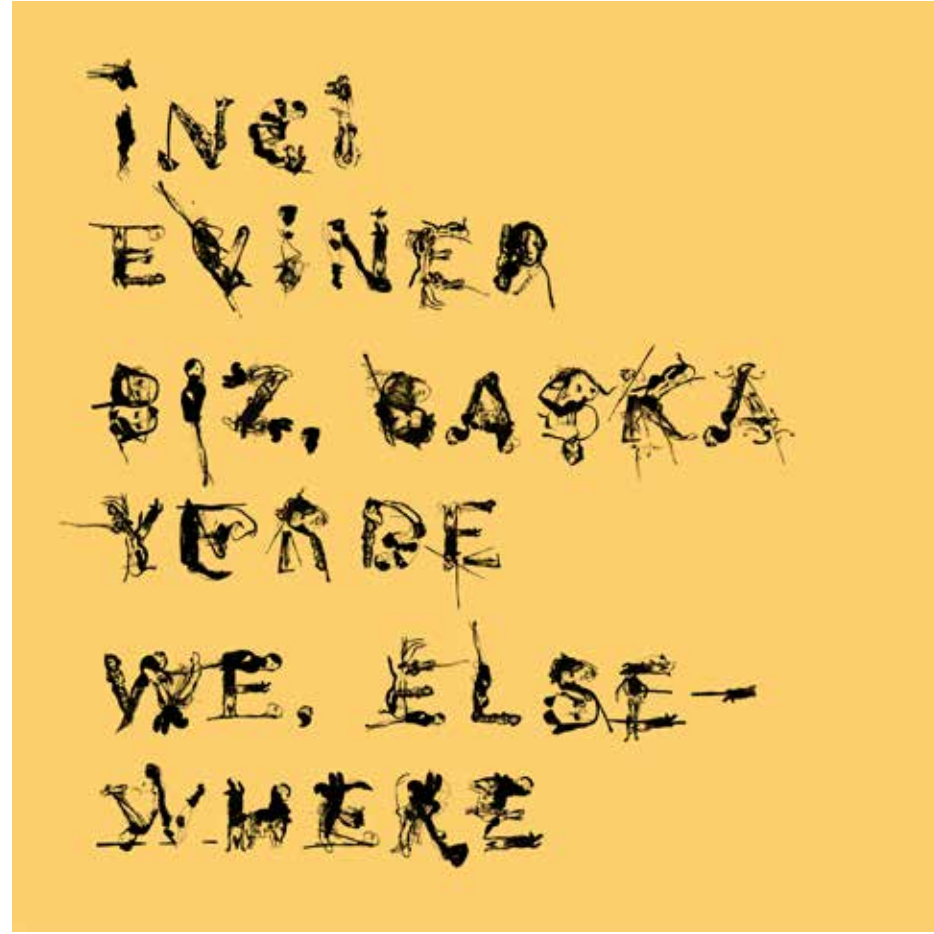
Serdar Ömer Paşa Caddesi No: 11
Beyoğlu / İstanbul
e info@muzeevliyagil.com
www.muzeevliyagil.com

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KÜRATÖR | CURATOR
BERAL MADRA

SANATÇILAR | ARTISTS

AHMET ELHAN · ALİ KABAŞ · CAN AKGÜMÜŞ
EŞREF ÜREN · GÜVEN İNCİRLİOĞLU · HANDAN BÖRÜTEÇENE
MEMO KÖSEMEN · NİLHAN SESALAN · RAZİYE KUBAT
SADIK ARI · SERHAT KİRAZ · SİBEL HORADA



İNCİ EVİNER, WE ELSEWHERE, VENICE BIENNALE 58TH INTERNATIONAL ART EXHIBITION, PAVILION OF TURKEY VISUAL IDENTITY DESIGN

of authentic things. First you need to understand the thing that you're going to narrate. People who are involved in these projects and these sector are very devoted. They perform their professions with a certain desire, enthusiasm and devotedness. For that reason, they produce lots of Works that are above a certain level of quality. Since you do not learn how to do things from a professor, each time interesting things happens. And I believe this is beautiful too. It is also one of our shortcomings that this has to be communicated to the whole world. Maybe we do not produce as much as the western countries but they are qualified enough and worthy of attention.

AT: My argument is slightly different. I think there is a lack of publishers. Art publishing is conducted mostly through institutions. Publishing requires a long time and experience it is not something that we can not do. The problem lies within the fact that they are originally not publishers. They need to get services from mechanism such as distributors or publicity companies so that these books and publishing reach out to many more people.

OK: Publisher is the person who takes the responsibility and who makes profit out of it. This is a commercial business. In purchasing and selling art Works maybe there is a trade but art publishing in Turkey is something that is generally distributed as gifts, that is purchased with a sponsor and is tried to sold at a cheap price, is printed at small quantities for a limited number of certain followers, it doesn't develop. I don't know if there are many who desire this as much as we do.

Yes, art books generally are not printed by publishers. They are rather published by museums and galleries...

AT: Because the cost of the books is really high.

OK: I wonder if there is anyone making profits out of this. I doubt that there would be any institution that profits from art publishing. At least, if a publisher can make itself economically sustainable with a social profit... Models in Europe are smaller, new, inexperienced and institutions who are not used to publish books constantly, that these institutions cooperate with such publishers.

OK: In Europe there are some funds, some government supported formations and foundations. For example think about a book that is to be done for an exhibition. Sponsor's expectation is clear: "Is my logo on the cover?" Is there a contradictory visual for people I am going to gift to? Their relationships with the job is generally are at this level. On the other hand, it comes to me that institutions such as foundations approach with the attitude that "We trust what you do, here is the money, saying that we have contributed to your work is enough for us." It has levels of course but the real expected profit is contribution to cultural production. Contemporary art is an area where we can see this overcome thanks to so many sponsorships... As it touches on many political topics at the same time, it is a highly wide area.

It is a wide area but it is still an area where we see difficulties in reaching out to people.

AT: Cultured upper middle class has never made peace with contemporary art.

OK: We have at least 50 years until the day this art area is established. Okay, there is too much communication, everything can be read by everyone... We claim that we are comprehensible but for something's to be established or enter into the radar of the people it is not enough that we are organizing 16th of Biennale.

Time is important. Only a small fraction of those who have received their share of the education is interested in this... I am not defending that ev-

erybody should be interested in art but generally speaking we see closeness against contemporary art. There is this slight disdain... We should always go back to the beginning and tell. How do we close this gap? This is an important question. Second of all, Istanbul is a city of twenty million people. This is significant and empowering. But so few of these twenty millions of people are interested in art... In this context, it could be more pleasant to see more inclusive attitudes from big scale exhibitions.

OK: Let me get into this from a bigger perspective. As a result, dealing with art, saving time for art, sharing a space in your mind is a characteristic structure. When it comes to Turkish comedy movies we see that lots of people watch it. So, it has a commercial success and they're being produced. People need art. But people perceive that the profit of art is about escaping. But art is good for you as a bitter medicament. Art is something that you can use in your life. You can recognise yourself and see things about humanity through art. The reason why art is conceived differently in Western countries is the welfare that they preserve since long time. They are born into it. They do not question if they will be making the same amount of Money tomorrow. So, they can look inside. I don't find it realistic to break the link between. Maybe you can construct a village but you must let the people walk by themselves.

That bridge is evidently constructed with classical arts. With modern and after that contemporary art we see planets getting within. I am obsessed with this since I do contemporary art magazine. A lot of cultured, university graduate friends who take their children to the museum comments after the exhibitions " This is funny, I mean contemporary art is completely ridiculous." What can impact those people? For them to at least stay interested? Of course not every work of art is a good example. Eye will discern the good as it observes. This, also is a process. I think only if more people are interested, it would be better. I take a responsibility. I think you also have a responsibility.

AT: I think the established phenomenon in Turkey "reaching to the level of the contemporary civilisations" creates this weird psychotic situation. Let me explain it this way: While we are giving a tour for an exhibition one of my students told me "I come here, I find these things ugly, I don't understand. I feel bad." I said, "Don't be foolish, why do you feel bad? Go do whatever you want to do then come and write, "this is bad". We need to trust ourselves first.

OK: Approval part is really important. In publishing also. We automatically position an exhibition opened by a big institution in a good place. That institution owns a capital and when they approve an artist it may cut off the ties with the rest of the people. Who is supporting contemporary art? Rich people of Turkey and Europe. They automatically think that their thoughts are represented.

AT: When there is a Larry Clark exhibition in Paris, there is a queue up to the far end of the city. Because there are people who bridge the gap. These discussions need to be popular before they get shallow.

OK: It may get shallow if needs to... Art exists so that you can question it. Not for you to accept it and become a disciple. Really, when the main supporter is a capital, people question it. Some people even refrain from entering those giant, monumental buildings. Small artists' initiatives work really hard. Those are the people who get into relationships with the neighbourhood directly. There are initiatives trying to keep that soul through books such as border_less Art Book Days, Fuam... Bas' artist books collection is now exhibiting at Torun. This is a loss for Istanbul but a huge gain for Ankara.



María Paz BasCuñan

19⁰⁹ - 09¹¹

SYNCRETIC

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No: 39 Beşiktaş - İSTANBUL

KRANKI art
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Le MERIDIEN
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A different *breaking point* in Italian design



YAMAN ERTURAN

Istanbul and Ankara will be hosting two world famous names of Italian design in September. Within the scope of exhibition and events that will be organized by Italian Embassy, Mozaik, B&B Italia and Bilkent University Architectural Faculty, Italy's cult architect Caccia Dominioni's cousins; soldier, author, engineer, designer and architect Paolo Caccia Dominioni and architect, designer and urban planner Luigi Caccia Dominioni will be presenting their works to those who are interested in art and design. With Mozaik's owner Yaman Erturan, one of the co-executives of the project, we have discussed these events, which focus on to 1950s Italian design with different perspectives

Interview: Sami Kısaoğlu



Could you please elaborate what the name Luigi Caccia Dominioni mean to the Italian design and design culture in the World?

After the World War II, a complex phenomenon where there are different cultural components in architecture surged in Milano. Luigi Caccia Dominioni devoted himself to a classical approach that gets its inspiration from industry and bears futuristic and nationalistic values. Rejecting the decorative and traditional approach, simplifying in line with the eclectic and personal choices, defended the abstract and geometric style. Thanks to this approach, he succeeded in not only producing modern object but also becoming an architect who challenges time.

It is especially impossible to think about urban architecture that develops after World War II in Milano without Caccia Dominioni. There is this phenomenon that is called "Caccia effect" in Italian architecture. If we are to give an example, when Antonio Citterio designed Bulgari Hotel in 2004, it presented as a structure, which made open references to Caccia Dominioni. After that we have seen similar references in the Works of architect Steven Holl and cino Zucchi. Can we please talk about the general qualities of Caccia Dominioni's architecture?

