



ArtDog

Istanbul

“ CONTEMPORARY DEDUCTIONS ”



ISTANBUL INTO THE FUTURE

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW WITH EKREM İMAMOĞLU: ISTANBUL IS A MASTERPIECE | CONTEMPORARY ISTANBUL AT 15 | 200-YEAR WAIT DRAWS TO A CLOSE: GALATAPORT ISTANBUL | KEEPING THE URBAN MEMORY: ISTANBUL MUSEUM OF PAINTING AND SCULPTURE | A NEW BUILDING FOR ISTANBUL MODERN DESIGNED BY RENZO PIANO | GRIMSHAW TO DESIGN THE NEW SADBERK HANIM MUSEUM | ARCHITECTURE IN A MULTILAYERED CITY, ISTANBUL'S NEW ATATÜRK CULTURE CENTER (AKM) AND TERSANE ISTANBUL-HALIÇ SHIPYARDS | STANDING STILL BUT MOVING ON | IS MARINA ABRAMOVIC A DINOSAUR? A BRIEF HISTORY OF TURKISH PERFORMANCE ART | ISTANBUL MUSEUM OF CINEMA | A HEARTBREAKING REALIZATION WILL THEATER SURVIVE THE CORONAVIRUS?

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a term that describes one that is totally consumed and **obsessed** with art, an “**art aficionado**”



In-to The Future

The challenge we face today has been both unexpected and devastating, in the form of a virus that is spreading rapidly around the globe and that is changing how we live and work.

It's become clear that we could be in this for the long haul. These strange, most unnerving times will go on and will test our resilience. This global threat invisible to the naked eye is everywhere around us making our lives and future unclear.

This is inevitably pushing us to question the way we live; the relationships we have with each other, the nature, living beings, the whole universe. In re-defining our lives, art has a crucial role to play; it will be an inspirational guiding force for change.

Art can have an enormous effect; we really believe that.

That's what this issue ended up being—a cry out to anyone that will listen during these seemingly hopeless times. The art world isn't going anywhere anytime soon; in fact the art world is responding. We are keeping up the good fight. The fight for a better world.

We are in a period of lockdown, while across the world museums, galleries, historic sites, fairs, biennales and auctions have closed.

Yet, İstanbul is at the brink of a massive cultural transformation. Major museums and cultural hubs are going to open soon. AKM, the new building of İstanbul Modern designed by Renzo Piano and Sadberk Hanım Museum by Grimshaw Architects are some of the remarkable projects which will transform the city.

We focused on the kind of insight you cannot get anywhere else.

We hope that this issue can be a significant positive force in the months ahead.

Soon, we will step out of darkness, filled with a new vibrancy. There will always be an art world to pick up the pieces and carry on. We will survive this.

Stay safe,

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Istanbul Is A Masterpiece

We met with Istanbul mayor Ekrem İmamoğlu to talk about the city, which he calls one of the “most distinctive works” in the world. With its forthcoming yet nascent arts and culture projects, İmamoğlu sees himself as a “good moderator” of the “shared wisdom” of local residents.

By ŞEBNEM KIRMACI

During the first half of the 2000's, Istanbul was an attractive center for the arts. But then, the agenda shifted. Where do you think Istanbul stands right now? What is your vision of Istanbul's future?

The answer to your question would be a long one, so let me try to summarize. When we talk about culture we talk about a very wide array of subjects, whether they are lifestyles, urban design, feelings... Istanbul is one of the cities where you can talk about these things for pages. Both its historical depth and cultural variety is suitable for such a conversation. It is clear that within such a city, we are not at the point where we deserve to be. We had many ambitions. While fulfilling and developing these goals we prioritize participation. This was our motive for setting up an arts and culture committee, and inviting people from a variety of disciplines to that table.

I guess this process has been interrupted due to the pandemic, right?

True, one must accept, that not only Istanbul but the whole world has evolved into an entirely new ground. And it is perhaps the culture and arts industry that the pandemic has influenced most deeply. Right now, one can even question whether there are new creations anymore. As a human being, an art lover and a mayor, I feel a hunger. An inexplicable hunger.

How?

Arts and culture is not something one can embrace without feeling, touching, living, delving into it; without

hours-long conversations or perhaps hours of listening. In that sense it is a reality that we are in and are managing through an anxious period. Yet we are also responsible for planning the future while imagining the end of this period. I mean, Istanbul has a chance.

Can you elaborate a bit on this “chance”?

This city is capable of cultivating projects that can evolve into brands. And there are certain foundations, institutions and organizations which are already realizing such enterprises. The Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality (İBB) should not turn into a center for arts and culture production. It should become the moderator for diversifying life. This is our expectation. Let's think of it this way. The state of arts & culture should not change according to which officials hold office. It shouldn't be orange when mayor A is in charge and gray or black when mayor B comes. To advance the existing values, artistic and cultural heritage of the city in the best possible way, with mechanisms, institutions and existing human resources that can serve its residents, the general public and international audiences... This is our way, this is what our capacity requires us to do. Though we have concerns.

If you ask about how I see the artistic and cultural atmosphere of Istanbul in the future, I would say we dream of an Istanbul where global festivals, events, meetings, and auctions are taking place, where it is a worldwide design center. In addition, we want Istanbul to be a cultural hub so to speak, where arts &

culture workers from across the region's geography choose Istanbul as a base and come here to live and create. The 1.5 to 2 million artists in Turkey should think, “I have to be in Istanbul to live and create, to emerge and interact with the world”. I think Istanbul should be such a city. We can make this happen. We already possess values that are parallel to this objective.

In the meantime, this should go hand in hand with urban design. I mean with the quality of living, with its liberties, sense of environment, squares, parks and all which should serve this feeling we mention. And this part is on us to prepare for this, while the other part is on the shoulders of valued foundations, the civil society organizations of our city. And it is our responsibility to moderate this and I can state that we are designing this process.

You mentioned “moderation”. And that Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality (İBB) or municipalities in general should not be a production mechanism for arts and culture. So then how do you conceive of your mission to open space for the arts and for artists to breathe and express themselves freely?

Well expressed, true, as a moderator. Of course you can not think of the municipality, which includes, for example, the brand of Istanbul City Theatre, as outside of cultural life. But seeing the municipality as a [cultural] production center would be wrong. What the municipality should do is to coordinate operations in collaboration with artists and institu-

tions, to build a mechanism that facilitates their work. The “I know it all” approach is no good here. If that's the case, each mayor will interpret, and administer arts and culture as he/she likes, and that is not at all desirable for the arts.

Of course. Art exists in a whole other dimension.

It is a creative field. A creative field does not tolerate intervention, it requires complete freedom.

With Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality's acquisition of the portrait of Fatih Sultan Mehmet and the Kenter Theatre you have hinted, perhaps symbolically at the value you place on arts and culture.

In fact, I think we did what we know to be right. With these two symbolic gestures, we took the initiative for an artwork that should have been in Turkey in the first place, to be brought here and exhibited. I think in a way we set it free and brought it where it belongs.

After the passing of Ms. Yıldız Kenter, we wanted to sustain Kenter Theatre with all its grace. It was not our objective to incorporate the theatre under the roof of Istanbul City Theatre but to keep it to keep it alive and functional. We didn't say, “Okay now it belongs to us”, but we said it should live on here, as it is. Of course the physical space is purchased and has gone under several renovations, but these are other discussions. What we have done is in fact a projection of the philosophy I am talking about.

The leader of the current regime

has noted that they could not make progress, as desired, in terms of arts and culture. I don't mean to pull you into shallow political disputes, but it is a fact that they have failed to keep the culture and arts field alive. These are lost years. Do you feel there should be compensation for these lost years?

What was lacking and incorrect in what has been done in the past is I think the interventionist, “I know it all and better” approach. One can apply this perspective to many other fields, but not the arts. My outlook is pretty clear here; providing opportunity to the creative residents of this city, not to intervene in their liberties and provide spaces for sharing through different spaces and ways of exhibiting. I can foresee that soon, perhaps within a couple of years, we can complete Istanbul's arts and culture roadmap under the guidance of these codes.

There are also many museum plans in the works at the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality.

We are working on the infrastructure to include many museums.

Can you specify?

For example, a city museum has been planned in Topkapı. A study was made here; there is an archive, participation at some level, and technical support/advisory from international specialists. We are now taking the effort to open it to the public by inviting broader participation. There is also a museum at Feshane, the Museum of Sufism. There are so many veins of criticism involved in the field, there are many



projects that we question, "how we can make a contribution, is this the right thing to do..."

I also find it important that one of the most urgent topics on the global agenda is the climate crisis, environmental consciousness, but there is no spatial construct in Istanbul that emphasizes this. Now at the Hasanpaşa Gasworks, there are ongoing renovations to transform it into a culture and climate change communication center. The Gasworks buildings were mechanisms that produced energy from fuels. Now there is global awareness against fossil fuels to protect our country, our Earth. Now we are working towards environmental consciousness through museums and exhibition spaces. Very soon there will be a photography exhibit on what we have lost during the Kanal Istanbul project.

All these examples I mentioned are steps that captivate the global and urban agenda and that will revive the artistic and cultural landscape of the city. For example, one artist is making a work using trash piles, which we will exhibit for six months. Through such striking works we aim to walk side-by-side with a movement narrating social, sociological and environmental messages. We are carrying out studies to update existing structures and systems with a more participatory and publicly accessible tone.

I do not want to sound cliché, but I would like to emphasize this. Politicians, administrators, and construction projects come and go. What is left behind in a society is merely the sum of its cultural and artistic output. As you are in charge of the administration of this city, do you feel any responsibility? Or let me rephrase it, is it a heavy responsibility to live with?

I do feel an enormous responsibility because Istanbul is among the world's most special, peculiar works - if we talk in artistic terms. If there are 3 to 5 admitted masterpieces in the world, Istanbul is among them, it is a masterpiece. This work of art that is Istanbul has been passed down for thousands of years with its positives and negatives to this very day. It's not an easy task to both preserve and enhance it.

There is nothing more fallacious than a mayor pointing his finger to some place, giving orders. You can not administer a city such as Istanbul like this. To govern Istanbul you should activate the societal consciousness, to consult experts. I think such a model should be adapted for all cities. Our antidote for the existing system and order is collective consciousness and participation. The best examples of this approach are our urban design projects in Taksim Square and Salacak.

The design of coastlines for Bakırköy, and Salacak, which have the most beautiful views, and the design contest for Bakırköy Square and its underground marketplace, the Kadıköy pier and coastline has all been administered through participatory practices, individuals voted in person. This is an extraordinary feeling, you'll see the this participation, and shared wisdom will be applied substantially. Of course, it is impossible to come up with projects that everyone agrees on - but realizing projects that win the approval of a big percentage of the society is very valuable. With this method, no administrator can fail. There is such a trust in us, no matter what, there is the wisdom, and the reason that residents of Istanbul possess. Some cities lack such a human resource but Istanbul has it. This is the only model to experience and reflect on the cultural diversity of Istanbul. Even though I think of myself as an inclusive political figure, or as a personality, it is impossible for me, as an individual, to be sufficient for a city possessing such cultural diversity. To convey this approach in the field of its applications is my formula for making my task as a mayor easier.

Isn't it harder to work when you consider the opinions of so many individuals?

I feel confident, in that sense, that I'm a good moderator.

3 Contests For Public Squares

The public squares of Istanbul are being renewed with transparency-and shared wisdom, in a democratic way; a space that will increase quality of life according to the slogan, "Istanbul is Yours." On the national and global level, a wide variety of two-stage, free pre-selections were organized, for a

total of 10 competitions, five of which were about urban design and public squares.

The Taksim Cumhuriyet, Bakırköy Cumhuriyet (Özgürlük) and Salacak Urban Design Competitions were held recently. Following the announcement of the results, the process of deciding

on the project to be implemented was initiated, among 3 equivalent awards. In this process, an "innovative, participatory, democratic and transparent method" was applied. The project decisions were determined after a joint evaluation of the jury, by users and the local government, each systematically

and under equal conditions.

During the decision process, award winners presented their projects in 13-hour long online sessions. An average of 420 people attended these presentations. A total of 352,784 people voted in the three public competitions.



The Museum Of Sufism

Feshane, located on the shore of the Golden Horn, will serve as the Museum of Sufism upon completion of its restorations. Feshane, which is becoming a cultural and social hub on the Golden Horn

will narrate the story of Sufi culture as integrated with the city, as well as the Sufi past. In addition, a library will be established for the study of Sufi culture within the museum.



Theodosius Port Visitor's Center

The Theodosius Harbor Archaeological Site Architectural Project Competition was announced on 20 July 2020. The contest concluded on 3 November 2020. 35 projects were submitted for assessment. Project designers were asked to protect and integrate the ruins and finds of the Ancient Theodosius Harbor into metropolitan life; ensuring that visitors

could experience each layer of history, at the same time, they were tasked with solving issues of the use of space and reconnecting the area to its surroundings. Work continues on building a permanent visitor center based on the design of the winning project in the competition, which is expected to attract the attention of the people of Istanbul and tourists.

Hasanpasa Gasworks

Located in Kadikoy Hasanpaşa Gasworks is one of the most valuable industrial heritage sites of Istanbul that has been preserved up to this day. Following the restoration, there will be a science center, climate museum, a building for temporary exhibits, theater buildings, library, restaurant, cafe, workshop spaces and a bookstore. Under the name, "Museum Gazhane" an outstanding commu-

nal area will be created for the people of Istanbul. The building for temporary exhibits will be opened to visitors with an exhibition themed, "Kanal Istanbul." The climate museum among the first in Europe will include permanent exhibitions aiming to raise awareness about global warming and climate change. An exhibition drawing attention to plastic consumption is also in the works.



The Anemas Dungeons

The Anemas* Dungeon, located on the shore of the Golden Horn, will serve as a museum after its restorations are complete. A study is being carried out to determine the content of the museum. But it will likely draw on the in-

fluences of certain events that exist in the city's subconscious and social memory.

The Prison of Anemas is traditionally identified with the prisons named after Michael Anemas, a Byzantine general who was the first to be imprisoned there. Four Byzantine emperors were imprisoned there.

Istanbul City Museum

The Istanbul City Museum, will study the phases that Istanbul has gone through over the span of its history. The building has disadvantages in terms of exhibition techniques due to its scale, size and curvilinear walls. In the course of time, the museum's furnishing projects have been disrupted due to the lack

of a concrete inventory and a holistic curatorial program. Studies on inventory and exhibition content are being carried out under the Cultural Heritage Department. The efforts to construct the Istanbul City Museum in a location and cultural site suitable for the historical texture of the city are underway.

Tunel Memory Museum

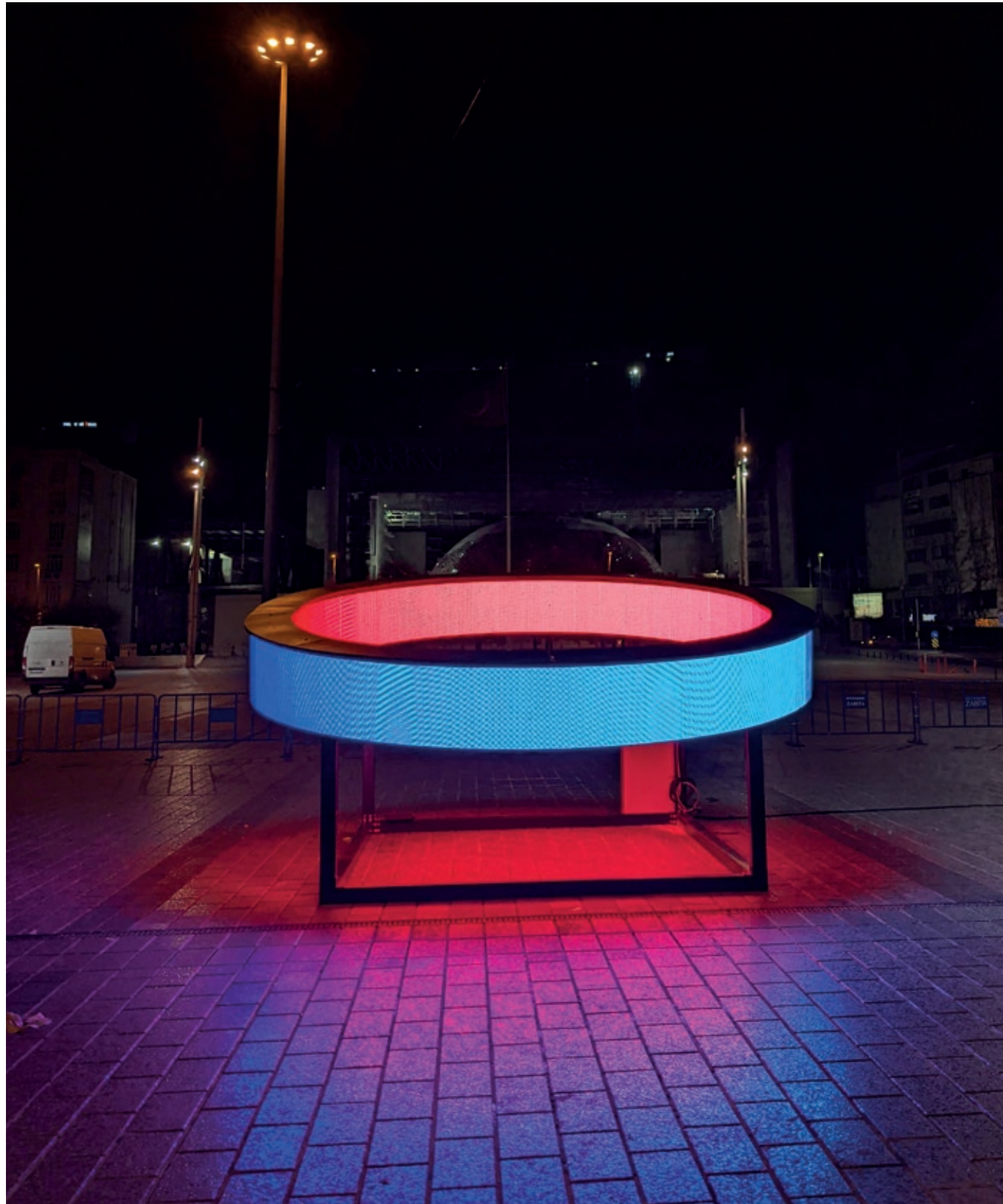
The museum, witnessed the great changes and transformation of Istanbul, which has been the meeting place of different nations, religions and cultures throughout history life, will follow the traces of memory both spatially and socially. It will present the multilayered structure from its cozy perch in Beyoğlu. By

outlining the cosmopolitan identity of the city, the museum, will include significant content from individuals who have made original contributions to city life, to events that can be considered milestones for the city. The museum will take on the task of preserving memory and passing it on to future generations.

Contemporary Istanbul at 15

The last-minute postponement of Contemporary Istanbul's actual fair, a first in its 15-year run, has been replaced by much anticipation for its virtual components. Istanbul the Lights, Plugin and Virtual Contemporary Istanbul are expected to reflect widespread paradigm shifts on the global art world agenda.

By MATT HANSON



Hakan Yılmaz, *Borders* 2020

After 15 years of uninterrupted annual programming, Istanbul's largest citywide art fair, Contemporary Istanbul, will continue in December exclusively via digital channels, as its actual, physical components are postponed till further notice. Chaired by Ali Güreli, the fair is an intercontinental carnival of creative resilience, in which the value and significance of new artworks are re-defined and exchanged within a week. For 2020's virtual edition, online this December, curations will include a generous representation of galleries from Istanbul and abroad.

The artists to be featured hail from as far afield as Seoul, Johannesburg, London and New York with a substantial sampling of Istanbul's art scene. Within the scope of Contemporary Istanbul, Turkey's 16-million-strong metropolis will become more than the sum of its populace, transforming into an integrated technological environment. Under the autopilot momentum of computerized industries, at the cusp of artificial intelligence, creatives vision digital worlds while grappling with the vulnerability of mortal existence.

For better or worse, however unwilling, 2020 is revealing a new cultural moment as concerns art history in the wake of global pandemic-related closures. It is possible that virtualizing the appreciation and trade of art may not be a remote, or diminished experience. The eye creates an image of the visible. Art, particularly contemporary art, is a force that has the potential to challenge individuals to think for themselves in public, as an intellectual society of thoughtful individuals among all classes, despite literacy, by mere presence and perception.

The vicissitudes of life under the pandemic have forced interpersonal

human contact into an unprecedented degree of simulated, institutionalized sense perception. Art represents an exception to the rule of sensation as a purely physical encounter with matter. Artists are composers of physical laws, notating the elements of creation by way of intuition and thought. A creative act becomes art, arguably, when it rides that liminal wave between the virtual and the actual, despite the popular pretense of analog technology's materiality.

The French philosopher Henri Bergson, who made a discipline out of intuition, wrote on virtuality and actuality as modern industry globalized. In his 1889 book, "Time and Free Will", he wrote, "...actual and not merely virtual perception of subdivisions in what is undivided is just what we call objectivity." Nearly a century later, the art critic Michael Fried espoused a theory of art objects in his essay, "Art and Objecthood" (1967), proclaiming: "The shape is the object: at any rate, what secures the wholeness of the object is the singleness of the shape."

Beyond the immediate obviousness of its empirical data, contemporary art relays the elusive quality and power of thought, towards multifaceted identifications with cultural activity born out of a mixed gene pool of ideas. A contemporary artwork can be thought of as a tool, not unlike a piece of machinery, whereby conceptual notions and perspective shifts are prompted simply by perceiving the visibility of its objects, listening to its audio projections, or experiencing the ideational context of its spatial installations.

An early glimpse at Istanbul the Lights

The difference between a virtual artwork, and what could be termed an

actual artwork, might be that a virtual piece is self-propelled. An appreciator of art will watch as virtual artwork does its magic, demanding more or less passive observation. Actual art, painting or sculpture, even an installation of objects, arguably asks its observer to practice reflexive introspection, basically to think in order to enjoy, or even to sense it. Whether automated digital, virtual, or multimedia art is more thoughtless than its predecessors has been asked since cinema began.

"In terms of digital art, technology-based art, new art, light installations, none of the world's art fairs have done this, a special section for the technology of art. During these past seven years, I was always trying for better sales for these artists, because they are exhibiting their works but they were not able to sell," said Güreli. "People don't understand that they are for sale, that it is a fair, and that you can buy it. They think it's just a very nice exhibition!"

"I think, for the first time people will realize that this is another type of art, and that it's developing fast, and that it will be much more important in their life in the future. This festival, 'Istanbul the Lights' will show that their is this type of art, that it can be appreciated by all people living in the city. This festival will be a jump for this type of art. Because this is going to be our first year for 'Istanbul the Lights'."

"Istanbul the Lights" is a project of Contemporary Istanbul Foundation, with support from Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality. It is a series of open-air, digital art exhibitions running alongside Contemporary Istanbul. "Istanbul the Lights", will run in various locations throughout Istanbul from December 7

to January 3, 2021, including over fifty works by 39 artists, such as Ali Elmacı, Ayşe Gül Süter and Buğra Erol. The installations will present massive displays of projected light, and integrate augmented reality apps.

"The locations of Istanbul the Lights are based on the facilities that the municipality has, including giant LED screens. In the beginning we focused on Taksim, Nişantaşı, Karaköy, Şişli, Beyoğlu, and Kadıköy, then the municipality offered all the LED screens in the city," Güreli said. "So, the festival will be in very different locations, wherever there is a screen. In a way, it's everywhere in the city. We contacted the local municipalities of Şişli, Beşiktaş, Beyoğlu and Kadıköy. They are also going to provide us with their own screens during this period."

Similar to other outdoor festivals around the world, such as The Festival of Lights Berlin, or St. Petersburg's Autumn Light Festival, "Istanbul the Lights", aligns with the objective of Contemporary Istanbul Foundation to temporarily transform Istanbul into a citywide art gallery. Hinting at traces of what might be shown are works like "Datamonolith" by the artist known as Ouchhh, which may provoke human humility, not before the vast landscapes of nature, but before a figment of human creation consolidated into a molten rectangle.

"Datamonolith" summons the iconic scene from Stanley Kubrick's 1968 classic film, "2001: A Space Odyssey", in which primordial apes meet their evolutionary enigma in the form of an absolute, artificial object. The nebulous glow of Refik Anadol's slow-motion capture of electric blue, pixelated waves on the Bosphorus, or some related incarnation from his practice may roil to abandon before the eyes of unsuspecting passersby. If

an artist's past works are any indication of what to expect, "Istanbul the Lights" will be as diverse as it is mystifying.

"For the next year's edition of 'Istanbul the Lights' we will have much more time and more financial input from private industry, corporations," said Güreli. "My vision is to have next year's digital art use the buildings of these corporations. These corporations will support this festival by supporting an artist with a giant artwork on their building, also promoting their building. It could have fifteen to twenty buildings exhibiting this art. This is how it will develop. Next year is going to be much different."

The questions of art appreciation, of aesthetic enjoyment, and conceptual apprehension lead to more profound investigations on the nature of mind, and its capacity to both reflect, and refract — to alter or process creatively — what it perceives. These highly cerebral pursuits scratch the surface and touch the depths of technology and media, particularly where the moving image is concerned, because, arguably depth and surface overlap by the phenomena of spaceless, virtual media.

The mind is essentially tricked by light, a condition of the physical world whose subjection to scientific investigation has unveiled the essence of universal creation. Light is the underlying theme that connects science and art, a reunion that is occurring from the art world through digitization, and virtualization. Long before the age of reason led to the manufacture of microscopes and telescopes, magnifying the inner and outer spheres, studies of light defined the history of painting.

Painting, in its artistic context, can be said to be a practice of looking at light, or discerning that which enables sight as visibly separate from the personal circumstances of the subject-object dichotomy. The changing role of light in painting runs parallel to innovations in the artificial reconstruction of dimensionality and perspective. In the studios and salons of Europe, artists were using paint and canvases as the software and hardware, respectively to hack the boundary where external sense perception and the activity of the mind interact.

The white cube as a multicolored globe

As for participating galleries and the more conventional dynamics of art appreciation, such as canvas painting, Güreli expressed personal excitement in the participation of Ilona-K, an art gallery based in Moscow, coming to Contemporary Istanbul for the first time. "It is a very young gallery. I know Ilona very well. Her family owns Stella Art Foundation, who managed and financed the last three Russian Pavilions at the Venice Biennial."

Güreli exudes personal enthusiasm in Istanbul's public art appreciation and pride in the perseverance of Contemporary Istanbul as a conduit for maintaining a network of relations with important galleries from around the world. Ilona-K is one of the leading, international galleries in Moscow, whereas, according to Güreli, most Russian and Moscow galleries are more local.

The London-based JD Malat represents two Turkish artists, sculptor Hande Şekerciler and painter Zümrütoğlu. JD Malat's eponymous director Jean-David, compliments the significance of Turkey's art market, as a frequent visitor to Istanbul, even during the pandemic, expressing confidence in Turkey's response. Şekerciler has innovated a virtual exhibition, "ecstasy", in which she is merging sculpture with digital art in new ways. Those who attend the 15th Contemporary Istanbul will also be able to view her latest show in London via cyberspace.

"I represent these two Turkish artists, both of whom I discovered in Istanbul two years ago. Both artists are progressing extremely well. The evolution of their practice and

the maturity of their works have really developed over the last few years,” said Malat. “Hande Sekerciler is now working with bronze in a monumental scale, it is really impressive, especially as she creates her own chemical patina. Both Zumrutoglu and Sekerciler already have a strong following in Turkey and we want to continue expanding their international audience.”

Malat is particularly excited to present the works of their new artist, Kojo Marfo, who painted a piece especially for the 15th Contemporary Istanbul. Malat discovered Marfo through their exhibition ‘Isolation Mastered’, after its open-call provided a platform to aspiring artists following the first lockdown. Marfo’s work stood out immediately out of over 1000 submissions. With floral patterns juxtaposed against matte black, his anthropomorphic shapes commingle in seamless weaves within tapestry-like canvases.

Also for the 15th Contemporary Istanbul, besides Marfo, Malat will exhibit two paintings by Colombian artist Santiago Parra, a life-size bronze sculpture by Sekerciler, a monumental canvas by Zumrutoglu and a new painting by female abstract painter Katrin Fridriks. A gallery akin to Istanbul’s nationally-driven, relatively fringe art scene, Berman Contemporary, based in Johannesburg, South Africa, will exhibit multimedia artist Stefan Blom, sculptor Marian Hester, and installation ecologist Ingrid Bolton.

“The three artists on show have all worried in a different field before they decided to develop their artistic career,” said Els van Mourik, based in Amsterdam, yet working as an independent curator for Berman Contemporary. “At this moment, we are not only looking to the West: London, Paris, NY, Basel, etc. What is more interesting for Berman Contemporary is the development in the new art cities on the continent, and cities with whom the gallery can relate to on a historical, cultural and arts level.”

The representation of African artists at Contemporary Istanbul, from both London and Johannesburg, is a unique opportunity for collectors and artists to reflect on its relationships not only abroad but within the multiculturalism of Istanbul’s migrant minorities. In some of the more culturally active, inner-city neighborhoods of Istanbul, such as Tarlabası beside Dolapdere, where the museum Arter stands as the country’s contemporary art mecca, there are significant African communities who live and work in Istanbul, yet are all but invisible within the city’s cultural life.

“On the African continent there are several cities that are currently developing a strong local and national art market such as Cape Town, Johannesburg, Lagos, Marrakech and Accra. Typical is that recently in all cities a contemporary art museum has opened and nearly all of them are organizing annual art fairs,” Mourik explained. “The diverse audience attending Contemporary Istanbul reflects the state of the arts in Istanbul. How the Turkish contemporary art market in general is flourishing and growing is for us still difficult to see and we hope to gain some more insights while talking to other galleries and artists during the upcoming art fair.”

Directing a prominent contemporary art gallery in London, Malat is committed to diverse, globally-minded representation. It is part of the reciprocity between the Global North and South that makes the art world at large such a fertile space for imagining alternative communications and interactions, intellectually and economically between otherwise disparate, remote nations. That is a lesson that Malat learned as former director of Opera Gallery.

“Opera Gallery participated for two years, in 2011 and 2012, but they made a mistake in terms of choosing the artworks and the artists during those two years. They were too expensive,” Güreli recalled of the times when Jean-David of JD Malat formerly directed Opera Gallery. “They exhibited artworks were worth up to a million dollars. Sales were weak in Istanbul. They know the market better now, and will be coming with more reasonably

priced artworks by the same artists.”

For their return to Istanbul for 2020, Opera Gallery, a multitiered organization with galleries in New York, London, Paris, Hong Kong, Beirut and elsewhere, are posing an ambitious, compressive approach to global multiculturalism and genre definition in contemporary art. They see Istanbul as fertile ground to foment an entrepreneurial spirit in concert with the youngest generation of artists.

At the 15th Contemporary Istanbul, Opera Gallery will exhibit monumental, performative light sculptures by British artists Nick Gentry and Anthony James with bicycle chain sculptures by South Korean artist Seo Young-Deok, which are more “meditative”, as they describe it. Paintings by the world-famous Fernando Botero will be exhibited in Istanbul via Opera Gallery, as with works by Manolo Valdés, Julian Opie, Reza Derakshani, and others.

“Due to COVID-19, the majori-



Ingrid Bolton, *Granules*, 2018. Metal box with loose copper shavings 20x20x5 cm



Anthony James, *Crystal 001*, 2020 Stainless Steel, specialized glass, LED lighting, solar black 245.1x116.8x120.7 cm



Victor Sydorenko, from the series *Inversion of Egocentrism* 190x190 cm, Oil on canvas

ty of art fairs were canceled this year, leaving the industry without one of its fundamental elements. As we know, the art fair sector has moved online thanks to the use of digital platforms, but despite the positive feedback of online collaboration,” wrote Frederica Beretta, director of Opera Gallery in London.

David C. Terry, an artist, independent curator, and the artistic director of C24 Gallery, lavishes praise on the community-oriented milieu of Istanbul’s art scene, informed by his many visits to Contemporary Istanbul throughout the years. C24 is known in some circles as the Turkish gallery in New York, as partners Emre and Maide Kurttepel, Mel Dogan and Asli Soyak have overseen its curations within the aggressive careerism of the nonpareil Chelsea district.

Representing Istanbul-based artists Seçkin Pirim and Irfan Önürmen, whose works will be exhibited at the 15th Contemporary Istanbul, C24, under the astute guidance of Terry, maintains sagacious, visionary foresight as concerns the art world’s future. In few words, as an artist himself, Terry stands behind the trans-media position of contemporary art, that despite technological trends and popular demand, is defined not by the media through which it is expressed but by its expression, and most importantly, the ideas it conveys.

“Seçkin Pirim’s works are about obsession with control and patterns and fighting those. Irfan Önürmen works on three or four different types of series at a time. He’s doing a series on isolation, multimedia paintings. We’ll mostly be showing small works,” said Terry. “Our modus operandi is not necessarily about a specific medium, it’s about the artist and the work and the voice and what they’re communicating. If it ends up being in a painting, fantastic. If it’s in augmented reality that’s great too. We’re about the voice and the vision not necessarily tied to a specific medium. It just keeps you more open and free, and not limiting yourself.”

The high-voltage currents of Plugin and Virtual CI
Another time-honored digital venture

alongside Contemporary Istanbul is called Plugin. The multifaceted platform equates digital art to experience, and to immersion in space. It will advance interest in artificial intelligence and bio-art, while sparking dialogues on design and technology through panels and talks. Artists of various disciplines in the plural field of new media will be exhibited as part of a public spectacle and visualization of its core intent, namely to be at the cutting edge of technologically-informed creative work.

Artists contributing to Plugin encompass such eclectic, modish minds as the Brooklynite and German furniture designers Phillip Schmitt and Steffen Weiß, whose wildly impractical works are only outmatched in their abstraction by Berlin-based neural networker Sofia Crespo. It is intriguing to recognize that most of the artists featured via Plugin are in fact of Turkish origin. They include New Media artists Bevoid, Can Büyükberber, Mert Kızılay, Under1Min, Onur Sönmez in Munich, and the duo Enes Özenbaş and Ethem Cem, as well as the cyber-inflected, fictive portrait photography of Yonca Karakaş via Istanbul’s Pg Gallery.

Practitioners of the digital field will discuss such harder tech themes as robotism and coding with softer, more community-oriented approaches to reconnection, sustainability, and upcycling within the prevailing, computerized milieu. It is simultaneously the case that the 15th Contemporary Istanbul and much of its complementary projects and sideshows will be accessible through online portals. In fact, with the fair’s director, Melih İsmail İnan, Güreli has overseen the comprehensive Virtual Contemporary Istanbul.

“We discussed all aspects of Virtual Contemporary Istanbul, through online software. We decided on a German firm, with their partners in Istanbul, young genius guys,” said Güreli who recovered from a COVID-19 infection during talks in March. “We also worked on an international communication marketing program for Virtual Contemporary Istanbul. Many of the online fairs look more like a website, they don’t give energy or joy,

to spend longer hours looking at the galleries and artworks carefully.”

Virtual Contemporary Istanbul will be divided into four different web portals, each distinctly themed according to medium and movement. Participating galleries near and far will book spaces within interactive, online channels. The digital spaces will have the look and feel of entering buildings within the fair’s complex. Along with high-resolution imagery of the artworks, Virtual Contemporary Istanbul will link collectors with the artist and their gallery, relaying the history and life behind the works and with options to meet privately and negotiate.

So as to set a precedent, and recognize the full-scale changes that have affected the art world in 2020, Contemporary Istanbul intends to remain on the pulse. Its online program will continue after the fair’s physical reincarnation this spring with year-round events focusing on various substrata of art production, be it photography, sculpture or technology. Galleries from across the city and world will occupy certain times and spaces within the sprawling, rolling web-exclusive edition.

Among the more influential, yet perhaps quieter voices at Contemporary Istanbul will be the Turkish collectors who have astutely followed art in Istanbul for decades. Such is true for Ahu Serter and her family, who manage a number of initiatives, particularly in Bodrum through Casa dell’arte, a treasury of their collected artworks based in a hotel, and a cultural complex called Zai Art Museum. Serter, as the entrepreneur in the family is looking forward to opening a modern art museum in Bodrum, while running their future innovation lab, FARKLABS in Maslak.

“Our collection consists mostly of modern and contemporary Turkish art. We collect international contemporary art but we’re not artist or medium-specific,” Serter wrote. “The pandemic will give artists an enormous opportunity to differentiate themselves, I believe many new artists will emerge. It will cause others to transform. I have seen the preliminary

digital preparations of CI. It is impeccable. It may even be more convenient and productive doing the fair online. Hybrid is the word of the year. We just need to be patient and leave the door open.”

The Ankara-based businessman Emre Dökmeci collects works by prominent artists from Turkey and abroad. He possesses a sample of the peerless legacy of Farhelnissa Zeid, whose paintings are among the highest valued from the Middle Eastern region. Dökmeci is also a collector of Tony Cragg, who had a solo show at Istanbul Modern in 2018, and the contemporary Istanbul gallery artist, Sinan Logie, among others.

“I am looking forward to Contemporary Istanbul as a whole, positive that the artworks the artists produced during these hard times with the pandemic will be very interesting,” he said, reflecting on his participation, as a collector, in art talks and lectures series online. “Collecting is a journey. One may use different means of transportation, for their journey can be in person or virtual.”

Erol Tabanca, founder of Odunpazarı Modern Museum (OMM) in Eskişehir, has been following the works of young artists closely for the last 7-8 years. OMM has repositioned Turkey’s art map outside of Istanbul, offering an alternative perspective, which Tabanca affirms in his commitment to younger artists. As well as being a research-oriented collector by virtue of his institutional leadership, he describes himself as an art lover. The enthusiasm runs in the family as his daughter, İdil, is also the chairperson of the OMM Board of Directors.

“This is because we talk about different exhibitions, different artists and feed off each other. At this point, while I pursue my own selection, and she does her own, a collection selection that is rich in diversity emerges,” he said, referencing the inaugural OMM exhibition’s inclusion of the London collective Marshmallow Laser Feast. “I think ‘Plugin Istanbul’ represents an important domain within the fair. That is to say, today, new media and digital art have come into prominence in the world of contemporary art.”

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW

Istanbul's new AKM and Tersane

Architecture in a Multi Layered City

The new Atatürk Cultural Center (AKM) and Tersane Istanbul, designed by Tabanlıoğlu Architects, are both significant in terms of historical culture. In an exclusive interview, Murat Tabanlıoğlu tells us more about these projects and the changing face of Istanbul.

By ŞEBNEM
KIRMACI



The new Atatürk Cultural Center designed by Murat Tabanlıoğlu



Originally built in 1946 as the "Opera House," and later transformed in the 1960s as the Cultural Center, AKM was designed by Dr. Hayati Tabanlıoğlu

Designed by Tabanlıoğlu Architects, the Atatürk Cultural Center (AKM) will mainly serve as an opera house, but the center will also have venues ranging from cinema and theater to exhibition halls, cafes and restaurants. Located in the main square of the city, AKM was once the symbol of modern Turkey. Since its closure in 2008, the building has remained empty for more than a decade.

Tabanlıoğlu Architects are also engaged in the restoration of the historic 15th Century Haliç Tersanesi (Golden Horn shipyard). The project regenerates a former industrial area of coastline to create a new cultural destination for the city, with hotels, housing, offices and leisure alongside a new marina.

Historically, the Golden Horn served as Istanbul's inner harbor with a longstanding legacy of shipbuilding and repairs in its shipyards. In 1453, Sultan Mehmed II established an imperial shipyard across the Golden Horn from Constantinople, in the formerly Genoese suburb of Galata.

During the Republican Period, Haliç became a natural port for merchant vessels and warships. At the same time, it served as a shipyard zone while the upper part remained a popular excursion and summer resort of the city, where mansions, waterfront residences and pavilions lined up as a natural extension of the Bosphorus. After the 1960s, the region lost its charm under the pressure socioeconomic conditions. Instead, it became a commercial and industrial center. This resulted in the emergency of irregularly constructed residential hubs, or *gecekondu*, and caused a deterioration in life and building quality of the surroundings as well as the Golden Horn itself. After many years of neglect, the first cleaning works began in 1984.

By means of strategic transformation, the Golden Horn is getting ready

to reclaim the prestigious identity of its past to become a vigorous extension of the city. The view of the coastline from the sea emphasizes the image of the city. Part of the Tersane Masterplan is the new Sadberk Hanım Museum. Grimshaw has been commissioned by the Vehbi Koç Foundation to develop designs for the Sadberk Hanım Museum. The museum is being relocated from its current home on the Bosphorus to a listed building in the Golden Horn. The coastline aims to be a new cultural destination for the city.

Let's say someone who does not have a clue finds out that an Opera House will be built in the middle of Taksim square. Do you think that person would find it bizarre?

There has already been a building there since the '60s. That's the important thing. Then, of course, we forgot it because it was closed for a long time. Especially the young generation does not know about it. They didn't experience it. On the contrary; we attended various concerts, operas, ballet shows we were invited to parties there.

AKM was one of the venues of the 10th International Istanbul Biennial curated by Hou Hanru. It has another significance in this sense. The point is that, the door of the building would open when there was an opera or a ballet show, and it would be closed again when performances were over.

Improper Use

I remember visiting an exhibition of Bedri Baykam back in the day. Nilgün Özyayten was the manager of the AKM Art Gallery between 1985 and 2000, but that gallery was never used properly after she left. In other words, AKM had one administrator and she managed everything. It was a nice place but not used adequately.

In 2009, under the leadership of Nuri Çolakoğlu and Şekip Algeviç, as

well as the coordination of Korhan Gümüş, we started discussing the future of AKM within the framework of the European Capital of Culture Istanbul project.

On this team, there were actors and actresses, artists, representatives of the chamber of architects and academicians. Two panel discussions were conducted on the future of AKM. That is to say, it was brought up on the agenda there for the first time. Later, I was given the task of renovating this place. We prepared a project. When that project was about to be implemented, the chamber of architects and unions representing some of the artists, came out against it.

Howso?

They said that the place was a first-degree historical monument and such changes could not be implemented there. Therefore, we made a decision to cancel it. Then, we prepared another project. Upon that, an agreement was made and it went out to tender. At that time, the Gezi Park Protests were happening, and the project was shut down. Frankly, I do not know what happened afterwards either. Years later, when I entered the building again, I saw that the interior was deteriorating and it was now in bad condition. For some time the building was intended to be strengthened, but it was reported that, technically, it would not be secure. During my visit, I saw that only "the bones" of the building were left. At the time, I thought the building had to be rebuilt, but this was a decision beyond me. Its interior and exterior facades were uninsulated, the structure was not compliant with the new fire and earthquake regulations, and opera and ballet halls must be around 2000 people in a city like Istanbul. Due to these reasons, it was finally decided to demolish and rebuild the building. We prepared a new concept project accordingly.

Entrance from both sides

What was the concept project?

There is a main building that we all recognize. You know, the main building in which we enter the concert hall below. Above it, is the art gallery and the large foyers. At the back, there is a section we call the "backhouse" that is unseen, where offices, a carpentry shop, a paint shop, tailors, rehearsal rooms, dressing rooms and sets for crew members are located. There was a parking lot next to the building at the time. It is a very disused part under which there was once Aziz Nesin's Stage and warehouses. We came up with an idea after an analysis of the area. If these two sections were combined, a space with two entrances could be created... So the idea was to create connection in two ways; one from the Technical University and the Atatürk Library, and the other from Taksim Square. The axis that we call "Culture Street" became an extension of the Beyoğlu Culture Road that reaches up to Galataport. It is accessible from Taksim and the technical university.

A new life

We have increased the capacity of the opera hall to over 2000 people, which used to have 1300 seats. Actually, we wanted a hall like Scala in Milan. We thought that it should be a complete cultural center like the Centre Pompidou, and that it should be extended all over that street. So, there is a concert and theater hall for 800 people. There are several multipurpose halls, a small film library where culture and cinema movies can be shown, and a stage for musical performances.

There is also a library that I attach most importance to. This country does not have any proper library dedicated to art, architecture and music.

There will also be a cafe and restaurant. People will be there, people will be able to spend time there. The building completely overlooks the Bosphorus, and there will be a restaurant with a terrace. What I want to underline is that apart from opera and ballet performances, this place will be a meeting and socializing place for people. It will be alive.

Meeting Place

Are there going to be any art galleries or spaces?

Yes, there will be a space for art. Back to your question, the most important task is to make Taksim a vibrant square again. A place to meet and socialize. People will visit, attend concerts, read and share their experiences. So with what we are doing at AKM, it shouldn't be seen as just an Opera House.

Construction Phases Published on YouTube

AKM is a symbolic structure and its demolition has been controversial.

Not many people know about the current project, don't you think so?

From the moment we started, we have transparently posted videos on YouTube about our work. I even presented this subject at an exhibition in Berlin. We had a discussion with the architects there. It has also been discussed here. You know, my father, Hayati Tabanlıoğlu, designed the first AKM building. However in 1970, it was devastated by the fire that broke out while Arthur Miller's *The Crucible* play was being staged.

AKM was rather like a character you know, like a inhabitant of the city.

I think the building is living its third life today with a story behind it. We already have an enormous archive. Real building parts, old pictures, interviews...

Are you going to share these with the public?

Sure, with an exhibition, they will all become components of the building. A visitor, even one without any knowledge about its history, will develop an idea from what they see and read, and will continue to exchange ideas. This is really important.

Being the architect of the building that your father, Hayati Tabanlıoğlu, had designed years ago... You must feel a great deal of responsibility?

That's why I do not see AKM as just a building; it actually has a different kind of meaning for me. This building is nothing like a sculpture or something static, it is built to be used. Think of the opera house in Sydney that changed the very skyline of the whole city. At the moment, there are not many tourists coming to Istanbul as in the early 2000s, but one day this will change. This place will become vibrant again. In addition, opera, ballet and music shows from all over the world will be staged here. The acoustics of the building, and its capacity to entertain the audience are all world-class. The rehearsal rooms, changing rooms... All throughout the building we used cutting edge, the most advanced technology available.

Everything Will Change in Time

Istanbul is all grey now; Taksim Square is even worse, all dead... Let's imagine the building opens tomorrow; don't you ever worry about how it will unfold in this environment?

There has already been a competition for Taksim Square and some things will change. The important thing here is, how will Taksim regain its former vitality?

Taksim is an unpleasant place now; static and in endless gray...

There used to be flower sellers in the street, who disappeared suddenly. I

Istanbul-Haliç Shipyards



Haliç Shipyard is under renovation, courtesy of Tabanlıoğlu Architects



Haliç Shipyard, the oldest shipyard in the world was founded by Fatih Sultan Mehmet in 1455

wish they would come back. On one hand, right at the entrance of Beyoğlu, there are those hamburger restaurants. How can they be changed? I remember, when I was little there was a place called Ankara Bazaar. Vakkorama had a very beautiful shop under the Etap Marmara. We used to go there, but now we don't anymore. There were very nice places. There was the main agency of Turkish Airlines, Marmaris Buffet and Crystal Buffet. They were the reasons to go there. You may also remember the first McDonald's building designed by Şevki Pekin, or Han Tümmertekin's Art Gallery. All of these are lost today. The arrangement of the square, and its surroundings, not just AKM, should be perceived from the same perspective. Some things will change eventually. Not everything will happen in a year or two, but it will change over time.

Taksim Will Benefit From AKM

Nothing comes to mind when I think of Taksim today, or what the future will be like. I can't visualize it...

Consider the Centre Pompidou. When it was first built, Parisians opposed to its construction because they thought the project looked too mechanical. Nowadays, there are not only art galleries but also quality restaurants and cafes in those side streets. When people started to spend time at those cafes, the whole environment changed. They revived and regenerated public there. Indeed, that area was less significant when compared to Taksim. I think AKM will provide many benefits for Taksim. I imagine Beşiktaş fans, coming out of the football games, will pass here in the direction of Beyoğlu. This is nice too.

Tourists will visit and many more...

Do you think AKM is a first-degree historical monument?

I don't think so. A first-degree historical monument should be complete; both outside and inside. For instance it can be the Hagia Sophia, the Blue Mosque or Dolmabahçe Palace. Such a structure built in the '60s cannot be a first degree historical monument because it requires technical alterations. If it had been one, I would not have been able to work as I do now.

Taksim Square is Constantly Changing

Taksim Square is maybe the country's most iconic square. It is the city's main touristic and cultural centre. It has often played host to political rallies and protests over the course of history. While working on your project, you studied how the square transformed over the decades, right?

When I look at the old photographs, plans and sketches of the square, I observe that it is constantly transformed in different directions. On the contrary, St. Mark's Square in Italy has remained the same. Even the art galleries around it have been the same for years. But Taksim is not like that. I think it was deformed by both Gezi Park and its surroundings; as a result it lost its scale. That's why we neither feel like we are in a square nor a park. So the problem is there. And then it is cleared of cars and crisscrossed by tunnels. Now, it has become a square that we never pass by. This can also be discussed. The second

important point is the natural use of the square. I think people have abandoned the area because of this lack of scale. So instead of acting as a meeting place, it becomes a place to avoid. Why is there no Turkish Airlines office anymore? Probably because it's not the right place to be, if you know what I mean...

3D Chandelier in AKM

But, will there be other formations in time?

I think art is very important for the revival of a place. The street can unite with art. The whole area, starting from inside the park, AKM, Marmara and İstiklal Avenue should be combined. It can be equipped with spaces for concerts and markets.

You have also designed a special chandelier for AKM which disappears into the ceiling, right?

Yes. If I may say so, it is a 3D chandelier. As an important item for the hall, when the performance is over, it will be brought down. The hall is in the shape of a horseshoe, and the seats are uniquely designed.

Grand Opening in March 2021

Now, here comes the question: when is the grand opening?

In March 2021, the building will be completely finished. We will be able to stroll around. Certain technical parts will be completed by the end of next year.

Besides AKM, there is the Haliç Port Project. The Haliç Shipyard was established in the 15th century. Another historically and culturally significant project.

The Golden Horn, when you look at the engravings from the Ottoman period and the pictures taken afterwards, it is actually a very well used point, as if it is a continuation of the Bosphorus. Now, the most important difference between the Golden Horn and the Bosphorus is that there is always a north wind and flow in the Bosphorus, and the strait lives on its own. What I mean is that, when you are in Bebek for instance, you immediately feel that you are in Bosphorus. The Golden Horn, on the other hand, is different; it is a quiet place that does not directly take the north wind. You feel different when you travel by boat from the sea towards the Golden Horn. While this place was used as a recreation spot in the past, it was opened to construction over time. It became an industrial zone, with small and large formations. It gained a mixed identity. On one side, due to

the existence of Jewish businessmen who are now in the minority, there are synagogues for the Jewish community and churches for the Orthodox Patriarchate. But on the other hand, there were also small workshops where hats and fezes were made. Such a complexity and solidarity prevails there..

Almost a Small Town

In the '80s, Dalan embarked on a major cleaning operation. It was also not done properly, and they cleared everything away. All industrial structures other than the shipyards were demolished, which were also a part of history. There are many layers in that area, you have to be very careful with those layers while manipulating one. Especially if we think about this along the whole shore...

When we visited shipyards, we observed all those things that I have mentioned so far. There are buildings here dating from Byzantium to the Ottoman Empire; from the first period of the Republic to the last period. The Ottomans made their first ships here and larger ships were built later in the early Republican period. New workshops, new factory buildings were built as the need arose and a small town was formed there. These layers were added on different dates. Some of them are to be maintained at their scale within the scope of historical monuments, in order to continue the atmosphere that had been created all along. We prepared the project accordingly.

A New Museum on the Golden Horn

This place has not been used as a shipyard for years, right?

Yes, it has lost its function. The most important point here is that now people will come to this beach. The municipality held a competition about this issue as well. The whole Golden Horn shore will be reorganized; we are actually a part of it. Sadberk Hanım Museum, which belongs to Koç Family, will be relocated to one of the largest and oldest shipyards. Approximately thirty percent of the project will be an art space. Apart from that, of course, there will be art galleries, shops, restaurants and hotels. But most importantly, there will be residences. Therefore this place will have its owners; we will actually start to create a new neighborhood here. For the first time, there will be various studios, housing units and small offices on the edge of the Golden Horn. It is different in that respect. So this is not a place just to visit. It will develop as a neighbourhood

like Ortaköy and Bebek, and become a coastal town like Arnavutköy.

Galataport Project is another massive project which will transform the city isn't it?

Yes. The fact that Galata Port Project has two very important art spaces in its premises is very remarkable. It will host the new Istanbul Modern Museum building. Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University Painting and Sculpture Museum is also within the project area. In fact, Galataport is also a very old project. Just as Karaköy was transformed when Istanbul Modern was opened at the time, Galataport will now experience that transformation. AKM will create the same effect in Taksim, and Haliç Port will also make an impact on its surroundings.

Istanbul is undergoing an update of some sort, isn't it?

Sure. The population of Istanbul is also quite variable. Europeans used to visit Istanbul, and they are beginning to do so again. I remember there used to be cultural trips where a group of architects would visit Istanbul and we would give them a tour around the city.

These massive urban projects contain museums, an opera house, art spaces... Would you agree that art will be the transformative force behind all?

Surely. No doubt. The importance of art is gradually increasing. It is very important in a city like Istanbul.

When is Haliç Port going to be opened?

In 2021, we will be able to visit certain parts of it, but the project will open bit by bit.

Valide Slipway

The Golden Horn has existed for centuries. Have you come across any interesting stories while working there?

Actually there is. In old photographs of the Golden Horn you can see there were many ramps for boats. One of them was the Valide Slipway. Upon investigation it turned out that there is a small building standing where it used to be. We took a good look at it and discovered it had a very nice skid structure. So we decided to restore it. When we got into it, we saw that the old stones were standing there and we kept it that way. These are nice details. But the whole project has changed. While identifying historical traces the whole character of a project can change in an instant. The geometry and living spaces change. When seen from the ferry, the area will be a multi-functional space. So there could be fishermen, a fish market, or a flea market. Today, a rare example of an organic market in Istanbul is in Bomonti. Under a steel pile, everyone is trying to go and buy something. We will see that it can be done in a much better way. There will be many reasons to go to Haliç Port.

Unique Processes

What kind of responsibility it is for an architect to be in charge of two culturally and historically very significant projects?

For an ordinary project, the process starts when we assess the site. If it is empty, we try to gather certain references by discovering the surroundings and then start to draw, and it eventually turns out to be a project. It is unlikely that these two projects went through different kinds of processes. Mostly open discussions and meetings were held for the duration of the AKM project, as well as for determining the uses of the Haliç Port. Many different elements are intertwined, so the architect becomes the coordinator; you have to listen to people, absorb their ideas and interpret them correctly. So it is very different than doing any other project. There is a certain process and this process must be followed. It is not one of those things that can be done and finished quickly. Of course it applies to anything these days, but these two projects are a specific example.



Sadberk Hanım

Grimshaw to design the new Sadberk Hanım Museum

Turkey's first private museum will open at the historic dock site on the Golden Horn

Celebrating its 40th anniversary this year, the Sadberk Hanım Museum holds an extensive collection of around 20,000 items. Housing outstanding artifacts dating from prehistory to the 20th century; from Anatolian civilizations, Ottoman artists, as well as Greek and Roman civilizations, the museum is preparing to move to a new and more centralized building designed by Grimshaw Architects, with the objective of increasing public integration with the arts.

By RANA KELLECI

The air is crisp along the Bosphorus, ideal for a visit to the Sadberk Hanım Museum's collection of peculiar Anatolian figurines. But will its environment be as fresh after the heritage institution's move to the Golden Horn inlet? The objects in its collections have the potential to serve, support, and stimulate our imagination – perhaps even to reconstruct the popular imagination to better understand the feminine evolution of societies.

The studies of archeologist and anthropologist Marija Gimbutas are a call to pay more attention to the collective memory, by following her unprecedented readings of Neolithic artefacts. Throughout her remarkable career, Gimbutas (born 1921), studied the Neolithic and Bronze Age cultures of what she called "Old Europe," through field research that extended from Sardinia to Ukraine to Turkey's Çatalhöyük. She emphasized the life-giving, death-giving and transformational aspects of the goddess as a unified entity, in contrast to the conventional and limited understandings of the pieces being simply fertility or Mother figures.¹

Sadberk Hanım Museum holds a small number of carefully preserved, seated female figurines, accepted as among the first examples of the mother goddess dating back to the 6th millennium BC. These figures are part of a wider selection of objects in the museum's collection, which are "qualified to represent all of the Anatolian civilizations throughout all cultural periods as early as prehistory to the 20th century," a museum spokesperson wrote in an email.

The museum collection is founded on the private collection of Sadberk Koç. While initially holding 3,000 pieces at the time of its foundation in 1980, the collection has grown into an astounding 20,000 pieces of history, thanks to an ever-expanding list of acquisitions and donations. The do-



Sadberk Hanım Museum Turkish-Islamic Art Section



Sadberk Hanım Museum Turkish-Islamic Art Section

nation of the Hüseyin Kocabaş Collection in particular has served as a turning point for the institution's archeology collection. The museum also holds a comprehensive Turkish and Islamic Collection, developing with the objective of presenting the main veins of Islamic art. Two departments include a wide spectrum of artifacts such as traditional costumes, embroidery, silver artifacts, porcelains, cups and vessels not only from Anatolian and Ottoman history, but also Greek and Roman civilizations.

In his writings, archaeologist and historian Neil Asher Silberman discussed the politics of archeology, describing his field "as a tool for historical self-identification."² Considering recent critiques of the discipline of archeology within the sphere of colonial discourse, the study's historic tendency to re-construct history, and its role in the establishment of imperial and nationalistic narratives, I think of private institutions such as the Sadberk Hanım Collection as a part of the identity struggles brought about by modernity.

A place of creative research

The Sadberk Hanım Museum is within the circuit of professional visitations by artists and scholars who also study the collections at the Istanbul Archeology Museum – founded by the pioneering curator and painter Osman Hamdi Bey – and the Museum of Turkish and Islamic Arts, both located near Sultanahmet Square. These museums are around a hundred years old, and historically had close ties with the state. Both have gone through several ruptures, remaining idle for periods of time due to political turmoil and other factors. In comparison to the collections of these institutions, the Sadberk Hanım Museum offers subtle nuances that can be noted in its repertoire.

The collections of these state institutions originate from the same collection base. As extensively analyzed in art historian Wendy Shaw's book *Possessors and Possessed: Museums, Archaeology, and the Visualization of History in the Late Ottoman Empire*, the collections, are informed by political, cultural and ideological guideposts; as is the case for most, if not all museums of the period. It may be considered valuable to highlight the museum institution's political and historiographical agency.

In contrast, while admiring the dis-

tinctive exquisite objects in the Sadberk Hanım Museum, one can easily relate the museum and its collecting endeavors to a very personal passion, desire, or even fear. Sevgi Gönül, the daughter of Sadberk Hanım, writes in "Sevgi'nin Diviti," her column at *Hürriyet Newspaper*, how she remembers their mother-daughter excitement, walking around antique shops and flea markets in search of old, interesting items: "Catching hold of an object that nobody else has noticed, albeit hard, gave me and my mother great delight."³ Sadberk Hanım's husband, Vehbi Koç, noted in his memoirs⁴ that his wife's wish was not to be forgotten; a desire that influenced her decision to open her collection to the public as a museum. Her wishes were fulfilled after her passing by her family. Her daughter Sevgi Gönül remained active in the foundation and operations of the museum, and donated her own collection of Islamic calligraphy in 2003.

Private collections not only enable our understanding of the social and political context of history, but also hint at the subjectivity and identity of the creators. Sadberk Hanım was passionate about historic Ottoman women's costumes, so much so that she herself maintained the preservation of fabrics and embroideries, which have reached our day in very good condition. With approximately 1,300 pieces of items dating between the 18th and 20th centuries, the items encompass different geographies under Ottoman rule at the time. It is in fact quite delightful to catch details and imagine their backstories in your head: What would a woman, with all the trappings of her time, value the most? What things are of the greatest importance to her? Why? What kind of conversations and thoughts did she have while wearing this gown? As I say, museums are great at igniting and opening space for the imagination.

Alongside clothing and other textiles, the Sadberk Hanım Collection holds valuable examples of Ottoman art between the 15th and 20th centuries, including ceramics, glass, metal, silver works, and porcelain artifacts. The Turkish-Islamic collection also has a prominent selection showcasing the development of İznik tiles and ceramics, as well as calligraphy and illumination artifacts. It even holds works by renowned calligraphers of their time; such as Şeyh

Hamdullah, Derviş Ali, and Hafız Osman.

The colonialism of early museology

By the 1800s in Europe, archeology began as an amateur interest for collecting curiosities and recording ancient sites or findings. It later evolved into a discipline fully equipped with the methods of scientific research. Amateurs, scholars, and smugglers swept across unknown lands, over the territory of ancient sites, taking knowledge, images and objects back to their homes. Lands that were then under the rule of the Ottoman Empire suffered much from this new European endeavor.

In her book, Wendy M.K. Shaw narrates a comprehensive history of archeology museums in Istanbul and their collections, noting the effect of the imperial archeological enterprise on Ottoman museology. For Shaw, the museum is a site of resistance in the Ottoman context, because protecting archeological objects meant protecting borders.

Archeologic pursuits in the Ottoman lands, from present-day Greece, Iran, Iraq, Anatolia and other regions indicated an absence of authority, leading to the dislocation of many objects to European museums. Perhaps the most distinct example is seen at the Pergamon Museum in Berlin, a public institution based on the acquired remains (some legally and some illegally) of the Zeus Altar, originally located in Bergama, a town in İzmir Province, located in southwestern Turkey. The Ottoman Antiquities Law, updated and extended several times, illustrates the significance Ottoman authorities placed on efforts to control the mobility of objects as a way to exert power.

Apart from being a vein of resistance against Western imperial expansionist policies, the Ottoman pursuit of preserving and collecting its archeologic heritage continued in a more abstract way, utilizing archeology's ability to rewrite history to define a cultural identity, albeit quite dispersed. This acted as both a resistance and an involvement in the narrative of Western civilization, constructed with the help of the archeology discipline. Later, it was re-utilized as a strategy by nation-states.

Towards a future recollection

In a time when the so-called Islamic State, or Daesh, as well as other terrorist groups have demolished ancient sites and smuggled their remains to unknown private collectors and tax-free havens; borders are being tightened in fear of refugees. Artists, activists and intellectuals increasingly

question the colonial backgrounds of museums, and rethink the fragmentation of our very fragile identities. Going forward, what are the implications for private collections and public institution?

A document sent by the Sadberk Hanım Museum in response to my questions often emphasized the collection's ability to enable visitors to follow the history of Anatolian civilizations and the Islamic Arts. The museum's extensive library, which includes 10,000 books in print and 670 manuscripts, offers valuable material for scholarly research. With its library as well as a myriad of items, the Sadberk Hanım Museum is doing its best to enrich, deepen, and diversify discussions around history, culture and identity.

The museum plans to move from its current location in Sarıyer, on the Bosphorus coast, to one of the old shipyards in Haliç, a more central location. Lale Görünür, a representative for the museum, summarizes the reasons behind this decision as an effort to integrate with all levels of society, and become a center of attraction for all. In addition, she says there are practical reasons for the move, such as suitable display and storage facility needs that the existing building does not satisfy. For the architectural design of the building and exhibition area, Grimshaw Architects and Atelier Brückner have been commissioned to do the work. Like the upcoming museum quarter in Galataport along the Karaköy coastline, which have been designed in line with contemporary museology practices, it will be interesting to observe the influences of these new, shiny museum buildings.

As narrated in "Statues Also Die," Chris Marker's short film with Alain Resnais, "... the God who wove this flesh taught them by its turn to weave the cloth and its gesture sends back every second to the weaving of the world." In the present day, where the weaving of history is based on fear and othering, the agency to discuss and communicate self-identities seem to be a non-negotiable necessity. Objects, although being central to a problematic means for narrative making and knowledge production, are mute. Nevertheless, they always hold the possibility to ignite imagination, a tool with which we continuously weave our futures.

Sadberk Hanım Museum is Moving

Vehbi Koç Foundation's Sadberk Hanım Museum is Turkey's first private museum exhibiting the private collection of Sadberk Koç, the wife of Vehbi Koç. The museum opened on 14 October, 1980 in a building called the Azaryan Mansion in Sarıyer-Büyükdere. Restoration projects for the Bosphorus mansion were made by renowned architect Sedat Hakkı Eldem, and carried out between 1978-1980. Now planning a move to a shipyard in Istanbul's more central Haliç location, the new building will be designed by Grimshaw Architects. It is the same firm behind the new building of the contemporary art museum, Arter in Dolapdere, a subsidiary of Vehbi Koç Foundation.

² "Promised Lands and Chosen Peoples: The Politics and Poetics of Archeological Narrative", Nationalism, Politics and the Practice of Archeology, eds. Philip L. Kohl and Clare Fawcett. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.

³ Author's translation from Turkish original.

⁴ Recollections, Observations, Counsel. Vehbi Koç Foundation, 1991.

¹ Interested reader may want to check her book *The Living Goddesses*.

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Istanbul's Museum of Cinema



The Atlas Passage arcade was built in 1877, for an Armenian Catholic banker named Agop Köçeoğlu. Hosting the famous Atlas Cinema, the building is currently under renovation. Soon to re-open as the Istanbul Museum of Cinema, the museum will contain an Augmented Reality Room.

By ŞEBNEM KIRMACI

The covered passages of Istanbul are an integral part of the city's unique charm. Like the famous arcades of Paris, the passages of Istanbul were built in the European district of Pera now Beyoğlu, often opening to the main street, the Grande Rue de Péra (now İstiklal Avenue). Now, the Atlas Passage will become a museum.

The Istanbul Museum of Cinema consists of four floors and a roof area, reaching a total of 1500 square meters. The exhibition space for the museum's permanent collection will contain an Augmented Reality Room, A Memory Pool of Turkish Cinema, a Greenbox, and a Selfie Room.

The museum will revive the Atlas Cinema, which plays a vital role in the collective memory of the city. The movie theater sits next to Yeşilçam Street, the heart of Turkish cinema for decades.

On the second floor of the museum, visitors will be shown through the different chronological periods of Turkish cinema, with themes such as Shadow and Moving Image, the Early Period, and the Current Period.

The exhibitions area on the 3rd floor rests on 400 square meters, which will act as an art gallery focused on movie culture.

A shared workspace called the Cinema Research Center Co-FILM will claim the top floor, providing access to an international digital database. Social areas include a cafe, museum shop and particularly the Atlas Cinema.

The Café rests on an area of 150 square meters on the museum terrace, which will serve



"Putto Figures"

Digital Artworks

A digital piece of art in honor of Turkish cinema will be produced by Kutluğ Ataman. Emre Lüle's window installations and infographics will form the visual language of the museum. Hyper-realistic sculptures will be placed at the staircase

food and drink outside of the museum's visiting hours.

and museum entrance, designed to add fun to the visitors' experiences.

Themed presentations displayed on LED screens will be placed on the outer windows of the museum building. The screens will not only provide information about the museum, but will also act as a platform where graphic artwork and new media can be displayed.

Augmented Reality Application
An augmented reality application is being designed to offer visitors the opportunity to watch real-time 4K movies. It may be among the first museum uses of the virtual platform, developed by Samsung.

The augmented reality application will also be used in cinema venues in the Beyoğlu district. Visitors will be able to download an Istanbul Museum of Cinema application and map.



Ministry of Tourism and Culture is converting historic Atlas Passage into a cinema museum.

empty for a while. In 1985, it was handed over to the Treasury and allocated to the Ministry of Culture and Tourism in 1992.

The historical Atlas Building was restored to its original structure, and the Atlas Cinema was completely renovated with a detailed restoration carried out by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism in 2019 and 2020.

The building, which is one of the first important examples of the reconstruction process of Beyoğlu following the fire of 1870, has a facade layout with Neoclassical features that are unique to the end of the 19th century. It reflects the art of the period with its unique ceiling decorations, plaster reliefs, marble replaces, parquet flooring and architectural elements. The rich decorations, monumental entrance, magnificent stairs and high ceilings of the building reveal the care given to its construction.

The brick-covered passage floor, which was discovered at the entrance of the building during the restoration and is on display through a panel of glass flooring, was the road that was used to enter the building's barns by carriage.

Despite the fact that the first floor of the building lost a significant part of its original decorations and spatial elements due to the interventions that has been made over time, the unique ceiling decorations were uncovered during the restoration, hidden behind a layer of inauthentic modern additions.

Four Elements

The French painter Hippolyte Dominique Berteaux, who came to Istanbul in the 1870s, created important works reflecting the art of his period. Undoubtedly, the most striking one of these paintings can be seen on the ceiling of the Istanbul Museum of Cinema's great hall. The work is called "Water, Air, Earth and Fire."

The mural is an extraordinary representation of the four elements, through the depiction of mythological characters in the classical era. In another work, there are childlike, angelic figures called *putto*, especially seen in Renaissance and Baroque paintings. On the 3rd and 4th floors of the building, artists used examples of geometrical and vegetative decoration frequently encountered in Islamic Art.

Putto Figures

These figures, called *putto*, which were uncovered during the restoration, are seen on the first floor of the building. During the classical period, *putto* were used to portray mythological characters and the depiction of angels during the Renaissance period. The Istanbul Museum of Cinema building is one of the rare buildings where *putto* figures were used in Istanbul.

History

The building was constructed during the reign of Sultan Abdülaziz, after the Beyoğlu fire on June 5, 1870. It was commissioned by Agop Köçeyan, a businessperson of the period, in the area formerly called Cadde-i Kebir (Grand Rue de Péra). The building was donated by Köçeyan to the Taksim Vosgeperan Armenian Church, and then passed into the ownership of the brothers Aziz and Ahmet Borovalı in the 1940s. "Atlas Cinema," one of the largest multipurpose halls of the period, was built in 1948. In 1951, the first floor of the historical building was transformed into a theater (Küçük Sahne). It opened its curtains on April 13, 1951 with the play *Of Mice and Men* under the direction of Muhsin Ertuğrul. The building was then purchased by Cevher Özden in the 1970s and sat



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SPECIAL FEATURE

A New Cultural Hub at Galataport

As a global city with a vibrant cultural history and distinct geography, Istanbul needs new hubs where art and culture can breathe. Galataport Istanbul, which will host historical symbols like Istanbul Modern, the Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University Painting and Sculpture Museum, and the Tophane Clock Tower, is about to bring a new dynamic to this ancient city by preserving its urban identity, spirit, architecture, and nature.