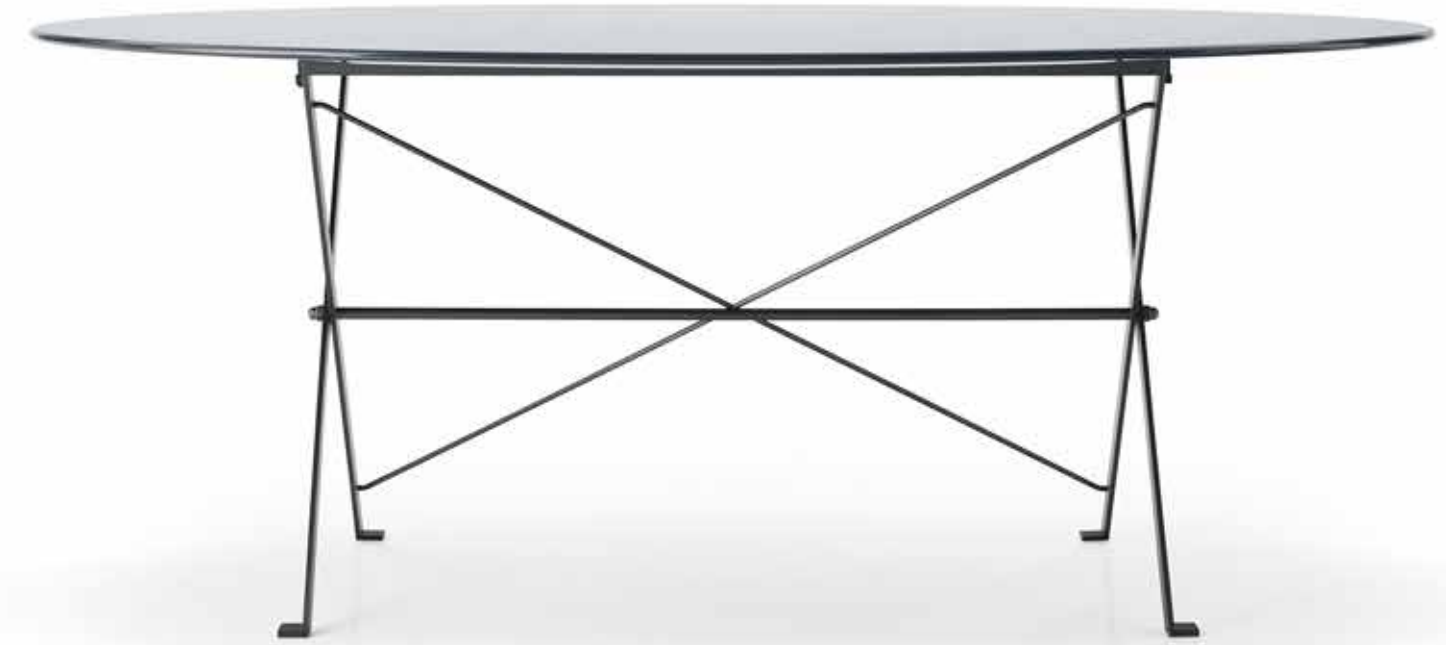
I believe that it is impossible to think about Italian architecture without Luigi Caccia Dominioni's works which inspires greatly to the Italian architecture. We can clearly see the Luigi Caccia's architectural talent, his devotion to baroque movement's passion for form and details in all of the buildings he has made in every corner of the city that he was born. No one can summarize the values of Milan aristoc-

racy better than Caccia. One of the reasons of his being such a successful architect is that he is synthesizing cultural and traditional limitations meticulously combining historical awareness with creativity. We see that not surrendering the nostalgia and bringing it to our day summarizes everything about Caccia's authenticity. For that reason it is possible to see "Caccia Effect" in the examples that you count.

Dominioni surname kept going in the design and architecture history in the aftermath of Luigi Caccia Dominioni too. One of his cousins Luigi Caccia Dominioni is at the same time is the person who designed the Project of Italian Embassy's premises in Ankara and who manages construction works between 1938-1940. Can we please discuss the architectural qualities of Italian Embassy in Ankara of and the architectural approach he brought?

Instead of constructing one single monumental building, he aims to design buildings one of each will provide different services, in different measures and forms and when we take a look at the embassy building in general we see the desire to create "city within city". Paolo Caccia Dominioni defined Ankara Embassy as "a community complex rather than an official building", both in social or cultural sense as well as thinking about "An Italy far from Italy".

Within the range of the activities that you have planned, both in Ankara and İstanbul, there is a special exhibition which displays works from the Azucena Collection that belong to Luigi Caccia Dominioni. Could you please elaborate on the variety of the design objects within the scope of the exhibition and the importance that they have?



TOP: CILINDRO, 1963
BOTTOM: CAVALLETTO TABLE, 1960

Calitina chair in which materials are elegantly used, has an elegant look rather than comfort. The product that takes its name from one of the Senators of Roman Empire, Lucio Sergio Catilina and that makes references to the middle age thrones is still accepted as one of the most important designs of Dominioni. The Cilindro pouf that he designed in 1963 which has impeccable proportion and elegance is one of the most iconic pieces of the 1970s. While Cavalletto dinner table represents craftsmanship in Lombardy and Veneto area, ABCD armchair is designed to meet the needs of the contemporary life. Chiotto armchair which has unusual measures is one of the products that we are exhibiting. In pursuit of protecting Luigi Caccia Dominioni's rich design heritage B&B Italia purchased Azucena brand's rights and gave life to 20 new products again.

There is this *Open day* to be organized by Italy Embassy. Can we learn about the details of this event which is opening its doors to Architecture department students and scholars? We know that the event will continue in İstanbul.

Prof. Cristina Pallini from Politecnico di Milano and Prof. Giorgio Gasco from Bilkent University are joining as speakers to our event that will take place in Italy Embassy on September 10th. Prof. Cristina Pallini will hold conversations with Paolo Caccia Dominioni about the architectural structure of the building, after that Prof. Giorgio Gasco will make a presentation about Azucena Collection and Luigi Caccia Dominioni. The event that we are going to hold in İstanbul on September 12th will be at Venice Palace; with the participations of Italian Ambassador and B&B Italia's honorary chairman Giorgio Busnelli. We will be pleased to host our guests in this special event whose inauguration speech will be delivered by Busnelli.

**As a part of the events series,
which aims to make Italian
design and architecture
more well known in Turkey's
design scene, Venice Palace -the
residence of Italian Ambassador
in İstanbul- will host an event
on September 12nd. In the event
there will be a special exhibition,
consisting of design objects from
Azucena Collection that belongs
to Luigi Caccia Dominioni**



CATILINA CHAIR, 1958



HAYATA DOKUN

Akıllı baston WeWALK ile engeller kalkıyor,
görme engelliler hayata dokunuyor.

WeWALK



The Whole Planet Was Inside



DENİZ ARTUN, PHOTO: AHMET SEL

Following its closure in 2016, Maçka Sanat Galerisi is hosting one of the parallel events in the 16th Istanbul Biennial. *The Whole Planet Was Inside* is curated by Galeri Nev Ankara's director Deniz Artun and exhibited in MSG's own space for 16th Istanbul Biennial

Interview: Nergis Abiyeva

Founded in 1976 by sisters Varlık Yalman and Rabia Çapa, Maçka Sanat Galerisi had been a leading institution for forty years in Turkey, opening space for contemporary art and promoting discussions in the field. During their 40th year in 2016, MSG published books, engaged in archival work and exhibited its archives. The concluding exhibition of the gallery was *Tectonic Impressions* by Mehmet Konuralp, who was also the architect of the exhibition space. After this three-year gap, MSG is hosting *The Whole Planet Was Inside*, curated by Galeri Nev Ankara's director Deniz Artun as a parallel event in 16th Istanbul Biennial. The common features of these two galleries are not only the list of artists they exhibit, but also the positions they take as institutions. Throughout their history, they followed their own exhibition programs rather than mimicking the trends and market values. We talked with Deniz Artun, the second-generation gallerist of Nev who previously curated exhibitions at various spaces in Istanbul such as Depo, Galata Rum İlkokulu and Galerist. Our focus was the exhibition they will exhibit in MSG's own space, its focus as well as the issues it refers to. *The Whole Planet Was Inside* is open between September 11th and October 19th.

Let us start with the exhibition title. *The Whole Planet Was Inside* reminded me of the first venue of Nev in Ankara: Gezegen (Planet) street. I had visited that venue a few times for NevArşiv. But then you told me that the title refers to a quote from *The Dispossessed* by Ursula K. le Guin. Can you elaborate on this?

It's not a reference to *The Dispossessed* or that fictional dystopia. When I told Zeren (Göktan) about the exhibition, she happened to recommend Ursula le Guin to find a title. I did open *The Dispossessed* once again and "The whole planet was inside!" – on the first page, in one of the first lines... Then I closed it right away. I'm always reserved not to be carried away by the prophecies of le Guin. Since the ecological focus in the title of Istanbul Biennial refers to *The Seventh Continent*, we were led to imagine life on other planets if the earth becomes completely uninhabitable one day. Following this starting point, the exhibition forced us to explore to act and breathe in novel ways. Artistic and philosophical representations of other modes of existence have thus joined together in this exhibition. It's been fifty years since mankind has landed on the Moon, can we still migrate without landing on other moons?

The idea behind this exhibition is to create a brand new world where all beings free themselves from their skins, desert their familiar bodies and adopt new ones. And the works repeatedly underline (some simply shout) that one can find new beings "inside" rather than "outside", and the world we destroy or re-establish also resides "inside". I wasn't thinking of the connection that you referred to, but since this exhibition features Erol Akyavaş, Yüksel Arslan and Nejad Devrim, whom we exhibited plenty of times in Gezegen Street, may be that "planet" also resides "inside" the world we establish here. Who knows...

Maçka Sanat Galerisi was founded in 1976 in Istanbul to create space for contemporary art. Nev was founded in 1984 and its exhibition program was based on the artists from the Paris School after the WWII as well as their contemporaries who followed them. There are common artists whom both Maçka Sanat Galerisi and Nev exhibit. How did this common trait play a role as you planned the exhibition?

Rabia Çapa keeps a list of Turkish artists in Paris – these records contain their addresses and phone numbers. I checked it again, the list is from 1977. The initially typewritten records were then annotated with coloured pens. I adore this list as an aesthetic object, and the core artists of Galeri Nev almost completely overlap: Nejad Devrim, Mübin Orhon, Hakkı Anlı, Selim Turan, Tiraje Dikmen, Abidin Dino, Albert Bitran, İlhan Koman, Yüksel Arslan... As we were planning an exhibition in Maçka Sanat Galerisi, we wanted to feature all common artists (over the years the list extended to include Seyhun Topuz, İpek Duben, Melike Abasiyanik, Neşe Erdok, Nur Koçak, Azade Köker, Adnan Çoker, Ömer Uluç, Utku Varlık, Mengü Ertel, Alaettin Aksoy, Komet, Mehmet Güleriyüz, Koray Ariş, Serhat Kiraz, Canan Tolon among others) and thus exhibit our common understanding and horizon! The exhibition could then manifest our responsibilities in the art history as well as our moral standpoint in the art market.

But then we decided to open it during 16th Istanbul Biennial and connect it to their theme. Our firm belief that one should introspect into our own bodies, under our skins to explore a new continent rather than distant skies led us to a piece by Candeğer Furtun – the one that we featured in the exhibition. Placing this piece to the centre then meant a focus on "exclusive" names rather than common artists. As an artist exhibited in Maçka Sanat Galerisi but not in Nev, Candeğer Furtun is then surrounded by artists who are exhibited by Galeri Nev but not in MSG.



NERMİN KURA, PRIMORDIAL, COIL BUILT STONEWARE, MID RANGE AND LOW FIRE GLAZES, 38X35.5X18 CM, 2019



MEHTAP BAYDU, THE DISTANCE BETWEEN ME AND EVERYTHING ELSE, POLYESTER CAST, 180X127 CM, 2017

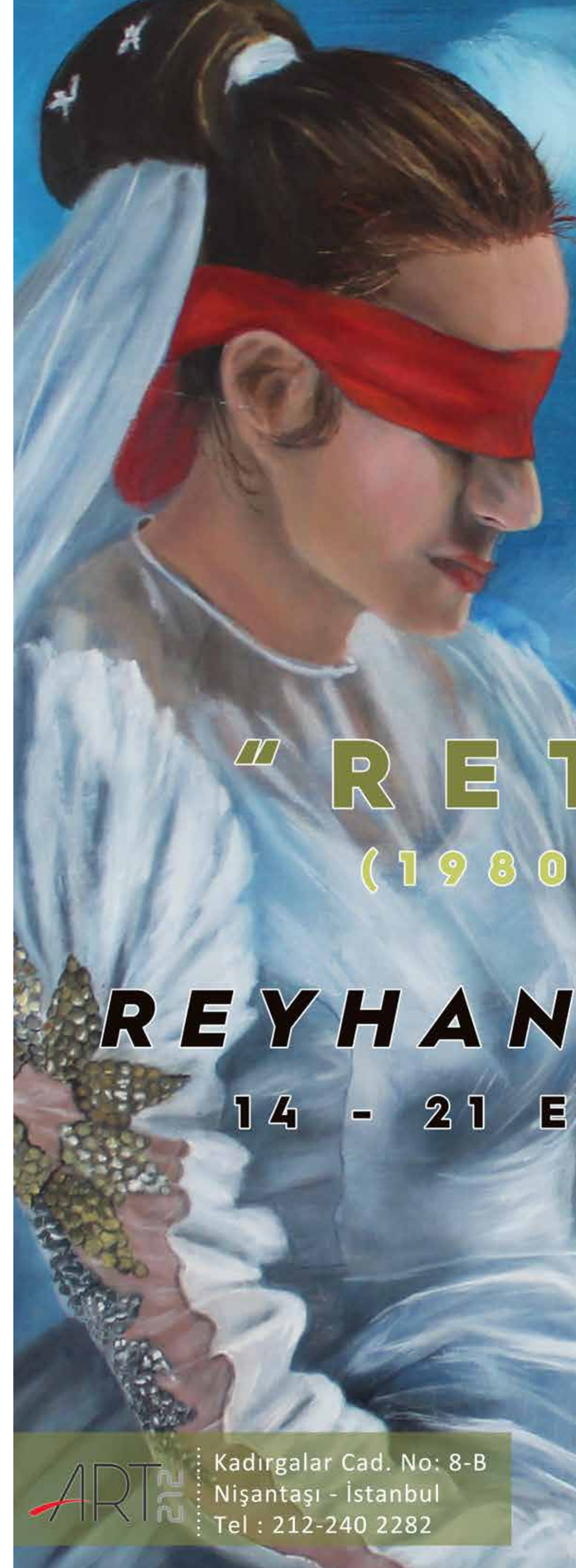
What you just said is very important and it has a lot to do with your art historical perspective. When I was working on the archives of Maçka Sanat Galerisi, I was deeply impressed by that inspiring relationship between the ceramic sculptures of Candeğer Furtun and the ceramic tiles of the gallery and those talks on contemporary ceramic art organized in parallel to Furtun's exhibitions (which would later be published). What does that focus on Furtun's ceramic sculpture mean to you for this exhibition? Does that offer a discourse on ceramic or contemporary ceramic art?

I'm not sure if we offer a discourse that champions contemporary ceramic art. I think we rather look for "fragility" in our search for the exhibition's focus, independent of any material. Compared to the works of Candeğer Furtun, the exhibited works of Nermin Kura are much more fragile – technically speaking. Frilled layers, seeds made of nacre, tiny little buds that extend here and there... In one of her art pieces, Kura even crated a very thin eggshell and re-shaped it. The sentiments they convey, however, are far from being fragile. They are rather excited and enthusiastic – blooming and exploding. As opposed to the contemplation found in the works of Furtun, they are impatient to leave their cocoons, seeds and shells. The same fragility is there in the introspective nude drawing by Nejad Devrim. Although their materials are fragile, the sculptures by Necla Rüzgar again display great courage since the women rest on the animal power and lean on their strong bodies. Their unbreakable courage relies on a great poetic intermingling between mankind and animals.

MSG also stands as a site of memory for İstanbul. A gallery that also you visited for exhibitions... Do you remember the first exhibition that you saw in MSG? Which exhibition was the most memorable to you? Which one has the most lasting influence on you?

Unfortunately I can't recall the first exhibition I visited, yet I do remember that I was deeply immersed in the legs by Candeğer Furtun and the glass perfume bottles by Nur Koçak in the opening exhibition of Santralİstanbul. I must have seen the works by Nur Koçak in a book or catalogue since they were somewhat familiar to me. Yet that familiarity was replaced by astounding

EDA GEÇİKMEZ, VENUS, OIL COLOR ON CANVAS, 100X100 CM, 2019



"RETRO"
(1980 - 2019)

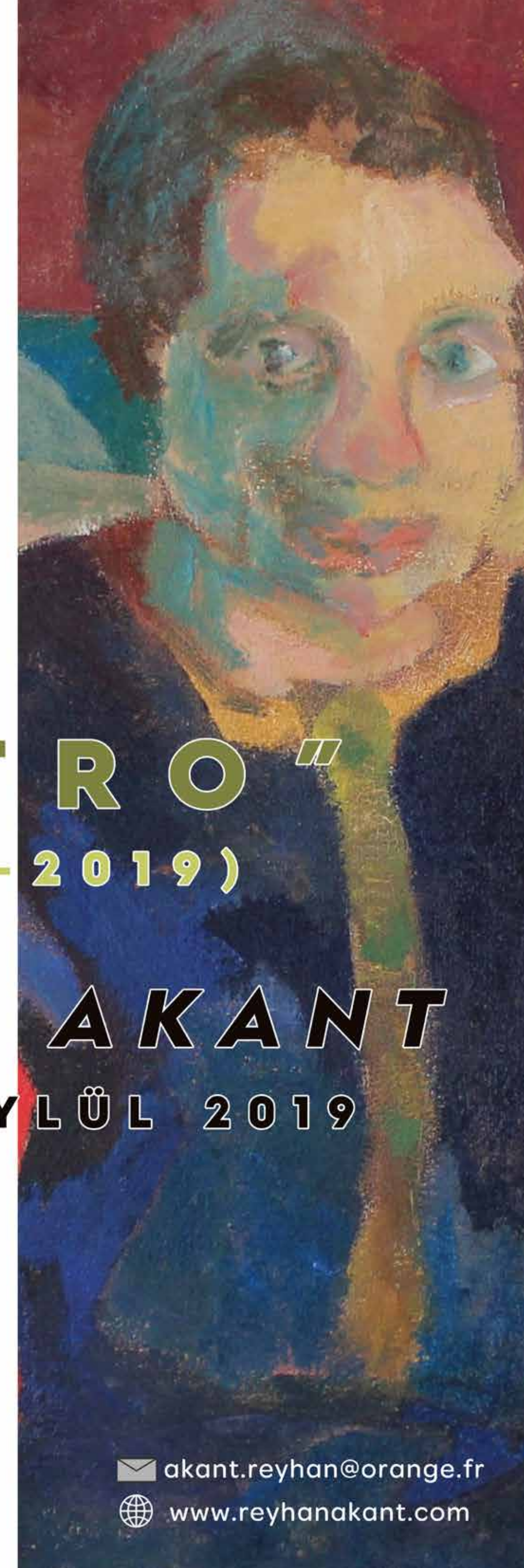
REYHAN AKANT

14 - 21 EYLÜL 2019

ART 212

Kadırgalar Cad. No: 8-B
Nişantaşı - İstanbul
Tel : 212-240 2282

✉ akant.reyhan@orange.fr
🌐 www.reyhanakant.com



impressions when I was physically confronted with them – they were breath-taking and almost overwhelming. Candegir Furtun was almost completely unknown to me and I simply felt embarrassed. That meant a huge void in my relation to the world not only as an art historian, a sociologist or a new gallerist, but as a woman as well – and I had to make up for it at once!

In the following years I realized how avantgarde the art historical and sociological standpoints of Furtun and her contemporaries are thanks to the archives of Mačka Sanat Galerisi. When Zeynep Rona introduced me with most of these women artists years later for the project titled NevNadir, my 25-year-old-excitement was very much alive. Here I must confess that Rabia Çapa is surely one of those “women artists”. Just like the glass perfume bottles of Nur Koçak, I carry with me an image of Rabia Çapa’s from my youth – although I never know how and where I get it. Meeting her in person, I’m often speechless as in my experience with perfume bottles. What I gradually learned and what makes her puzzlingly admirable is her avantgarde position in history and society. Now it occurs to me that in 1993 I visited the Daniel Buren exhibition. We had a train trip to İstanbul, my father must have taken me to Mačka for the first time.

How did you imagine this exhibition surrounded by the peculiar ceramic tiles of the venue? The famous niche of the gallery should be the greatest architectural challenge here. How will you use that niche? And then there is that back hall... During the first few years of MSG, that is to say when Varlık Yalman was alive and the partner of the gallery, that section was used to showcase and sell objects, fabrics and accessories that belong to the Anatolian folk art so that the contemporary art exhibitions in the front hall could be financially supported. Later it was used either together as single space or separately for other contemporary art exhibitions. How do you (or actually do you) use that back hall?

Our initial idea was to place a piece we borrowed from MSG’s past into that niche. The figure we had in mind belonged to Candegir Furtun and was previously exhibited right there. This idea of repetition was very exciting. But then “duplication” or “echo” was the most impressing element in Furtun. This figure with her knees pulled in, sitting shy looks striking when it repeats – it “screams” as I previously told you, it echoes perfectly. Therefore, it had to be exhibited in three pieces rather than alone. The niche then was filled with a piece by Erol Akyavaş. As we focused on planets and universes that reside inside, I referred to his *Bâtmi* (internal) and *Zâhiri* (external) images so often that it is no surprise that you find Akyavaş in that niche – if that space should be reserved for the guest of honour.

At the very beginning, when we first walked into the gallery with the knowledge that we’ll organize an exhibition there, the back hall wouldn’t be included in the event. At that moment no one felt this would leave some “missing” link. But then looking into the photographs from the archive, I had the chance to see the 1989 exhibition by Ayşe Erkmen. Boxes made of sheet steel formed a semi-circle that extends from one hall into the other, which reminded you of the skeleton of a legendary creature that once lived inside. Then I understood the integrity of spaces in MSG. Without the back hall and without running one full circle inside the venue, we would be betraying the architect Mehmet Konuralp, my idol Varlık Yalman whose name always intrigued me (“varlık” means “being”), and other legends of that space. If one could not breathe all around the venue, his/her lungs could at once fail – or so we believed. Now “the whole planet” is inside the venues of the two galleries and the iconic library of Rabia Çapa. As for the tiles... So many artists have so aptly dealt with those tiles that any specific focus in our exhibition could mean over-ambition. We took them as they are without any intervention. On the other hand, like everyone else I was also super curious about the future of those tiles when Rabia Çapa “waved goodbye” to the gallery after her fortieth year. I can assure you that it feels relieving to see those tiles where they belong to. Once I saw a website that sold pieces of stones collected on the Moon and they said “Think about it, you can do anything with these stones, you can watch them, place them on a shelf, or simply eat them to possess the powers of the Moon” but then there was the song that said “Moonstones belong to moonshine...”