By GÜRER MUT

Art is an aesthetic type of opulence that enhances our social memory and keeps it fresh. This richness within the harmonies of art and space cracks the door open to cultural accumulation and development. The city acts as a significant field integrating the processes of cultural production. Through Foucault's approach, it becomes a structure that sometimes limits and sometimes liberates the processes of being.

The need for a Cultural Hub
With each breath, each difficulty, and each controversy; cultural production is improved and enriched. Especially in the last twenty years, we have witnessed the withdrawal of all of the colors of art from the social sphere, and artists pushed out from "memory spaces." A question hangs in the minds of many-- "why are there no cultural hubs in this 2000-year-old ancient province?"

The monumental heritage of Istanbul, now estranged within a megalopolis of over 15 million people, is impressive in terms of numbers. But the influence of this historic built environment is limited, because it does not fit into the city's context. Thus, the inability to form a fluent connection between the city and its people inhibits the possibility of constructing a rich urban culture. Istanbul is founded on a unique geography and history. Its significance as a "world city" will be possible, not through an architectural style that bears no unique identity, but by preserving and enhancing its soul, nature and traditional architecture through the art that surrounds the city.

Many of the arts and culture capitals in the world exist within an architectural perspective that owns their specific identities. Many host millions of tourists within their unique urban fabrics. If Berlin did not preserve countless cultural venues and incorporate them within public life, such as Museum Island, the Princess Palace, and the Brandenburg Gate, or the Berlin Cathedral, Berlin Wall, and Adlon Hotel, how would Berlin be included in our memories? What if Paris, a

city where the Romanesque, Gothic and Byzantine traditions exist in harmony, did not host the Louvre and Orsay Museums? If it had not transformed its common public spaces such as the St. Germaine Boulevard and Montmartre, would it still be one of the important centers of Europe? What about Moscow, Milan, Barcelona, London, Florence, or St. Petersburg?

A Betrayed City

Among these global capitals, Istanbul-- with its history, geography and culture-- stands in a distinct position. More than ever, the city that has been "betrayed countless times" needs centers where art and cultural spheres can breathe. There is a need for spaces that bridge the past and future, that do not stand apart from the city's culture. The Galataport project, which includes Karaköy and Tophane-i Amire, has the claim of being a cultural center that reflects the city's urban culture, as well as being a touristic center. It seems the project emerging in the area where Istanbul Modern and the Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University Painting and Sculpture Museum are located will add a global dimension to Istanbul's cultural and artistic life.

A New Reference Point in Town
Galataport, one of the largest coastline projects in the world, is a project that enables much of the local historical heritage of Karaköy to be brought to light and to the public space. Situated across from the historical peninsula, Galataport's spatial form was designed in harmony with the spirit, character and culture of the district. With the addition of landscape design in the scope of the project, Tophane Square will be the first museum quarter in Istanbul. Galataport, which will host various cultural events, is preparing to become the new art, design and cultural hub of the city.

The project covers approximately 1.2 square kilometers of coastline and an area of 400,000 square meters. It includes Istanbul Modern and the Painting and Sculpture Museum, alongside cafes, restaurants, hotels and work offices. Upon



Tophane Clock Tower

its completion, it will establish a new point of reference for the city. The project includes icons of urban memory such as the Paket Post Office, Ruhtım Han, Karaköy Passenger Hall, Çinili Han, Nusretiye Mosque, Tophane Pavilion, Tophane Fountain, Tophane Clock Tower and the Kılıç Ali Pasha Mosque. It is an ideal space for outdoor exhibitions, art installations, and concerts.

Galataport is also a "tourism complex" and is prepared to host 25 million tourists a year.

Hidden behind old warehouses and customs offices, this coastline has been closed to public use for nearly 200 years. This idyllic coastline will become a public waterfront connecting the town to

the sea.

A pedestrian-friendly step

It is quite outstanding that this area, which has remained closed to the public, will be reutilized so that the people of Istanbul can enjoy an extended waterfront area. This spatial consciousness practiced in the Galataport project may also constitute an example for the solution to a fundamental urban problem. This problem is that Istanbul is not a pedestrian friendly city. In the past months, the U.S.-based Institute for Transport and Development Policy announced the world's most "walkable cities," underlining that making cities friendly to pedestrians has positive benefits for human health.

The practice also prevents global warming by reducing exhaust gas emissions and can help build a strong economic model. Unfortunately, no Turkish cities made it on the list.

Therefore, it would not be wrong to assume that a project like Galataport, which does not prioritize the use of vehicles, will set an example by creating a "walkable city." Local administrators say they will consider this positive development, and perhaps after a while, based on this example, the coastal areas can be turned into spaces of cultural production and be completely "pedestrianized."

Istanbul's clock tower from the past

Doğan Kuban makes a notable obser-

vation on city and memory: “Renowned cities like Istanbul live among people’s memories not as actual phenomena, but as ‘images.’ Even for contemporary Istanbulites, the city is beyond a physical entity; it is an image.”¹ With this observation, Kuban almost calls out to the city resident who has forgotten that living in a city means living in an image. The city’s streets, boulevards, squares, historical buildings, coastlines and bridges form a sea of motifs. When a historical but forgotten structure joins to become a component of urban space, it regains its identity. It becomes a part of our personal history.

In the area slated to become the Galataport’s Museum Square, an urban symbol has emerged from history. The Tophane Clock Tower (also known as Nusretiye Clock Tower), which has not been restored in 162 years, will gain a different meaning as the symbol of a new city, of a 21st-century Istanbul.

The clock tower, which was built by the Balyan family for Sultan Abdülmecit in 1848, laid in ruin after the fire in 1913. For a while, it was used as a warehouse. To bring this cultural heritage to the public space is a valuable act; this example of neoclassical architecture is one that many Istanbulites do not even know. In this respect, we can easily say that the development of Tophane Square is not a dry, abstract and unidentifiable area, but a project that combines with the city’s images.

Here, we must also sit and reflect on concerns about the transformation of Istanbul’s urban areas. The unplanned urbanization that began with the Menderes period in 1950 and gained speed after 1980, caused the city to lose its identity over time. This rightfully causes anxiety and anger. Many citizens are making efforts to prevent the alienation and cultural amnesia regarding urban spaces that is caused by improper restorations and urban transformation projects. Being protective and critical regarding living spaces is very valuable, but steps towards protecting the urban fabric and identity of the city while protecting public interests should not be ignored. Keeping the mission of reviving cultural life at the foreground makes the project valuable.

A Cultural Transformation of City Life

“A dream or a recollection without a space, hence is remembrance possible?” asks Gaston Bachelard.² For Bachelard, the concept of “space” forms the basis of both a “dreams” and “remembrance.” The individual does not only acquire her cultural and cognitive development through institutions, but also redefines herself through space. It plays an important role in the development of personality and identity. For this reason, it is important that art centers, galleries, concert areas, and museums are involved in public life. The diversity of the cultural realm will surely affect the cultural accumulation of that society.

Another important question is how the Galataport project will affect urban life. In that sense, the project also aims to bring cultural and art-related activities into daily life. The area is expected to become an attractive center for hosting fashion and art events, as well as adding to everyday life.

The port area on which Galataport is located has hosted many cultural and artistic events over the years. This area, where the biennials, fashion weeks, special exhibitions and film festivals take place, has continued to host the “IKSV Design Biennial Academy Program” and the “Mercedes-Benz Fashion Week Istanbul.” This year, “Fashion Week Istanbul,” held with the participation of more than 30 designers between October 12-16, was organized for the first time on a digital platform, due to the pandemic. All photo ops and filming took place in the Tophane-i Amire Culture and Art Center and Galataport. It seems Galataport has already begun to serve as the meeting point for art and fashion lovers.

This year, the “Italian Design Days 2020” (IDD’20) held in the digital realm until 15th of Dec. The latest trends in the fields of fashion, architecture and in-

¹ Kuban, D. (2010). Istanbul, an Urban History: Byzantium, Constantinople Istanbul. Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları. This is the translation of the translator from the book’s Turkish original, published in 2004, under the title: Istanbul, Bir Kent Tarihi: Byzantium, Constantinopolis.

² İlhan, M., E. (2018) Kültürel Bellek. Doğu Batı Yayınları. Quote translated from the Turkish source by the translator.



The Parcel Post Office

dustrial design will be discussed with the participation of Italian and Turkish designers. The photography and filming for “Italian Design Days 2020” was held in Galataport Istanbul with the theme “Drawing the Future - Development, Innovation, Sustainability and Beauty.”

A total of 40 panelists will be guests in 11 panels organized with the participation of the Italian Consulate in Izmir and the Italian Embassy in Ankara. In addition to sessions presented by the architect Dr. Pınar Sipahi, another world-renowned architect and curator, Prof. Luca Molinari, will moderate the panels from Milan.

The success of the Mercedes-Benz Fashion Week Istanbul and Italian Design Days 2020 are an early indication that Galataport will become an important center of culture, art, and design on the worldwide stage.

Cultural Life Will Take a Breath

Galataport is expected to host many of the arts, culture and design events included in Istanbul’s annual calendar. This cultural concentration will undoubtedly have an influence upon its environment, changing the face of Tophane and Karaköy. In this sense, Galataport has the opportunity to lead a transformation in not only its surrounding areas, but in other parts of the city as well, spreading throughout the cultural atmosphere.

There is no doubt that the area will become an important center of attraction by preserving the city’s identity, culture and urban fabric. The cultural diversity extending to the backstreets of Karaköy and Tophane will perhaps bring about a change that we cannot imagine now.

While the neighborhood will host various artistic events and art installations in its squares and streets, it will also turn into an open air exhibition, becoming an important hub of socialization for millions of Istanbul’s residents. The region, which will host centers of arts and culture as well as various gastronomic places, will change its exterior, so to speak. What is important here is that Galataport, which will breathe new life into the cultural and artistic spaces of the city, can unite the local and the universal together on the same ground.

The Cultural History of Space

Monuments, walls, harbors, and neighborhoods are rich focal points of urban life. This ancient city of Istanbul rises from a deep-rooted heritage. It is often understood as the capital of the Ottoman

Tophane Square

Located in Tophane Square on Meclisi Mebusan Street, the Tophane Pavilion was built on the order of Sultan Abdülmecid. Designed and built by British architect William James Smith and completed in 1852, the building was designed for the sultans’ visits to military facilities in Tophane, or to welcome foreign statesmen who arrived by sea on their visits to the city. Tophane Pavilion marked its place in history with the acceptance of Grand Duke Konstantin, the brother of the Russian Tsar, by Sultan Abdülmecit. It also hosted meetings of the “International Straits Commission,” after the 1894 International conference, and the Treaty of Lausanne, which ended the Ottoman-Russian War. Later used as a dormitory for veterans, the building was transferred to Mimar Sinan University in 1987.

Merkez Han

The architect of the building on Karaköy Kemankeş Caddesi dating to the early 1912s is unknown. It is located on the Karaköy seaside, close to the ferry docks. The building belongs to the late Art Nouveau style.

Empire and Islamic culture, but it also carries a Western character; not only with its cosmopolitan face, but also due to its geography and the presence of Roman-Byzantine traditions. The historic push and pull between east and west is what gives Istanbul its personality. On various levels of existence, it finds its own reflections.

Galataport Istanbul, which plays the important role of carrying the city’s unique historical heritage into the present day, has assumed a cultural fabric and coherent form by incorporating important cultural symbols. These include the Parcel Post Office, Merkez Han, Karaköy Passenger Hall, Çinili Han, Nusretiye Mosque, Tophane Mansion, Tophane Fountain, Tophane Clock Tower and the Kilic Ali Pasha Mosque. Together, they transform the cultural fabric into a harmonious form. But how much do we know about this cultural heritage?

Kilic Ali Pasha and the Tophane Fountain

Near the mosque, two exquisite fountains with a rich history stand near each other. The first is the Kilic Ali Pasha Fountain, commissioned by Sultan Mahmud I in his name. The fountain next to it is the Fountain of Mahmud the First, also known as the Tophane Fountain. It is one of the most beautiful square fountains to be found in the city. The design of the Tophane Fountain forms a remarkable ring in the chain that extends from the Baroque into the decoration concepts of the Tulip Period. At this point, the public obsession with all things floral reached its peak, and this example stands at the center of a long line of works that represent various periods of Istanbul’s history. The Tophane building serves as a representative of the 15th century, while the Kilic Ali Pasha Mosque lets us dream of the 16th century. Nusretiye Mosque and Tophane Pavilion illustrate the first quarter of the 19th century. Unfortunately, the Arabacıları Barracks, which was renovated at the beginning of the 18th century, did not survive.¹

¹ Cezar, M. (1991). 19. Yüzyıl Beyoğlu. Akbank.

Nusretiye Mosque

Commissioned by Mahmud II, construction of the Nusretiye Mosque started in June 1823 and was completed on April 8, 1826. It was built on the site of the Top Arabacıları Barracks and Mosque, which was burned in the great fire of February 24, 1823. The architect of the Nusretiye Mosque is Krikor Amira Kalfa of the Balyan family, who built many state buildings in the late periods of the Ottoman empire. Unlike the old complexes, Nusretiye Mosque formed an integrated structure with its neighbors, Tophane-i Amire and the Tophane Barracks. The mosque, which is located on a high platform, has a rectangular floorplan. The dome, which rests on four large arches, makes an impressive appearance. There are sofas covered with cross vaults on the facades outside. As in the previous Nuruosmaniye Mosque, a mihrab is placed on a five-sided protrusion, which is covered with a half-dome on the qibla side.

The Parcel Post Office

Construction started in 1892 during the construction of Galata Pier, and was built as a customs building between 1907 and 1911, in an eclectic style encompassing a mix of Baltic, Caucasian, Neoclassical, Neo-baroque and Art Nouveau styles. In 1879, an agreement was made with the Frenchman Marius Michel (Pasha), the General Director of Lighthouses Administration, to build a dock in the Port of Istanbul. Michel Pasha, who had the right to operate the port for 75 years, commissioned the projects for the Istanbul Ports Company in 1891 and the Galata Customs Building in 1905. The construction of the Galata Customs Building, which is located on the Bosphorus and Kemankeş Street, is an early example of a reinforced concrete building. Construction started on March 6, 1907. The design features of the building, which also include a special dome, were built with the most advanced construction techniques of the time. Natural slate stones were used for the wooden covering on the top of the dome. The port, acquired with the proclamation of the Republic, was used as the Parcel Post Office after the Haydarpaşa Port was built.¹

¹ Batur, Afife (1985). Batılılaşma Dönemi Osmanlı Mimarlığı. Tanzimat’tan Cumhuriyet’e Türkiye Ansiklopedisi, C. 4, s. 1038-1067 İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları.

Karaköy Passenger Hall

One of the unique buildings of the early Republican period, the Karaköy Passenger Hall, opened for service on July 2, 1940. During its construction on Nov. 7, 1936, the Istanbul Port Management Administration launched a competition for the passenger lounge project to be built in Galata, with a winning prize of 2,500 Turkish Liras. A plan designed by the young architect Rebiî Gorbun won first prize in the competition, which was attended by German, French, Italian and Turkish architects. It became Turkey’s first modern marine passenger lounge for arrivals and departures. A domestic hall was added later on. The building served for nearly seventy years.

Çinili Gümrük Han

Located on Karaköy Kemankeş Street, the Han was built in 1910 by Dersaadet Rıhtım Dok. and Antrepo Sirket-i Osmaniyesi. The building’s architect is unknown. The five-story building, consists of a ground floor, mezzanine and three regular floors in a rectangular plan. Additional floors were added afterwards. In 1913, maritime agencies held offices in the building. The captain of Belgian Port, the Russia Insurance Company, Liverpool, the Istanbul representative for London and Glob, the Russian Post Company and a cement Company operated in the Han. When the ownership of the building was later transferred to the state, it was used by the Istanbul Customs Directorate and the Customs Section of Smuggling for many years.

Kilic Ali Pasha Mosque

Designed by Mimar Sinan for Kilic Ali Pasha in 1580, this beautiful site was built as a mansion mosque on the ground created by the filling of the sea along the coastline. It is among the world’s finest cultural heritage sites with its 430-year history. The building is surrounded by a large courtyard. The mosque contains more elements of ornamentation than the other works of Sinan. But its greatest treasure lies in its tiles, which reflect the artistic style of the 16th century and the brightest period of Iznik production. Though the most.

A 200-year wait draws to a close

Galataport will finally re-open a 1.2 kilometer stretch of coastline in the Karaköy neighborhood. We spoke to Zeynep Fadillioğlu, Seyhan Özdemir and Mehmet Bali about how the project will revive one of the city's oldest public squares for the first time in 200 years.



Cruise Terminal

The First Impression of a City

SEYHAN ÖZDEMİR
Co Founder of Autoban
Designer of Cruise Terminal

Autoban is designing a brand new underground passenger cruise terminal for Galataport. Galataport is poised to revitalize Istanbul's oldest and only major port, the historic Salıpaazarı Port, by transforming it into a high-tech cruise port and public promenade, with a hotel, boutiques, restaurants and office spaces.

Unique and fresh

The design brief for Galataport's passenger cruise terminal was to present a thoughtful design taking into account the needs of a wide variety of cruise ships and passenger profiles. The terminal design needed to offer a unique and fresh experience for an expected 25 million visitors, including 7 million foreign tourists and 1.5 million cruise ship passengers. As the gateway through which visitors will enter the country for perhaps the first time, as well as the last point through which they will exit, the design for this world-class cruise terminal needed to provide a smooth transition while creating a lasting impression for passengers.

For the Galataport project we have applied a contemporary approach while reflecting the historical significance of the port, as well as the cultural texture of the surrounding neighborhood. The resulting design intends to put forward a project that is both aesthetically strong, but that also successfully serves its purpose and function with a design narrative.

Revolutionary terminal

The revolutionary underground terminal is a first for the cruise industry, and required innovative solutions and cutting-edge technologies.

A New Hub of Art, Design and Culture

Mehmet Bali
Chief Marketing Officer of Galataport
Istanbul

Galataport Istanbul will become the city's new hub of art, design, and culture. The complex houses the finest works of modern art in Turkey with the Istanbul Museum of Modern Art and Mimar Sinan University Istanbul Museum of Painting and Sculpture, which are located inside the Galataport premises.

The Tophane square

The Tophane Square, which was renovated as part of the project's landscaping, will become the first museum square in Turkey.

The restoration of the Tophane Clock Tower is remarkable for all of us. Located at the center of the Museum

The underground passenger terminal has been completed to global standards and brings all terminal operations, luggage handling and passport control activities underground, allowing the waterfront to remain open for the enjoyment of visitors. Autoban's design primarily ensures that all passenger movement and terminal functions are planned correctly within the space, while simultaneously offering visitors a pleasant and unique experience.

Ancient cisterns

Our design narrative was deeply informed by the cultural texture of the area, specifically the ancient cisterns that were built here as water reservoirs during the Roman and Byzantine periods. Istanbul's cisterns, such as the Basilica Cistern and the Cistern of Philoxenos, are recognized as significant cultural treasures of the city, and draw in thousands of tourists yearly for their mesmerizing architecture.

The historic architecture and character of these ancient cisterns was referenced in the interior shell we built within the terminal space, by rounding the edges of the columns and structural forms of the upper floors. To provide a sense of direction within the space, differentiating materials were used on the side of the terminal facing Topkapı Palace and on the side facing Dolmabahçe Palace, respectively the former and later administrative centers of the Ottoman Empire.

Autoban's design intends to render the space as natural and airy as possible despite little access to natural sunlight, optimize the flow of passengers in and out of the space, and ensure a pleasant transit experience. Lighting schemes were specifically chosen to emit a silver light and accentuate this natural feeling, while a light and natural color palette

was used for the various materials.

As a cruise ship docks into the port, a gangway will rise to meet the ship doors and transfer passengers to the underground level. All of the terminal's core operations, as well as areas allocated to public authorities, duty-free shops, maintenance units, and other necessary services are located here within 29,000 square meters. Passenger baggage is transported by conveyor belt to the baggage collection area, where it is placed on coded shelving by terminal staff. Arrivals and departures have been separated, and the terminal also includes areas designated for drop-off and pick-up for taxis and buses, ensuring traffic is routed underground to ensure a peaceful and pleasant atmosphere at ground level. Moreover, an underground parking lot with a capacity for 2,300 cars further diverts car traffic away from the ground level.

First impression of the city

*Three cruise ships can dock at the same time, and the terminal has a capacity of 15,000 passengers a day.

The underground terminal and baggage areas are 29,000 meters square.

Passengers disembarking from ships will reach the ramps that descend to the terminal underground. Passengers will then arrive at passport control and ground transportation, where arriving and departing passengers will wait in separate lines.

Baggage will be transferred to conveyor belts in the same separation, reaching the baggage claim point and being placed on coded shelves.

In addition, there is a duty-free shopping area, 2,300 passenger parking lot, and a separate area for Hop-On Hop-Off buses and taxis. This area is all underground, eliminating aboveground traffic.

embodies many architectural and structural innovations, the expression of the authentic archetypal feel is preserved.

Cruise Terminal

The main inspiration behind building the cruise terminal underground is our desire to open the 1.2 kilometer coastal strip of the Bosphorus to the public, as a 24/7 outdoor art and leisure space. This strip has been closed off for the past 200 years.

Galataport Istanbul brings many firsts, including being the world's first underground cruise ship terminal with a special hatch system that connects to a 29,000-square meter underground terminal. The seaside promenade, which had been closed to public access for almost two centuries, is being reintegrated with the city both physically and visually.

Reviving a City's Heritage

ZEYNEP FADILLIOĞLU
Interior Designer of the
Peninsula Istanbul

Several heritage buildings located within the project site are being restored to embellish the city once again. Among these, is the Paket Postanesi (The Parcel Post Office). As the oldest structure on the pier, it is one of the iconic symbols of the project with its characteristic slate roof and façades. Three other heritage buildings - the Merkez Han, Karaköy Passenger Terminal and Çinili Han - are also undergoing restorations to serve as a location for the Peninsula Istanbul hotel.

Merkez han

The Merkez Han (General Management Building) was built between 1912 and 1914. It was built as an office building and later purchased by the maritime port authority to be used as its general management building. The architect is not known, however it is presumed that an architectural team was brought in from France because the Project was financed by the Ottoman Bank. The building belongs to the late Art Nouveau style, with architectural details belonging to the culture of the empire such as the çini tiles on the façade.

Karaköy Passenger Hall

The Yolcu Salonu (Ferry Terminal) was constructed in 1937 by Rebi Gorbun after a design competition. With its impressive clock tower, the building is one of the rare examples of Bauhaus style in Turkey. Impeccable Gorbun çini tiles manufactured by Rebi Gorbun's descendants are used in the Ferry Terminal, creating a full circle for the building's heritage of multiple generations.

Çinili han

Çinili Han (Tiled Inn) was built between 1910 and 1911. It was built as an office building. Even though its architect is unknown, the projects were developed by an embankment and warehouse firm funded by the French. The building was constructed in Neo-classical and

Art Nouveau styles, with elements that belong to the culture of the empire, i.e. çini tiles on the façade.

Uninterrupted Flow

While combining three existing buildings with styles from the 20th century and a new 21st century building, we aimed to create an uninterrupted flow within the space. While preserving elements from the existing buildings, we have added classical details that embody not only the local culture, but also Peninsula's aesthetic approach.

Reviving The Heritage

Accommodating heritage buildings is a common denominator for most Peninsula hotels. 'Renewing tradition' part of our philosophy. Our team aimed to revive the old traditions of Turkey's arts and crafts. We have used luxurious and diverse textiles as well as exquisite metal, glass, and wood workmanship. We have worked with artists to create bespoke surfaces that reflect the sophisticated aesthetic approach of Peninsula and Istanbul's culture.

For the Ferry Terminal building, we have created a mezzanine floor inside the lobby area to revive the memory of the farewell function of the old building.

There are details all around the project that were inspired by the designs of these three buildings. Sometimes they manifest themselves as wall details, sometimes as furniture designs, and sometimes as timeless patterns.

The idea of reviving the heritage is apparent in the functions, designs, and materials of the project.

The history of the existing buildings, as well as the history of the city were essential sources of inspiration. Resurrecting the almost extinguished craftsmanship of Istanbul, along with promoting local contemporary artists were important fundamentals for the design process. Peninsula's multi-generational, affluent, and sophisticated client profile was instrumental to employ timeless design details with quality and finesse.



Cruise Terminal

Keeping the urban memory

Istanbul Museum of Painting and Sculpture



Istanbul Museum of Painting and Sculpture, Photo by: Cemal Emden

Emre Arolat's architectural approach may be defined as a detailed, creative thought process. He aims high in his designs, and values the collective memory of cities. We spoke with Arolat about the changing face of Istanbul, and how the city's public spaces will be influenced by the arrival of Haliç Tersane and Galataport.

By HATİCE UTKAN ÖZDEN

As an architect, Emre Arolat is a man of detailed and innovative projects. His aim to search and find new perspectives is endless. His way of looking at things varies between philosophy, art, urban culture, technical approaches, and more. His creative process is one of importance and detail, bringing forth a journey of ideas along the way. His ability to link architecture with philosophy, urban culture, and design has allowed him to evaluate the city's new additions in detail. His projects are among the most well-known architectural structures in all of Turkey and in Istanbul. "At Emre Arolat Architecture (EAA), we tend to take each project as a research project. For each project, we first create a design basket, in which we collect data and add awareness to the project. After that, we start to design and draw. Most architects think as they draw designs, but I prefer to think before acting for most of the projects," said Arolat. One of Arolat's most controversial projects, the Sancaklar Mosque, evolved through a long thinking process. He did not draw anything for four months, and only read and thought about the project until he found the right way to express the mosque in a philosophical sense. His goal is always the same. Arolat tries to define and express an architectural design as an intellectual world. As he creates and designs he adds together the notions of history, culture, and philosophy. Arolat is an architect who tries to fulfill his projects from an intellectual grounding.

"I always try to fulfill the projects with intellectual backgrounds, and try to figure out the real essence of the idea that's in it. I am not saying we are creating a certain typology, but I tend to create an intellectual infrastructure for spaces," Arolat said. According to him, an architect should have a worldview and an intellectual framework. "An architect should follow a thought process filled with design and an architectural path. But very few architects follow this path. Not many architects follow their path of creativity. Because it is a risk to produce your architectural world, stepping aside from the bombardment of data and become original. If an architect wants to be like that, then he or she has to see each

project as a research project," Arolat said. But not everyone is destined to become an architect. It is hard, and facing these difficulties a necessity.

A far-fetched project: the Istanbul Museum of Painting and Sculpture
Arolat, on the other hand, takes the long and arduous path; one that is faced with challenges. His project for the Mimar Sinan University's Istanbul Museum of Painting and Sculpture may be one of the most challenging projects he has ever done. The museum was once a large storehouse in the 1950s. For Arolat, the most crucial point was its concept project, made by Sedat Hakkı Eldem. As a building, it was a typical example of Istanbul's architectural style in the 1950s. Another important element to consider was the building's environment. In the area around the museum, the Meclisi Mebusan Street is going through a major urban transformation project. "While I was designing and constructing the museum, we did not know what would become of the urban transformation in Karaköy and nearby. The structure was already there, and it contained a certain level of architectural and collective memory. Our question was; is it possible to keep this architectural memory and pass it on to the next generation?" Arolat remembers. As a result, Arolat endeavored to keep the museum's valuable concept design as it was. "Because if we are to talk about an urban memory, then we must know that this depot was a typical structure from the 1950s. From that day, it has stayed as it was. But when we designed the project and presented it to the Cultural and Natural Conservation Board, they asked us why we wanted to keep this building. I always value Republican era buildings and 1950s architectural design styles. I think keeping that structure is an achievement for the urban heritage and collective memory of the city," Arolat said.

According to Arolat, there is a tendency today to get rid of the signature architectural structures of the Republican era. People tend to think of these structures as ugly, he said. "However, I think they are important structures to keep the collective

memory alive," Arolat added.

Arolat says this is a very natural way of looking at the architecture, and that we can observe the same tendency abroad. "I have witnessed the same approach when it comes to the National Theatre in London. I have seen that many people dislike the structure because of its 'brutalist' design. On the other hand, we should always remember that these kinds of structures represent an important part of our urban culture."

Arolat had been criticized for conserving the original structure of the museum. "I have renewed the front side of the museum and once again, many people have criticized me," Arolat says, but insists he is not afraid of critics and criticism. "In a way I know that if I am to work with these kinds of structures – Istanbul's old, historic cityscapes – I will always a target of criticism." However, Arolat is an audacious architect while handling criticism. "For me, the most important thing is the clarity of my conscience," he says.

Keeping urban memory alive

In a way, conserving old structures and professionally redesigning them helps keep the city alive. Somehow, it is a way to rediscover the city and maintain Istanbul's urban memory.

According to Arolat, Istanbul is a city of layers. There are layers of culture, layers of heritage, layers of different eras, all existing as one in the city. This is what we call Superimposition. It is the act of placing one thing over another, in such a way that all layers are still visible. For example, when we see old buildings and newly built high-rises grouped together along the skyline, they somehow appear in harmony. Not all cities have that touch, he says. Istanbul, on the other hand, handles this superimposition very well by keeping the old and the traditional together, but adding new spaces.

Of course each new project is a challenge, and each challenge brings a new one. Arolat is very interested in urban spaces, and how they are used by the people living in the city. There are two major projects in Istanbul at the moment; Galataport, a global project providing access to the

Karaköy coastline for the first time in 200 years, and Tersane (Shipyard), a development on the coast of the Golden Horn in what was once one of the biggest shipyards on the Mediterranean Sea. Arolat is encouraged by the prospect that people of the city will be able to enter and use these spaces.

"This is a matter of balance between consumption and production," says Arolat. He notes that these two spaces are in large, central spaces, and after these projects are complete, the spaces can be used by the public. "The crucial thing is to make these places public spaces. They have lost their uses a long time ago. In this case, the architectural space and its interpretation has not come to the forefront. It's more importantly a matter of management," Arolat says. At the end of the day, they will be open to the public; and how it will be managed will matter in the future.

This is a part of the system and this is how the system works. If there is a large portion of space that is not used in the city, it is usually transformed to be accommodating. "If a shipyard is not working today, it should be transformed. The same thing is true for Galataport. The depot structures inside this space are not used anymore, so they need to be remodeled and the system goes on... and so they become useful places for everyone in the city."

The Galataport campus will include two major museums: the Istanbul Museum of Painting and Sculpture, designed by Arolat, and Istanbul Modern, a still unfinished project designed by Italian architecture Renzo Piano. There is no doubt these projects might come with social dilemmas, Arolat says, but if we want to know how these projects will contribute to urban life, we should wait and see. We can only know when these areas are open and start to live with the people of the city (becoming public spaces). "In this case, it's not only architectural construction that matters, but also how it's managed," says Arolat. That's when we will see the reality of these projects, he adds. The key point is to gather different social groups in one space and let the space evolve on its own.

As an architect, Arolat always sees the critical points of a project. For him, it is a necessity to make a project gentle, modest, and respectful. I always say that as architects, we are destined to become agents of the neo-liberal system, and other architects get angry with me. However, it is also our job to make a project gentle and down-to-earth, for everyone in the city. Arolat also says these projects bring a lack of opportunities for critique. "We need to criticize these projects from different points of view. However, instead of criticizing it in the right way, we focus on whether they should exist or not," he stresses.

The reality of architecture:

Books for future generations

During the beginning of the 2000s, the EAA bureau has become the first Turkey-based architectural firm to be presented in a book published by Rizzoli Publishing House. The book was written by Philip Jodidio and Süha Özkan. This year, the book was republished as an updated version.

The book is a complete volume on the buildings and urban projects by Emre Arolat Architects (EAA), says Arolat, noting that it was an important success for the bureau to be presented in such a book.

The book is almost proof of how Emre Arolat approaches architecture. His way of seeing design, and throwing his remarks and comments into the world comes to the fore in these global and local projects. Highlighting 32 projects across Turkey, England, Portugal, and the United States, the book contains projects like the award-winning Sancaklar mosque and The Museum Hotel Antakya, a hospitality center that uses a novel design strategy, straddling archaeological findings. Other projects include the innovative Istanbul Museum of Painting and Sculpture, which will historically document and display the largest collection of paintings by Turkish artists; and the Abdullah Gül Presidential Museum and Library, the first presidential museum of Turkey. New photography for each project is accompanied by the architect's drawings and plans.

A New Building for Istanbul Modern, Designed by Renzo Piano

The world of art and culture has been interrupted for a long time due to the pandemic. How do you think the current period affect our cultural lives? Undoubtedly, as in all domains, the world of culture and arts was caught unprepared for the pandemic period. We see that leading art institutions and museums have made significant investments in digital technologies and virtual environments since the 2010s, in order to communicate and share their art. Despite all this, the unexpected situation in which we have found ourselves has been a very important experience. We've had to see and understand how institutions will communicate during the periods when their doors are inevitably closed, what they will offer to their visitors, and how they will create new dialogues with artists. The process is still ongoing. These topics need to be considered in detail. It is useful to think of it this way: great institutions will be able to manage the process internally in a healthy way. Maybe they will be able to resist with their own strength and means. But I believe that the pandemic will have a lasting effect, especially on independent art organizations and artists.

I think it will influence the social and economic circumstances of the artists, but I do not agree that this effect will change the ontological structure of the art itself, in a short time. On the other hand, I think different ideas are being raised regarding the sharing, communication, visibility and experience of art in a space.

How do you think the virtual museum culture will proceed? This was an existing effort in various museums around the world, but it developed further during the pandemic period. What kind of effects will there be on museum culture, and the response to this process? How did Istanbul Modern go through such a period when cultural life was stagnant?

Museums, which were closed off and on again throughout the world due to the pandemic, started to continue their activities in a different format with the advantages of digital options. From now on, museums, cultural and artistic institutions will be places where real and virtual work comes together, offering us and program content for online media even if their physical spaces are open.

I can say that Istanbul Modern has adapted quickly to this new era. We have showcased our collection digitally since the mid-2010s, and we have transferred our exhibitions onto a virtual tour. This has been an effort that prepared us for a dialogue about how to transcend the borders of art as much as possible. During the period when the museums were closed, we were quick to share existing content on all digital platforms and Istanbul Modern accounts.

In this process, we made the virtual tour of the collection exhibition, titled *The Artist in Their Time (Sanatçı ve Zamanı)*. It was displayed between 2015-2018, and allowed that exhibit to become more visible. We have updated and presented a rich selection of artworks and photographs in our collection to the visitors. We brought together a digital archive of the exhibition *Centennial Love (Yüzyıllık Aşk)*, and the exhibition videos of *Guests: Artists and Craftspeople (Misafirler: Sanatçılar ve Zanaatkarlar)*. We included curator briefings and a documentary on the production process with the audience on our website, as well.

We frequently broadcast special content for art lovers of all ages through our YouTube channel. Our education experts present modern and contemporary artwork in an easy-to-understand way through a virtual environment, as well as artistic activities for children to do at home. We make the artwork in our collection accessible for our adult audiences as well.

We asked the artists whose works were featured in our collection to explain how they went through this period. The series that we began with Mehmet Güleriyüz continued with Deniz Aktaş, Mehtap Baydu, Taner Ceylan, İrfan Önürmen, Necla Rüzgar, Güneş Terkol and



Yusuf Sevinçli

The director of Istanbul Modern, Levent Çalıköğü, shares the thrill of attaining something the museum has long dreamed of: a world-class building.

By GÜRER MUT

TUNCA. After a comprehensive study, we brought the virtual tour of the *Lütfi Özkök: Portraits (Portreler)* photography exhibition to the audience. Additionally, the *Artists' Film International (Uluslararası Sanatçı Filmleri)* program has opened for online visits for the first time, through our website.

In the days when we were confined within the borders of four walls, we brought together photographers from different generations to discuss the question, "What can we do about photography?" With the invitation of the Istanbul Modern Photography Department and the Advisory Board, we brought together brand-new artworks of 43 artists who participated in the project with our online exhibition *Photography in Days of Pandemic (Pandemi Günlerinde Fotoğraf)*.

Istanbul Modern Cinema arranged a selection of films for the digital environment and shared their recommendations for movies to watch at home. They also prepared a series of interviews titled *Re-dezvous with Directors (Yönetmenlerle Buluşma)*. We organized events and activities for children, and relocated the Atölye Modern seminars online. This content is specifically prepared for digital mediums, so it's a good option for art lovers who cannot visit the museum in Istanbul.

How do you think the Galataport Project will contribute to the cultural life of Istanbul?

The area where the entrepot no.4 exists, which was allocated to Istanbul Modern in 2004, is located within the Galataport area. When this area is completely renovated, we will be moving into a world-class museum building, one that we have long dreamed of. In addition to Istanbul Modern, there is also the Museum of Painting and Sculpture within the borders of the Galataport area. I believe that both institutions will undertake very import-



Collection exhibition space

ant responsibilities in terms of their collections and corporate identities.

What are the current and upcoming exhibitions?

In addition to the collection being shown at our temporary space in Beyoğlu, we are bringing two new exhibitions to the audience in November. Selma Gürbüz's artworks are liberated from time and place -- rather, they are woven with tales, myths and legends. They will be displayed under the roof of a museum in Turkey for the first time. *Selma Gürbüz's This Place We Call World (Dünya Diye Bir Yer)* demonstrates the artist's 35 years of artistic practice. More than a hundred works produced by Gürbüz are present in the exhibition, including different means of expression such as painting, installation, drawing, video and sculpture. Our photography exhibition, *Şakir Eczacıbaşı: Selected Moments (Seçilmiş Anlar)*, which was opened to audiences at the end of November, features a selection from Şakir Eczacıbaşı. In an exhibition curated by Bülent Erkmen, the artist's impressionist photographs he when he started his photography career took in the 1960s, are showcased together with his later works. In these, he interpreted the technical possibilities of photography from the 1980s.

In the meantime, we are continuing the museum's trainings and workshops in an online format only. We are organizing weekend workshops for children and tours that are in parallel with the exhibition on digital platforms. We have also arranged our Atölye Modern seminars online, for adults. It was gratifying to see that the attendance of the seminars included people not only from outside Istanbul, but also from abroad.

With the measures we take, we are trying to carry the program of Istanbul Modern Cinema both in the halls and online.

We are working to generate informative video productions, an effort which accelerated with the pandemic. On our digital platforms, we will continue to bring together information about the works and the artists in the collections with clear visuals, as well as the narration of our museum's curators and instructors. We are continuing our preparations concerning the transfer to the new building. We are working on both the construction process of the new building and exhibition projects and programs, all at once.

What kind of identity will Istanbul Modern establish with its new building; what is the process of this transfer and its alteration? How would you describe Istanbul Modern's current and future position on the local and international stage?

The preparations for the new museum building that will bear Renzo Piano's signature are in progress. He is one of the most influential architects, specifically in museum design. We are talking about a visitor-centered project that will meet the highest standards of modern and contemporary museums, so that we lead the way as the first in the city. Let's not give out more information for now. We are planning to make a project launch in which we will present these details in a short time.

In this transformation process, Istanbul Modern is showing its pioneering identity, which it has maintained since its establishment. On the one hand, we are excited to go through this transition to a temporary space seamlessly, where we can continue operating without any interruptions. On the other, it is thrilling to work with one of the leading architectural offices in the world, and to return to our main location with a brand new building.

The Istanbul Modern Museum by Renzo Piano

A new building will replace the existing one currently located between the old city streets of the Galata quarter and the existing port cruise terminal. The new museum will become an urban focal point between the old town to the west, the Bosphorus to the south, the Tophane Park to the north and the new Galataport waterfront development to the east which replaces the old pier activity. The museum project is part of an overall regenerative masterplan of 1.5km along the quay.

The 15,000 sqm building is not only home to the existing and future art collections of the Istanbul Modern, but it also provides a safe and inviting environment for educational and cultural activities offering multiple gathering occasions to the community and the city. The transparent lobby gives public access to a café, bookshop, library, museum information points, and a dedicated workshop area for the "Discovery Space" project, developed in collaboration with Centre Pompidou in Paris. A glazed fence around the ground floor ensures a secured environment where the public can enjoy an outdoor café and a sculpture garden.

A Beguiling Bewitchment

An exhibition titled, “Selma Gürbüz: This Place We Call World,” at Istanbul Modern conjures up the artist’s unique imagination and practice, spanning 35 years. Gürbüz and curator of the exhibition, Öykü Özsoy, tell us more.

By CEREN ÇIPLAK DRILLAT

“**I**ntersecting lives of the human and animal, their otherworldly gender-less figures, human-animal hybrid beings, silently haunt the viewer, bewitching them as if it were a spell.” These are the words on the paintings of Selma Gürbüz. Her 35-year oeuvre, which encompasses themes such as history, tradition, mythology, nature and the subconscious has opened to audiences at Istanbul Modern. The exhibition showcases more than a hundred works by Selma Gürbüz, in which she utilizes various tools of expression such as painting, installation, drawing, video and sculpture.

You state that: “For me, each exhibition is a reckoning. It is a new idea, a new feeling within me”. What has been your reckoning with this exhibit? What are the sentiments you have found?

In this exhibition, I wanted to emphasize the relationship I have established with nature and earth. The world has become unbearable. It frightens me that we are preparing our demise with our own hands by destroying the nature that we do not own to begin with. We do not only determine our own fate; we are also shattering natural states that are millions of years old, the ecological balance that creates life on earth, its animals and plants. Although I had no intention of drawing attention to the danger, really. I try to escape from the city as much as I can and take shelter in nature, to dream in that nature, to strengthen my bond with it, to discover animals. I try to feel that I am a part of them, to embrace what I see, and to live my feelings to the fullest.

My World

Digital works you have created for the first time are coming together with work from different periods of your artistic career. What do you see when you take a holistic look at the more than 100 works that are gathered together at this exhibit?

By saying, “This Place We Call World”, I’m also speaking about my world. With its nature, animals, plants, women, feelings, thoughts, myths, tales, dreams; it is the world that I am seeing and hearing with many other aspects. That which I breathe in, feel at the depths of my heart and that I have portrayed ceaselessly to this very day.

I look at that world from a distance, with an intense sensuality. There’s a little bit of compassion, sorrow, love and melancholy, as if looking from another planet. At the same time I see it with a story-like, dream-like tone that may cause feelings of alienation and strangeness.

Take Care of Each Other

What were the reasons behind your choice of the title of your work, “Take Care of Each Other”?

Actually, this title has two meanings. For one, it references “take care,” the phrase people use to say goodbye to each other with good intentions. Not only do you take care, but the world has become such an evil, cruel place, it may not be enough that you take care of yourself. All of us must take care, treat others nicely, and protect each other.

On the other hand, it makes an allusion by communicating directly to the viewer. The crying faces of women in the painting directly gaze toward the viewer and say, “Take Care of Each Other,” right at the viewer staring at them. It’s an ironic appeal, a wish to not be blind, deaf, and mute towards that pain.

Pursuit of Expression

What can you say about the dynamic that your figures of women provide for your paintings?

I always have interesting women in my life. They are the women I imagine, in fact all of



Home, 2019, 220x120 cm, ink on handmade paper, Collection of the artist.

them are me. They are my look, my laughter, my portraits... The fragility, courage, teasing and smiles of my women are the reflections of my emotions. I have always incorporated a pursuit of expression into my art. With time, these figures, my figures, have lived on. With my travels to Africa, they found new cycles, new stories. They underwent a transformation. You will see that change in this exhibition.

The Ability to Transform into Your Own Language

How did the pandemic affect you and your practice? The artistic community of this new world is seeking digital work... What are your thoughts on working with digital tools? Was it during the pandemic that you made digital work for the first time? How was this experience? Was it perhaps like a new language?

Like everyone else, I’m also influenced very much by the course of pandemic. The flow of life suddenly changed. At the same time, it tied many to their homes. Lifestyles, ways of working, and habits had to be abandoned. Of course everyone rushed to technological tools. During the preparation of this exhibition we too had to conduct some meetings online. Normally I travel often, I can’t stand still. So imprisonment at home felt very desperate. During the first months I couldn’t even go to my studio. However I tried to use the time spent at home as efficiently as possible. I did my exercises, meditated and practiced yoga at home. I watched many movies and documentaries. Read new books. I sailed. For two months, on the sea, I contemplated my exhibition. Loneliness both taught me and enabled me to see the truth.

It is very understandable that digital works in art have increased as technology advances. Art has always utilized present technical developments and the technology’s opportunities of its age. What is important is the ability to form an individualized vernacular, to have a soul, a feeling and an offering.

Two Video Works

Whatever the technique is, what is important is to transform this technique into your language. My primary tools are my hands, brushes and pencils, techniques we call traditional. When I was traveling to Africa, I had the idea to shoot a video and create a digital work. We set off with our equipment. We recorded over three hours of footage. Finally, we created the two video works you will see at the exhibition.

If I wasn’t satisfied with the material, I wouldn’t include a digital work in the exhibition. It doesn’t matter. But as soon as I saw the dancing Masai people, I felt that it could evolve into the video work I had in mind. I used video in this exhibition because I wanted to, in order to see the effect of establishing a different relationship.



From Where We Left Off, 2019, 114x197 cm, ink on handmade paper, Collection of the artist.

Curator Öykü Özsoy on the Exhibition’s Context

Back to Mother Nature

Can you elaborate on the title “This Place We Call World”?

“This Place We Call World” aims to take a look at the world from the eyes of the artist while opening up her world to us. In that sense, it is an exhibition title operating on two axes: how does Gürbüz, who creates by combining the world we live in with her vocabulary of images, perceive the world? What does she tell us? How does she present to us stories of those we see and do not see? As we are face to face with striking, captivating works, she invites us to explore her world.

New Methods

Selma Gürbüz has shared with us her archive, which includes work from across her 35-year long artistic life. With an intense study on the archival materials, we determined the exhibition’s themes and selected the works that will be shown. The extraordinary period created by the pandemic is a period in which conventional living conditions have completely changed, and in which we have introduced and experienced new methods. At the same time, I can say that it led us to think more often about the world we live in and its future. We introduced themes related to this in the exhibition.

You say that “she describes human, nature and animal figures in an inseparable union in her works.” Can you expand on this statement a little more?

In the mysterious and colorful world created by Selma Gürbüz, symbols and stories about humanity, nature and our lives come to life.

The artist has a great love, passion and curiosity towards nature. The loveless, opportunistic interventions made into nature hurt her immensely, and she feels the need to escape from them. She desires to integrate with nature and feel that she is a part of it. In her work, she shares these experiences with us.

Bodies Blending With Plants

The sovereignty of the modern world, in which human and non-human beings are moving away from each other, collapses suddenly in Selma Gürbüz’s paintings. There is an emphasis on the return to Mother Nature, Gaia, remembering her nurturing and protective feminine existence and her power to produce. It is a meditation on our forgotten essence, the reality that we are a part of nature. The hybrid creatures, bodies blending with the plants that appear in the artist’s works belong to prehistoric myths. They are in parallel with the understandings of ancient narratives that destroy the hierarchical order between humans and non-humans to bring them together.

Anatolian Legends

The animal-headed and human-bodied beings that we come across in Anatolian legends, Eastern and Western mythologies, Shamanism narratives, Iranian, Indian and Turkish miniatures, are the same that inspire Gürbüz. They are not

freaks, but creations that symbolize being one and whole with nature.

The rigid boundaries between the two species that are created by modern life blur and melt into each other. Without alienation comes liberation. Within this emancipation, there is a desire to celebrate, dance, sing, and meditate. As we often see in the works of Gürbüz, there is a desire for the detached roots to meet with the earth again, and be made complete and whole.

What context is the exhibition based on?

The exhibition focuses on Selma Gürbüz’s most recent unseen works, sharing the meticulously handled creations weaved with tales, myths and legends, independent of time and space. “This Place We Call World” is an exhibit that aims to grasp her artistic oeuvre spanning 35 years, through certain themes. Although we do not call it a retrospective, it is fair to say that it is the most comprehensive show of the artist shown under the roof of a museum in Turkey. The exhibition showcases more than 100 works which by the artist, using various tools of expression such as painting, installation, drawing, video and sculpture.

A Unique Color Scale

Selma Gürbüz, in her artistic practice, explores themes of history, tradition, mythology, nature and the subconscious. Throughout the years, with various different materials she manifests an artistic language, adding new dimensions to these themes. With her oil on canvas works, or ink on handmade paper that she has worked with since the 80’s, Gürbüz creates optical illusions and chiaroscuro. Her unique color scale gives life to symbols, figures, patterns and motifs, opening the door to an in-between realm of dream and reality.

The artist’s travels to different geographies are also the driving force behind the emergence of new narratives. She meticulously researches and observes different cultures, combining these influences with her own visual accumulation and imagination. Her paintings after her trip to Africa, shown for the first time in this exhibition, visualize the intersecting lives of humans and animals in the warm, generous and sometimes threatening nature of this region.

The Theme: Womanhood

Womanhood is another theme of Selma Gürbüz’s oeuvre. Her depictions of women are those who break social pressures and the roles imposed on them, undertaking internal journeys to discover their own nature, and seeing the spirit of nature as a part of their existence. Together, they portray the artist’s own transformation over time.

Selma Gürbüz skillfully brings together elements of both Eastern and Western culture; their subjects and techniques. The color black and the shadows that she identifies with



Tree Woman, 2019, 220x120 cm, ink on handmade paper, Collection of the artist.

this color have an important place in her artistic practice. The artist’s relationship with shadows develops as she delves into and reinterprets how the allegory of a shadow plays prominently in Turkish and Eastern cultures.

The artist, who created her first shadow play as an installation at the Gwangju Biennale in South Korea in 1995, animates the animal figures she made from paper pulp for this project and creates shadows with the figures that she projects onto the wall. Over the following years, shadow characters settle into Gürbüz’s two-dimensional works like old friends.

Humanity’s complicated relationship with life and death finds its place in Selma Gürbüz’s paintings. In her work, the artist defines life and death as cycles that complete each other. She reveals the contradictions between life and death, reality and the imaginary by combining her personal experiences with visual memory in these paintings.

A Visual Encyclopedia

Beyond its service as an exhibition, I would like to describe “This Place We Call World” as a visual encyclopedia. It has come into being as Selma Gürbüz’s art production grows more and more refined over the years. The artist offers her spirit of traveling between geographies, times and cultures, her thoughts on the subjects she has carefully collected, and a focus on people, nature and life, and asks us to reconsider. Although Selma Gürbüz’s works seem far from the reality of the world we live in, they actually tell us about life, the passage of time and the state of the people living within this cycle.

No Geographical Limits

What would you say about Selma Gürbüz’s place in local and global art history? How has the artist made a difference with her unique approach?

Selma Gürbüz combines and draws on unexpected links between elements of Eastern and Western cultures in her artistic practice. While drawing on influences from Iranian, Indian, and Turkish miniatures as well as the art of the Far East, she with also uses the elements of Western painting in her work. Like a time-traveler shifting between different geographies and cultures, she does not build her artistic production and intellectual practice under the sovereignty of a single geography. On the contrary, she establishes different relationships and narratives between them. There are no geographical limits for Gürbüz. She is interested in all artistic traditions and goes after the emotions that inspire her own work within these traditions. In all of her works, she has the ability to convey emotions we have not discovered yet about ourselves, humanity and the world we live in.

Selma Gürbüz: “This Place We Call World”, can be viewed at Istanbul Modern until March 31, 2021.



The dress 2019 Installation.

A Delicate Balance

Ilgaz's artworks deal with socio-political, individual and contemporary issues in a range of interdisciplinary productions from the 1990s to the present. Together, they bring today's chaotic problems up for discussion from various viewpoints. "Breaking Point," an exhibition by Gul Ilgaz, can be viewed at the Milli Reasürans Art Gallery until January 23, 2021.

Could you please tell us about your inspiration for the exhibition at Milli Reasürans Art Gallery, and how you determined the title "The Breaking Point"?

My first solo exhibition at Milli Reasürans Art Gallery in 2009 was titled, "Partly Cloudy", and my second solo exhibition at the Daire Art Gallery in 2011 was titled "Before It Gets Dark ...". They were all related to the atmosphere and the environment we were living in which was not pointing in a good direction. In this holistic exhibition; I can observe many turning points during my 30 years of artistic production. On the other hand the other hand I hope that it will be a breaking point, towards changing this negative course within the geography and world we live in. Such breaking points happened, even during this exhibition process, including the Covid-19 outbreak, the Black Lives Matter protests in the United States, the US elections, and the days of trying to heal the wounds inflicted by the Izmir earthquake. It is obvious that there will be many more [disasters] both in our personal lives and in the world, during and after the exhibition.

We have been following your productions that emerged from an interdisciplinary framework since the 1990s. Could you tell us about the formal and conceptual aspects of your exhibition "Breaking Point", which is spread over two floors at the Milli Reasürans Art Gallery?

The exhibition consists of two parts. On the ground floor of the gallery is a "Biography Wall," as I call it, on which a selection of my past works are presented and a screening of my video works welcome the audience. With presentation, like this, I intended to visualize the artist biography written on the catalogue pages and associate it with the new exhibition.

Additionally, it ensures that the works I have done based on the breaking points I

have experienced as an artist can be observed by the audience as a whole. The works in my new exhibition, which is in the main space of the gallery, consist of different materials. Spatial installations, videos and a sound arrangements accompany the photographs, all of which exist in the space in a way that complements each other. These new works of mine also take their references from my past works. I believe that by being able to observe how the materials, signs and images used by the artist have evolved, the audience has a solid approach to comprehend an exhibition.

So, how did you set up the multidisciplinary selection of the exhibition?

I worked for this exhibition for more than a year. The choice of material came out of the content of the work. While installing the exhibition, I paid attention so as not to fill the space too much due to the great size of the works. I did not think much about the exhibition while the works were being made. But I did go through a strict planning and dimensioning process for the works during the production phase. By doing this, I made sure that both the audience and the works would be in a fluent relationship.

Can we say that the concept of "I" in your works offers a multidimensional expression to define a socio-cultural and socio-political dilemma?

As a person who was thrown into this world and fell into a certain geography, I have been exposed to the effects of the environment-family-friends-society, and politics-like every individual. When I concentrate on these effects and ask questions about them within a specific time period, my works begin to appear. Our body, which is the recipient of our perceptions, thoughts, and feelings, is also the recorder of happenings. In my opinion, while embodying these influences, pointing out social and political situations simultaneously seems to be a non patronizing language.

In the main space of the exhibition, we see an installation of a tulle dress with a skirt that is stretched by several pieces of stone. You are making use of a delicate material, tulle, along with a rigid substance, stone. Beside it, a rope acts as a stake, bringing these two materials together. From this perspective,

what was the starting point of this installation of an innocent white tulle dress being pulled by the stones surrounding it?

This work came out of a very personal experience. The white dress is a metaphor for my mother, who lived the last 11 years of her life in a precoma, dependent on machines. The dress is tied up by ropes and tied down by stones. It exists in an in-between, hanging in the air; it can neither go nor stay. Being in purgatory is a concept that I have been carrying all along. Being dependent and being free; these two counter concepts are actually a fundamental contradiction that people constantly find themselves in. Being dependent can easily evolve into captivity, just like being free can become solitude. I think we keep going back and forth between these two poles through various phases of life.

Could you tell us about the work with a meditative effect that can be viewed in the main space of the exhibition? The video in which you throw a stone on your shoulder into the sea over

and over again...

As you have mentioned, there is a meditative effect throughout the majority of the exhibition. Since there is a repetitive movement, the video, specifically, creates such an effect on the audience. I do not use offensive language or an aggressive tone in my work. I think works can better communicate calmly, without taking the viewer hostage. This video work is related to the white dress. As a result, they are positioned across from each other. Throwing stones into the sea is a ritual of lament in many cultures. A new stone appears on the shoulder after one is thrown, and this movement continues in an endless loop. We are invited to accept this situation, one way or another.

In "Breaking Point", you present details of objects with various functions that can be found in a house. What is the conceptual analysis of these photographs as they are followed in the exhibition?

For the first time, I used audio together with photography in the sound installation called "Domestic Sounds". There are images of household items in various dimensions which are placed on two walls usually with their own sound. Accompanying them, there is the sound of a person doing daily housework. This work, began when the sound of a nightstand drawer came from my mother's

Gül Ilgaz's third solo exhibition, "Breaking Point," on display at Milli Reasürans Art Gallery, is a clear demonstration of the artist's thirty years of production. Her videos, photographs, and sound installations underline the perpetual hassles of the contemporary world. The exhibition, which suggests an archival and documentative approach, can also be considered a critical and multifaceted examination of this very hassle.

By MELİKE BAYIK

house to mine. It reminded me of the time I spent in that house in the past. In addition, this sound installation was a practice in indicating the way domestic sounds accompany the feeling of loneliness, and reminding me of the time I spent alone at home.

In the exhibition, you have various works that can be viewed as a relationship to your own body. Considering these works in particular, would it be true to say that they are also constructed with a feminist approach as well as defining your body and telling an individual and social narrative?

As I mentioned at the beginning, we are exposed to the influences of the life we live. In this case, there may be situations I find myself in just because I am a woman. I produce works that reveal these situations, but I also produce works that address the problems related to our common subconscious that cannot be separated as a woman or a man. It is a fact that my work is also said to be autobiographical. In my opinion, women artists have a better ability to look at their own life experiences and psychological processes, and show the courage to reveal them explicitly.

To conclude, while creating a narrative through your own body, do you think that your identity has become alienated from you? That it is becoming an expression that does not belong to you but to society, and transformed into a language that reflects the social structure?

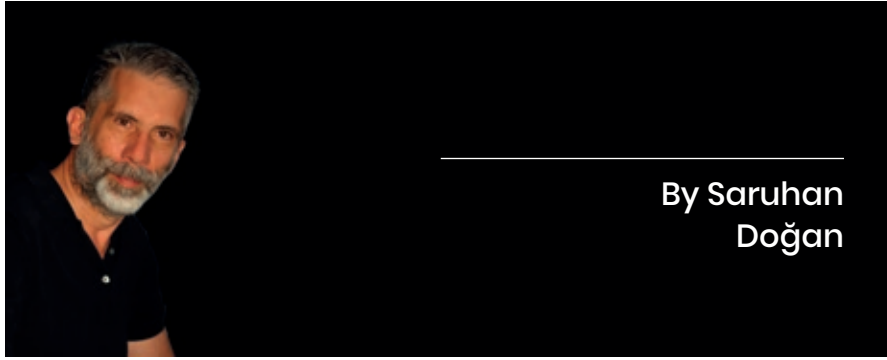
I frequently use my own body in my work. I do this naturally because I am the best one to know the influence that I want to create. It feels like an inherent act to revive a personal experience through my own body. While doing this, there is also a kind of performance. From time to time, I become a part of, or subject to a theatrical instance that I fictionalize. The works do not remain within themselves. From the moment they meet the audience, their context changes so that they become part of a social context.

It's not just about me; I am also a translator of the issues related to the world, environment and society I live in. In other words, I feel the impact of the world on my body for a certain period of time, and then I transform these feelings through visual and conceptual images and present them back to the audience. I believe that the autobiographical nature of my work has a quality that is like a historical record of feelings.

Until Jan 23th



The bed 2019 Installation.



By Saruhan
Doğan

Echoes Of Ethos

My previous column was on cinema. Actually, it was on cinematic, fictional TV series, centering on the late Rainer Werner Fassbinder. While I enjoy writing about film (not writing critiques of it, just writing about it) I did not think I would write about film again in the following issue. Well, here I am with the hottest topic on Turkey's social media in the last week: Berkun Oya's Ethos.

Just days after the series' eight episodes of 45 minutes each began screening on Netflix, comments filled social media platforms, initially with praise. Viewers loved the series. While most people talked about the performances of a top-rated cast, the art direction and production quality were also mentioned. Then, about a day later, the conversation turned to amateur sociology: what did the characters (mind you, not the story) tell us about us?

The fact that a vast majority of the viewers liked the series should come as no surprise. We (Turkey's TV audience) have been subjected to a very specific (there is no format remotely close to it around the world) drama structure. 150 minutes per episode, these soaps drag on and on around the clichés of the old Yeşilçam: poor girl-rich kid or, make a wild guess, rich girl-poor kid, guns, legs, and intrigue. Not even Süleyman the Magnificent could escape this format. The Magnificent Century, a best-selling soap opera based on his legacy, was a harem version of Gossip Girl.

And then, one day, Ethos came along.

It takes place in Istanbul, between the shanty houses in the outskirts of the city and minimalist residences in the newly built high-rises. It follows a format that I just love detailing the lives of people who would otherwise not know one another and how they intersect. They will all go through something: they will face their fears, break down or heal, go away, or come home. No one will be the same person they were eight episodes ago, and all because they met one another. This format was best put into effect by Alejandro Gonzalez Inarritu in Amores Perros, and by Paul Thomas Anderson in Magnolia.

Ethos begins with Meryem. She leaves the house she shares with her brother and his mentally 'displaced' wife to take a series of buses and minibuses to go clean Sinan's flat in a steel and glass tower. The problem is, every now and then, she faints. The psychiatrist she is sent to, Peri, fights her own demons on the other side of society. She's American college-bred, U.S. educated and very secular. So secular, that she cannot cope with the presence of a woman wearing a head scarf (Meryem).

A half dozen more characters join the crowd, and intersecting lives take us through a very well structured story. It is so well 'recounted' and paces at such a fine-tuned speed that even those who criticise Oya's perspective on our society say nothing like 'it's

boring'. Indeed, Ethos is nothing but boring. It is probably one of the most engaging and entertaining dramas of the last decade, and I do not just mean in Turkish television, but among all television work now available in a variety of digital channels.

I am not going to dive into the much talked about 'who are we?' aspect of the show. Do the imam and his techno listening, club going, queer yet headscarf-wearing daughter truly represent their social segment? Are Peri or Sinan honest reflections of their class? I do not think that Oya, or any fiction writer for that matter, take on the responsibility of 'representing a whole social class through their characters'. This is fiction. And, as the rule goes, you are free to do anything you fancy as long as it works (or even when it does not.)

Well, in the case of Ethos, it works. This is exactly why audiences loved it. A well written, well paced story, jumping from one character to the next, letting you wonder what will happen next, all in just 8x45=360 minutes. 360 minutes is actually equal to just 2 episodes of a regular Turkish TV show, a taxidermy of drama inflated with dull dialogue to fill all the hours required to squeeze in enough ads. And when suddenly a finely paced story, where the characters resemble real people and not plastic imitations of either "The Young and the Restless" or "Awara," many viewers realized they have been duped for all these years by a system running on ad statistics. Televisions will try to stand their ground and fight off the invaders, but digital platforms are tasting blood. We will see more of the likes of Ethos. Previous attempts at breaking down the barrier by rejecting the 150-minute format have failed, mainly because they were poor attempts. This one is anything but poor.

It all comes down to a single criteria: is the story a compelling one? In the case of Ethos, the answer is Yes. And it is a Yes, not just because it deals with our open wounds, (the divisions within society: the assimilation of the Kurds, the pains of social climbing, hidden violence, the refusal to remember) but because it is well written and shot. It takes those divisions to make a good story out of them. It constitutes a very important step taken by television towards good filmmaking that has been traditionally ignored by the common viewer, and only appreciated by a small minority. The story of Meryem, who has so far only been represented as a side figurine in mainstream television, resonated with the viewer in a way that hardly a mock-character has enjoyed. (Usually, they are played by a former model-turned-actress.) It is fun to watch Melissa (playfully acted by Nesrin Cavadzade) do it in Ethos.

After Ethos, it will be difficult for producers and screenwriters to toss out more of the same old format. The discussions it fueled are likely to go on for some time. It seems that we were all waiting for an opportunity to discuss who, or what, we have become.



Noah's Ark Aylin Zaptçioğlu 51x77 cm

A Simplified Method Of Collecting An Existence

The central theme of Aylin Zaptçioğlu's 7th personal exhibition, "in situ/ex situ," is one's relationship with the inner and outer worlds. Nature, and all life forms, are transitioning from the past, where they were deified, to a new time, where they are made real. This comes about through the ever-changing relationship between human beings with its central tenant being a feeling of safety.

By BEGÜM GÜNEY ALKOÇLAR

How did the two polarizing concepts of "in situ/ex situ" come together? Can you speak about your preparation for this exhibition and its conceptual and figurative structure?

I came across 'in situ' in Joseph Campbell's book "Primitive Mythology." It was used as an archeological term and was kept in Latin as it most likely did not have an exact Turkish translation, which piqued my interest. In medicine and archeology, it means finding and observing something in its 'original location.' Here, I take it as a thing's spontaneity. When I researched more, I came across 'ex situ.' This means the exact opposite; to separate a thing from its natural habitat like botanical gardens, zoos, and even plant or seashell collections that we take home to preserve them. Although I generally like to see nature in its spontaneity, in my works there is a criticism on our tendency to interfere with it in a material and spiritual way. Therefore, the non-judgmental contrast of these concepts and their references to each other seemed consistent with my work.

I was already thinking about our urge to see nature and its representations and our need to keep them close. I started collecting animal trinkets that have been caricaturized and have expressions. In these trinkets I see that animals have come to be reified from the times when they were deified. On the other hand, we add human expressions to them. That makes sense to me.

Most of the gouache series, where I painted these objects, and a major part of the prints were already shaped before the title. Usually I start a new work before even finishing one. I mean when I decided on the title, most of the exhibition was already there, but naming

made it a little clearer for me, helped me to complete the works. The title became a framework for the exhibition.

I think most of us will not be able to grasp the title of the exhibition at the first encounter. Hence its connotations will be ambiguous. Is this a conscious choice?

Actually, I hoped it would have a Turkish translation. But after some research I could not find an equivalent to "in situ / ex situ." Of course, I would be glad if anybody out there knows and shares it with me. I love that the language evolves, changes and feeds on other languages. So although it may seem difficult to understand at first glance, I was conscious of my choice. I did not think the meaning could not be grasped. I think those who are curious will search for it.

Your entire creation is a subtle interaction; you work in a very permeable structure in line with your purpose and function of reaching the meanings created by your discourse. How does interdisciplinary work affect your production?

It gives me energy to continue. Not necessarily perfecting a specific technique but the possibilities or difficulties that the technique or the material present make me curious and give me new ideas. Creating is a bit like an emotional and physical need. That's why sometimes I can start a large-scale piece or a work that requires more physical effort, such as carving, without making conscious decisions and calculating every step. In those cases, I sometimes choose the techniques and materials during the process.

Some works in your previous exhibitions, "Interrupted Cycle" and "good, bad, cold, hot," nature is presented as uncanny. How did these half-human, half-animal figures in your works transform into this 'preservable nature' to be observed indoors, these 'trinket-things' with their human-like expressions?

In time, I started not wanting human figures in my paintings. I am more interested in looking at plants, and especially painting animals. I am more into anatomical details, or rather the inner world of the human as a whole, physically and spiritually. This transformation actually happened spontaneously. But when we look at this question, maybe we can read the situation like this: human beings are powerless against nature, primarily physically. Everything we develop to overcome the fear this brings, is to feel more potent. We also need to believe that there is something bigger than ourselves. The shifts between seeing nature as bigger than ourselves and being a part of it comes after a period of seeing animals and mythological creatures as guides. Today, we try to live more within reason. I think we come to a point where we consume

ourselves when we try to make everything superficially consumable for the sake of feeling superior. In this sense, the nature that we cannot protect we try to preserve; flowers in pots, shoots we try to root in jars, objects we want to keep at home just because we like. They tell us some part of ourselves that we try to ignore.

Humans, generally, not accept life as it is develop a controlling ego in order to feel safe. This repetition of attempts to imitate oneself is an effort to make sense of what we control. This results in the constant transformation of the source of one's creations. If everything is constantly being restructured, what does the image evolve into in your universe? In this context, what is your role in these relationships that you reconstruct?

If I can take the image as a constantly changing and evolving language that we can read and look at to create dialogue, I cannot say that I have a very conscious and active role here. As a person, I try to see how I can nourish from this life and what I can give without harming myself and my surroundings. I hope my expression evolves in time to be simpler and more holistic.

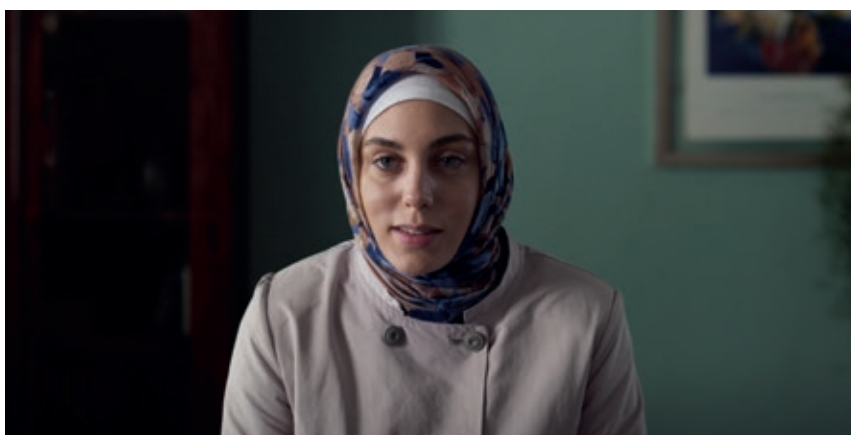
In the relationship we establish with "everything outside of us" or "ex situ" in the conceptual note, what is it that is actually outside of us?

'Outside of us' is a sad and lonely definition but a human reality. So I think of what is actually outside is ourselves. The world is already spinning in a balance beyond our control, and the moment we exclude anything, we actually deprive ourselves of a relationship and interrupt a flow.

Upon this isolation, we witnessed the unexpected positive effects of the COVID-19 pandemic quarantine measures on the environment and nature. It is as if the faster the virus moves and the less we move, nature cleans it up. All this improvement will be temporary when governments implement their economic packages. I find it important to ask this because of the relationship of nature with your art: Is a new world order for nature not possible without a disaster?

I guess when the human population is growing so rapidly and the level of consciousness is changing so slowly, nature is de-stressing and breathing during such disasters. We always have hoped for a new world order. For example, there is often talk of people's level of consciousness leaping forward as the planets change their positions. In this approach also, it seems to me again that humankind is taking itself too seriously. Nature always finds its own way, whether we open a space for it or not. Our destruction may be very rapid, but the strength and speed of nature's recovery also gives me hope in this regard.

Can be seen at X-ist.



For Years, I've Been Longing To Be By Myself

We joined artist Nilbar Güreş for her solo exhibition, "The Sea Said Okay", hosted by Galerist. We discussed her artistic production during the pandemic, as well as influences and reflections on herself and the art world.