SEFER MEMİŞOĞLU, THE FEET, MECHANICAL PENCIL ON ARCHIVAL PAPER, 37.2X50 CM, 2017

ALL IMAGES ARE
COURTESY OF GALERİ NEV

NİLBAR GÜREŞ

MIKNATIS VE AY
MAGNET AND THE MOON

06.09 | 12.10.2019

KÜRATÖR | CURATOR KEVSER GÜLER



MEŞRUTİYET CAD. NO 67/1
TEPEBAŞI BEYOĞLU 34430
İSTANBUL TÜRKİYE
T + 90 212 252 1896

info@galerist.com.tr
galerist.com.tr

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GALERIST



GÖKŞEN BUĞRA, PHOTO: ELİF KAHVECİ

Part Whole, on literature and art

We interviewed Gökşen Buğra, director of Art On Istanbul, curator and writer. We talked about her projects, the relationship between poetry and contemporary art, historicization of art in Turkey and Sezer Tansuğ, all of which was outlined by art and literature

Interview: Sami Kısaoğlu

Could we talk about the exhibition series *Part Whole*, with which you open the season and the second in the series of exhibitions that you launched last year? Could you elaborate on the conceptual framework and the subtexts of these exhibitions?

The exhibition series *Part Whole* emerges from my concentration on the readings that I have been doing for a while. I was in graduate school in the department of Turkish Literature at Bilkent. Mehmet Kalpaklı was teaching Ottoman Literature. He began the first class by drawing some structures on the board. He talked about how these structures all followed each other. Then he said that this was a series of structures at the Topkapı Palace and how the buildings changed with additions from different sultans. He then constructed the relationship between these structures and Ottoman poetry and he talked about how the palace and poetry were products of the same imagination. I was very impressed. I gained a foundation in perception through this experience; I was able to delve further into analysis of form. Furthermore, Sezer Tansuğ has an impeccable deconstruction of the Topkapı Palace. He researched how the relationship between the whole and the part is constructed in Eastern art, the eclectic structure. This eclectic structure functions as an entity and as a whole on its own, but can also be perceived together with others. In 2017, as we were preparing a publication for Mithat Şen's *İstif*, we had published Sezer Tansuğ's essay, *Structural Integrity*. This text is a resource that I use to talk about the relationship between the whole and the part. The text has an approach that does not treat the issue as a duality, including relating through inclusion. This exhibition is rooted in my literary background. "What could I discover through researching such a structure in visual arts? Could I propose a reading of the work through the relationship of the part and the whole? These are the questions that I started off with. I'm convinced that artistic production and the questions I direct to their mental structures can give rise to more questions that will be inspiring.

Part Whole exhibitions include publications as well as exhibitions, right?

The publication of *Part Whole* is bigger and more important for me than the exhibition. Because when I was preparing this book, I was driven by a desire to leave behind a permanent record for art history. How is it possible to discover an artist's world through a single concept? How is it possible to open up and to interpret their world? How is it possible to analyze their whole practice through tracing this one concept? There are one or two examples that we were able to show in this exhibition, but this is expanded on in the book; through the part-whole trajectory, we look at the artist's older works and different series chronologically and we

re-assess them. Throughout this process, we look at different examples of works by the artist and we see their transformation and we also present a small introspective to the viewer. Thus, the book is bigger than the exhibition. The exhibition is renewed each year and the books follow each other, giving us more resources to analyze. I refrained from writing or commissioning a text for the first book for this purpose. I preferred to talk to the artist. I chose to be the means through which processes could be analyzed; presenting things that maybe they had not realized themselves, using their language to communicate these. The introductory and analytical texts that I wrote were explanations of the curatorial perspective that I followed. I'm going to keep doing the interviews, but I want to commission guest writers to write to introductory texts so that this concept is not limited or trademarked to me.

You include artists that you do not represent in the *Part Whole* exhibitions. Could you talk about the artist selection in these exhibitions? What is your methodology?

I prefer to work with artists from Turkey on purpose. The effort to "leave behind a document that serves as an archive to art history" is based on an ideal to get rid of a void here. Through including an artist that is represented by the gallery, I manage the balance with the gallery. I have made a decision to focus on artists who are not represented by the gallery. This is true for all the exhibitions that I curate at the gallery, because the gallery's artists are already represented in the gallery. In order for this gallery to become a place that everybody loves, where everybody feels comfortable and where everybody is happy to show their works, more artists need to be embraced. Representing them or not, the gallery should pay attention to be an institution that makes an effort to get to know and to present an artist well. We cannot get to know an artist through one or two works, but through a comprehensive publication, we can present more perspectives to the viewers. Included in the first *Part Whole* exhibition were Gülsün Karamustafa, Ahmet Elhan, Burcu Yağcıoğlu, Mithat Şen, Begüm Yamanlar, Ekrem Yalçındağ, and Ülgen Semerci. The second *Part Whole* exhibition that we are going to realize this year on September 4 includes Canan Dağdelen, Şakir Gökçebağ, Nuri Kuzucan, Seçkin Pirim and Guido Casaretto.

Your undergraduate and graduate training is in literature. I would like to talk about the relationship between literature and art. Michel Foucault, in his *Order of Things*, says, "But the relation of language to painting is an infinite relation. It is not that words are imperfect, or that, when confronted by the visible, they prove insuperably inadequate. Neither can be reduced to the other's terms: it is in vain that we say what we see; what



CANAN DAĞDELEN, CÜZ [FASCICLE], TERRA ALBA, ENAMEL, PLATIN, 57 X 40 X 11,5 CM, 2015 PHOTO: KAYHAN KAYGUSUZ

we see never resides in what we say. And it is in vain that we attempt to show, by the use of images, metaphors, or similes, what we are saying; the space where they achieve their splendor is not that deployed by our eyes but that defined by the sequential elements of syntax,” thus defending that between art and literature, neither can be deemed superior. John Berger, in his *Ways of Seeing* says that “Seeing is before speaking,” accepting the visual image as more predominant. Over the course of art history, William Blake made works based on Shakespeare’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* and Salvador Dali was inspired by *Alice in Wonderland*; there have been numerous artworks produced based on literature. As we are wrapping up the first quarter of the 21st century, where do you think literature stands in relation to contemporary art? If you were to look at the contemporary artistic production in Turkey and around the world, what would you like to say about the relationship between literature and contemporary art?

I see culture as an integrated whole. Contemporary art and literature are both part of culture. Instead of ranking, positioning, comparing them in relation to each other, I think music, poetry, and painting melt into each other and mix with water through different channels and they all feed off of each other. I believe that the influences that push the form underneath this production are important—the codes of mental structure. As you have mentioned, there are always overlaps, matches, inspirations, and shadows. For example, behind me is Olgu Ülkenciler’s *Russian Classics* series: a series of paintings where the artist has abstracted various states of humanity, referring to novels. At the end of the day, these are not clear at a single glance and they should not be. Because the essence of the work is in abstraction. I refrain from things with direct references and favor abstraction. This is a matter of intuiting and letting others intuit.

The word *kelime* [word] stems from the root in Arabic, k-l-m. This root means wound. Words are also wounding, hurtful. Perhaps words are the resonances of the pain in people. Are you interested in making exhibitions with words and poems that have become wounds in you?

Literature will always be involved in my work. Within this context, there are lots of exhibitions and books that I’m interested in making. I like how these thoughts keep my mind occupied. On the other hand, what ultimately matters is the work—this whole world that we have constructed, museums, galleries, collections, in short, the art world revolves around a single core: the work. I find that a support that could shed light on the work that could help solve the matrix of meaning on the work is absolutely sacred. It is important for the codes within the work to be deconstructed well and that they are communicated to the viewer without using language as a tool of power or authority. Thus, the relationship between literature, text, and the artwork is a crucial one.

I want to talk about the exhibition that you realized last season, paying homage to Sezer Tansuğ. 99 Squares proposed a type of exhibition practice that we don’t encounter often in Turkey.

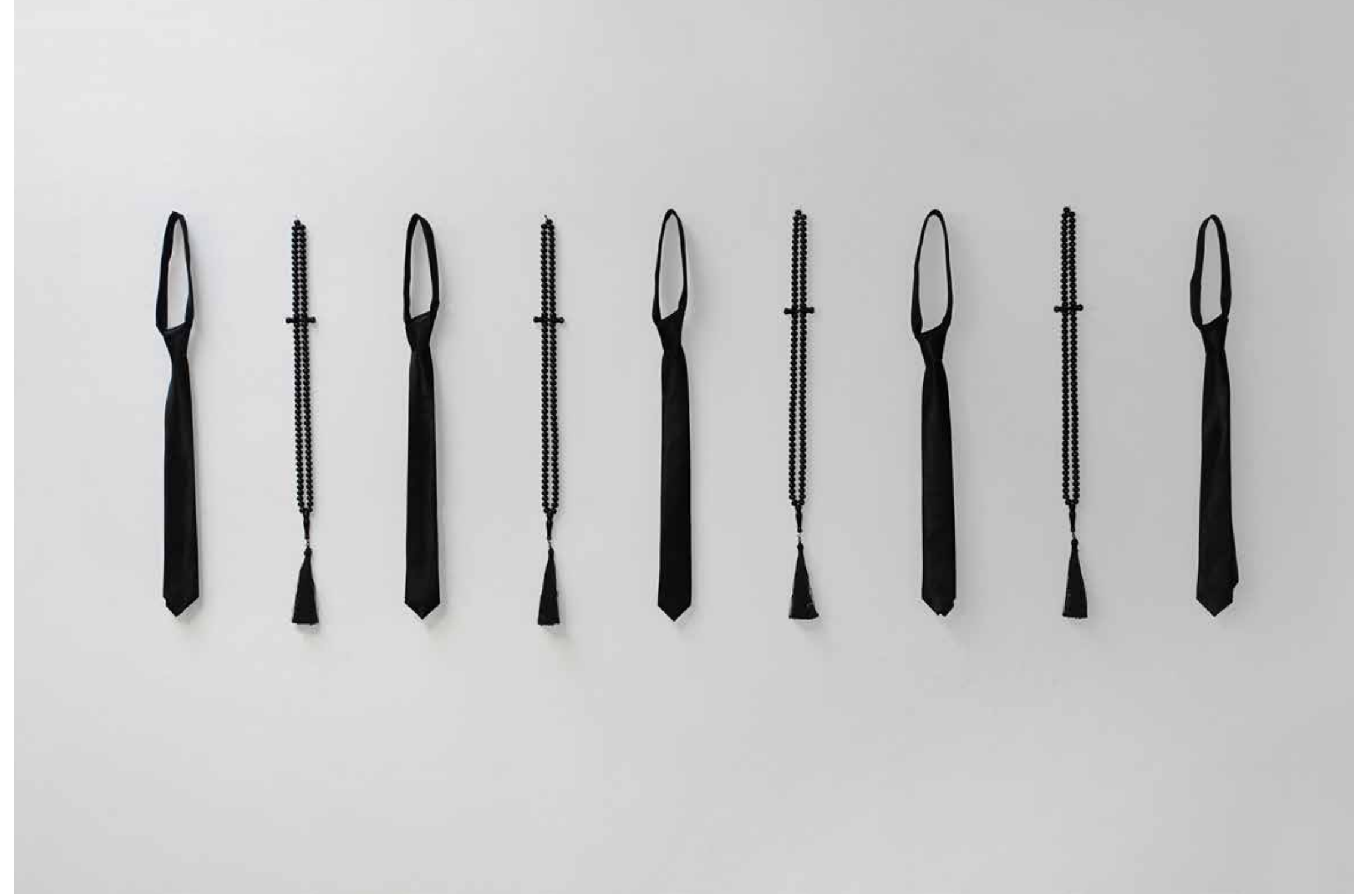
I’m glad you asked about *99 Squares*, because it was a project that lasted for two months and that also included a book. We showed 114 works from the time period between 1993 and 2018. But the 97 artists and 114 works were not addressed: people only talked about Sezer Tansuğ’s reputation. “Who did he work for? What is the quality of the abstractions in these works? How are they? What are the technical and aesthetic shifts that happened since then?” None of these questions were addressed. You know this quite well, in the absence of art criticism; it has almost become a taboo. No, no, no. How are we going to relieve this absence? This is why I think it was important to remind people of Sezer Tansuğ’s criticism.