By ÖZGE TABAK
ozge@artdogistanbul.com

Artist Nilbar Güreş, whose show titled "The Sea Said Okay," is currently on view at Galerist, says that this exhibit brings the summertime indoors. The world she creates here, in her words, is "a dynamic world that moves, talks, advises and stimulates", and is as "colorful and hyperactive" as her own. Regarding the pandemic, she writes: "For years, I have been dreaming of a period during which I could stay by myself and produce, with only my own thoughts and decisions, without being influenced by anyone. This exhibition has been the result of such a period."

Güreş's sculptures, which she produced during a lockdown period in the spring of 2020, will be exhibited in Switzerland and Vienna in April and May of 2021. In addition, the artist, who enjoys unique forms and an analogous craftsmanship with glimpses of the moment and chance, shares with us that there is a possibility that she will soon make work that will function digitally, for the first time.

We are experiencing a pandemic, a situation last seen almost a hundred years ago. The way it came out of the blue, how did this pandemic influence your inner world?

It really came out of nowhere, and I hope we have understood that what and who we consider global are actually our next door neighbors. As a next door neighbor myself; phones didn't ring, e-mails didn't pour in, and exhibitions got cancelled. Those people who wouldn't wish you a get well soon if you called in sick; who wouldn't listen or appreciate if you asked for a little time, all of us have been put on equal ground when faced with a health risk. It's well known that the art world is a cruel system that doesn't let you be sick or start a family; especially if you're a woman. You can go offline at the slightest disruption. We live and work as we endure the most difficult of our menstrual cycles without saying a thing. This is sheer discrimination, really.

As part of my work, I'm a person who spends a bit too much time in the studio and indoor spaces. Even when I travel for a project or artistic residency, my process of integration within a space is very slow. In a new location for example, it takes a long time for me to go out on the streets. I'm not interested in casual social circles, cafes, bars and their audiences. For that matter, I didn't need to integrate into being inside. The opposite is much harder for me. What I missed during this period was going to movies, concerts, exhibitions and just sitting there, hugging my loved ones.

Though I was shaken when I realized something, I have been working way too much! I have been incarcerating myself indoors. And so sometime soon, I hope to move into a new home in nature and be outdoors more often, in the garden, the forest, the sea.

We can see our weaknesses much more clearly

What would you like to share regarding the course (and aftermath) of this pandemic? Any resentments, hopes... What a warm invite, thank you. I'll say the negative ones first. When we were locked down at home, people I have worked with -- gallery owners, curator friends --

they didn't really call to check up on me. Likewise, I was in Vienna recently when the terror attack happened. It happened in my neighborhood, at a place I pass through three or four times a day. Again, not many people called and asked how I was, except for two. So few of them sent a message, emailed or called. It's honestly upsetting to experience the fact that the art and business world, is so devoid of human emotion and empathy. On the flip side, this experience enabled us to know them in the real sense, as humans. They will be sifted out of our lives.

Being home alone brought with it a sort of indispensable individualization. But, setting apart the negative sides which are mostly a direct reflection of selfishness, being an individual has many great aspects. For example, now we do many things on our own, without help from others. This will change us, by supporting a type of liberation and the ability to be more mobile on our own. Perhaps we will be less of a burden to others, by doing our own work or hearing our inner voice more clearly. Either our confidence has improved or we have seen our weaknesses more clearly when left alone. Turkey is a society of communal habits. Perhaps this process will bring us into balance, drawing some of the too-detached Western societies together while bringing us some distance.

Or let's forget about all these. These are all things about tomorrow, and they are possibilities. For me what it all comes down to is to learn how to live today, in this moment, and not to postpone what we want.

This is from the press release of your exhibition: "The Sea Said Okay" conceives a queer image while exploring ways to represent the experience of a world for these images." It points to the blurring of borders against established hierarchies between sexes and different species. I'm interested in the production process and background your exhibited works.

In this exhibition there are plenty of generous bodies, palm trees, figures and gestures recalling precolonial perceptions of the body and other lifeforms. Someone who follows my work would easily grasp how this new exhibit connects with my previous outputs. Class inequalities and the hierarchies between the sexes are issues I have been bringing out for the last ten years in various forms. In this exhibition I only hope that I'm able to present images reflected through a wider lens. I also elaborate on what other aspects these issues include.

Your work presented in this exhibition came to life during the pandemic. How do you think this is reflected in your output? Are there any visible differences?

For years, I've been dreaming of a period during which I could stay by myself and produce, with only my own thoughts and decisions, without being influenced by anyone. This exhibition is the result of such a period. The difference I noticed is the change in my concentration. The current density of my focus is very clear and special. I'll do my best not to lose it afterwards.

My first oil painting

The exhibition also showcases your oil paintings. Have you missed working with this medium? How do you think oil interacts with the issues that concern you?

I haven't done oil painting professionally before. While I was studying, I worked with oil paints and acrylics for three years. But I was always more eager to work with acrylics because the oil didn't dry out for ages. Now there are newer, contemporary materials that dry without matting. Seeing this, I immediately wanted to try out my ideas with oils. The works you see here are actually my first oil paintings, and they are all done in sessions. I did not repeat any of them, which makes them a little performative for me. Whatever the

moment brings; there are no calculations, no second tries.

The right to live

There are themes we often encounter in your work: those of gender, women's identity and role in society, LGBTI+ rights, historic and cultural definitions of the body in the context of sexual identities, as well as dominance and masculinity. As in "The Sea Said Okay," hierarchies between social classes, sexes and different species are among the issues that you critically engage. How did the pandemic influence your treatment of these issues?

I guess we are trying to survive in an environment where our physical strength is constantly questioned, no matter the job or the context. We are in an environment established by relatively healthy and genetically strong people, even though this criteria is very ambiguous and problematic. This is a type of established and imposed normativity. Being unhealthy or having a health problem is then a kind of anomaly. This is what is held up as normal, if the system and its exploitations are to endure in a controlled way and pace. Yet it is perfectly natural to be unhealthy or low-performance. Also natural is the desire to live on, whether you're healthy or not.

This applies to animals, humans and all living creatures.

Everyone's right to live should be available in the form they desire. If the heterosexual is natural, then being queer is natural too. As you can see, it's very easy to view them together. In this exhibition, all of these are in my agenda.

Will this lead to empathy?

Post-pandemic, we will witness transformations and new trends in the art world. This current condition of staying out of closed spaces, for instance, has brought attention to public art. Do you anticipate an increased variety of spaces for exhibitions in the near future?

Modes of presentation and communication may also change. Artists can now open exhibitions in their own venues and create narrower gatherings, more intimate and even private settings. Perhaps now, smaller and other types of spaces can flourish, not just one big, strong space.

And in the post-pandemic stage, everyone will react to it on their own. Nothing is at least physically post-pandemic yet, because still many of us could still die.

Digital platforms are soulless

Fairs have been replaced by online viewing rooms and digital platforms for the purposes of art sales and trading. In this sense, how will the means for artists to reach their audiences and their collectors change? Or will they change at all?

Frankly, I made two videos and sent them to the SAHA members who supported me for my participation in different events, because their planned studio visit was canceled. So I shot and shared videos. Apart from that, I guess I am not very fond of digital platforms in terms of exhibiting; I find it soulless. It can be a tool for galleries, but it cannot convey the feeling of a space. This is just like theatre plays or concerts, which should ideally be watched live. We cannot deny that exhibition spaces are stages and that they are crucial. There are also other elements at work, such as history, reaction, movements and curation.

The digital world irritates me

The increasing popularity of digital art may also influence medium preferences for artists. Some time ago we witnessed many people turning to video, but then it stabilized over time. Do you expect a similar trajectory for digital art?

I guess I'm the wrong person to ask, because it's not a medium I have a comprehensive grasp of.



Nilbar Güreş, *Applause*, 2020, oil on linen, 50 x 70 cm

The videos you give in your question are an exemplary case, and may as well be analogue works that have been digitized. The digital world irritates me, and I skip digital works in exhibitions. In my personal practice, the presence of digital things are limited; rather there are things that are digitized. My photos should be in .TIF format to be printable, and videos should often be in .MOV format to be able to be shown. That is all. The aesthetics of the computer world are generally very raw and non-dimensional for me. Perhaps what pushes me away from them is that they work with ready-made forms, being odorless and tasteless. I like unique forms, analogue craftsmanship that contains and reflects the moment and is open for chance encounters. Because in analogue work, the control of time and movement is difficult. Repetition is impossible. Digital, on the other hand, is always open to reconstruction, it's a bit like an "as if"... There is also meaning in this, of course, but it is not for me.

Although, interestingly, there is a possibility of doing a work that will function digitally for the first time very soon. Because otherwise I have no chance to access a space. But again, the work will be in analogue.

This exhibition embalms summertime

In a previous interview you said: "Time is not a concept for me, it is a feeling I pass through." One thing that is by far most influenced by this pandemic is our sense of time. How can one interpret time in your recent exhibition? How is time reflected there?

I am not a philosopher and I quickly forget what I have read. Almost everything I say is based solely on my personal, and at times naive, ideas. I recently started reading a book for a biennial, the book of a philosopher who is claiming the same thing as I am. He says the same thing, incidentally... The sense of time is something related to perception. Some days are too long, some are too short, they are a link-less chain that depends on how you live.

I always get cold. I like summer months the most; the feeling of time running through my exhibition is the summer, and it merely embalms summertime within the space. There are naked and free bodies hovering under a hot sun. Sometimes the wind blows, the grass sways, the ground is sand or earth. To me, it warms us up. According to a visitor, it elevates us. We had a very difficult spring and summer. My summer, though it's a shame to say, has been good for the first time, because I took a vacation for the first time in perhaps 19 or 20 years. But it was not enough, so I guess I somehow extended that time, this summer, for all of us with this exhibition.

Now I want to read more, think more

You care about the feelings that your work evokes for the viewer. What would you like to say about the visual world of "The Sea Said Okay"?

There is a dynamic world in this exhibition; a talking, moving, advising, and stimulating realm. This is my world of course; colorful and hyperactive, so am I. But frankly, I do not stay long under the influence of my own creations. If I do so, I cannot create new things. I cannot commit to new worlds. I always keep asking, "what was this other thing I always wanted to do?"

The Art Market Is Unfair

You state in a previous interview that the art market in Istanbul is unfair,

underlining that the relationships between artists, collectors, gallery owners, institutions and managers are an obstacle against a fair environment. How do you think this pandemic will affect the art market and its structures in Turkey?

I have very rebellious ideas of my own that sound very naive at times. Some artists work in institutions. They become assistants, moderate conversations. Then, the same artists establish relationships and make exhibitions with the support of these institutions. All this is not ethical. Every year, many international curators come to Istanbul and meet with artists. As their time is limited, they only visit certain institutions and meet with people recommended by those institutions. I think this network that operates through acquaintanceships will get even worse with the pandemic. I mean, think of it this way; I live in this city, I have a studio here, a life here. But in all these years, only one curator has approached me from any of those institutions, and that was in the last month.

Until last year, I would immediately introduce my artist friends to someone I worked with and trusted. And when I saw that nobody approached me in the same way, I stopped doing so. Constantly making unilateral efforts is very consuming.

Artists live with anxieties

The times that you live in are the highlights of your personal story as well; your being in multicultural environments, with people who do not speak your language. You are based in Istanbul and Vienna, probably spending lots of time abroad as an artist, and this must have been disrupted this year. How does settling in one place and being spatially restricted reflect on your mind and your work?

I was not restricted at all. On the contrary, it felt very good, and suddenly this exhibition that I am very pleased with came out. Because flying and working so much brings many health problems, I have chronic aches and cannot take care of myself at this abnormal pace. My body is forming oedema from flights, stomach aches, and hormone imbalances disrupted by excessive time shifts, and many other things! Being slow and traveling less has definitely been healing.

But financially, it's not the same. Employees of institutions are people with salaries, artists do not have such benefits. During the pandemic, everyone got their salaries, but we were desperate as artists. In fact as artists, not only because of the pandemic right now, but in general, we live with great insecurities and anxieties for the future. My suggestion is that anyone who owns an institution should be leading that organization to establish close relationships with artists and help them ease this feeling of insecurity. Artists need constant support, and mostly from their colleagues!

Galerist made a nice move during this process and created a sales list without taking a gallery percentage. Unfortunately, the art collectors failed us and didn't buy anything. So sad!

Is there a work of art that you have been very impressed with recently, from any field?

Only in music: Scott Walker's album *Bisch Bosch*.

Standing Still, But Moving On

“Stillstand,” a site-specific installation at CerModern by Murat Cem Baytok, pursues the most simple and unadorned creative aesthetic: That of a child.

By BEGÜM GÜNEY ALKOÇLAR

Given the physical and social isolation we experience on a global level, art in the public space is much more influential today, due to the social interaction it creates. Murat Cem Baytok proposes this with a work four meters long and six meters wide. Uncolored, it is placed in the open-air terrace of CerModern, crafted with objects found at the same industrial site.

With it, Baytok makes two propositions. He criticizes the world’s consumption in the context of globalization, taking care to point out the ecological impact of globalized production. His second critique is that of the widespread inclination of art to focus on common acclaim. The simplicity of his work lays in contrast to the popularity of the problem in recent years. The naivety of the form contrasts with the intricate structure of its content. At its core; it wants to reach the most simple and unadorned aesthetic of creation. One that a child has.

Two wooden beams, transformed into stick men, push and squeeze a world made from rusted iron and nails. Two forces, applied in opposite directions, create an immobility that serves as an absolute definition of the present. The artist captures the spirit of today, where the struggle for global survival is fought with the same inaction everywhere. The work carries an impulse to see the world as a singular space. In contrast to the unnamed, undefined meanings, even the world order points to this concept, because we are powerless to bring about change. The work evokes a kind of emptiness. With a design of overlapping metal plates, a sphere’s preserved opacity does not block the image of a vast city, but it does not mean we are in need of a new world order.

“Stillstand,” creates the feeling of



“Stillstand” by Murat Cem Baytok is a site-specific installation in the open-air terrace of CerModern, Ankara

being stuck in an unlimited space, which generates a point blank duality with the site through its intellectualism. The “emotional and cerebral” theme of the public work also supports this duality, despite the prohibitive conditions of physical contact today. Doesn’t it give a rise to another duality, due to the equality of power in its narrative and the inequality of global economic, political and social structures? Baytok’s opposite positioning

of the visible and the invisible fulfills the ethical responsibilities of the emphasized concepts over the collective consciousness.

I remember a quote from Walter Pater, from a postgraduate class, as we discussed the ideals of art and left aside its responsibilities. “All art constantly aspires to the condition of music.” Music is the most abstract form of art within reach of the public. Achieving the pure effects

of music in visual art is only possible with a sense of visual perception. Compared to music, it is particularly inaccessible. In the 19th century, when the interaction between art forms began to intensify, a holistic approach to art was shaped by the connection that mainstream artists established with music in the 20th century. A sense of melancholy and loneliness, created by the period’s feeling of crisis on members of society is quite similar to the spirit of today. In this context, an interdisciplinary solidarity based on what is felt in the art world today occurs within the elements of visual art; the rhythmic harmony or the tension of a line, texture, volume, form, color, or composition.

It is evocative of this dialogue on music in Haruki Murakami’s book, “Men Without Women.” The passage expresses a desire to capture a bond that can approach what the visual arts are trying to show, and to the distance that remains.

“The reason I like this kind of music,” M said one time, “is a question of space.” “Space?”

“When I listen to this music I feel like I’m in a wide-open, empty place. It’s a vast space, with nothing to close it off. No walls, no ceiling. I don’t need to think, don’t need to say anything, or do anything. Just being there is enough. I close my eyes and give myself up to the beautiful strings. There’re no headaches, no sensitivity to cold, no periods, or ovulation. Everything is simply beautiful, peaceful, flowing. I can just be.”

By its very existence, “Stillstand” is in the same dialogue as the individual, who is both the subject and the object of each discussion. With this connection, the artist is not alone in his ironic interpretation of the ‘present moment’.

More of the artist’s work can be seen @mcbaytok

A Land Art Installation At Harran

The first stage of a monumental land art installation by Michel Comte, The Centre of the World, reaches beyond the border into Syria from the ancient Turkish city of Harran. The work will be completed in 2021.

ARTDOG ISTANBUL

A multi-media artist, climate campaigner and photographer is working on a piece of art so large, that once complete it will be visible from space.

Located roughly 20 kilometers from Turkey’s present-day border with Syria in Upper-Mesopotamia, Harran lies at the heart of where mankind first settled down. Archaeological remains — such as those at the nearby site of Göbekli Tepe — demonstrate the earliest signs of civilization as we know it. Here, the cultivation of crops and the domestication of animals first came into practice, and the first connections between religion and architecture were formed. The city was once populated by the Sabians, a community of star worshippers, and became a vital trading post in the ancient world. Its geographical location provides an outstanding view of the constellation Orion. The world’s first observatory and university were constructed here, of which the great archway still stands today. Much later, in the 9th century AD, Harran was the leading city for the production of celestial globes in the Arab world.

Working with Japanese architect Mitsunori Sano, Comte will chisel an initial series of five (and potentially seventeen) circular excavations into the desert ground, ranging from 20 to 25 meters wide and at least three meters deep. The installation will cover an area of over 120 kilometers. The scale and position of each circle will mirror the formation of Orion in the night sky, which is especially visible in the skies above Harran during the months of February and March. Each evening after the sun goes down and until the moon is visible, the outline of each circle will be gradually illuminated. It will form a symbolic connection between the knowledge of the ancient Sabian star worshippers and technology today.

“Appreciating this work will require commitment in the strict sense of the word,” said Michel Comte. “The Centre of the World’ is not at first easily visible, plus it is located far from the beaten track, in a site loaded with history extending from the beginning of civilization to the current time. People first have to make their way here, and then they have to experience it at different moments of the day in order to fully appreciate all the variations that light and shadow will create.”

Comte chose to work in Harran because its multilayered historical, societal and religious legacy lives in tandem with a complex socio-political reality of today. His aim is to build a bridge between the ancient and the new, as Comte notes, “a road to peace.”

Comte’s commitment to socially-oriented projects started over thirty years ago. In 1994 and ’95 he worked to support the building of an orthopedic hospital in Kabul, Afghanistan, travelling there many times over the year. Similar



projects followed, including auctions to raise money for the International Committee of the Red Cross and similar organizations worldwide. Throughout his years as a fashion photographer, he worked on photo assignments from the International Red Cross in war-ravaged regions including Bosnia, Angola, Rwanda, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Kenya, Sudan and Somalia. Comte recorded much of what he saw during these years in a book, *People and Places with no Name*, published by Steidl. During the Gulf War he went to Iraq twice, and worked in Jordan, Israel, Palestine, Egypt and Syria.

Born in Zurich in 1954, multimedia artist Michel Comte studied in France and England. He began his career in art restoration, specializing in contemporary art; his restoration works include those by Andy Warhol, Yves Klein and Miro’. In 1979, Comte met Karl Lagerfeld, who gave him his first commercial assignment for Chloé and later, Chanel. He has since collaborated with Vogue Italia, Vanity Fair and Interview, in addition to brands such as Dolce & Gabbana, Gianfranco Ferré, Calvin Klein, BMW, Ferrari and LVMH.

Comte later traveled to conflict zones to raise funds for humanitarian projects, such as “People and Places with No Name.” After meeting Ayako Yoshida in 2008, he has dedicated more time to art and personal projects. Together, they produced their first 3D feature film, “The Girl From Nagasaki,” in 2013. In the fall of 2016, Comte opened “Neoclassic,” his exhibition on the rise and fall of neoclassicism, at the National Gallery of Parma. He has completed four exhibitions from his “Light” series: at the Museo



Maxxi in Rome, at La Triennale in Milan, Beijing’s Galerie Urs Meile, and most recently at Dirimart in Istanbul. “Light” is a study of natural landscapes through large scale sculptures, photography, video installations and projections, exploring the impact of environmental decline on the world’s glaciers and glacial landscapes.

Upcoming projects

In the spring of 2021, Comte will have a major solo exhibition at the Old Royal Naval Collage in Greenwich, London. In the summer of 2021 he will sail to Spitsbergen, a Norwegian archipelago in the North Pole, as part of a project that will include a light installation to highlight how much ice is being lost in the area. In the second half of November 2021, Comte will exhibit a 3D-map projecting images of glaciers onto buildings in Vatican City.

Is Marina Abramovic A Dinosaur?

A Brief History Of Turkish Performance Art

The exhibition Flux by the Marina Abramovic Institute at Sakıp Sabancı Museum is historic for spotlighting performance art in Turkey, yet the history of Turkish performance art and its local scene are conspicuously absent.

By MATT HANSON

In an early, uncorrected proof of her book, *Walk Through Walls*, Marina Abramovic wrote that Aboriginal Australians look like dinosaurs. Dinosaurs lived about 160 million years longer than the entire span of human evolution, after the first apelike creatures in Africa became bipedal five million years ago. They also set a precedent of worldwide species predominance, not unlike Abramovic, whose Istanbul retrospective, Flux, reaffirms her influence over the globalization of art and her self-promotion as the world's preeminent performance artist.

Outside the sleek, sloping, manicured landscaping of Sakıp Sabancı Museum (SSM), the world-class fine arts institution has the air of an exclusive country club yet admits the public to admire its permanent collections of calligraphy, manuscripts, furniture, sculpture and painting with temporary exhibitions revitalizing historic, international intellectual movements. Abramovic is an adulatory name within a yearly round that has included obscurer subjects like the Russian avant-garde and the early Turkish impressionist Avni Lifiç.

But just because it was her inaugural retrospective in Turkey, does not mean that it was Turkey's first fling with performance art. Performance art and Turkish artists are old friends, meeting, even if erratically, reliably, at least since the 1970s. That, however, was not the stance of Paula Garcia and Serge LeBorgne, the curators of Flux, a touristic Abramovic retrospective with an inspired yet misguided live performance program at SSM, which resumes November 30 to December 20 after Istanbul's spring outbreak of COVID-19, and its ongoing winter spell.

"MAI [Marina Abramovic Institute] and SSM decided to launch an open call as the best way to connect with local artists and activate the artistic community in Turkey," Garcia and LeBorgne wrote in collective response to questions of their selection process. "We propose an alternative understanding of the museum as a place of participation and community. This is not important for Turkey alone but it is at the forefront of a global discourse. In this respect our collaboration with the Sakıp Sabancı Museum has been ex-

emplary."

Did Flux contribute to the development of the local performance art scene or whether involuntary or not, make them invisible through their statement? Their statement reads: "Akış / Flux aims to introduce and support performance art, which is the general term developed in the 1970s to define the non-object, immaterial and time-dependent form of art that is widely performed today as an interdisciplinary social process, encouraging art audiences in Turkey to experience performance art firsthand."

"MAI and SSM did a lot of work to light the way for performance art in Turkey. 12 artists were selected among hundreds of applicants for the open call. This surprising interest in performance art revealed many potential performance artists in the Turkish art scene," said Seyhan Musaoğlu, the founding director of Space Debris, and a performance artist and performance art curator with many leading art companies in New York, Boston and Istanbul.

"Looking at the work of many established artists, performance art is a widely spread discipline among Turkish artists' practices since the 70's, unfortunately the lack of archives, education and academic interest in the field made it almost invisible."

The future history of Turkish performance artists

There are many questions to ask. What will be the future of performance in Turkey after Marina Abramovic's exhibition? What was the past of performance art in Turkey? Flux aims "to explore the legacy of performance art still informing its present." What legacy will this exhibition leave in Turkey? How will this legacy be maintained? Is this legacy holding performance art back or driving it forward? Did MAI and SSM conduct decent research about performance art in this specific geography and through its culture and history?

As a member of Performistanbul Performance Art Development Association, Musaoğlu spoke with clout: "There is a platform and research space in Istanbul dedicated to live art (performance art), it is even named after the city and the discipline; Performistanbul. "Aiming to provide a platform for performance



artists", the platform curated and realised more than 150 performance projects since its creation in 2016. The platform works closely with emerging performance artists who dedicated their life to performance art. It is with great sadness to notice that none of their work or artists are represented in this exhibition."

Instead of continuing to work with Performistanbul, the decision that MAI and SSM took to base their live performance program on an open call undermined not only the integrity of contemporary Turkish performance artists living and working today, but faulted on the definition of performance art itself. The inclusion of dancers, actors and musicians arguably muddled critical appreciation for the unique discipline of performance art into a lightweight potpourri of the performing arts.

In 2005, Istanbul's Beral Madra curated Nezaket Ekici as one of the leading performance artists from Turkey. A student of Abramovic in Germany, Ekici has come to embody the export value of the Abramovic legacy. As one of the artists invited by MAI for Flux, she performed a piece, "Work in Progress - Personal Map", in which she tied herself to a map tracing her performance history. At SSM she led a lecture performance in which she showed family photos of growing up in Germany and asked the audience to breathe in unison.

"Why are we looking for a word, a title, that is not named performance art, but something else. It has a name already. It has a history," Ekici said in an interview for Artdog in March. "I would be happy if an actor says, 'I'm an actor, but I'm working in performance art. I do performances. But my profession is acting.' [Or,] 'I'm a musician. I do performances. I do performance art, but my background is a musician. It's clearer. I have the right to say, 'I'm a performance artist.' I studied performance art."

Abramovic behind the world stage

In mid-March, when Flux and SSM grappled with Istanbul's pandemic closures, ARTnews published a piece by writer Jasmina Tumbas about the Abramovic retrospective in her native Belgrade. "Abramovic got the hometown retrospective that her contemporaries who live and work in Serbia could only dream of," wrote Tumbas, referring to the cultural elitism that Abramovic enjoyed, remote from most Yugoslav youth, and the controversial reopening of the Museum of Contemporary Art (MSU) in Belgrade in 2017 following national economic crises.

Tumbas critiqued the cult of Abramovic: "She is never seen in the context of the Belgrade artists who were crucial to her training... What Abramovic's call to young artists misses is that many of them draw on the Yugoslav legacy of collective resistance rather than hagiographies of individual artists...we must face the ways in which art is validated through broad publics: not only by habitual viewers, but by the everyday communities that enable art scenes—and the stars that emerge from them—to thrive."

Walking through SSM in the midst of Flux, where the ubiquity of Atatürk outside the museum is comparable to the face of Abramovic inside, I stood with the curators to admire the site-unspecific piece, "The Mortal House", by Maria Stamenkovic Herranz, in which the artist builds a brick labyrinth blindfolded. Garcia, a performance artist from São Paulo, spoke with pride about Brazil's long history of performance art. LeBorgne responded to a question about the future of performance art mockingly, "it's like asking what is the future of painting!"

It is a demonstration of cognitive dissonance to hold a stake in shaping the past, while denying participation in the future through multigenerational and intercultural influence, whether through specialized academic training, or public art

appreciation. There is a reason why Abramovic targets youth in her work as an artist and educator. Tumbas explained: "It was no surprise that her letter to Serbia was addressed to the youth. Abramovic looks forward to a new generation of artists who await her leadership."

Since the 1970s, when early Turkish performance art emerged in Paris and New York, Abramovic began performing with Ulay (who passed away after Flux opened), changing the course of performance art with works based on remaining in place, enduring embodied space for often lengthy amounts of time, and against various odds. Henri Bergson introduced duration as conscious existence in his 1889, essay, *Time and Free Will*: "Pure duration is the form which the succession of our conscious states assumes when our ego lets itself live..."

While the prestige of Abramovic, her method, and influence on performance artists around the world is clear, it was an abomination to curate her presence in Turkey with wholesale neglect for Turkish artists' unique contributions to the history of performance art. Ekici echoed the gospel of Flux, which was to both deny the history of Turkish performance art, while emphasizing its Eurocentric pantheon. A pretentious wall at Flux visualized its heritage from John Cage to Yoko Ono, Nam June Paik to Lygia Clark, and others.

"Be honest. Performance art only began to flourish in real terms in recent years in Turkey. It is new, new, new," said Ekici, who has participated in at least three residencies in Istanbul since 2005. "But you can not compare to the [performance art] history of Germany, to Spain, to Poland, to other countries with 60, 70, 80 years of performance art. You can not compare. I like that Turkey is working on that, and that's a good thing because it needs to come there. But it's really in the beginning. They have no history."



Flux, Sakıp Sabancı Museum (SSM)



Flux is a collaboration between Sakıp Sabancı Museum (SSM), Akbank Sanat, and Marina Abramovic Institute (MAI)

Turkish performance art or performance art from Turkey

Garcia and LeBorgne invited Şükran Moral, Turkey's living legend of performance art active mostly during the heady days of the 1990s in Turkey, when cultural liberalism flourished. She declined to participate. For one, she does not practice durational performance. It was an example of an Orientalist approach to see Turkey as terra nullius (literally empty land, a term for British colonialism in Australia), where there are no histories, no people, no artists. For Flux, anything goes in Turkey, meaning any performing artist can be a performance artist.

"From São Paulo, Athens, Bangkok and now in Istanbul, we have been dealing with different political climates in those countries," Garcia and LeBorgne explained, yet quickly pointed to the absence of performance artists in Turkey, due to political flight. "For example, 'No Musicians Land' from Murat Ali, it is a very strong statement of how so many musicians moved to other countries, because of gender issues, political, opportunities, etc. And with this live streaming performance, Murat's brings back those musicians to their homeland."

In late 2016, the comprehensive exhibition, "Off the Record", forwarded retrospective appreciation for the seminal postmodern Turkish artist Nil Yalter, who was born in Cairo in 1938 and later emigrated from her stomping grounds in Istanbul to Paris in 1965. Eda Berkmen curated the show at Arter, including a work, titled, "Deniz Gezmiş" (1972), named after a leftist law student sentenced to death. Yalter made the piece traveling between Paris and Kurtuluş, staying with a friend as Istanbul suffered under martial law following the coup

of 1971.

"Deniz Gezmiş" can be thought of as a point of origin. It is the first work where Yalter incorporates text, found materials and performance," Berkmen wrote in her catalogue essay, "Off the Record". "Composed of paintings, text, photographs and archived newspapers, the work is a pro-to-performance, which Yalter describes as 'an act of presence.'...I reconstruct the artist's motions in my mind. I wonder whether her shock and disbelief morphed into a sombre acceptance as she kneaded history and emotion."

Similarly, in New York City, an older Turkish artist from Istanbul named Tosun Bayrak smeared the streets of Manhattan with blood and guts, swaggering with a hardhat while coining Shock Art. Bayrak became an abstract expressionist painter before converting to Islam. His third-person autobiography, "Memoirs of a Moth", recounts a strain of art history that, like Yalter's work, could not be categorized, for its multivalent detachment from the social norms of Western cultural historiography. It started with his eviction from a live-in studio in New York.

For his life story, published in 2014, Bayrak wrote of his performance art: "In response to the eviction, Tosun designs a performance piece called *Death of a Living Loft*, which is announced to the public by street flyers and posters. In preparation, he throws the contents of the loft — including his old paintings, his wife's sculptures, tables, chairs, plates, pots and pans — into the street. He then digs holes in the walls and ceilings of the loft and fills them with liters of blood, intestines, of-fals, rats, and squirrels, and finally patches the holes up with plaster."

Rewriting the global history of performance art

In late February, hosting The Well, a performance piece by Berlin-based Turkish artist Başak Günak, Arter's performance art curator Selen Ansen refuted the top-down approach of Flux and its Orientalist pretension that Turkey is void of performance art history. She mentioned Yalter, Bayrak, and others. While everyone involved in Flux, including Garcia, LeBorgne, and Ekici, admitted the past existence of individual Turkish performance artists, the idea of their constituting a history remains controversial, despite at least five decades of precedent.

Süreyya Evren, also a curator at Arter, critiques the imposed models of canonization that have come to afflict art historiography in Turkey both from within its core institutions like Istanbul Modern, and from outside, such as the Flux curation at SSM. In his recent essay for a critical series by Istanbul's art writers for SAHA, he identified and contextualized the 1990s as the earliest emergence of Turkey's contemporary art scene, when Şükran Moral redefined social norms with her feminist, pro-sex, self-exposing performances.

The publication of Evren's piece before the reopening of Flux is prescient, as he wrote with characteristic, locally-minded and seasoned insight: "The issue — we could easily call this 'the issue' according to the new and effective contemporary art scene — is how to narrate this sceneless era in the past and how to draw a connection between the story of those times and the story of a post-scene era, the very recent past, which is of course an era that would be relatively easier to narrate and historicize."

In the retrospective phase of Flux, about halfway through the galleries, the curation screened a pivotal Abramovic video. In the 20-plus minutes of "The Onion" (1996), tears flow from the wincing, cringing close-up of Abramovic's face as she eats a raw onion whole before the camera. The piece followed her personal and professional break with Ulay (as in, *The Great Wall Walk* (1988/2008), also screened at Flux). The Onion also expressed contempt for the institutional demands of working as an artist.

She wrote notes for "The Onion": "I'm tired of more and more career decisions, museum and gallery openings, endless receptions, standing around with a glass of plain water, pretending that I'm interested in conversations. I'm so tired of my migraine attacks, lone..." The artist is a figment of individualism in a culture stunned by the anxieties of modern identity, the demands of national citizenry in a world that is increasingly interconnected. Abramovic has always pined for solidarity, whether with Ulay, or as a leader.

The radical individualism of art exists outside of social theory, cultural studies, and the writing of history. These themes tax Slavic, Turkish and other outlying art scenes, yet prompt alternatives to mainstream canonization and disciplinary categorization. Art, however, is not bound to nationality, culture or history. But while globalizing herself as an institution, Abramovic exports her trademarked method of performance art in the name of universal human empathy. Her omnipresence is almost as unsettling to localized art as British colonization is to Australia.



The Köpe family, Salonica, 1903, Antoine Köpe Archive Courtesy Elizabeth Childress

Must-See Exhibition

Between Empires, Beyond Borders

An unmissable exhibition at SALT Beyoğlu, "The War and Armistice Years through the Eyes of the Köpe Family," runs until December 27.

ARTDOG ISTANBUL

Between Empires, Beyond Borders delves into the memories of the Köpe family, who witnessed Ottoman Empire's modernization period as well as its withdrawal from the world stage. The visual narrative of the exhibition is based on detailed archival records spanning the Second Constitutional Era, the First World War and the Armistice Period that followed. Carefully preserved personal documents of the family members, whose lives took shape across Brassó, Istanbul, Thessaloniki, Edirne and Konya, shed light on the milestones of political, social and diplomatic history.

The family's story begins in the Tanzimat era, a period of Westernizing reforms in the Empire, when the roads of Andras Köpe and Léocadie Tallibert intersect in Istanbul. Born and raised in a village near the city of Brassó, Andras had fled to the Ottoman capital from the pressures of the Austrian Empire. Léocadie, whose family was from Brittany, was in the city accompanying her two brothers; Louis, a watchmaker and jeweler, and Pierre, an architect. The couple married in 1842. The exhibition includes the letters of their second child, Charles, who in turn married Rose-Marie Marcopoli, in 1882. Coming from a Levantine family of Genoese origin in Trabzon, Rose-Marie had six children with Charles: Charlotte,

Ida, Taïb, Ferdinand, Antoine and Eugène.

Educated in French, the six siblings never became Ottoman subjects and remained citizens of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Taïb went to Brassó a little after the beginning of the war in 1914 and joined the military of the dual monarchy. Antoine followed in his brother's footsteps and enlisted two years later in Istanbul, serving in Syria and Palestine in 1917. When the war ended and both empires entered respective stages of dissolution, the majority of the Köpe family members stayed in Istanbul, and witnessed the Armistice of Mudros in 1918, the Paris Peace Conference in 1919, as well as the occupation of the city by the British, French and Italian military officials in 1920.

As multicultural members of a multi-ethnic empire, the lives of the Köpe family and the documents they left behind testify to a moment in time when subjecthood and citizenship were not categorized within stable definitions of nationhood. Through Antoine's memoirs, volumes of cartoons as well as visual and audio recordings, in addition to a selection from hundreds of photographs taken by his brother Taïb, *Between Empires, Beyond Borders* explores how the diplomatic relations between the empires of the Austria-Hungary and the Ottoman manifested in everyday life. Built on a family history as it moves from the 19th to the 20th century, the exhibition draws attention to the mutability of identities, the mobility of lives, and the uncertainty of borders in the transition from empire to nation-state.

Developed by Nefin Dinç (James Madison University), Erol Ülker (Işık University) and Lorans Tanatar Baruh (SALT), the exhibition is supported by the Hungarian Cultural Center in Istanbul.



Köpe family members

Art Under COVID-19

COVID-19 could kick-start the art world's long-awaited digital transformation. The online art market will eventually converge around a few key players. Large galleries could emerge as new online players. The Turkish art market seems to enjoy online-only auctions and young artists' competitions. The slowdown of art sales may trigger more genuine collectors to open private museum and exhibition spaces. After all, isn't art a tool to communicate, rather than invest?

By PROF. DR. AYLİN SEÇKİN

Since national lockdowns started in mid-March, global economies have slowed to a great extent. The art world has been hit even harder, as it is a market based on social interactions and networks. The trend of falling market values correlates with economic recessions, as it did in 2008, when sales were down by over 30%. All of the market participants have been affected by this pandemic to varying degrees. So far, one observation is clear, the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) could be a catalyst to finally ignite a strong flame for the online art market. The art industry, which relies considerably on the human interaction between art dealers, artists, and members of the public, must rethink its practices. With social distancing, the way art is seen and bought has changed, along with many other things. Crowded art fairs and gallery openings are no longer a part of the program. Dealers have had to find new ways to create continuous hype to make collectors buy now. The unexpected and unprecedented bans on travel and transportation during the shutdown have presented these players with new challenges.

The art market has been mostly resistant to events in the wider economic and political environment due to its peculiar working dynamics. However, the unpredictable pandemic has left the art market with serious challenges. In 2019, the art market achieved \$64.1 billion in sales, a 5% decline from \$67.7 billion the previous year. With uncertainty in politics and economics overall, art sales have been under pressure.

Galleries

As the COVID-19 pandemic spread, it caused many galleries to close their physical spaces. Almost all art fairs and other events were cancelled around the world. Some galleries have already closed permanently, others have furloughed or laid off significant numbers of employees, and the effect on those that remain open is still unfolding. The aggregate outcomes for the sector in 2020 will depend on how long the various phases of this crisis last. Despite already having very tight employment structures, many galleries have had to furlough or permanently lay off staff in response to the COVID-19 crisis.

Art Basel published a report in September of 2020, based on a survey of 795 modern and contemporary galleries in over 60 countries and regions. Each gallery reported how the pandemic has affected their businesses and sales. According to the report, galleries with a turnover between \$250,000 and \$500,000 a year, which represent 13 per cent of those surveyed, had the largest share of downsizing (38 per cent) as well as the greatest fall in total sales (47 per cent). One third of those surveyed were forced to cut their staff. This equated to an average of four job losses out of a staff of eight (permanent and part-time employees) during that period. Only two per cent of galleries reported having to close completely. Nearly all galleries (93%) closed their premises between January and July 1 of 2020, with an average closure period of 10 weeks. The shortest closures were in small and medium sized markets, with South Korea and Sweden reporting the lowest average in five weeks. The longest average gallery closure was in the US, with an average of 14 weeks.



The report finds a median decline in sales values of 43 per cent for the period, a relevant measure in such a fragmented industry. The gallery industry model is based fundamentally on discretionary spending and in-person contact. In short time, it had to change its business practices to adapt to the pandemic.

The report also finds that the majority of galleries expect sales to continue to decrease in the future.

For some years now, galleries have maintained a 'viewing room' on their websites, with limited use, with the exception of a few good examples. Gagosian started making digital sales at the end of 2018. Gagosian launched its Artist Spotlight initiative long before the pandemic, focusing each week on selling one work by one artist. By using targeted social media posts, the curators build anticipation, desire and fervor. Gagosian's Spotlights are based on promoting a scarcity mindset in its buyers, a 'get it before it's gone' mentality. The sale of a Jenny Saville painting for an undisclosed price of \$5 million dollars confirms the success of this project.

Megagalleries have also offered their digital platforms to smaller galleries and fairs during the COVID-19 crisis. David Zwirner launched 'Platform' in early April, initially for smaller New York galleries, but then broadened his approach to include London, Paris and Brussels.

However, many smaller galleries cannot extend their limited budget to hire more digitally-fluent staff or consultants.

Collectors

Art Basel reports also presented the results of a survey of 360 high net worth (HNW) collectors, each with more than \$1m in liquid assets from three major art markets – the U.S., the U.K., and Hong Kong SAR (China) – with a particular focus on how the COVID-19 crisis has changed their interactions in the art market and galleries. The online viewing rooms of art fairs and online third-party platforms were used by just over one third of the collectors buying works of art in 2020, and 32% bought works directly using Instagram. Most (81%) of the collectors surveyed felt it was important or essential to see a posted price while they browsed through works of art for sale online. Across all of the HNW collectors surveyed, 59% felt the COVID-19 pandemic had increased their interest in collecting. The vast majority (92 per cent) reported that they had bought art in the first six months of 2020, and at high levels. The report finds that 56 per cent of collectors spent more than \$100,000 during this period, including 16 per cent who spent more than \$1m. This instinct is strongest

among the millennials (defined here as between the ages of 23 and 38), where these levels are at 70 per cent and 42 per cent respectively. These millennial collectors, who represent nearly half of the active collectors surveyed, were also found to be more comfortable buying art online at higher prices. 16 per cent of millennials were found "to regularly buy work at over \$1m online, while none of the boomer generation (aged 55-73) bought online at this level.

Institutional collectors, such as Deutsche Bank and British Airways, have reported intentions to auction their art collections to ease COVID-19 pressures. If this is the case, there may be buyers' opportunities on the horizon. For auctions and dealers, COVID-19 presents significant economic challenges, as with most industries. But it may also be an opportunity to adapt and innovate the methods of the art market, expand its audience and move into a new era.

Auction houses

ArtTactic's recent report found that leading auction house sales fell 49 per cent in the first half of 2020. This is predictable, because room auctions have been cancelled due to health and safety measures. Pi-eX also reported a 79% year-on-year drop in the combined revenue of the three major auction houses (Sotheby's, Christie's and Phillips) for the second quarter of this year, as compared to 2019.

Against this decline, the art auction market has been forced to innovate and embrace its novelties. Online auctions have been around for some time, and have steadily increased their reach since the beginning of the pandemic. Auction houses that have already invested in their online offerings seem to be prepared for the shift to digital. Sotheby's, for example, held 129 online-only sales in 2019. While only 20% of major auction house sales were conducted online in the first half of 2019, this rose to over 80% for the first half of 2020, according to data by Pi-eX Limited.

During a Rembrandt to Richter sale in July, Sotheby's used a multi-camera global livestream format to reach an online audience of over 150,000. Employing a similar model, Christies' *One* sale was relayed in sequence from Hong Kong, Paris, London and New York. Over the summer, Sotheby's auctioneer conducted an auction from London, using video conferencing technology to communicate with bidders in real time in New York, London and Hong Kong. Purchases were announced on three screens, and over £292 million worth of art was sold without a physical audience. This type of virtual auction was the first of many to

follow. COVID-19 has forced auctioneers to rethink their businesses. The past few months have accelerated a change that might otherwise have taken years to occur. This may signal the end for traditionally packed auction houses.

Sotheby's has reported that live-streamed sales and online auctions are attracting new buyers who have never been to an auction house before. Sotheby's confirmed that 40% of buyers are new to the auction house and 30% are under 40 years old. Technology facilitates online access, and allows collectors to examine artworks much more closely than in a pre-sale visit to a busy showroom. Christie's, for example, is offering buyers super-zoom photography to inspect the art before bidding. Earlier this summer, a series of 15 canvases by Picasso appeared at Christie's new cutting-edge auction platform, "ONE," for the first time. Furthermore, as Christie's sold a near-complete skeleton of a Tyrannosaurus rex in October 2020 for \$31.8 million, a whopping 280,000 viewers tuned in to the virtual sale.

By embracing social media, and Instagram in particular, auction houses can expand their audiences at a minimal cost. For example, Brett Gorvy, an ex-sale officer at Christie's, sold an artwork for \$20 million after posting it on Instagram. Almost immediately, he began receiving enquiries from existing clients. Living artists can also sell directly to the public without an agent. The audiences can track artwork trends, message the artist privately, and buy in less than a minute. Whilst these artworks are generally low in value, this online trading capacity vastly expands the accessibility of the art market. Furthermore, virtual art fairs can take advantage of social media platforms, enabling experiences and buying opportunities without geographic limitations.

The Art Basel report also estimates an increase in the shares in online sales, from 10% of total sales in 2019 to 37% in the first half of 2020. Despite having the lowest share in 2019, galleries with the largest turnover showed the highest increase, with those in the \$10 million-plus segment rising almost fivefold to 38%. Of those dealers reporting online sales, 26% went to new online buyers with whom the gallery had never had personal contact. New online buyers were more important for smaller galleries, accounting for 35% of the online sales of those with turnover below \$250,000. The cancellation of art fairs meant that gallery sales at those venues were radically reduced in the first half of 2020, to 16% (compared to 46% in 2019). Art fair expenses are the single largest component of total costs for the galleries surveyed, (an average of 29%



Now” online auction, creating a major dealer-to-dealer art exchange platform which has created liquidity and further transparency in the art market. New art startups are also developing. *DE ARTIUM* is “a platform that has set out with the goal of spreading new media arts and digital art, aiming to create a new generation ecosystem by bringing together artists and art lovers. It is a platform where artists can exhibit their work with software and hardware integrated with new generation display systems such as LED screens, smart televisions, and VR.” The digital art rental market is a new concept for the art market. However, with the development of speedy internet connections and the expected arrival of 5G, it will boost the economic potential of art rental and screening experiences.

After being closed for about three months, galleries resumed their activities at the end of summer. Despite the health crisis, we see that the galleries made good use of the months of September and October. They held their online exhibitions in physical spaces, albeit with a limited audience. Mamut Art exhibits the most successful new graduates in Bomontiada between October 27 and November 8, while the Base art competition organizes its exhibition in Tophane-i Amire showing the work of successful young artists between November 20 and 25, as well as online. The 7th Çanakkale biennial, titled Constellation, was held between September 19 and October 19. Important works of art were exhibited from the Agah Uğur collection curated by Azra Tüzünoğlu, entitled “Unwillingly But With Pleasure.”

This year, Artweeks Akaretler organized exhibitions with the participation of major galleries. The exhibition, which took place from October 28 until November 8, exhibited some art from private collections. Step Istanbul Art Fair took place in Taksim 360 from November 18 to 22, with about thirty galleries and limited visitors. The art fair Contemporary Istanbul will also take place in December. The fair will be held physically and online. All these examples are positive signs indicating that the production, presentation and exhibition and exchange of art has slowed, but has not halted.

Conclusion

Nonetheless, there is room for optimism. After decades of unhurried progress, the art market is now evolving at an exponential rate. Still, if the auction houses and dealers can make it attractive and stay on top of the trends, they should be able to grow and diversify their audiences in a virtual space. The art market is embracing a new world of data, transparency and efficiency, with a clear focus on online strategy.

There has been enormous progress in buyers’ openness and savviness to browsing and buying art online. The ramifications of online selling need to be considered, such as data protection laws, the potential for copyright infringement and consumer legislation. COVID-19 restrictions are boosting online sales as art lovers invest in fine art instead of overseas holidays. There is a real interest in people who stay home to buy art online. The increasing access to data and analytics may provide sophisticated buyers with more transparency and detail on potential purchases, which in turn may impact the prices that artworks can achieve at auction.

Collectors and dealers ought to be aware of the risks that come with online transactions. When everyone is selling online; artists, collectors, auction houses, galleries, dealers, and even art stores are exposed to possible fraud.

The online art market eventually will converge around a few key players. Big galleries could emerge as new online players. The market is expected to evolve around specific collecting segments. Outsider disruption could attract the next generation of buyers. A competition from other collectible trading platforms, such as StockX, may change the speed of the race. StockX started with sneakers and now has about \$100 million in annual sales, including collectibles such as KAWS and Murakami.

COVID-19 could kick-start the art world’s long-awaited digital transformation. The online art market is going through some potentially transformational changes, triggered by COVID-19 and the impact of social distancing; some of these changes are set to last. The pandemic has also exposed the extent of dependence within the art market on certain traditional sales (physical art fairs, gallery exhibitions, auctions etc.). Moreover, this health crisis has also triggered a new type of audience and buyer engagement, focusing on social causes, rather than financial gains or one’s reputation.

Resources:
<https://www.ft.com/content/ff6530b4-1c40-497c-bd23-c5a70e552a01>
<https://arttactic.com/editorial/after-jpegs-how-we-buy-art-now/>
<https://www.artsy.net/article/artsy-editorial-midst-covid-19-chinese-galleries-adapt-persevere>
<https://ubs.trickbox.live/artbasel-survey-apac>
<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/miscellaneous/going-going-gone-covid-19-boosts-online-art-auctions/articleshow/78729989.cms?from=mdr>
<https://privateartinvestor.com/news/adapting-to-the-new-normal-challenges-for-the-art-market-919/>
<https://www.artsy.net/article/artsy-editorial-insurance-buying-art-online-works>
 Art Basel & UBS Report “The Impact of COVID-19 on the Gallery Sector: A 2020 mid-year survey” is free to read at [artbasel.com](https://www.artbasel.com)
 Hiscox online art trade report 2020

in 2019) a higher share than payroll or rent. The cancellation of art fairs led to a significant cost reduction.

According to a Hiscox report, online sales made up approximately 7.5% of global sales in 2019, with a growth of just 4% over the previous year. Selling art online is not new. But the public’s openness to it is. Daata, a digital platform for video and new media art, began as a commissioning site, but quickly developed into a streaming service and gallery after discovering a demand for viewing options. They even host an art fair. There have also been interesting collaborations between galleries and innovators for solutions to art market experiences. David Zwirner worked with Vortic to create virtual-reality experiences, and major auction houses relied on their digital departments to stage online-only auctions. Hauser and Wirth and Thaddeus Ropac participated in Daata’s new fair. In theory, there is little to distinguish online galleries and auctions from platforms like Saatchi Art, Etsy, and eBay. The idea is to offer a different kind of service to cultivate prestige. Furthermore, the line between auction houses and galleries has blurred. In an effort to help improve dealer visibility to auction house clients, Sotheby’s launched its Dealer’s Eye sales in London and New York. Another innovative model is the platform provided by Christie’s to the exhibitors at the Paris Biennale in September. Dealers have launched their own collaborative initiatives, too. The London Collective was formed out of 40 galleries, which had originally come together for mutual support and advice through a WhatsApp group.

Otis, a US-based fractional ownership company, is already using a “sneaker drop” model while launching artworks by artists such as KAWS, Murakami and Tracey Emin. This feature allows artists and galleries to collect invaluable user data and sales, leading potential collectors in return for exclusive access to time-sensitive online exhibitions, artwork, and content.

During this time, artists are also turning to online crowd-funding platforms such as Patreon to generate income. Patreon is a membership platform that provides business tools for artists and other creative types to run a subscription content service. It allows creators to earn a monthly income by providing exclusive rewards and gifts to their ‘patrons.’ Patreon reported that in the first three weeks of March, more than 30,000 creators launched pages on their site. These artist-led models have been important in keeping liquidity amongst artists by extending the ‘buyer pool’ and giving artists some initiative.

Perspectives from the Turkish art market

Although the impact of the pandemic has also been negative on the Turkish art market for all the cited reasons above, online art auctions have gained momentum. Many new online-only auction houses for artworks and collectibles have intensified their activities. The biggest auction house of Turkey, Artam, has launched the “Buy



Table Talk

Nilüfer Kuyaş

“Masculinities” At Gropius Bau In Berlin

A brief respite from our bewildering gender discourse

The full title of this group exhibition is “Masculinities: Liberation through Photography.” It will run until Jan. 10, 2021, for those lucky enough to come out of lockdown and travel to Berlin.

Masculinity is in deep crisis -- this is a well-established fact. We’ve talked about “toxic masculinity” for quite a while now.

Just as in the climate crisis, the effects of the masculinity crisis also threaten our planet. Our perception and our performance of masculinity urgently needs to change, and radically so.

With work by over fifty artists, the Gropius Bau show documents precisely how that change has started taking place over the past six decades, through various strategies to question traditional representations of masculinity, as well as exploring new forms of it.

Simply titled “Fraternity”, Irish and American artist Richard Mosse’s 2007 video features ten portraits of young males from the Yale University chapter of Delta Kappa Epsilon, in the form of a shouting competition, depicting a performance of what the artist describes as “elite-white-male rage.”

The person who is able to continue shouting until the end wins a keg of beer. Mosse consecutively blacks out the screens of those who cannot sustain the effort, until we are left with the last man standing, or shouting.

As he explains in an article in *New Yorker*, Mosse revisited this work in 2018 during the nomination of Brett Kavanaugh to the Supreme Court by Donald Trump. Kavanaugh, who was also a member of DKE during his time at Yale, was confirmed to the Supreme Court despite the accusation that he sexually assaulted Christine Blasey Ford, at a high school party. Ford, an academic who came forward at great personal cost, received death threats after her decision to speak out.

I too watched those Senate Judiciary Committee hearings and wrote an essay on the spectacle. Richard Mosse’s sentiments were exactly the same as mine. He too perceived Kavanaugh’s performance as “entitled, defensive rage.”

He wrote: “I hope the video gives viewers pause to consider how, sometimes, the toxic forms of masculinity that are fostered in elite school systems are not simply allowed to exist at the highest levels of government but seem almost required.”

It is indeed important to mark that toxic masculinity is an organized force, and the present global backlash against feminism or the rise of violence against women is closely related to it.

Mosse concludes: “I feel that the video resonates with the defensive anger of an entire population of voters, many of whom are white men, who elected Donald Trump to office. Those men may not be from the elite, like Kavanaugh, but, like him, they fear losing their privilege in a changing society.”

For me, this echoed perfectly with the curator Alona Pardo’s introduction to the Gropius Bau show, where she points out that the exhibition is especially timely, given “the current global socio-political climate, which has seen the rise of a ‘masculinist nationalism’ characterized by male world leaders shaping their image as ‘strong’ men, set against the backdrop of the #MeToo movement.”

What also makes this exhibition so timely, I think, is the so-called “Shadow Pandemic.” Since the outbreak of COVID-19, global data has shown that all types of violence against women and girls, especially domestic violence, has intensified. We are talking about two worldwide scourges here, which seem to be competing with and feeding each other.

The Gropius Bau exhibition does not address the issue of violence against women as such, but the perspective it opens on the social and performative aspects of gender, including various stereotypes of rampant male supremacism, is right at the center of the debate.

The exhibition is divided into seven sections. “Disrupting the Archetype” is a section which cleverly and sometimes beautifully challenges our ideas of heteronormative or hypermasculine

stereotypes, such as soldiers, cowboys, or body-builders.

When I say beautiful, I mean especially the work of Sam Contis, who is one of the artists I most admired in this show.

Her series titled *Deep Springs* (also a book), from 2018, explores the cowboy mythology of the American West. Or rather, it debunks it. The black and white images of young men in tender or intimate moments, taking care of each other or having a moment of contemplation during the strenuous work of learning how to be a cowboy at an isolated, all-male college, are very moving and exactly the opposite of the behavior one would expect.

The impression of the openness or the reinvention of self, the sense of discovery palpable in each frame, are as life transforming as art can get.

Contis says in an interview, “Photography has always been used as a tool to construct new ideas about place and self.” I could not agree more. She adds, “especially in the West.” But I suspect that this human desire for self-discovery, for openness to experience, is very much universal, from California all the way to Kandahar, as I discovered a little later.

Similar explorations in the dissolution or reinvention of identities is a strong thread in the Gropius Bau exhibition. One obvious chapter that does this to perfection is of course, “Queering Masculinity.” The section highlights artists from the 1960s onwards, who constructed queer aesthetics.

One of the most striking works in this section is Thomas Dworzak’s series called “Taliban”, featuring romantic, florally decorated, haloed, almost feminized portraits of Taliban soldiers, which the fighters themselves commissioned to be re-touched and fashioned in this way. Dworzak personally excavated the images from various photographic studios in Kandahar.

This goes to show that fluidity of gender and the queering of identities, the performance of both expected roles and their unexpected opposites, are powerful human needs. These basic truths touch us in one way or another throughout our lives, so their depiction in art is truly liberating. The effect is not only for the artist but for the viewer as well, probably more so.

There are also humorous and fun moments in the exhibition. Like the iconic 1993 series “Being and Having” by Catherine Opie.

Her recent animated collages of digital cutouts notwithstanding, I admire and also clearly remember this landmark series of hers, with close-up portraits of her lesbian friends wearing fake mustaches. The series was one of the first depictions of gender, and consequently of masculinity, as a performance and a social construct rather than the “natural order of things” imposed by a male-dominated society for so long.

Not only is it a cheeky work, but I remember it had a big impact at the time in Turkey, where mustaches were just then being parodied as symbols of backward-looking, authoritarian, Middle Eastern male supremacism. Meanwhile, the feminist movement truly began to become active and visible in the country. Images are powerful symbolic weapons in such cultural transformations.

Last but not least, on a personal note, I feel that even in our image-saturated, hyper-visual age, photography is still vital and relevant, not least because of its versatility.

I believe that the range of creative means available to it, and the inventiveness of photography, makes it the most vibrant art form of the moment.

Photography is able to combine the documented and the staged, the real and the fictional, in almost infinite varieties. And more importantly, it is probably the most democratized and accessible medium in existence today.

The subtitle of the Gropius Bau exhibition, “Liberation through Photography,” is certainly not an overstatement.

In any case, it brought me relief from humanity’s gender misery for a short while, at least.

*A longer version of this essay can be found in the online edition of *ArtDog*.
 Many thanks to Aykan Safoğlu for signalling the show.



Anke Eilengerhard,
'Resilience', Anna
Laudel Istanbul, 2020

Resilience Is The Order Of The Day

By ÖZGE TABAK
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Berlin-based artist Anke Eilengerhard's first solo exhibition in Turkey, "Resilience" showcases more than 30 of her new and recent works including sculptures, wall-reliefs, and screen printings. The exhibition, which hosts a series of interesting sculptures produced by the artist using a special silicone material and porcelain, can be seen at Anna Laudel until January 14th.

In an exclusive interview, Anke Eilengerhard talks about her artistic process and COVID-19's impact on the art world...

Your sculptures stimulate not only sight, but also the senses of touch, taste and smell. For over three decades, the motif of the "Layer Cake" has played a prominent role in your oeuvre. Since 2004, you have been focusing on the sculptural form of the swirl of 'whipped cream,' and your trademark is the 'icing on the cake'. What were your ideals, inspirations & motivations when you created your signature sculptures? In which ways does the 'stimulation of all senses' enhance the experience of art?

Basically, I ask these three questions about my art: Is it autonomous, is it expressive, is it unique? I try to stimulate the audience by associating apparently familiar objects and key stimuli. A work of art is only brought to life by the viewer. The dialogue creates a sensual and intellectual experience.

However, I do not want to give instructions on how to read my work. The artistic intention should primarily be communicated through the work itself. Anyone can immerse themselves in their own way, and with their own potentials.

The basic shape, surface structure, color and title are materials. They all have the same status in the development process. Abstract, often reduced basic forms such as spheres, hemispheres and radii, which are staggered, and the surface structure, the color, describe the emotional moment and the title... all of these create the emotion of a body. The abstract sculpture becomes a figuration. Neither color nor shape comes first, everything comes simultaneously.

Union of the Seemingly Incompatible

We'd like to hear about your unconventional technique. You use silicone as your material. Can you briefly describe your technique and choice of material?

For me, whipped cream is the perfect sculptural shape. There is something cosmic about it. It reflects the longing for paradise. From this I developed

Anke Eilengerhard thinks that while the pandemic makes us tougher, more creative, sadder, more adult and more serious, it also shows how important it is to persevere. Resilience is the order of the day. But she is also hopeful: "Nature shows us how, after a fire, new life can arise on scorched earth. Maybe with even more beautiful flowers. May that also apply to the art scene..."

my special artistic technique. Like a confectioner, I manually sculpt the whipped cream from highly pigmented polyorganosiloxane (silicone) into a sculpture. Polyorganosiloxane, which DIY practitioners and cosmetic surgeons like to use for correcting imperfections in appearance, is for me the perfect art material in addition to its physical properties.

You present the known in an unimagined, unknown form. You also apply unusual symmetry and geometry. How does it all come together? When I think about the repetitive process of the silicone caps placed next to and on top of each other; I wonder, do you have a visual in mind beforehand that you'd like to achieve at the end? My observations and experiences are the basis of all my work. My aim is to make things visible that I cannot put into words and that are still universal. Human sensations such as longing, desire, lust, passion, fear, but also temporality and balance are the focus of my interest. I want to raise awareness of the fragility of our existence.

I am also attracted by the union of the seemingly incompatible, which manifests itself in my sculptures in many ways.

A new sculpture is created in my head long before I sculpt it with my hands. And not just formally, such as the shape, color, and size. But also emotionally. What should it express? How should it stimulate the viewer, where is its ideal place? For weeks, I engage in an inner dialogue with the unborn figure.

Between Orient and Occident

Your solo exhibition "Resilience" at Anna Laudel showcases more than 30 of your new and recent works, including sculptures, wall-reliefs, and screen printings. It is your first solo exhibition in Turkey. How do you describe this experience? You've visited Istanbul for the exhibition. What are your thoughts on Turkey's art scene and art viewers?

I get tons of positive comments and posts on social media with very touching feedback. As a result, I spend some time on the smartphone every day, writing responses. This is very stimulating and motivating. Thank you so much to all of you. The exhibition was visited by almost 2,000 art lovers in early November, despite corona restrictions. That honors me a lot and makes me happy.

Through the exhibition at Anna Laudel Istanbul, the discussions with the Turkish artists represented there

and, of course, because I am now dealing more with the Turkish art scene overall, I see and experience a very dynamic, creative Turkish art scene with fascinating art, which of course is partly world class. I think the geographic location between Orient and Occident is very inspiring for artists. There is a preference for intense colors, ornament, and poetry.

I Love Colors, I Taste Them

The use of color is also an important subject for you. Visitors can see dynamic colors but also dreamy pinks and turquoise shades. In your work, color and form merges in some way. Can you tell us about your color palette and their reflections on your artworks? When I was little, my grandma often took me to a cafe to eat cake. There I not only marveled at the floral wall-papers and the fascinating shapes and colors of the cakes on display that were lit up as if on a stage, but I also enjoyed my grandmother's brief bliss. Presumably, a palette of shapes, colors and emotions manifested itself there early on. For me, a cake with whipped cream is a piece of heaven on earth.

I love colors. I taste them. Just as one doesn't like to eat the same thing every day, I always prefer new colors. Colors are an expression of emotion. There are people who have a sense of color that can be compared with a musician's perfect pitch.

We can say the whole world has stepped into a new era with this pandemic. How did the coronavirus outbreak affect you and your art practice? Has it changed your themes, colors? Has it affected your preferred medium or presentation methods? We've seen online exhibitions, fairs present online viewing rooms. How do you think digitalization will change the art world? Do you think 'online' can provide the same experience as in-person experience?

For a long time I have been on the trail of questions that are even more urgent, due to the digital reception of art during the current crisis. How physical, how real must works of art be? What does "real" mean in terms of the digital reality of distribution and reception? What does the digital reception of art do to art and to its recipients? Is it a completely different situation when the viewer experiences art in a space especially designed for this purpose, together with others, at an exhibition opening or a visit to a museum? What if he is viewing an image of an artwork on a 5 x 5 cm screen during a daily social media scroll.

Will our perspective change? Will art change? What will remain and what will become lost?

How do you describe your psychological state during this viral pandemic and quarantine period? What were the main questions/topics on your mind? 2021's coming, in which ways do you think it'll be different? What are your expectations, hopes for 2021?

The pandemic has a strong impact on everything. It is like a sieve through which, perhaps, less important things are simply filtered out. It makes you tougher, more creative, sadder, more adult, more serious. But it also shows how important it is to persevere. The artists are particularly trained in this. Resilience is the order of the day.

Democratization of Artistic Taste

The global art scene has also been affected by the pandemic. Art fairs were cancelled, art galleries closed; some artists have started selling work directly through their social media accounts. There are concerns that, blue chip galleries aside, small and medium scale galleries will have hard time surviving. Do you think artists and their ways of finding and connecting to collectors and art viewers will change? If yes, in what way? What will the new, post-coronavirus art scene look like?

The pandemic is like a natural disaster that is already destroying so much. Many sacrifices are made. For some artists and galleries, it has surely come at a very bad time, and not everyone will survive the crisis. But there is hope. Nature shows us how, after a fire, new life can arise on scorched earth. Maybe with even more beautiful flowers. May that also apply to the art scene.

The Frieze Sculpture opened in Regent's Park in 2020. People prefer outdoor displays during the pandemic. Do you think outdoor art exhibitions and artworks in public spaces will be more popular? Also in your case, how will it affect artists that create large-scale artworks or installations?

Christo and Jean-Claude have set standards when it comes to outdoor art. Why is their art so powerful? Because even at the concept stage, the work was conceived, in a way, to be in a relationship, interaction and in unity with the environment and its reception. It seems impossible and nonsensical to squeeze a "Valley Curtain" inside a museum. On the other

hand, I believe that art cannot simply be moved outside. Often, it lacks the shelter of the museum or gallery. It is then simply in an inappropriate place. Or else, the work of art has to be laboriously proofed for wind, weather, vandalism and theft, which often contradicts the intended effect and leads to a material battle. It is at least possible, here and there, to create selfie spots that attract the public. This, as a result of the power of going viral, can make previously unattractive places more attractive and stimulate tourism. Perhaps this will go hand in hand with future ways of receiving and valuing art. In a way, it is the democratization of artistic taste.

Can you tell us about your next project that you're working on right now?

I keep asking myself whether and how I can make sculptures for outdoor use. Right now, I'm even busier with this question because the curators of the Bad RagARTz Sculpture Triennial in Switzerland have invited me to take part in the 2021 triennial with an open-air sculpture. I'm curious to find out what the viewers will see of me there.



Anke
Eilengerhard, *Lovely*,
Highly Pigmented
Polyorganosiloxan,
Stainless Steel, with
pedestal, 230 x 90 x
77 cm, 2016

Digital Sculptures

Hande Şekerciler experiments with virtual sculptures in a digital exhibition hosted by JD Malat Gallery, London. We spoke to Şekerciler and Jean David Malat, the founder of the gallery.

By NİL NUHOĞLU

Ecstasy, a solo exhibition by Hande Şekerciler, will be displayed at London's JD Malat Gallery until the first of January. *ecstasy* brings together a selection of three-dimensional digital sculptures exploring the theme of the human 'self' while presenting a new mode of engagement with contemporary sculpture.

This new series of three-dimensional digital sculptures will be presented via JD Malat Gallery's online exhibition platform, PARALLEL. By situating the digital sculptures in a virtual exhibition space, JD Malat Gallery seeks to highlight the progressive nature of Şekerciler's practice, and aims to underline her role as a protagonist in the field of contemporary sculpture and digital art. We spoke to the artist and Jean David Malat, the founder of the gallery.

Can you briefly describe your production process, for both real and online/virtual sculptures?

H.Ş.: Actually, both processes are a little bit similar -- especially in the beginning. First, I meditate on the idea. Usually I start with a word or a concept, then I make sketches on my iPad. After numerous versions, I pick one of them and use it as reference to create a 3D model of the sculpture with my MacBook.

I use several different software programs to create my sculptures in a 3D space. ZBrush is my main sculpting software. I use Substance Painter to do the coloring phase, which in my case is a virtual patina. I use Cinema 4D and Arnold to light and render my scenes, if necessary. We also used Unity to create my VR exhibition and AR experience.

To bring these sculptures to life is a totally different story. I make wax models of the versions I choose. These are used to prepare high temperature resistant molds for casting bronze. Bronze melted at a high temperature is poured into the mold, and then broken open after it solidifies. Usually a sculpture consists of several parts. After casting, their leveling process begins.

At the end of this phase, which lasts for a week or two, the bronze statue emerges and finally I do the coloring work, which we call patina.

I have my own unique chemical patina solution that I use to color my sculptures. So even though my works usually have five or six editions each one has its own unique look. Finally, I apply a polish that allows the sculpture to have a marble texture, which is also used in the world's most important museums, such as The British Museum.

How was the experience of curating and installing the exhibition without the physical space?

H.Ş.: One of the hardest things about displaying sculptures is deciding how to place the work. This requires a lot of help to organize the exhibition, because you cannot move the works alone. I didn't have to worry about that for this exhibition!

On the other hand, light is one of the most important elements in sculpture. Since I chose millions of natural and artificial lights in this exhibition, I had the opportunity to choose the ones that best suit my sculptures. Of course, in physical areas, you are limited by the possibilities of the space and the light in the environment.

Your exhibition is called *ecstasy*. Can you elaborate on this state in the sculptures?

H.Ş.: The series *ecstasy* is about the possibility of a person accepting and loving themselves in every way and as whoever they are. Thanks to the impositions of our civilization, we always want to be better, richer, more beautiful, more important and just more. However, each one of us is beautiful and valuable as we are. I dream of a world in which we accept and love ourselves and others, where we do not care what or whom they wear, and whom they love. I try to share this ideal through these sculptures.

How long have you been working with Hande Şekerciler? How do you perceive



ecstasy self-portrait no.1, 2020 Bronze with Custom Made Chemical Patina 92 x 112 x 101 cm

a sculpture exhibition, which is 3 dimensional in its nature, to be digitally exhibited?

JDM: I have been working with Hande since I began planning on opening my gallery back in 2017.

I discovered her work in Istanbul, and I love the subject matter she explores throughout her work. I am really proud to represent her in London. She has developed so much throughout her career. For example, she is now one of the leading sculptors handling bronze, and the special patina she creates herself is just magical. There aren't so many women artists working with bronze sculpture, so to see her doing so well is great.

The 3D exhibition is really amazing, and especially in the world we live in today. I would definitely say that this is a new and pivotal way of engaging with sculpture, especially given that historically, sculpture has been viewed 'in real life'. This exhibition marks a new combination of technologically advanced creation and traditional arts. The digital production behind it takes a lot of technical skill and understanding of new media and technology. Hande is an expert at that.

I think the digital exhibition will also encourage people all over the world to see Hande's work in real life. We will present an exceptional life-sized sculpture this year at Contemporary Istanbul; I am sure that after viewing our online exhibition 'ecstasy,' Hande's international audience will want to see her sculptures in person at the art fair.

A virtual exhibition space is an innovative idea, especially in the arts industry. How do you think the collectors and art enthusiasts will view this innovation? Is there a mental barrier to jump through?

JDM: We opened our virtual gallery, entitled 'Parallel,' in October, and the return on this virtual space is really good. I truly think it is really unique. The world can travel through the exhibition and see Hande's sculpture right from their sofa. It is an exceptional show that Hande and I have planned for a while.