When Sezer Tansuğ was working on 66 Squares, he always had a departure point and he had asked the artists to interpret the thought that was his departure point. Here, you worked with this idea by Sezer Tansuğ. In light of all this information, what triggered you to make such an exhibition?

From my perspective anchored in literature, the most striking exhibition catalogue for me was Sezer Tansuğ’s *66 Squares*. I first saw this book when I was 19 and I was very excited both by the introductory text and the quality textual content commissioned from the artists. Later, when I started curating, I wanted to make an exhibition in relation to literature. My intention was to make an exhibition similar to *66 Squares*, referring to Sezer Tansuğ while making an exhibition that would serve as an invitation extended to artists to bring them to literature, to poetry. But the issue of Sezer Tansuğ was so unspoken about and there were no professional discussions, it had become such a taboo. Due to personal victimizations, all the works were covered up. Sezer Tansuğ, in his *66 Squares*, just like in his other projects, presents a proposal: Remembering the value of the local and reminding artists of the cultural reserves. For me, this exhibition was an act of making people aware of both the legacy of Sezer Tansuğ and the people working in culture who had served the Republic.

Finally, what would you like to say about your exhibitions in the new season?

The only thing I’m careful about in the exhibition calendar is my workload. I find solo exhibitions quite comfortable for the gallery, because while I accompany the artist during their production process—and I do accompany them closely—the weight is mostly on the artist’s shoulders. Then, what makes a gallerist a gallerist? Exhibiting, selling, representing properly are all things that are already givens. In my opinion, what makes a gallerist who they are is their curatorial perspective and how that is presented. This is why Part Whole is important; this is why group exhibitions are important.



Şakir Gökçebağ

Aşina

09.2019-07.2020



ŞAKİR GÖKÇEBAĞ, UNTITLED, CARPET INSTALLATION, 240 X 208 CM, 2019
PHOTO: KAYHAN KAYGUSUZ

Producing beyond the patriarchal network



Words: Nazlı Pektaş

Photograph: Elif Kahveci

**On a slop in Sarıyer,
at a very short air
distance to Anadolu
Kavağı, on a terrace
overlooking the
Black Sea, we visit
Nilbar Güreş's house
studio listening to
the screams of a mother
seagull protecting
her baby from the
artist's cat Psika.**





In this three-storey house studio, in a neighbourhood where Nilbar grew up as a child, we sit surrounded by memories and Magda is omnipresent there. She is a very close friend to not only Nilbar's grandmother but also the artist herself. Magda is a lady who sews swimming suits for the children in the neighbourhood. The artist's confidant, best friend and protector until her early youth, Magda is a *Rum* (Turkish citizen of Greek descent) lady who grew up in İstanbul, Nişantaşı. Getting married at a relatively young age, she moves to Sarıyer, following where love takes her. Half of Nilbar's family is Kurdish-Alawite while the second half is a religious family from Trabzon. A second mother to the artist, Magda's *Rum* identity nourishes her childhood with happy memories, and it brings further colour to her roots. Nilbar visits the church on Sundays and dyes eggs during Easter, and her multicultural background is often present in her works.

Saniye Hanım, the great aunt-in-law of Nilbar who is a tailor from Trabzon, sews together with other women from the family in a semi-collective to afford her daughter's education, and she also appears as a source of inspiration to Nilbar's works in her relation to fabric and the ritual of sewing.

Hundreds of fabrics from Malmö, New York, Vienna; a large variety from Brazil to Turkey... The works by Nilbar manifest the political within the "female". In harmony with the textures, colours and patterns, her works disclose gender-based constraints with a colourful resistance while fighting them. While violence against women is at the core of Nilbar's works, the ironic vision of the artist picks moments from the daily and the ordinary and she places them somewhere between the pleasure and the pain. Nilbar narrates the victimization of the female within a mythical world and she openly opposes this bitter reality.

In her house on Tatar Sokak, every voice from Nilbar's past looks toward the present. Her childhood that started on the outskirts of Sarıyer still lives in a secure space on the walls of this house, on its terrace and in the garden, on the fabrics and in her words almost as if



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within a mother's womb. In her interview with Çınar Eslek in Art Unlimited she asks, "Can an artist separate herself from her own being?" Nilbar often stresses this difficulty in distancing oneself in her multi-disciplinary productions and scenarios with a feminist discourse. A fabric that might have arrived from a distant corner of the earth meets an Anatolian pattern or is treated with a familiar touch from modern Turkey – which represents Nilbar's multi-cultural past.

Houses, families, streets, doors, stitches and fabrics meet and merge in an instinctive rhythm in the works by Nilbar, and viewers can freely imagine what they will. The subject is exclusively woman; all supporting characters and other aspects focus on the state and the conditions that the woman is in. Such careful focus reveals Nilbar's diligent observation into the reality. Her language is metaphor-ridden, just like a poet's. And she always poses those critical questions to herself. As a woman artist, Nilbar's production is never hindered by the restrictions of the male language or dominated by it. Corridors leading to Nilbar's childhood, Kurdishness, Turkishness, piety and *Rumness*, nourish her in a complex network, and the woman in these corridors announces the artist's knowledge into the wider world. This announcement is an independent exposure. Her narrative achieves visibility by creating her own space without ignoring the cultural and the geographical – it creates its own reality. The woman or the queer being that appears in this reality is there to create its own outer world rather than looking for the truth. Photography, performance, painting, sculpture or video... In each of them Nilbar fights, surrounded by the reality she creates. In her photographs, as she often underlines, one certain problem suspends between the past and the present rather than standing as mere photographs (Nilbar keeps repeating that she is not a photographer). The series *TrabZONE* represents one such state of suspension. The presence of a woman within childhood observations embraces queer readings in a feminist language of production; a performative being then suspends in time through photography in Nilbar's works.

The artist lives and works in İstanbul and Vienna; when she is not engaged in a project, she is everywhere. She fuses her identity as a migrant artist with her family's memories of migration in Turkey. In this fusion, timelessness and placelessness of her works accommodate the surreal image of an autobiographical narrative between geographies and cultures. His house on a slope in Sarıyer is home to that entire narrative. Roots or trips... They find that oneness within a plurality in Nilbar's efforts to find her own 'self'. Although the treasure chamber in the basement of this three-storey house is the centre of her entire creation, those streets, the windows, the garden, the terrace, that is to say, the entire house occupies a certain space in the air; and the trace they leave is where the past still hangs on.

Since the artist constantly travels, one might think that this studio is where she rests her thoughts; for Nilbar, however, this is where she contemplates. Her childhood, her school of religion, her decisions, her native land, her rights and the injustices imposed on her... In this house they all speak at the same time. Nilbar patiently puts them into an order in their own shades and patterns. Belonging to a different aspect of life, each of them emerges as something remarkable and stunning when Nilbar lets them speak for themselves in an entirely different form. In her video *Open Phone Booth* from 2007-2011, Kurdish-Alawite people from a mountain village in Bingöl commute on hills simply to say hello or to have daily conversations. Similar to their efforts, Nilbar finds her own efforts to be a female beyond the patriarchal network in her own reality. Just like Simone de Beauvoir saying, "One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman," she explores genders beyond the genitals.



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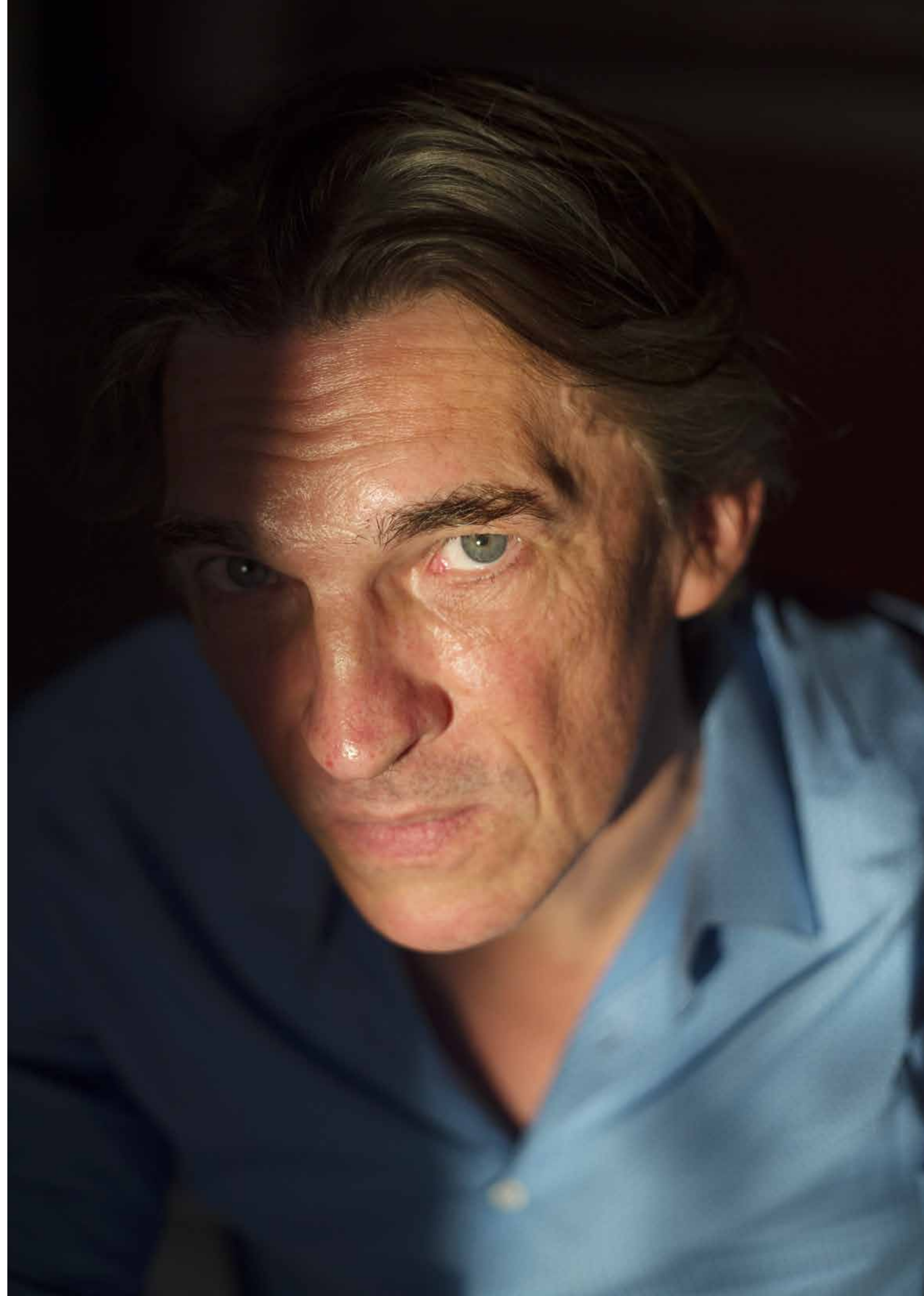
**Problematize and
invent new forms:**

Welcome to Anthropocene

Organized by the Istanbul Foundation for Culture and Arts, sponsored by Koç Holding, the 16th Istanbul Biennial is preparing to open its doors on September 14th. This year, the biennial treats the theme of Seventh Continent from the standpoint of different disciplines such as ecology and anthropology and will take place at Pera Museum and Büyükdada, as well as the new building of the Istanbul Painting and Sculpture Museum in Tophane. This year's curator of the biennial, the French academician and writer Nicolas Bourriaud brought together the works of 56 artists and artists' collective, focusing on the natural or cultural wastes caused by humanity, and the relationship between the huge waste heap floating in the oceans, art and ecology, we talked about being an artist

Interview: Merve Akar Akgün, Murat Alat

NICOLAS BOURRIAUD, PHOTO: ELIF KAHVECİ



Merve Akar Akgün: How was the preparation process for this biennial? How was your curatorial experience?

Nicolas Bourriaud: The process was very smooth from the beginning. It started getting complicated when we had to move out from one of the venues due to possible presence of asbestos in the area. Until then, I think it was a very professional, very smooth process. Today -August 10th- I have almost entirely planned the layout of the new exhibition venue, positioned every artist in specific rooms, and dealt with technical impossibilities. We were very fast actually. But of course, the exhibition will be totally different from what I originally dreamt of and had already prepared at the shipyard. So, what is going to change is the physical structure of the exhibition, which was supposed to create two different mazes that met in the middle. Of course, this is completely impossible now in a building with four levels. So the meaning has changed a little bit, but the greatest change is in the combinations of the works amongst them. I feel like a DJ now. I had to make a different remix with the same records.

MAA: Since 2014, starting with the Taipei Biennial, you have been working on the theme of Anthropocene. If the Istanbul Biennial is like a continuum of this work, how will this be treated differently from what you curated before? What are you adding to your discourse with this Biennial?

NB: I think this biennial is part of a trilogy of exhibitions starting with *Great Acceleration* in Taipei, and a general presentation of the theme. *Crash Test* that I created at La Panacée in Montpellier in the beginning of 2018 was the most specific exhibition of the series. This trilogy attempts to show what the impact of Anthropocene as a phenomenon is on the way artists see the world, on representation systems, and on the practices of producing forms. So the question was: What are the effects of Anthropocene?

But their perspectives are different; *Great Acceleration* was the analogy, the collapse of the division between nature and culture; the end of hierarchies between humans and non-humans, the co-activities between humans, machines, vegetables, minerals, etc. *Crash Test* was a bit more precise; it was an attempt to show only a very new generation of artists and its subtitle was “molecular revolution”. The idea was to highlight the fact that this young generation of artists is focused on representing the world at the molecular level. They don’t see the world in terms of objects or products but rather try to understand, the very structure, material structure of reality, working with gas, liquids, dust etc. This approach, that I call “molecular anthropology” also feeds the Istanbul Biennial that is based on a very strong image: the *Seventh Continent*, a huge territory constituted of plastic waste floating -like a vortex- in between the oceans. This is the image of a new world. It is the exact embodiment of the Anthropocene. It is a new territory that is the opposite of the new world discovered by Christopher Columbus, which started colonization. This territory is one we don’t want to inhabit, thus don’t want to kill the people that are already there to appropriate. It is the shadow of human activities; the by-product of our economical system and that is exactly why we have to make anthropology of it. I consider the artist in the *Seventh Continent* to be the anthropologist of this new world.

Murat Alat: In *Relational Aesthetics*, you define yourself as a materialist, but when you mention artworks in the book, you only talk about the works that create a community between humans. Now for the *Seventh Continent* you are adding non-human beings to these communities. Are we, then, expanding the definition of relational aesthetics?

PERA MUSEUM, PHOTO: GİZEM ÖZKOL



MSGSU İSTANBUL PAINTING AND SCULPTURE MUSEUM, PHOTO: GİZEM ÖZKOL

NB: Absolutely! This was also the trigger of *Great Acceleration* in a way. I wanted to expand the theoretical framework of *Relational Aesthetics* with the new awareness that we have today about non-humans. What is our relationship with animals, minerals or vegetal life? How can we produce new types of communities that encompass these relations? How can we rethink of the idea of proletariat including this new situation? Because today we realize that organic life as much as workers are under attack by the companies. Every aspect of nature is actually reduced to the state of a proletariat, working for us, humans -not all, but especially the rich. This process of new proletariat including non-humans, was a very important subject in the beginning of this trilogy.

MAA: What are the reasons why you were attracted by this topic in the first place?

NB: I don’t think I chose it. I think it was just obvious at the time. I wouldn’t be able to say why suddenly an idea or concept pops up and becomes important. It rather organically included itself in the chain of ideas and exhibitions. Nowadays, books and exhibitions are like in a game of Ping-Pong. When I am curating exhibitions I try to forget my previous series. This is useful for the composition of the artist list. Also, each exhibition has a grammar of its own. It is like an opera, and as a curator you write the sub text, the story, the *libretto*; then the artist does the singing. When you finally hear the sound of the exhibition, you realize that it is totally different from what you originally heard in your head before you started curating.

MA: What you’re saying is coherent. You have spared a chapter to Guattari in *Relational Aesthetics* and now you are continuing the path that he had shown in *Three Ecologies*.

NB: Exactly. I am glad that you noticed this. The most important thing in this ranking is mental pollution, social pollution, that Guattari called gentrification. This also makes sense in the context of the Istanbul Biennial.

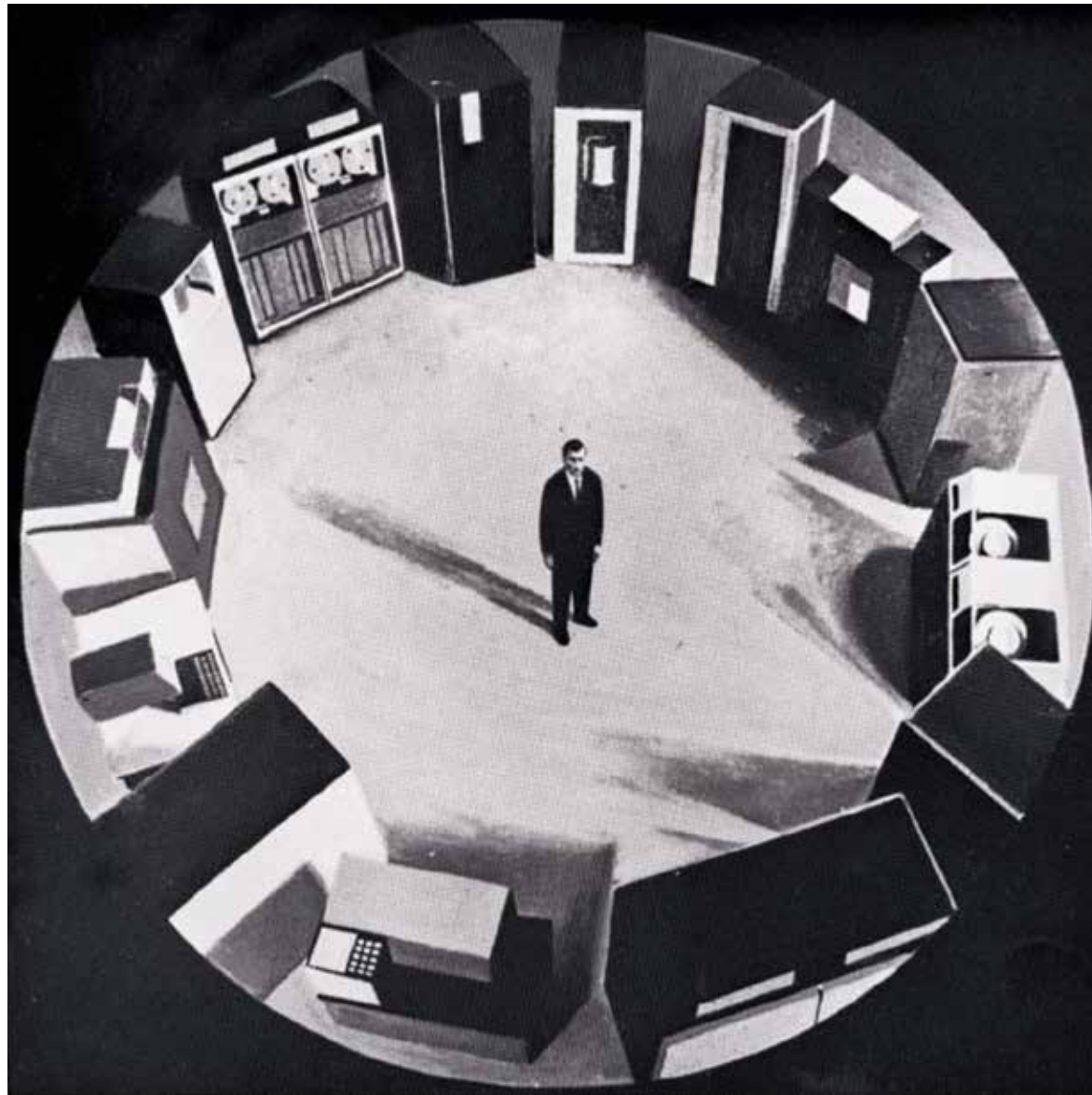
MA: In *Three Ecologies*, Guattari warns us about the ecologic crisis and the efficient ways of dealing with it; but it has been twenty years -maybe more- since he wrote it. What do you think the current situation is?

NB: Well, It’s just worse. I think he describes the situation very accurately, yet the problems that he points out are getting worse. When he wrote this text, it was still a problem for the future. Now we feel the catastrophe. That is why people should re-read *Three Ecologies* again.

MA: How can we deal with this crisis? What can art do in this situation?