Collectors are now used to virtual exhibitions and most of our clients are purchasing works through online platforms. I think that collectors will find this online exhibition particularly impressive, given that it specifically focuses on sculpture. This is generally very new. The technology Hande used to develop the digital sculptures made for a very accurate representation of the sculptures, as they would appear in real life. I don't believe a virtual show presents a 'mental barrier.' Rather, it presents a new and exciting way to engage with sculpture. With the help of technology, apps and virtual exhibition spaces, collectors can easily envision the artwork in different spaces.

What are the benefits of creating sculptures for an online exhibition space?

H.Ş.: We used the WebGL platform so that it can be experienced in the same way on all platforms while doing online exhibitions. In this way, regardless of the software or hardware used, all viewers can watch the

exhibition at the same quality. Together with Burçin Gürbüz, the founder of Garage Atlas, we established the best possible technological infrastructure within the possibilities of WebGL. Art lovers from all over the world will be able to experience the exhibition from wherever they are. I use the word experience specifically, because viewers will not only see the work on their computer screen. They will be able to walk around the exhibition in a more realistic way with VR glasses, with the opportunity to place the sculptures in their space and view them there, thanks to AR technology.

How do online applications change the way we think about and engage with sculpture?

H.Ş.: As I mentioned above, being able to exhibit my physically produced works in a virtual space creates the opportunity for the audience to experience the sculptures in their own spaces.

On the other hand, apart from my traditional sculpture production, I also work in the field of new media art. Thanks to these new technologies, in addition to working on new forms of expression in traditional sculpture, I also create pieces in areas such as digital human platforms, artificial intelligence and CGI in general. And I think these two different production methods feed each other.

What sorts of opportunities will this platform create for your gallery? Do you think the future of the arts could shift towards the use of digital applications?

JDM: I truly think it is a good addition, and it is perfect for the time being. But as a gallerist and an art lover, I believe nothing is better than seeing and feeling the work in person. Especially with bronze, because you want to touch and see the texture in real life.

Our collectors trust us, and we have a strong reputation worldwide. We can make them feel the art through this magical new platform. For that reason, I would say digital platforms certainly could be the future for distributing and engaging with the arts, but I wouldn't say it will be the only way to experience art.

As an artist, you are actively using these technologies in your work. Do you think they will be used more often in the future, to connect artists and collectors?

H.Ş.: Exactly. It is a fact that people perceive and interpret events from where they are. However, our vision is like an ant perceiving an elephant in the face of developing technology. Our generation was not born into these technologies. When I was born, there were no smart phones, no internet, and although I was part of the generation that built the culture, I learned these things later. However, there comes a generation that has been in a relationship with technology since the day they were born. Their physical-virtual perception and way of experiencing life will be completely different. In short, as collections pass on to this generation, the way of experiencing art will also change and the possibilities of technology will be used more.



By Emin Mahir
Balcioğlu

Art In the Time of COVID-19

Since last spring, a period marked by the confinement of our movements, our social lives, and of being stuck at home, I often wondered if Gabriel Garcia Marquez would have been tempted to write a sequel to his novel, had he been alive. In this awkward period that has compelled us to adapt to peculiar circumstances, we seem to have passed a daunting test in order to keep our sanity in place (at least the majority of us). Nevertheless, as subtle alterations to our own patterns of behavior emerged, it was impossible to ignore them. Especially in our emotional lives, the often overly close relationships with our loved ones tested the limits of our patience. Yet it also led to the opportunity to close certain gaps and mend alienating situations for some time, giving the necessary time to overcome conflicting positions, and to come to terms with our differences and ever-brewing discords. Love in the time of COVID-19 was indeed a challenging prospect, but perhaps one of reconciliation, too.

During these difficult times, it was impossible to ignore that only Art has the capacity to embrace us and protect our souls from sliding into oblivion. It mends our feelings, restores our minds, teaches us to love and to be loved again. While we were all stuck in our homes it was Art, in its diverse and enriching manifestations, that kept us sane. We may have preferred listening to music or reading a book, or watching films or even a TV series through our screens. These objects became the windows that connected us to the rest of the world. Others went further, and engaged in creative activities on their own, whether this was indulging in handicrafts or some form of visual arts, or singing operas at the windowsill for the benefit of neighbors. Time was a luxury which we were deprived of before the lockdowns, and now we had plenty of it to spare for Art. This availability of time also gave us the opportunity to be more receptive to the subtleties that eluded us before, the connotations behind them becoming apparent. This augmented concentration span allotted to us, the luxury of taking advantage of being able to explore deeper into what we were observing, was perhaps a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity granted to us.

It should not be construed from this that the lockdown was a good thing. On the contrary, it destroyed so many valuable aspects of life, the scars of which will take years to mend. But from the perspective of an artistic experience, and regardless of the deprivations of not being able to see a live performance or an exhibition in-situ or to visit a museum, the home experience was a unique and compelling episode in our lives. Hopefully, it was not one to be repeated, but nevertheless to reminisce about in the coming years.

But how did artists themselves live this experience? How did they cope with the limitations, how was their creativity affected by the severe constraints imposed upon them? This is a question that transcends the individual artist and covers a wide spectrum of human endeavors that we call the creative industries. The shooting of films and TV series were suspended, as were art fairs and exhibitions. Museums closed down worldwide, further aggravating their already dire financial situations. People living off of their creativity in other sectors such as advertising suffered too. But going back to the individual artists working alone, transferring their creative impulses from their heart and brain to

the outside world through their artistic production, how did they come to terms with this new environment? It is true that throughout the centuries, artists worked alone in their studios or workshops. But they also needed to interact with society and with their environment, look for inspiration, be socially engaged, and share the joys and tribulations of men and women around them. So how did the artist function in this sterile ecosystem?

Before indulging in a plethora of theoretical analyses that sustain various claims that repression or any other form of constraint has a stimulating effect on the creativity of the artist, it would suffice to take stock of the fact that today's artists would hardly be able to exercise their creative work in a state of detachment from their subjects and objects. Indeed, it is all in the mind. Nevertheless, the artist navigates a social environment, within constructs that come together from a dialectical relationship between the inner world and the outside universe. This abrupt and at the same time severe shift in paradigms is a great challenge to overcome for anyone involved in creative activity. So how did they cope?

The majority of artists took advantage of the restraints by working in their studios, experimenting with new techniques and materials. Others re-evaluated their past work and explored new idioms. Others still transferred their state of mind into their creative work, chronicling the present time and its circumstances. Regardless of all the effort, it has been a very challenging time for all of them, irrespective of their different approaches for coping with the situation at hand.

A positive note on all of this experience may be the fact that once more, the human mind has proved to be extremely resilient. It is proficient at enduring such hardships and is also capable of transforming itself and adapting to the new realities. This period was also marked by taking stock of what had been done before and what is being done now.

The first wave has receded, and we are now battling a second surge with the threat of an all-out lockdown looming, or at least a certain degree of limitations. Today, we appear to be better equipped to face these challenges even if psychologically, there is still a certain degree of attrition to come to terms with. It is indeed sad to see how people began to get out of their shells, to celebrate their newfound freedoms before being faced with a new dark period of constraints imposed upon them. How artists will cope with this new reality has yet to be seen. Will they survive again, or will they succumb to the depressing conditions of an enclosure?

Hopefully, the second wave will not be as intense as the first one. But if there are any restrictions imposed upon us, and if we need to spend a considerable period of time at home again, let us go back to our screens and watch old films that we had forgotten or listen to memorable past performances by great artists. There is no better cure than watching a Bertolucci or Fellini film, or listening to Keith Jarrett or Chet Baker -- not to mention masters such as Yo Yo Ma, Maria Callas and Leyla Gencer. They are all on YouTube, a true Pandora's box, where you can also find interviews with great artists in every category. From pianists to painters, actors to ballerinas, they are all waiting for you to visit them. So let us all transform these difficult times into a celebration of the arts.

A Heartbreaking Realization

Will Theater Survive The Coronavirus?



Swan Lake Photo by Halie

Theater has been one of the hardest-hit sectors in the coronavirus pandemic. The question is: will it make it through?

By EYLEM EJDER

Theater is a live form of art realized by a group of people – performers and the audience – gathering in a certain place, at a certain time. The three components involved in this definition were interrupted by the pandemic. Because of social distancing rules and the lockdown, it was almost impossible to sustain a theatrical practice. This led practitioners to seek ways of coming together, to put emphasis on being in solidarity. In the case of Turkish theater, the influences of the pandemic can be seen in digital theater experiments, creating forms of solidarity through and within the field, and the legal struggles of theatrical producers and theater workers who were left in a precarious financial situation.

Theater in Turkey, as is the case everywhere else, began to change form during the pandemic. The world's leading theatrical communities have shared their performance archives online. Festivals went online. A large number of theater companies explored the possibilities of performing in a virtual environment. Despite the initial negative reactions against digital theater, and discussions questioning its agency, the possibilities of experiencing a place to be felt and experienced, the “here and now,” in the digital realm, were explored by many. The pandemic prompted actors to experience a series of new forms of storytelling to meet their audience. However, with the burden of economic problems heaped on top, the anxiety of making art turned into a struggle for survival. Life was completely suspended, but taxes, rents, and bills were not. Today, theater companies and venues are on the brink of collapse. Due to the pandemic, more than 2,000 theater workers were left unemployed. Although the Ministry of Culture said it would provide support to private

theaters that are deprived of government subsidies, theater producers say the support is project-oriented, and will not solve the root causes of their problems in the long run. In addition, many groups which are on the blacklist due to their tax debts, cannot benefit from the government subsidy.

There is another side of the coin. The economic crisis opened the way for a network of solidarity among theater companies. In May, a solidarity campaign called “100 Poems of Solidarity/Poetry, the Face of Solidarity” was initiated by theater artists to financially support theater workers. Like wise various theater workers and groups from different regions of Turkey who perhaps have never come together before, united under the initiative, “Let Our Theater Live” (Tiyatromuz Yaşasın). With the petition they initiated, more than 30,000 signatures were collected in the first four days. This action encouraged others involved in the field, as well as audiences, to establish new organizations in their regions and demand support from the state or their local authorities. Theater workers began to develop a “Theater Law” that would recognize professional legal rights. “The Theater Cooperative,” which set out with similar intentions, continues to strive for the rights of theater workers affected by the pandemic.

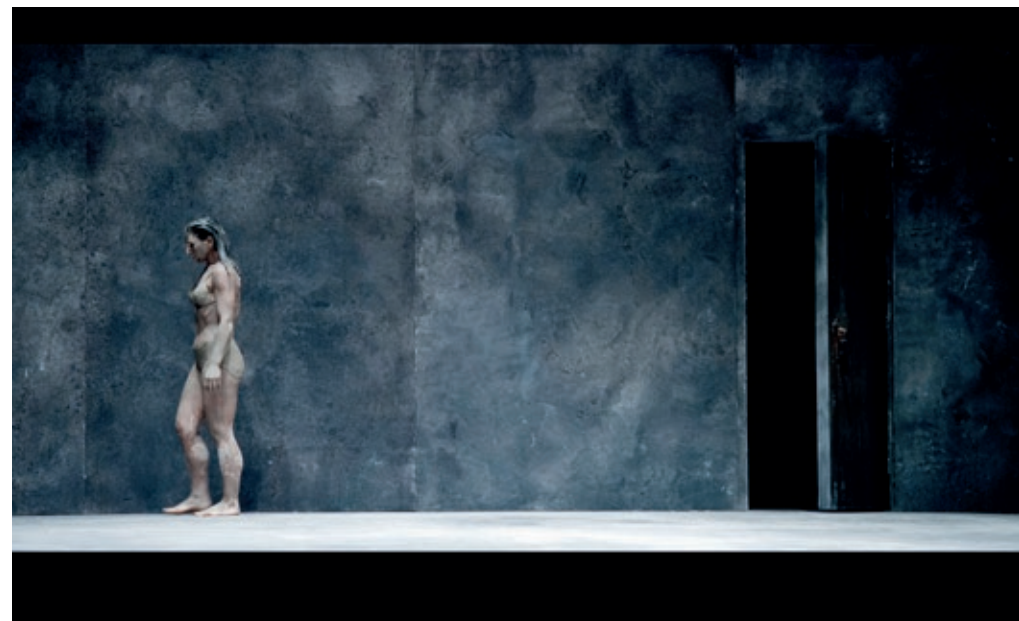
“Despite All Odds,” the 24th Istanbul Theater Festival A festival organized by the Istanbul Foundation for Culture and Arts (IKSV) began on November 14. The 24th edition of the annual festival brings several plays and performances to audiences worldwide.

The venues included DasDas, Fişekhane, the Moda Stage, the Zorlu PSM, the Harbiye Muhsin Ertuğrul Stage, Babylon, Yapı Kredi Bomontia-da, the Caddebostan Cultural Center, and Surp Vortvots Vorodman Church.

The 24th Istanbul Theater Festival's online program extends until the 28th of December. A total of 29 theater ensembles and dance troupes from Turkey and abroad continue to inspire audiences. The festival program is giving wide coverage to domestic productions this year, in an effort to alleviate the severe impact of the pandemic on the Turkish theater scene. Many of the online performances were produced especially for the digital platform. As it does every year, the festival also hosted free side events such as panels, workshops, interviews and reading theaters as a part of its Learning and Development Program. The festival's Honorary Awards were presented to dancer and choreographer Geyvan McMillen, director Işıl Kasapoğlu and Belgian director Ivo van Hove.

First held in 1989, the Istanbul Theater Festival is international event that brings the audience together with theater companies and dance groups from Turkey and abroad. Organized biennially after 2002, Istanbul Theater Festival returned to an annual cycle in 2017. Every year, the festival hosts carefully select companies and artists to open new horizons for both the audience and the art world by bringing national and international, classical and contemporary renditions to the stage through its unique lens.

So what observations do theater workers have regarding this process? What kind of a theater world awaits us in the new season, in which almost all festivals and performances will be held online? To what extent and how is this process questioned by the actors in the field? What are the suggestions offered by the theater practitioners for this crisis? Obviously, this process will lead to significant changes in the way we make and see theater. Although theater workers are faced with unemployment, the loss of income and business closures, this process may be an opportunity to invent new forms and languages unique to this time. With luck, they will help us grow, transform, and process these tough times. Below are the opinions of some of these theater professionals.



Dopo La Battaglia Photo by Lorenzo Porrazzini

Theater in 2020 is an oxymoron

Handan Salta Theater Critic

At first sight, theater in 2020 sounds very much like an oxymoron. After a long lockdown, the theater-related habits of both audiences and workers have changed. From the audience's perspective, this change could mean a long pause for real-time theater. However, for theater workers there must be a way to survive.

Being the only country in the world to ask for donations from its citizens rather than supporting its institutions, freelancers and artists, Turkey is not the brightest place for art to reside. Being left out, people found ways to make themselves visible, and started campaigns on Twitter. Their belated demands were expressed everywhere: “Let our theater live on, theaters should not pay taxes, there should be legislation regarding theaters”...

Under these circumstances, the theater met with its audience online. Flexible, open minded, practical theater people designed, figured out, performed and broadcasted their

digital performances. It seems that this will continue. Even the International Istanbul Theater Festival has put around seven performances in their program.

People from the theater world are also searching for ways to act in solidarity. There is a theater cooperative and an initiative, mostly for the theater groups in Istanbul. In Istanbul, the new mayor paved the way for another opportunity for solidarity with private theater companies by acquiring their plays. They will be performed in the City Theater's stages, scattered all around Istanbul.

Theater criticism is closely watching all of these developments. Both online and real-time shows are being reviewed, interviews are being made and there is an increase the online theater programs on YouTube. As for the subject matter of performances, one can observe the fruits of long-lasting inquiries; gender roles, polarization in society, and deep historic wounds are being carried to the stage.

Experimenting with digital

Aysel Yıldırım Performer, playwright, director

This interrupted theater season started with major emotional and financial damages for all of us. I recall some saying “it’s not time to desperately try to work and make theater, it’s time to mourn.” This felt like the acceptance that we – theater people – are useless in the face of a pandemic. Personally, from the first days, I could not submit to this idea of being useless and doing nothing. In fact, I couldn’t bear it! Because we are all human beings and everyone can make “something good” in times of a disaster -- at least for somebody, at least for herself. In that way, we are not useless.

So after the first shock, we started to get involved in the theater from our homes. Because we couldn’t come face to face with each other and with our audience, we started to meet and rehearse via Zoom. We produced for YouTube, IGTV and broadcasted our work on social media. Maybe for the first time in our artistic careers, we used the digital realm as a space for working and sharing. We experienced the first steps of making digital theater. Of course, we also had a very few, unique, much-longed-for moments of meeting with our audience, even if behind our masks. Those extraordinary moments reminded us how precious our art, and life, truly is.

Cancelling our theater productions was the most depressing option for us. So, we chose to find ways of coming together and progressing. We experienced how we can push the limits in a strictly limited space. So the digital media that we disliked at the beginning, procured for us a limitless arena for our minds and imaginations. These are the very first steps of course, but I believe they are promising.

First, we started to make something that we could never have thought of doing in the rush of our normal, everyday lives. With our newfound introversion and lack of better alternatives, we tried out new hobbies and crafts. We experienced acting in front of a smartphone camera. We wrote, performed, and edited for YouTube. We learned how to edit videos and film with software like Adobe Premiere, After Effects, and Photoshop. Normally, we never felt the need to do these things. We improved, and met with brilliant local and international artists. Even through digital means, we experienced the nourishing aspects of learning and gathering.

I believe that when we stopped running, we saw the face of the system in which we were living. Before, accepting the power of nature, women, children, equality, and our differences was a “must” or “homework” for us. Now, it’s a necessity.

Of course, we still work in an industry that is “closed,” “dismissed,” and “discarded” before any other. Theater is the ugly duckling of this system, especially in Turkey. We are deprived of meaningful support from the state or the private sector. Many theater workers had to close their houses/businesses, and went back to their family homes or took up other jobs like software coding or delivery driving. Some still try to stand upright, bear the COVID-19 restrictions and survive.

Against all odds, we take shelter in the support and solidarity with our audiences and our fellow friends. We try to be part of this humanitarian struggle, this health care rally. Meanwhile, we try to survive and to do our jobs in ways that we love.

Solidarity Is Something We Should All Strive For



Marvin Albert Carlson

A conversation with American theatrologist Marvin Carlson on theatre, in the midst of the pandemic.

By EYLEM EJDER

The pandemic has had a significant impact on the performing arts, mirroring its impact on all art sectors. Social distancing requirements and the closure of physical venues has curtailed not only public performances but also rehearsal. Many performing arts institutions attempted to adapt by offering new (or newly expanded) digital services. Theatre performances have been cancelled or delayed. Globally, there have been many coronavirus-related job losses in the theatre industry. Funding is a necessity if the creative arts industry is to survive. However, with budgets being tight across the world due to the pandemic, it is still unknown whether there will be enough money to save them all.

How was your experience at the beginning of the pandemic and lockdown?

At my last class, on Monday, March 13, I told my students that we might not meet again because there were rumors of school closings. When I returned to my office, I found a notice that indeed the school would close the next day. Since my wife and I have a second home in Ithaca, New York--about 200 miles from New York City--I quickly packed a suitcase and took a bus that evening to Ithaca, where I have been ever since. It is a much smaller town and we feel safer here.

How was and is the situation of theatre studies in New York? I remember that you usually attended performances at least five times a week, before the pandemic. You were also watching performances around the world. What was it like for you to be deprived of going to the theater?

The theaters in New York were closed on March 12, and are still closed. Being deprived of theater was almost as difficult for me as being deprived of social contacts. Not being able to travel has also been very difficult.

During the pandemic, digital theater is much discussed, because the theaters were closed due to social distancing rules. Some claimed that digital theater and the recording or live streaming of a show is not real theater. Some have already moved

their practices into online spaces. What do you think about this? How do you define digital theater, or theater’s relationship with digitalism?

I agree with people who feel that digital and live streaming is not real theater. There is no substitute for the live experience of actors and the audience in the same space. I think that digital materials, like film, can be used very effectively in live theater. The work of Castorf in Berlin is an excellent example, but digital performance, like film, remains something the theatre can use. But it will never replace theater. It is a different form. I usually see two or three digital Zoom performances each week, and one or two conventional films, but neither for me is a real substitute for live theater.

Can this crisis be a good time to think and experience the possibility of digital theater? I began to think about what new things the pandemic crisis can bring into theater. The first things that come to my mind are new forms of solidarity, accessibility, and experimentality.

Digital theater is still very young and trying to discover its own possibilities, like the early films. I think that like film, it can become an art form of its own. But like film, it will never replace theater.

We may also talk about theater and its crises through history. What can its history tell us today? What might be the new route of theater studies in such a changing landscape?

There has never been a crisis in theater like this one, which has closed theaters everywhere in the world. Even the closing of theaters after the fall of Rome did not affect theater life in China, India and elsewhere. Certainly major cultural changes—changes in technology, like printing or the discovery of electricity; changes in society, like the rise of the middle class or the rise of colonialism; or changes in belief systems; like the coming of Christianity, of Islam, of Darwinism or Marxism—will change the concerns of theater, as they have in the past. We cannot predict how the world will change, but we can be certain that its theater will respond to and reflect these changes.

With the pandemic, the conditions of making theater are changing, and many theater creators are struggling to make a living as the audience has a limited experience of digital theatre. In this context, I would like to talk about the role, or responsibility of theater criticism.

The role of the theater critic has always

been to help his readers better understand an experience. If digital theatre evolves into an ongoing and popular form, there is no question that critics will appear who will fulfill this need.

As a theater critic, do you see a difference between writing a live performance and the online sense of a (digital) play?

Of course, as I suggested before. I do not write film criticism because I have not been trained to do so. I do not have the historical or technical background or experience. The same is true of digital performance, which I consider a different art.

One of the things attracting my attention is the rising of protests again on the streets, even though we say “stay home.” The Black Lives Matter movement in the U.S., protests against the lockdowns, and rallies in Europe and Istanbul.

Protesting has been an important part of public life for decades, and has become more significant with the rise of social media and cell phones. I think this will continue, and it will probably increase as the virus comes under control during the next year or two.

Where is hope for the theater and for all of us? Is it enough to be in solidarity and to stand together?

We are social animals, and one of the great appeals of theater is to the social side of us. Working to create better understanding, communication, and solidarity is something we should all strive for, especially given the precariousness of any individual life on this earth.

ABOUT

Marvin Carlson, Professor of Theatre at the City University of New York Graduate Center is the author of many articles on theatrical theory and European theatre history, and dramatic literature. He is the 1994 recipient of the George Jean Nathan Award for dramatic criticism and the 1999 recipient of the American Society for Theatre Research Distinguished Scholar Award. His book *The Haunted Stage: The Theatre as Memory Machine*, which came out from University of Michigan Press in 2001, received the Callaway Prize. In 2005 he received an honorary doctorate from the University of Athens. His most recent book is *Theatre & Islam* Macmillan, Red Globe, 2019.



Fusions and Some Confusions – Dimo Milev / NDT2 Dari to Say Joris Jan Bos Photography

Cultivating forms of resistance

Onur Karaoğlu Performer, playwright, and director

Obviously, making theater in Turkey has become more difficult in 2020, but it has always been a tough job. At the moment, all theater artists, except those affiliated with subsidized institutions, feel an immense insecurity for the futures of their careers and their lives in the theater. Many theater people work in other jobs, and their years-long efforts to build an audience will be lost if we cannot go back to the former system of this practice. When there is no institutionalized support for the theater industry, the only thing we can do is find and cultivate different forms of resistance. The Theater Cooperative, Actors’ Union and several local networks are trying to suggest and organize plans and public actions. However, we know that these attempts will not lead to improvements in the short term. While we are in this situation, maybe through a naive optimism we can try to rethink our working methodologies. To do this, in the

days when face-to-face interactions are constantly being re-defined, existing production facilitators such as festivals and sponsors should support artists and organizations looking for new practices for human interaction in different areas, such as digital. Theater people are trained to research different forms of being human through their imagination. Under these new conditions, questions like, “What sort of humans are we going to be? How will our relationships with the world and one another be reformatted?” can be explored and experimented through theatrical practices. While 2020 is constantly teaching us new lessons, theater makers can guide us through their practices by exploring their experiences of being human in unexpected conditions. This can only be possible by going in the direction of researching and supporting the invention of a new concept of dramaturgy in theater.

A Brief History Of 2020, In Film

By EMRE EMİNOĞLU
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How it started...

In the first days of the new decade, theaters opened with the final chapter of the iconic trilogy, **Star Wars: The Rise of Skywalker**, Sam Mendes' one-shot war drama **1917**, and Greta Gerwig's period drama **Little Women**. On February 9th, history was made at the 92nd Academy Awards as **Parasite** won Best Picture. Bong Joon-ho's exciting and surprising satire not only brought South Korea its first Oscar for Best International Feature, but the film also won Best Director and Best Original Screenplay. Most importantly, the Best Picture win made **Parasite** the first film in a language other than English to accept the honor. The tiny, up-and-coming film distributor Neon and its successful Oscar campaign for **Parasite**, buoyed by charming acceptance speeches by director Bong's, proved that it was possible for an international feature to succeed in the U.S. Maybe, things are changing. Later in the month, Berlinale brought together an international crowd of stars, filmmakers, industry professionals, press and cinephiles. At the time, nobody knew these kinds of gatherings would soon become impossible for a significant amount of time.

... and how it's going.

Going in to March 2020, the entire world started transforming. The pandemic changed how we lived, how we consumed films and television, and how a huge industry worked. Film festivals were postponed or cancelled, including the Cannes Film Festival, the most prestigious of the bunch. Later on, entirely new ways of experiencing film festivals emerged, right from our living rooms and cars. Many summer and fall festivals switched their activities to online platforms, or built drive-in movie theaters. Winter releases bypassed the theater experience to premiere online; using VOD, Netflix, Hulu and Amazon Prime Video, or choosing newcomers like Disney+, Apple TV+ and HBO Max. It was a catastrophic year for the production and distribution of films, but an exciting one for digital platforms. Everyone was home, hungry for new content to watch. Many of key organizations and events postponed the dates on their awards timelines, shifting the awards season forward as far as April 2021. Rules changed, and new rules were written, embracing digital content and pardoning the latecomers. 2020 was the year of no Cannes, no summer blockbusters, no MARVEL films, and the strangest box-office list.

Box-office is irrelevant

Who would say that box office king Christopher Nolan's highly anticipated new feature, **Tenet**, would not be among the ten highest grossing domestic releases in the U.S.? Who would say **Bad Boys for Life** or **Sonic the Hedgehog** would be more successful at the box-office than it was? Well, this is the case. In an extraordinary year, box-office data became irrelevant. Globally, theaters were shut down for a significant portion of the year. During the first quarter of 2020, when COVID-19 was just a headline in international newspapers and life in unaffected countries continued normally, a few releases were lucky enough to attract a mediocre amount of audiences to top the box-office lists. Those were the last installment of the Sony Pictures Entertainment's action-comedy franchise **Bad Boys for Life** (\$204M in the U.S. and \$206M globally) and Paramount Pictures' **Sonic the Hedgehog** (\$146M in the U.S.). Warner Bros.' **Tenet**, which was initially planned for a global release on July 17th with IMAX, was postponed multiple times. Instead, it was released on Sept. 3, in a limited number of theaters and grossing much less than expected -- just \$46M in the U.S. and \$56M globally. In these unusual conditions, this is a predictable, yet unexpectedly dramatic fall from Nolan's previous film, **Dunkirk** (2017). The WWII epic grossed more than \$50M over its opening weekend and reached \$190M in the U.S. and \$527M globally.

A lesson learned: This was not a year to release a blockbuster.

After **Tenet**'s disappointing box-office numbers, and an inevitable second wave of the pandemic in sight, many blockbusters with a fourth quarter release are postponing opening weekend until 2021. Despite running ads for more than a year, with an initial release date as early as April 2020, Daniel Craig's last performance as James Bond in the 007 franchise, **No Time to Die**, was first postponed to November 2020 and is now expected to open in 2021. MARVEL Studios, which planned to launch the Marvel Cinematic Universe's (MCU) new phase with **Black Widow** and **Eternals** this year, announced there will be no MCU films in 2020, pushing both titles to 2021. The sci-fi drama adapted from the acclaimed Frank Herbert novel, **Dune** by Denis Villeneuve; and Steven Spielberg's remake of the famous musical **West Side Story** were



Ma Rainey's Black Bottom (2020, George C. Wolfe)



Mank (2020, David Fincher)



Minari (2020, Lee Isaac Chung)



One Night in Miami (2020, Regina King)



The Trial of the Chicago 7 (2020, Aaron Sorkin)

expected to open in theaters for the holiday season, only to be postponed as well. Other titles we will not be seeing this year include **A Quiet Place Part II**, **Candyman**, **Death on the Nile**, **F9**, **Godzilla vs. Kong**, and **The King's Man**.

2020 titles to keep an eye on...

In the absence of blockbusters, and with more time to dig in to VOD and streaming options, many independent films have found a different and wider audience. Withdrawal of billion-dollar productions from the awards race does not necessarily mean that 2020 was an idle year for film. Many independent films (and a few big-budget ones) made their premieres in the autumn film-festivals that were held online or with a limited audience. Many of those titles will be available online through December 2020 and the first quarter of 2021. Due to a shifted awards season timeline, it is quite early to make a best-of-the-year list, yet these titles (some of which we have already seen online) are worth your attention.

Kelly Reichardt's latest, **First Cow**, is a story set in 18th century Oregon, telling the story of two friends and business partners as the first cow arrives in the state. This sweetly becomes a tool to criticize American colonialism. Premiered in Berlinale, **First Cow** collected the most nominations in the season's first notable awards list, the IFP's Gotham Awards.

Spike Lee's Netflix original film **Da 5 Bloods**, an unconventional Vietnam war film, brings back four old friends who fought side by side in Vietnam to find the remnants of their friend and a treasure they hid together. Spike Lee's film was made available for streaming while the Black Lives Matter protests took to the streets of many U.S. cities following the death of George Floyd.

Although criticized for confusing the audience and shaken by negative reviews and unsuccessful box-office numbers, **Christopher Nolan**'s **Tenet**, a breathtaking action film with a different interpretation of time, featured the year's best technical achievements.

In highly-acclaimed screenwriter **Aaron Sorkin**'s second-time as a director, the Netflix original **The Trial of the Chicago 7** depicts the historically unjust trial of the Chicago Seven. Of the film's starring ensemble, **Yahya Abdul-Mateen II**, **Eddie Redmayne**, **Sacha Baron-Cohen**, and **Mark Rylance** are the MVPs.

Chloé Zhao's **Nomadland** is an outstanding performance by Frances McDormand, telling the story of a modern-day nomad on the West Coast. **Nomadland** became the first film to ever win the biggest prizes of two major festivals: the Venice Film Festival's Golden Lion and the Toronto Film Festival's Audience Award. If nominated for the Academy Awards, **Chloé Zhao** will be the first female director of Asian descent up for the director's honor.

Recent Oscar- and Emmy-winning actress **Regina King**'s debut feature **One Night in Miami**, is the story of a fictional night in 1964's Miami, bringing together four icons to discuss their impact on the civil rights movement and the country's cultural upheaval: Muhammad Ali, Malcolm X, Sam Cooke, and Jim Brown. If nominated, **Regina King** will be the first Black female director up for the honor at the Academy Awards.

Based on August Wilson's Pulitzer winning play, **George C. Wolfe**'s Netflix original, **Ma Rainey's Black Bottom**, takes the audience to 1927's Chicago. At a recording session, tensions are high between "Mother of the Blues" Ma Rainey, her ambitious horn player, and the white management. Featuring the late Chadwick Boseman and Viola Davis, the film is predicted to bring Boseman many posthumous awards and nominations.

David Fincher's black and white Hollywood drama **Mank** the most anticipated Netflix production of the year. The film follows the rivalry between screenwriter Herman J. Mankiewicz (Gary Oldman) and the iconic director Orson Welles during the production of **Citizen Kane**.

Lee Isaac Chung's Grand Jury Prize winner at the Sundance Film Festival, **Minari**, is the story of a Korean family that moves to Arkansas to start a farm in the 1980s.

Florian Zeller's **The Father**, adapted from his stage play of the same name, is about a man refusing all assistance from his daughter as he ages, while he becomes a victim of his own mind. Bringing together Olivia Colman and Anthony Hopkins, the film is said to have two of the year's best performances.

Some notable animated feature films of the year include Pixar's **Onward**, about the journey of two elf brothers, and an Irish animation by Apple TV+ called **Wolfwalkers**. Pixar's **Soul** tells the story of a musician who loses his soul. Some notable documentary feature films of the year are the political documentary **Boys State**, Apple TV+'s prize winner at Sundance Film Festival; **Dick Johnson Is Dead**, **Kirsten Johnson**'s heart-warming Netflix documentary about her father; and **Alex Gibney**'s **Totally Under Control**, which focuses on the U.S. government's mishandling of the COVID-19 outbreak.

Hope, Dystopia And Ghosts Turkish Cinema In 2020

By EMRE EMİNOĞLU
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The last decade was full of successes for Turkish cinema. It began with Semih Kaplanoğlu's Golden Bear win at the 60th Berlin International Film Festival with *Honey* (2010), his latest installment of the *Yusuf Trilogy*. The achievements of Turkish filmmakers continued to make the headlines through the 2010s. Nuri Bilge Ceylan, arguably the most well-known Turkish filmmaker, continued his Cannes journey by adding a Grand Prize of the Jury for *Once Upon a Time in Anatolia* (2011) and a Palme d'or for *Winter Sleep* (2014). Tolga Karaçelik's *Butterflies* (2018) became the first Turkish film to win the World Cinema Dramatic Grand Jury Prize at the Sundance Film Festival, another notable achievement. Many Turkish productions and co-productions received awards across the Europe, the Americas and Asia, while many emerging directors attracted an international audience in the festival world. In 2020, many festivals around the world featured and awarded Turkish productions, despite the pandemic making it a challenging year for cinema globally.

2020: An exciting year for urban stories For years, Turkish independent cinema makers and screenwriters have been stuck in a rut with films depicting the provincial and rural Anatolia. Often, directors try to evoke the audience's empathy for the characters, but resort to exoticism or even orientalism to make their case. During the 2010s, some directors started telling familiar, relatable, and well-written stories of urban people in their films; such as Deniz Akçay's *Nobody's Home* (2013), Pelin Esmer's *Something Useful* (2017), Kivanç Sezer's *La Belle Indifference* (2019) and Emre Yeksan's *The Gulf* (2017). This year, it seems, is another exciting year for urban stories. Although postponed by weeks or even months, and largely offering online screenings, the most prominent film festivals across Turkey moved on successfully in this strange year. The Istanbul Film Festival, which was delayed by three months, carried its National Competition online with an exclusive digital platform from the Istanbul Foundation of Culture and Arts' (İKSV). The Golden Tulip award for Best Film was presented to Ümit Ünal's *Love, Spell and All That*. It is a story of two women, once passionately in love, who come together a year later to break a spell one of them cast on the other out of desperation. In Ankara, *Not Knowing* by Leyla Yılmaz won the top prize. A successful student and athlete, Umur, disappears after being bullied by his teammates for refusing to answer whether or not he is gay. These are two urban stories that discover the weaknesses and hypocrisies of an educated and intellectual middle class, with strong queer characters who may be heralding a change in Turkish cinema. The Antalya Film Festival chose to go forward with socially distanced physical screenings, like its counterpart in Ankara, and awarded the Golden Orange for Best Film to Azra Deniz Okyay's *Ghosts*. Already a festival favorite after its recent achievement in Venice, *Ghosts* tells the intersecting stories of four people during a power shortage in Istanbul. The Adana and Ayvalık Film Festivals also borrowed İKSV's platform to reach a wider audience during the pandemic, while Adana chose to hold additional physical screenings. Ümit Ünal won the Best Director of the Year, the sole prize at Ayvalık with *Love, Spell and All That*, while Ercan Kesal's *You Know Him* was awarded with the Golden Boll prize for Best Film in Adana. An acclaimed author, screenwriter and actor with a background in medicine, Kesal's debut feature with its exhausting bureaucracy, tragicomic chain of events and desperate yet hopeful characters, is reminiscent of the Romanian New Wave and Armando Iannucci films. Kesal also leads the cast as a possible political nominee, trying to get the official nomination.