NB: The main political and human answer to this situation is activism: the change of mentalities, the change of behaviour, and the questioning our production system. But this is not the main task of artist. Artists cannot totally replace politicians and activists. It would be hypocritical to think that the task is theirs. I am not expecting an artist to become an activist. What I am interested in is producing new ways, new forms of representing the world. This is how mentalities can change in the long run. In other words, I am interested in how this becomes history? This is the way major discovery, and major events occurred in the past. At some point I was caught up by the paintings of Monet and Joseph Beuys. I am interested in artists, who can problematize these issues,

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ANZO, AISLAMIENTO 14,
OIL ON CANVAS, 100X100 CM,
1968, COURTESY OF
AMPARO IRANZO

and who are able to invent forms up to this historical moment. I think that is the main political task of the artist. The secondary task of the artist could be presenting alternative versions of reality. As I mentioned in *Post Production*, all scenarios that constitute our societies are just options that we took, but we can change them. You know, art makes life precarious. That's a very important point if we talk about the relationship between politics and art. Art is what makes us understand that all the elements of our everyday lives and our political systems are just made of cardboard and we can actually change them. We have the power to change. If it were not represented in the artworks, where would it be?

MA: Is this only about representation?

NB: When I say representation, I am not only talking about making a drawing of it. It is wider than that. It describes every type of form production : processes, materials or space organization are « representing » the world as much as images.

MA: As far as I understood from your texts, it is about creating new forms of living, experiences and thinking. The artworks that we talked about are the ones that not only criticize, but also produce something.

NB: "The painting of a horse is not the critic of a horse" as my friend Liam Gillick said. It is very important to repeat this. My main curatorial effort is in unveiling what artworks can generate in terms of new ways of thinking. Artwork is a generator; it produces energy. I see art as a form of immaterial energy. An artwork, rather than addressing the same old issues, has to generate something new.

MAA: Do you think artists living in the Anthropocene have new and different responsibilities?

NB: The Anthropocene brought our attention to the molecular level of reality. If you represent the world in terms of objects or products, you are already caught in capitalism. A new generation of artists apprehend directly the molecular composition of reality, and the traceability of our environment. It's materialistic realism.

MA: In one interview, you said that you are not a fan of *Object oriented philosophy*.

NB: I criticized Object oriented philosophy because the object appears to be a dangerous concept.

At the opposite, I think that everything is a subject, which connects us to relational aesthetics. The anthropocene

triggered a general process of subjectivation : stones, trees or dolphins should not be considered objects anymore, they express a subjectivity, and subjecthood has become a better key than objecthood. Object oriented philosophy is the ally of capitalism in the global merchandizing process, which transforms the living into products. Also, there is a big blank spot in Object oriented philosophy: art. How do they explain this phenomenon called art ? They don't. Because art is purely human. If you bury a Velázquez, it is not a Velázquez anymore. It is just some matter. Art is human, purely human.

MAA: Do you see any significant differences between the elder and the new generations in this matter in general and in the context of this Biennial?

NB: That's a good question. It is pretty obvious to me that the new generation is more aware, and into this situation from scratch. And their work really assumes this situation. Artists like Dora Budor or Eloise Hawser, many of them, actually start from this point. Their vision of the world is clearly determined by Anthropocene. The elder generation, including mine - except maybe Pia Arke-, is still into the presentation of the world; which is cultural. The idea of cultural appropriation is a thing in the past.

MA: The new generation was born into this technology and young people in their 20's are building online communities.

NB: That is the actual point. This generation is used to having a very human-like relationship with the machines. They consider them almost as people. This helps them talk to animals and understand plants in a way. They are used to talking with objects; they are used to taking them as "subjects". This is movement of subjectification that has been created by the digital technology, and the new world.

MA: I have to ask the significance of biennial venues in the context of the exhibition. Why did you choose those venues? You had to change one of them, but Pera Museum and the Island were chosen in the beginning.

NB: I preferred to find one big venue and concentrate on the artworks, instead of losing time in traffic jams. This Biennial is very focused, with a precise problematic. So it didn't make sense to spread it out all over the city. I wanted the artworks to be in dialogue. That's why the big warehouse of the shipyard was an appropriate venue, located a stone's throw from Pera Mu-



EVZU/ZUSH, THE PLANET OF FOUR MOONS, MIXED MEDIA ON PAPER, 130X156 CM, 2012-2014, COURTESY OF THE ARTIST

The Istanbul Biennial was the first biennial with no national representation in the 80's.

This is very important because Venice and São Paulo were based in national representations. This is a unique opportunity for a creator to have an articulated point of view, from A to Z, choosing the different venues. And the artist is a wild card to work. This is what the Istanbul Biennial historically represents.



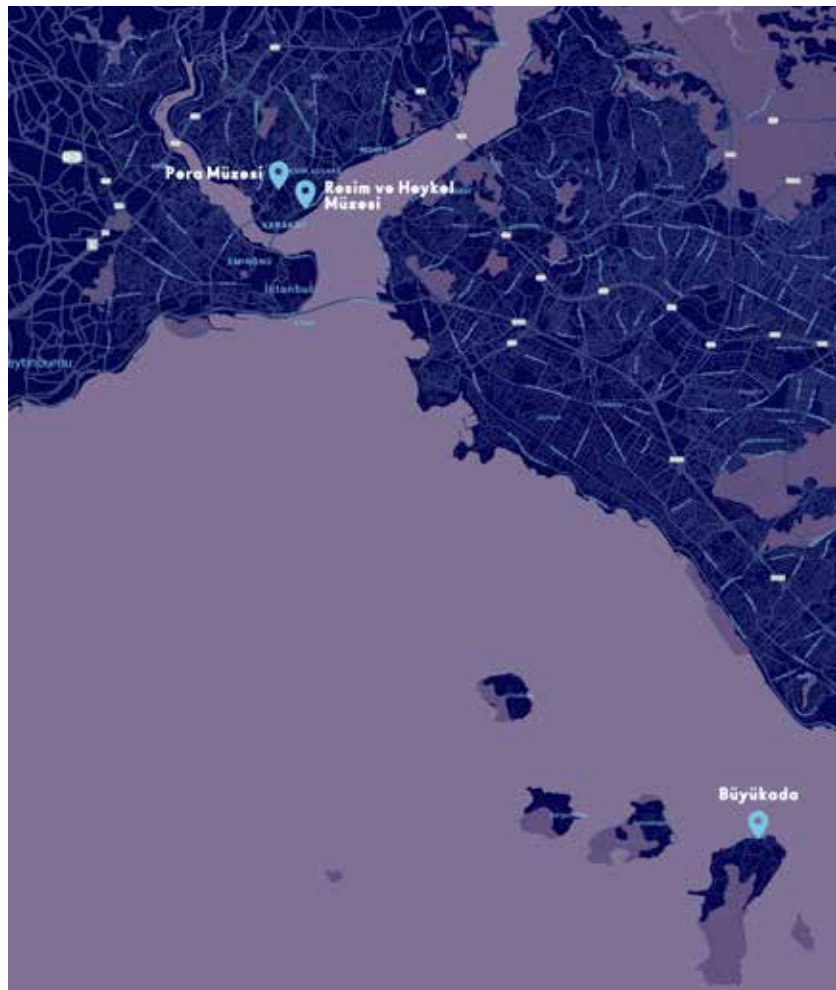
NICOLAS BOURRIAUD, PHOTO: ELİF KAHVECİ

seum. There, I implemented a particular section of biennial, devoted to fictitious archaeology, the way artists invent alternative worlds in order to talk about ours. And then the Island is a kind of parenthesis, with projects that needed more space.

MA: Maybe you already answered this question, but to sum up; what is the aesthetic form of the *Seventh Continent*?

NB: The venue had to be changed, but I'll try to sum up. At the shipyards, The Seventh Continent was a kind of bifurcating mental space. On the right path, you had many artists depicting in a very rough way the situation we are living in. Then, on the left, the imaginary path, with artists inventing rituals, exploring some aspects of ancient civilizations, making crossovers between different types of cultures and behaviours. Now, in the new venue, the real and the imaginary are opposing each other, so you will be passing from one to the other on four floors. That's how the reconstructed pathway is. **MAA:** Today there are more than 250 biennials all over the world. Considering the previous editions, in your opinion, what characterizes the Istanbul Biennial?

NB: The Istanbul Biennial was the first biennial with no national representation in the 80's. This is very important because Venice and São Paulo were based in national representations. This is a unique opportunity for a creator to have an articulated point of view, from A to Z, choosing the different venues. And the artist is a wild card to work. This is what the Istanbul Biennial historically represents. Today, I think it is the second most significant biennial in the world after Venice because São Paulo has been sinking in the last decade. And then you have the Asian biennials, which are more recent like Gwanju, which is important, too. Taipei and Shanghai biennials are important too, yet I would say Istanbul is more historically rooted.



MAP OF 16. ISTANBUL BIENNIAL, 2019

An exhibition is like an opera,
and as a curator you write the
sub text, the story, the *libretto*;
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ADRIYA

Zarif, elegan, zamansız...



The sea in the middle of the *lands*



ANISSA TOUATI

For the 14th edition of Contemporary Istanbul which takes place between September 12th and 15th Anissa Touati is appointed as the artistic director. In our interview with Touati, we discussed Contemporary Istanbul's mission in Istanbul and this year's theme for the fair: *Mediterraneanism*

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Interview: Ece Naz Demirkale

Photo: Sitki Kösemen

The theme of the 14th edition of Contemporary Istanbul is *Mediterraneanism*. How did you come up with the idea of a themed fair?

The Mediterranean, or *mare medi terra* -the sea in the middle of the lands- conjures the idea of the sea as a meeting place with Europe to the North, North Africa to the South, Southwest Asia to the East, and the narrow strait of Gibraltar to the West. When I arrived Contemporary Istanbul, my first feeling was to gradually establish a stronger identity for the fair by creating bonds and dialogues among all the actors of the art scene in this area and showing the dynamism of Turkey as a geographic hub closely tied to her historical and regional background. This approach characterizes Turkey far better than the tired notions of a gateway to the “East”.

How will you approach and explore the journey of *Mediterraneanism*?

After a meeting in Marseille, in February together with Jérôme Pantalacci and Véronique Collard, co-directors of ART-O-RAMA art fair and Axel Dibie, the founder of Galerie Crèvecœur, Paris/Marseille, we decided to build a *jumelage* between CI and ART-O-RAMA exchanging galleries, collectors and creating a cross-talks program. For this, we invited Salma Tuğan, deputy director of the Delfina Foundation in London to think of the Mediterranean basin as a key site for the exchange of ideas. So I'd like to quote Ms Tuğan here, “Being as much a construction of mythology, idealism and a shared -if simple- aspiration for interconnectedness; as it is of political agenda, the idea of a Mediterranean unity or the co-existence of Mediterranean identities still pervades today (...) This conversation series unfolds across ART-O-RAMA and Contemporary Istanbul, bridging the historic links between both port cities, exploring some of the complexities affecting the Mediterranean today including; global mobility, a reconsideration of the landscape and the legacy of colonialism.”

Considering your contribution to the rise of contemporary Mexican art, are there any similarities or sharp distinctions between the theme of this fair and the contemporary Mexican art, which is your central focus?

Turkey reminds me of the situation in Mexico a few years ago when the art market gradually gained more and more power, initially by the opening of galleries such as Kurimanzutto, with the help of the artist Gabriel Orozco among others. Meanwhile, thanks to the efforts by Pablo del Val as the artistic director and Zelik Garcia as the founder, Zona Maco emerged as a valuable fair of the country. The geographic position of Mexico at the crossroads between South America and the USA also helped create interactions between the art world from both areas and Mexico. But most importantly, I think, collectors, institutions, artists and curators understood that they have to work side by side to help the Mexican art grow up. Also Mexican collectors support their galleries and help them gain power and become internationally recognized. In Turkey we are enthusiastically at the beginning of this process and with similar geographic possibilities.

You are also known as the associate director of Chalet Society. Can you tell us more about the concept of your gallery?

The Chalet Society is a project designed by Marc-Olivier Wahler to encourage a new reflection on the institution of contemporary art. It's a mobile structure aiming at developing formats that work on a variety of platforms. This art center without a concrete location operates as a moving shelter that reacts to the boldest artistic settings and acts as a community space for artists, collectors, researchers, and other enthusiasts searching for “poetic consciousness”. We organized projects in Brazil, France, Switzerland, USA, and Italy among others, partnering with artists, art centers, museums, art fairs and project spaces such as the Museum of Everything, Les Berges de Seine, Family Business, Locust Project, Maurizio Cattelan, Kolköz, L'atelier des testeurs...

In a previous interview, you said that you see your exhibitions as sincere performances. What will visitors experience this year during their visit to CI? How would you define your contribution?

A total experience and the pleasure of discovery. We worked on a whole experience - starting from the Convention center façade and ending with a sculpture park in Lütfi Kırdar. I wanted to go over the concrete and the “socialist” massive architecture of the Convention center and bring in the imaginary, build some islets inside the fair, and a fictional garden on the convention center terrace - in between past and present - overlooking the Bosphorus. I did a selection of eight Turkish and foreign artists recommended by the participating galleries: Ebru Dösekçi (TR), Sinem Tekin (TR), Elsa Sahal (FR), Mikayel Okanjanyan (ARM), Guido Casaretto (TR), Emirhan Eren (TR), Burcu Erden (TR), Ugo Schiavi (FR).

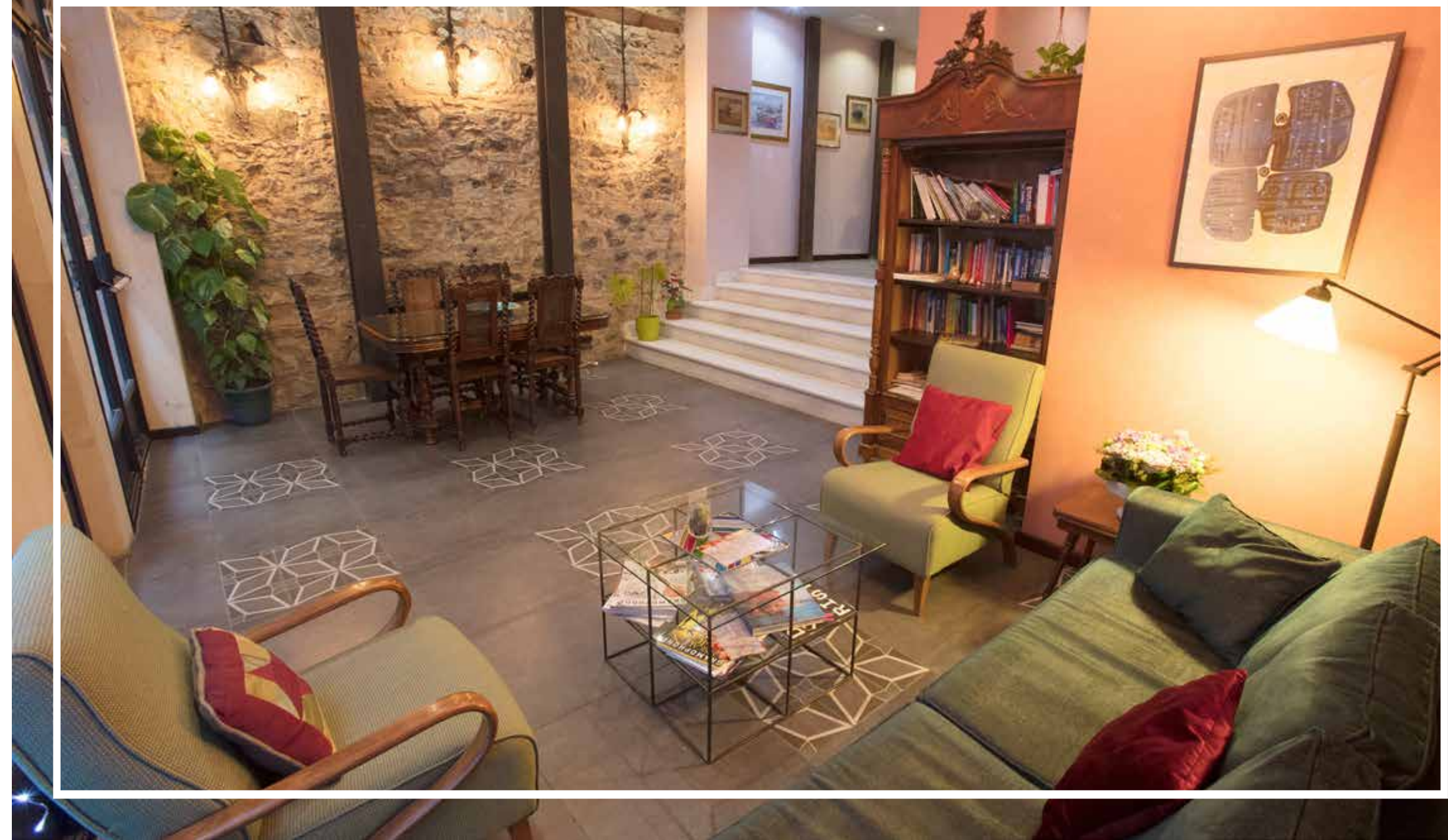
The fair play ground is going to be stubbed by art installations by Indian artist Sudarshan Shetty (from the show *the pieces earth took away*), an intervention by Swiss artist René Levi, a mural by Turkish artist Gülay Semercioğlu, a sculpture by French artist Ugo Schiavi among others. *Collectors' Stories* exhibition is curated by Hasan Bülent Kahraman, *Plug in* is curated by Esra Özkan offering a unique experience, a bodily interaction of the audience. The sculpture park is going to end the fair walkthrough on the convention center terraces facing the strait between the Black Sea and the Sea of Marmara. This year, collectors and visitors are going to explore a new fair via 22 new international galleries, three new Turkish galleries and seven international art initiatives.

How do you view CI until this edition and what do you envisage for the next five years?

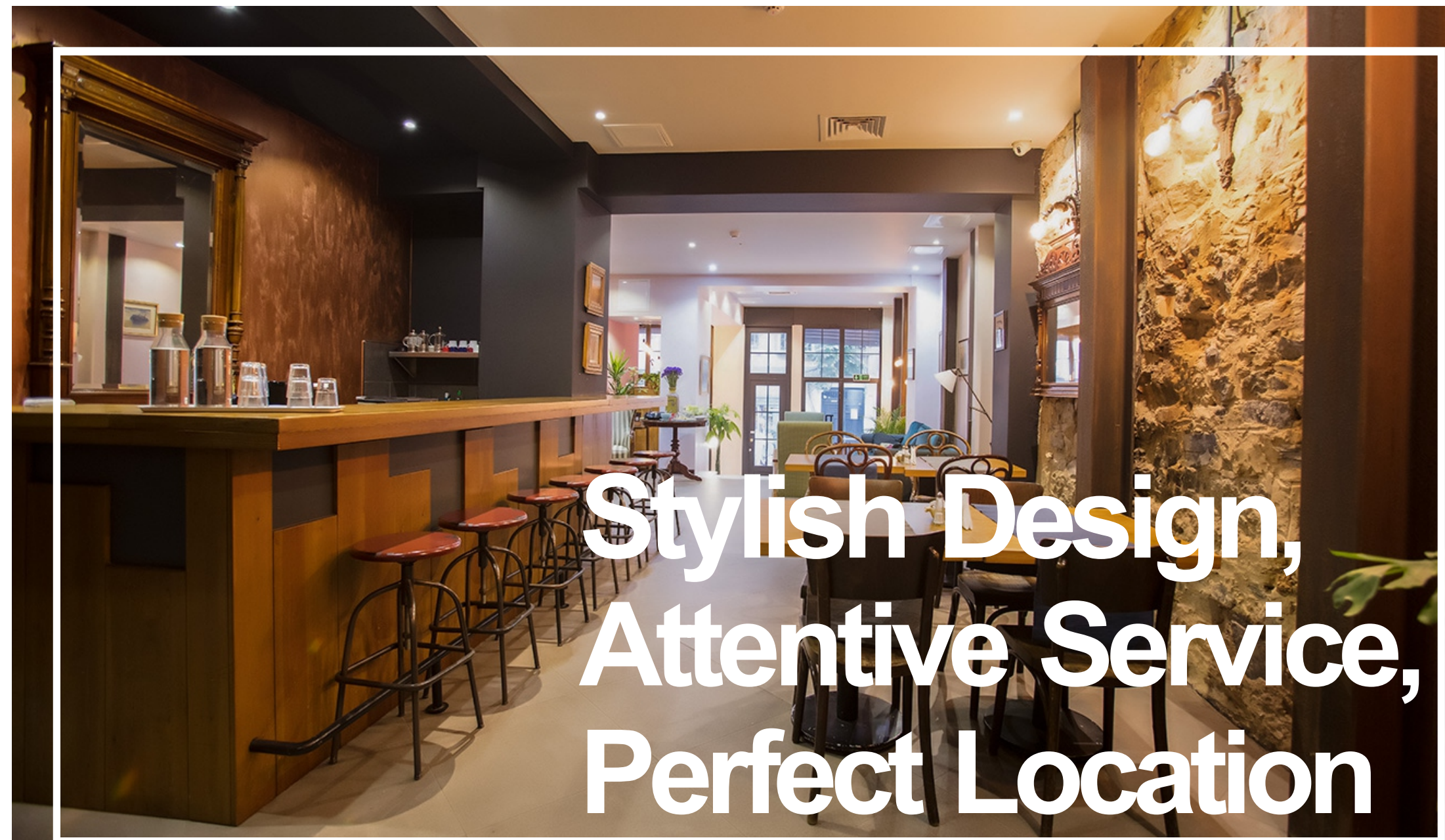
Contemporary Istanbul 2019 is collaborating with galleries from niche regions and focusing on bringing different assets together. Through the participating galleries and artistic program, the ambition of CI in the coming years is to show the dynamism of Turkey as a geographic art hub closely tied to Russia, Eastern Europe, Africa and Asia, and to connect collectors, galleries, artists, institutions, independent curators, art critics and journalists. CI shall be positioned as a driving force, supporting the role galleries play in nurturing the careers of artists but also acting as a relay with the institutions and the exhibition makers from the niche regions and more.



ANISSA TOUATI



Asmalı Mescit, Balyoz Sokak, No: 11 Beyoğlu 34430 İstanbul Türkiye
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