Some other notable films at this year's international festivals were Nisan Dağ's *When I'm Done Dying*, Azra Deniz Okyay's *Ghosts*, Erdem Tepegöz's *In the Shadows* and Deniz Tortum's *Phases of Matter* - all featured on this page. Another achievement of the year was by Burak Çevik, whose latest film *While Cursed by Specters*, a ten-minute meditation on *Klassenhältnisse*, was picked for the Currents section of the 58th New York Film Festival.



When I'm Done Dying by Nisan Dağ

Bir Nefes Daha / When I'm Done Dying (2020, Nisan Dağ)

"Her şey çok güzel olacak." The phrase is repeated in a catchy rap song that appears in Nisan Dağ's *When I'm Done Dying*: "Everything will great." This motto reminds the viewer of a very recent election campaign in Istanbul, resulting in the victory of an opposition candidate, which gave hope to many Istanbulites for the future - especially the young ones. In Karaçınar, a fictional slum of Istanbul, the reason many young people are passionately devoted to rapping is that the same word - hope. A nineteen-year-old rapper from Karaçınar, Fehmi, is torn between hope and despair; he is an excellent rapper but also a hopeless

addict to bonzai, a cheap and deadly drug. When he meets the twenty-something female DJ, Devin, the pair sail into a passionate relationship. He finds success in rap with Devin's help, but when he tries to kick his addiction in return for her help, he collapses. With beautiful and original rap songs by Da Poet, dream-like animated segments and strong performances by the two lead actors, *When I'm Done Dying* reminds us of the struggle of young people with addiction and why hope matters. *When I'm Done Dying* recently had its world premiere and won the Best Director award at the 24th Tallinn Black Nights Film Festival.

In the Shadows by Erdem Tepegöz

In an industrial system where there is no chief or boss, but only cameras and loudspeakers, Zait advises a newcomer: "Do not break the order, do not get sick, do your job. Get your water, get your meal, do not stand out, do not interfere." In this timeless dystopia with primitive technology and an omnipresent surveillance system, Zait is one of many mine workers who simply do their jobs. He thinks everybody is a newcomer until they are gone, and the system proves him right when he experiences strange things that he has never seen before: A broken machine, a mysterious disease, a strange sound coming from the pipeline, a skipped meal package and unattached cameras... He begins doubting the system and starts questioning, only to find himself in war with this monster with a thousand heads. Erdem Tepegöz's *In the Shadows* may be pointing to a trend in contemporary Turkish cinema, following Orçun Behram's *The Antenna*. Behram's work is another Turkish dystopia, which premiered in Toronto International Film Festival last year. It is equally gloomy, disturbing, profound and allegorical. But just as in Behram's work, the technical achievements (Hayk Kirakosyan's cinematography and the astounding art direction) outshine the director and his script. After its world premiere at the 42nd Moscow International Film Festival, where it was awarded with the Special Jury Prize Silver St. George, *In the Shadows* won multiple prizes at the Antalya and Bosphorus festivals in Turkey, and will continue its journey in Germany, the Czech Republic and Scotland in the following months.



Gölgeler İçinde / In the Shadows (2020, Erdem Tepegöz)

Ghosts by Azra Deniz Okyay

Ghosts is perhaps the best Turkish feature of the year, and the proof is in its collection of national and international awards over just two months. Right after its premiere at the Venice Film Festival, Azra Deniz Okyay's film received the International Critics' Week Award. Multiple awards followed, including the Antalya Film Festival's top prize, the Golden Orange. Finally, the film received the Human Values Award and the WIFT Award at the Thessaloniki International Film Festival, honors that are presented to a film made with humanity's best values in mind, and a film by a female filmmaker. *Ghosts* is still a mystery for those of us who were not able to make it to Venice or Antalya this fall, but the story is set across a single day during



Maddenin Halleri / Phases of Matter (2020, Deniz Tortum)

Phases of Matter by Deniz Tortum

The four phases of matter, as we all learned in science class, are solid, liquid, gas, and plasma. Unlike the title suggests, Deniz Tortum's subject is not the phases of matter, it is a story of what it means to be human. In an enormous human laboratory placed in one of the oldest and biggest hospitals in the middle of Istanbul, he lists the phases of human: Healthy, sick, and dead. Conscious and unconscious, perhaps - or doctor and patient. In a year that we truly understood the value of health care professionals, the documentary *Phases of Matter* looks at the lives of doctors, nurses and hospital workers through the different phases of matter and human life. Seeing someone laugh, joke, grumble or even be scolded at, makes them more human. Seeing the blood, the gore and the body parts, feeling the tension and pressure, makes the calm moments more relatable. And in fact, seeing the corners of a hospital that one would never see in health, kills one's curiosity. In whatever way you list the phases of a human, this is a place where all phases exist simultaneously in a gory and tense harmony. As the hospital imam says, it is all a matter of perspective! Deniz Tortum's documentary, after being called the Best Documentary Feature at both the Istanbul and Antalya festivals, and Best Film at the Accessible Film Festival, made its U.S. premiere at the Imagine Science Film Festival in New York, where it was awarded the Labocine Special Mention.



Hayaletler / Ghosts (2020, Azra Deniz Okyay)

a power shortage, following the intersecting stories of four different characters in the ghettos of the city.

What's New? News On Movies & TV

TURKEY PICKS MIRACLE IN CELL NO.7 FOR THE OSCARS

The list of submissions to the 93rd Academy Awards for Best International Feature keeps growing as the Academy's deadline approaches. By the third week of November, more than sixty countries, including first-timers Lesotho, Sudan, and Suriname, have made their official submissions. Among the contenders are Denmark's *Another Round*, Greece's *Apples*, Guatemala's *La Llorona*, Ivory Coast's *Night of the Kings*, Poland's *Never Gonna Snow Again*, and Spain's *The Endless Trench*. The Artistic Events Commission, under the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of Turkey, announced Turkey's submission on Nov. 10: *Miracle in Cell No.7* by Mehmet Ada Öztekin. The work is a remake of the South Korean film of the same title. The film tells the story of a man in prison, waiting for a miracle to happen. The character has been wrongfully accused of murder, and longs to meet his daughter. Before nominations are announced on March 15, a shortlist of ten features will be unveiled on February 9.

THE AWARDS SEASON IS ON

Although most of the key awards organizations of the season were postponed to spring due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the awards season had a quiet start with two recent announcements. 33rd European Film Awards nominations were led by three features with four nominations each: *Another Round*, the latest collaboration of Thomas Vinterberg and Mads Mikkelsen, *Corpus Christi*, last year's Oscar nominee from Poland, and *Martin Eden*, the Italian adaptation of the Jack London novel. A virtual ceremony will take place on December 12th to name the winners, broadcast and streamed from Berlin. On the other side of the Atlantic, Independent Film Project's Gotham Awards were led by *First Cow* and for the first time, all five nominees for Best Feature are by female filmmakers: *The Assistant* by Kitty Green, *First Cow* by Kelly Reichardt, *Never Rarely Sometimes Always* by Eliza Hittman, *Nomadland* by Chloé Zhao, and *Relic* by Natalie Erika James.

A SELF-RECKONING IN BERLIN

After suspending its Silver Bear Alfred Bauer Prize in 2020 due to revelations that the award's founding director and namesake Alfred Bauer was an active, high-ranking Nazi involved in Hitler's propaganda ministry, the award's current organizers decided to discontinue the award in August. Berlinale conducted a historical study on the matter with the evaluation of an external specialist. The study of the Leibniz Institute for Contemporary History, commissioned by the Berlin International Film Festival, confirmed that Bauer's role in the Reichsfilmintendantz (the steering body of National Socialist film policy) was more significant than previously known, and was systematically covered up by him after 1945.

NETFLIX TURKEY: FULL THROTTLE

Ethos, the Netflix original mini-series by Berkun Oya that wowed the audience and was collectively praised on social media, seems to be just the beginning. Netflix announced on Oct. 20 that it is ramping up its investment in Turkey with exhilarating new projects. Five of these have already completed production and are waiting for their release in the following months: *Leyla Everlasting*, a film by Ezel Akay starring Haluk Bilginer and Demet Akbağ (Dec. 4), *Azizler*, a film by the Taylan Brothers starring Engin Günaydin, Haluk Bilginer and Binnur Kaya (Jan. 8), *Struggle Alley*, a film by Can Ulkay starring Çağatay Ulusoy (March 15), and two new original series, *Fatma* and *50m2*.

GENDER-NEUTRAL IS A NO-GO FOR MALATYA

Initially scheduled to kick off on Dec. 1, the 10th International Malatya Film Festival announced its decision on social media to cancel the event. Although COVID-19 measures were also a factor in the decision, the Malatya Metropolitan Municipality clearly stated that the main reason for the cancellation was the public reaction following the festival's latest press release. Entitled, "10th International Malatya Film Festival will award the first gender-neutral acting prize in Turkey," the release caused an uproar, with critics saying the gender-neutral prize was "against the moral and traditional values of the society." A few months ago, Berlinale decided not to separate their awards in the acting field according to gender, in an effort to "signal for a more gender-sensitive awareness in the film industry." The move influenced other festivals in cities around the world. Apparently, Malatya will not be among them.

A Year Under The Pandemic's Shadow

Design and architecture, like every other field, has been affected by the pandemic on a global scale. We spoke with architect, urbanist, researcher and curator Ippolito Pestellini Laparelli about what happened this year, and how to make sense of our new normal...

By BAHAR TURKAY

After a career as an architect, later joining the OMA architecture studio founded by Rem Koolhaas as a partner, Ippolito Pestellini Laparelli has established 2050+, his own interdisciplinary studio in the city of Milan this year. He continues teaching at the Royal College of Arts in London. He was also a committee member for the Pavilion of Turkey at the Venice Architecture Biennale / 17th International Architecture Exhibition, La Biennale di Venezia.

This year Ippolito curated the Russian Federation Pavilion at the Venice Architecture Biennale, which has been postponed to May 2021, and ran an entirely online program functioning as an editorial and research project. Additionally a video project by 2050+, named 'Riders not Heroes', is a short video essay investigating the precarious conditions of food delivery workers in Milan. The piece received a lot of attention from the design and architecture community.

How would you define the moment we are living in?

If I have to use a word, I would use 'suspension.' In a way we are trying to deal with this global crisis but we are also on 'stand by mode'. What is worth considering is this notion of going back to normality, which was not fine at all. It is exactly the system that puts this crisis into being. So I just hope that this crisis will steer some thinking about those structural issues that we are put into. I am also concerned that many people are overwhelmed by this situation. It's something that is too big to describe and that is why there is a lot of waiting, in a way.

During the pandemic, we are all confused about the causes and consequences. But it is crucial to be aware of the real causes in order to be realistic about possible results. What do you think?

The virus comes as a consequence of our extractive and violent relationship with the planet, the constant and permanent erosion of wildlife and biodiversity. It is quite crucial to reframe our system of production. We need to look beyond anthropocentric perspectives and start thinking that we are not alone here. We need to find different or productive

ways to coexist with things other than human agents.

A new and localized way to look at technology, supply chains, distribution and production is emerging. Consequences will also deal with scale. We need to start looking back into cities, countries or regions as a collection of interconnected smaller communities which are then intertwined on a planetary level, and that can be sustained within closer networks.

How do you think the design and architecture industries are responding to emergency conditions, considering the actions taken in these fields during the pandemic?

I was very disappointed (and sad) during the first lockdown while browsing through architectural and design websites; seeing these kinds of projects that are made for pandemic-like design products, for new masks, separation tables, gloves, etc. In a way this is exactly the neoliberal kind of logic that brought us to this crisis.

On the other hand, there are important initiatives such as the biennial curated by Mariana (Pestana) - the 5th Istanbul Design Biennial held this year - that are looking at a different dimension, design as a tool for community making, to understand and nurture the places and the planet we inhabit. To reconnect, to go beyond the logic of mass production and mass distribution. So there is this tension between the market and more speculative and yet much more realistic operations, which is very vivid.

This morning I was looking for the symposium organized by Princeton University and e-flux, on 'sick architecture'. Architectural biosecurity is an incredible topic that will definitely reshape the system of hospitals and medical care around the world.

This year we are rethinking the meaning of home, distance, environment, control, empathy, nature, climate... How will the 'new meanings' shape the future of architecture?

There is a space for architecture to enter domains which were not familiar to architects before. That is very necessary. Obviously all works made

in the countryside proved the need for architects to project their thinking onto something that is dominated by engineers and technical approaches.

In order to do that though, there is a need for a huge pedagogical transformation. Schools need to start thinking in different ways, to shape programs that trespass the disciplinary boundaries. That is partially the mission of many initiatives that have been launched now.

'Riders Not Heroes!' is a short video essay that you, as 2050+, launched this year. It investigates the precarious conditions of food delivery workers in Milan. It is important to make a comprehensive reading on that subject at the intersection of social and economic matters. What is the main discourse here?

I'm personally interested in new forms of labor, and the way platform capitalism has been reshaping our cities in the past years. So the idea of the video was to explore the conditions of food delivery riders in Milan during the lockdown; lying at the intersection of platform capitalism, gig-labor, the refugee crises and COVID-19. During the first lockdown the world was brutally split into two categories of people. On one side, those who had the luxury to stay at home, and the other side, an army of invisible and essential workers who couldn't afford to stay at home. The only people you would see crossing the city were the riders working for tech platforms. They act as the last bits of a chain of automation, providing food through the interface of a mobile phone. The video essay documents the locked down city from the unique perspective of a rider, and it evolves into more political questions of precarious labor, automation and illegality.

We use this lens to unveil the mechanics of tech platforms, their often unfair conditions and connections to other forms of extreme exploitation. The film, for example, touches upon an investigation by local authorities into cases of gang mastering by platforms, which through the lockdown has regularly enrolled desperate undocumented migrants -- who are untraceable and therefore open to exploitation -- to run deliveries on phones owned by third parties. We interviewed several riders and many said that this is their only form of sustainment. In this context, platforms are not taking real responsibilities for the regulation of these new forms of labor. Their work is being regulated by artificial intelligence. They are stuck in a technological and bureaucratic void.

"Riders Not Heroes is part of a



This year a lot of events turned out to be digital and online under the current circumstances. The Open? programme of the Russian Federation Pavilion at the Venice Architecture Biennale was one of them.

work on the relationship between labor and technology which we have been developing since the Oslo Triennial in 2016. At that time, we did a fictional work called Panda that was looking into the impact of sharing platforms like Uber and Airbnb on our cities. Food delivery platforms are just the next chapter in this work.

This year you curated the Russian Federation Pavilion at the Venice Biennale 2020 and operated the programme themed as Open? How did you reshape the program due to pandemic and turn it into dialogue-based content?

It was not meant to be an online program at first. When the biennial officially announced that it would have to be postponed, we decided to migrate the entire program online. The overall idea of Open? was to investigate the public role of cultural institutions in times of global crisis, through different languages and media, such as cinema, music or video games. By transferring everything online, Open? turned from an exhibition into a sort of open-ended research and editorial platform. We had the chance to invite more curatorial perspectives, include other points of view and to even create chapters specifically developed for the website platform. For us it became very exciting, because it was a way to respond to the evolution of the crisis. For example, a few months ago we launched an entire video game on the platform, produced by Mikhail Maximov, a wonderful game designer and filmmaker from Russia. The game actually takes place at the Russian pavilion and the surrounding Giardini, in a dystopian post-pandemic scenario.

This year, a lot of events turned out to be digital and online under the current circumstances. And some events, like the 5th Istanbul Design Biennial supported long-term research projects based on collaboration and dialogue. How do you think this experience will evolve curatorial practice and the future of such platforms?

That is a big question! The most interesting impact of an event or a program is its potential in establishing a network of people participating. To me, curating is mostly about defining sites of encounters and dialogues, whether digital, physical or both. Curators need to set up the conditions to allow very inclusive dialogues to happen. It is impossible to understand this if you are looking at it from a strictly disciplinary perspective, because you are then neglecting the idea of complexity on one side and of inclusivity on the other.

I was recently in a debate on the

Venice Biennial. I was advocating the fact that the disciplinary division of the biennial doesn't make a lot of sense any longer, and that it is difficult now to trace a clean boundary between design, visual arts, science, performance, environment, etc. It is all part of one single cultural understanding. Disciplinary perspectives do have a meaning, but they do not necessarily correspond to what is happening in reality. To me, it is about exiting this fiction where everything is so clear and divided. In reality, everything is more complex, more blurred, more queer.

Research-based practices and expanding dialogue through an interdisciplinary approach requires a sincere and sustained effort. As 2050+, how are you turning your intention to do that into reality?

2050+ is a platform made up of architects and also non-architects. Our interest is working across our politics, environment, technology and obviously design. The biggest challenge to keep everything together is to find opportunities in the private or public market that allow us to continue our investigation in collaboration with our clients. We are trying to find affinities with potential clients that understand the value of an interdisciplinary approach and that are looking beyond the need of service design.

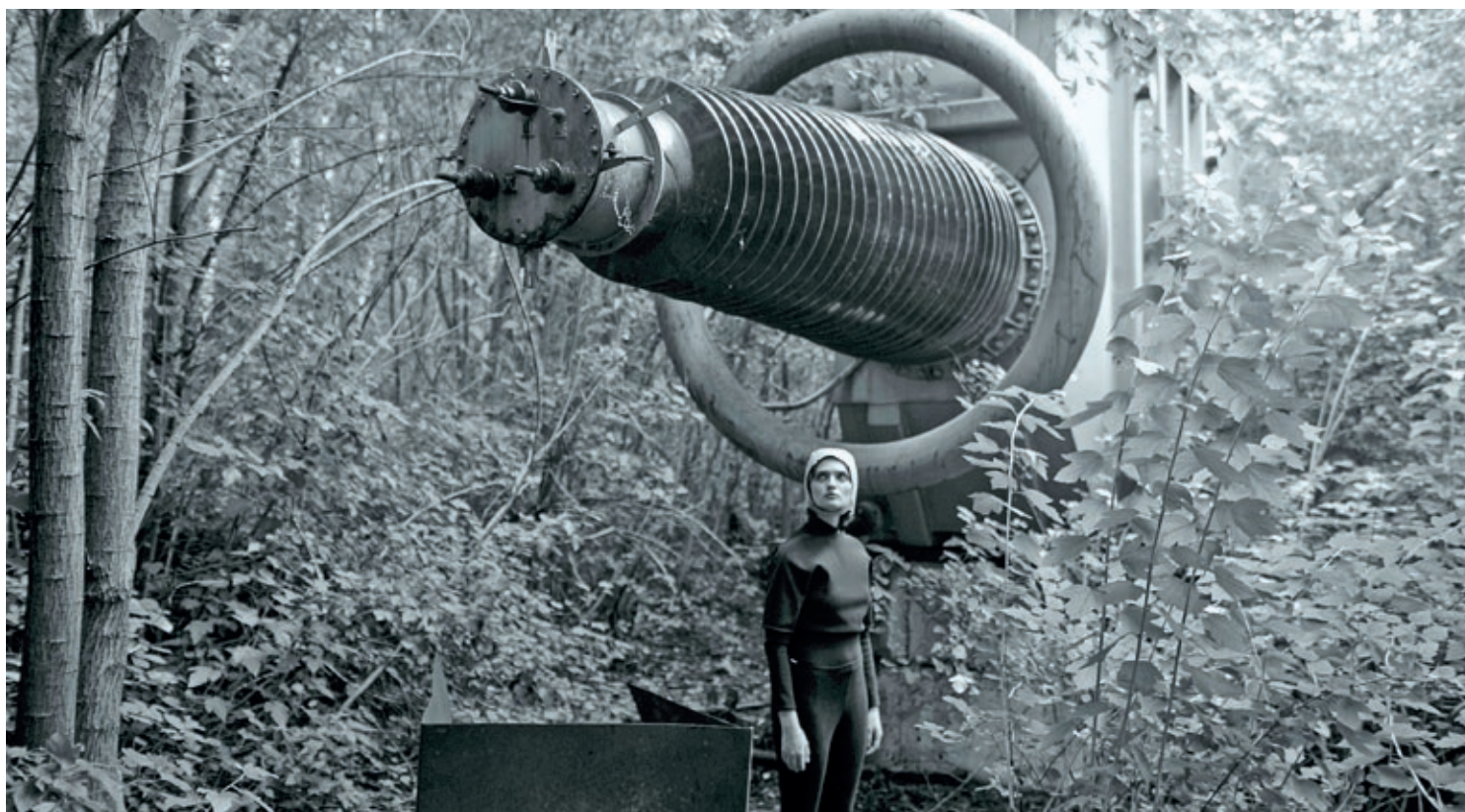
For instance, with Nike in Milan we have initiated the Nike Movement Lab initiative, a long-term research effort that looks at future trends of urban movement, expanding the definition of sports into body politics, self-expression, new ecologies, etc. The output of this work will turn into an editorial project. Instead of a design or architectural product, it was rather about engaging in a conversation about the need for their industry to change in order to be more political in the future.

What was the hot topic of this year's discussions with Ida?

The biggest effort that we had to make is to give her an impression of safety, that everything is fine and this is not the end of the world, although it is a very severe crisis. We tried to explain basically what the virus is, why it came to be, what we can do about it, etc.? We are dealing with reality but trying to create a zone of positiveness.

What is the 'big thing' is on your mind for next year?

We are thinking about launching a unit in our office that is fully dedicated to gaming and digital world making, which is something that we are currently researching at the Royal College of Arts with our studio.



The overall idea of Open?, transferred online, was to investigate the public role of cultural institutions in times of global crisis, through various kinds of inputs.



Soraia Gomes Teixeira's 'Public Devices for Therapy', originally placed at the Besiktas dock for the 5th Istanbul Design Biennial's 'New Civic Rituals' program, has moved permanently to Artists Park in Etiler. It opened to visitors on Nov. 20. Photo: Kayhan Kaygusuz

The devastation of a pandemic, and possibilities for new dialogues

Any evaluation of 2020 cannot be made independently of the pandemic. As in many fields, there are ongoing discussions in design and architecture about the causes, effects and probable consequences of COVID-19. Only some of the projects have focused on developing possible solutions—though the dialogue that has arisen through new media is still worth considering.

By **BAHAR TÜRKAY**

We owe the things we noticed, rethought and faced this year to an awareness gained through the global pandemic crisis. We have faced the consequences of our choices and decisions. We have learned what we cannot give up, what we make, produce and consume. Meanwhile, the no longer negligible existence of the massive environment outside of us that consists of human and non-human systems has shown us that we are not alone. It is debatable whether it was good for us to see this. On the contrary, it may have made us all feel guilty; individually and in the context of the evolutionary process.

Over time, different reactions emerged individually, socially, and professionally. We will see together what these responses become, whether they are long term or permanent, after a certain level of maturity.

Somewhere Between Speculation and Solution

The world of architecture and design has again sparked discussions with the rational solutions it has delivered, as well as speculations caused by certain projects. This time, of course, the pandemic was the center of discussion. Hygiene, mask use and social distancing rules, which are naturally and necessarily integrated with the epidemic, became a new frontier for applied design and architecture. While some of the projects presented a rational and practical approach in terms of functionality, some of them were on the compelling and speculative side.

One of the fields that quickly adapted to this process was the fashion industry. A jacket produced by the clothing brand Vollebak, known as the 'Full Metal Jacket', used copper, a material shown to kill viruses such as COVID-19 after a few hours of contact. It was among the more speculative designs.

Although some claimed that the germ protection feature would rapidly transfer to the clothing industry with this super-expensive product, the question of how broadly it would be taken up posed a thought-provoking discussion in terms of equal opportunities. Meanwhile, global fashion and textile brands commissioned their own teams and production units for fast and high-volume mask production. The first initiatives came from fashion designers Aslı Filinta and Zeynep Tosun in Turkey. In an interview about working during the pandemic, bio-designer Ece Gözen, who conducts innovative studies in the field of textile, shared studies gathered under the umbrella of biotechnology on alternative materials based on long-term observations in the fashion industry. Gözen stated that they could make a massive difference and provide rewarding results in times to come. (source: Vbenzeri.com)

Plot Twist

One project that made its mark in the sense of a "plot twist" this year was the exhibition, *Countryside, The Future* at the Guggenheim Museum. Visitors were welcomed into the museum entrance by a huge tractor and a cabin for growing tomatoes, lit pink. In a special interview with ArtDog Istanbul in April, exhibition co-organizer Samir Bantal, the director of the research unit AMO of Kooolhaas' OMA (Office of Metropolitan Architecture) made the following statements on the exhibition's content along with his co-organizer, architect Rem Koolhaas: "Today, our inability to find an interface through which to relate to nature is also what the Coronavirus has showed us: We lost touch with nature. We don't know how to deal with the boundaries between city and nature. This raises the question of how to interact with what we call the wild today. For this, we first need to redefine our relationship with it." These statements seem to have become even more meaningful within the course of the pandemic.

For the Ambiguous Standards Institute (ASI), one of the most striking projects among Turkey's plot-twisters, 2020 has been an exciting year. Studies of the Ambiguous Standards Institute were carried out by lecturers Cansu Cürgen, from Istanbul Bilgi University's Architecture Department, and Dr. Avşar Gürpınar of the Industrial Design Department of the same university, alongside other institution members. The vision of the institute is "to trace the roots of ambiguous standards in a given context, aiming for the accumulation of information and the local, national and global dissemination thereof. The institute pursues a delicate investigation of textual and visual representations of various exo-standard measurements, and takes them into the record."

The first comprehensive output of the institute's studies was an exhibition that took place at the 4th Istanbul Design Biennial in 2018. This exhibition aimed to open a discussion through objects, images and texts, in reference to topics such as food, uncodification, tunes, and electricity. The project was subsequently displayed at various exhibitions in France, Belgium and Israel. This year, the third edition of the *Franke/Herro Design Series*, organized by The Art Institute of Chicago, has been described as "an institute within an institute," an exhibition of the Ambiguous Standards Institute. The opening, which was delayed due to the pandemic, took place on November 21st. In this first solo exhibition, a total of 10 case studies were presented on the subjects of protest, travel, and health, in addition to previous research. "The exhibition audience is invited to consider the implications and shortcomings of our standardized world as it profoundly shapes our lived experiences,

the organizers wrote."¹

The Need for Dialogue

Another instance that made its mark this year were the events and meetings that couldn't be carried out due to the pandemic. In the meantime, design and architecture organizations sought to discover new ways to enrich and transform the ground of dialogue and discussion. Among the remarkable events of the year that brought the international design and architecture community together in digital formats were the Virtual Design Festival (April 15--June 30), the *Maison & Objet Digital Fair* (September 4--18), and the program titled *Open?*, at the Pavilion of Russian Federation at the 17th International Architecture Exhibition in Venice Biennale (postponed until May 2021). In addition, the broadcast of the Design Emergency platform, co-founded by MoMA's Architecture and Design Curator and Research and Development Director Paola Antonelli and design critic and writer Alice Rawsthorn, continues to gain traction. With a focus on pandemics and emergency design, the effort draws on the contributions of important actors from across the design and architecture related fields. The Istanbul Design Biennial also participated in the digital dialogues of creative industries. The biennial presented a podcast series called 'Design Biennial Talks,' sponsored by Vitra. The first part of the program, published on June 17 under the title 'Design Biennial Revisited,' was moderated by the people who have worked in the biennial team at different times. It included participants and curators of the previous editions; Zoe Ryan, Prem Krishnamurthy, Superpool, Orkan Telhan, Judith Seng, Camilo Oliveira, Murat Güvenç, Deniz Manisalı and Emre Arolat among them. The program provides an opportunity to evaluate the changes to the design and architecture agenda since the biennial's debut in 2012, and stands out as meaningful content for making a historical and contextual reading through the biennial.

This year, the digitally accessible graduation exhibitions and project presentations of university design and architecture programs also drew attention. The graduation projects of Istanbul Bilgi University's senior students in the Industrial Design Department, presented their annual exhibit, but transferred the event to an online platform. Their chosen title was "absent present: na/mevcut," to reflect this extraordinary period. The projects and studio processes developed in the "Alternative Architecture Practices" studio at the Mef University Architectural Design Graduate Program were also published through an online discussion series.

The students were followed by the design and architecture com-

munity in Turkey. Another widely attended event was the workshop series, 'Evin Halleri,' from Aug. 1--21. Workshops were carried out by 14 different groups based on collaborative working processes, and some workshops remain active. At the center of the workshop series was 'home', a particularly relatable theme for 2020 that was developed by architect Nevzat Sayın, and reconstructed through different ways of being and living during the quarantine period. These workshops, coordinated by Turkey's leading architects, involved participants and students from a variety of disciplines and opened discussions on questions such as, "is home a shelter, a nest, is it ours? Is it where we want it to be, can we stay forever? Are we guests, will we have to leave soon, are we safe, is it private enough?"

Awareness and Confrontation

In the future, if we were to assign a theme to this year, we would likely choose these two words. We have faced the impact of our living habits and consumption preferences on nature, the environment, the planet, the soil, water, and all living and non-living beings in a way that is beyond our expectations. The global pandemic crisis, along with its environmental, social and economic dimensions, has imposed the course of these discussions. Issues brought forward by the 5th Istanbul Design Biennial were added to the agenda in the last months of the year. Organized by the Istanbul Foundation for Culture and Arts (İKSVA) with the sponsorship of Vitra and the support of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, the title of the 5th Istanbul Design Biennial is 'Empathy Revisited: Designs for more than one.' The scope of empathy discussed here expands historically and culturally to a greater place than that in which we use in our daily lives. At the press conference where the title was announced for the first time, the biennial's organizers emphasized that the word empathy had a much more inclusive meaning in the 1910s. It included relationships between plants, animals and ourselves; bodies that were other than human. Today, the world beyond us; humankind and other bodies, systems and objects, are coming into play. The scope of the biennial is described in the curatorial text as follows: "Designers adopt sensitive, diplomatic, sometimes therapeutic functions, with the aim of connecting us with one another but also with the world around us, with other species, with microorganisms, soil, water, and even the universe. Thus, 'Empathy Revisited: Designs for more than one,' attempts to see design as a mediating tool for 'connectedness' based on the idea that design has the tools, platforms, and interfaces that allow us to relate to each other."

In an interview last month, Mariana Pestana who curated the

biennial with Sumitra Upham and Billie Muraben, shared her views on why the issues discussed within the scope of the biennial are important in today's context. "Despite knowing that we are living in an ecological crisis, we became immune to the data and statistics and numbers that are shown to us on the news, every day. We need to engage emotionally with the ecological crisis. And here, I believe empathy is fundamental: bringing emotions, affects, care, kinship into the design equation. Because we need to reassess our design processes and aims so that they benefit not just the immediate context in which they operate, but also the myriad of places, matter and species that indirectly are affected by any new design production." (Source: Vbenzeri)

Some changes had to be made to the format of the 5th Istanbul Design Biennial, due to the pandemic. The exhibitions that ran between Oct. 15 and Nov. 15 were visited under several precautions. Director Deniz Ova said this regarding the format of the biennial: "Considering the challenges and constraints imposed during the pandemic process, we organized a program that adapts to rather than ignores today's conditions. The pandemic prompted us to reconsider the model of the biennial. We designed a biennial which encourages new work and the production of research chains, productive and based on local production, in communication with residents of Istanbul, offering opportunities to stimulate new projects for them." (Source: Vbenzeri) Projects included in the biennial programs spread from the Mediterranean to North Africa, from Israel to Greece, from the Bosphorus to the Great Meander, with titles like 'Library of Land and Sea, Critical Cooking Show,' 'Empathy Sessions,' and 'New Civic Rituals.' They consisted of research projects and installations that focused on political, social, and economic issues intersecting with each other intensely, through empathy, land, sea, soil, food culture, cuisine, commonalities, and collective production. Some of the projects and programs included in the 5th Istanbul Design Biennial, and the 'activations' consisting of talks and workshops around those projects, will continue evolving until the end of April 2021.

Looking at all of the content, discussions, initiatives and projects, it seems that a global proximity has been achieved on the ground in the field of design and architecture, as in other fields. With this proximity, it could be that we are in a crucial moment in terms of dialogue and interdisciplinary studies, which will continue to evolve in the upcoming years. On the other hand, there is still an urgent need to bring the production practices of the field to the service of today's conditions in the most creative, rational and functional ways possible, in order to create a new path for the future.

¹ Taken from institution's official site: <https://www.artic.edu/exhibitions/9433/ambiguous-standards-institute-an-institute-within-an-institute>

Booksellers In The New Era

"You see, bookshops are dreams built of wood and paper," Jen Campbell once said. "They are time travel and escape and knowledge and power. They are, simply put, the best of places." Slow, quiet pandemic afternoons have gifted us a new life agenda. As we leaf through the pages, now is the time to keep independent bookstores in mind—for the sake of independent publishing, independent readership, and independent thought.

By NAZLI BERIVAN AK

During the first week of March, we held meetings with publishers and agencies from all over the world for the Istanbul Fellowship Program, trying to spread Turkish literature to the world while introducing new books to our language. We hustled between tables at the meeting room of a chic hotel, trying to fit the world's literature into ten-minute meetings. Evenings were spent touring the streets of Istanbul, discovering the beauties and quirks of the city with colleagues and friends from different cultures, who spoke different languages, and with whom we have united in literature. Most of us would hit the road to the London Book Fair a week later.

Then news of the pandemic started to come.

First the London Book Fair was canceled. Then, the lockdowns at home. The process of adapting to this new life slowly began; working from home, new passwords added to our lives, new terms. Quarantine, social distance, zoom, isolation, online meeting... savings, solidarity, creativity.

For those who realized they didn't need much more than an internet connection and a computer to create and do their job, the transition was relatively easy. We continued to select and publish books. We embarked on social media campaigns, online discounts and initiatives. Really, weren't the internet sales going great?

But the most important actors of this whole story, on the other hand, were experiencing the pains of a brand-new era along with their existing troubles. Things were not going very well for independent bookstores and secondhand booksellers. The pandemic wounded them severely. While being a bookseller under the shadow of destructive discount stores was already difficult enough, they now had to find new ways to reach readers locked in their homes. At the same time, they had to protect themselves, their crews and their businesses while keeping the doors open.

I have been thinking and working for a long time on the issue of independent bookstores. Over the years, I have met and interviewed many booksellers in Anatolia. We left nostalgia and romance aside and discussed their real issues, real problems and expectations. Almost a year ago, I was part of a group of researchers who published the "Independent Bookstores Report,"¹ one of the most professional studies on the subject to date. Over the course of our research with KONDA Research and Consulting and the Turkish Publishers Association, in-depth interviews were made with 40 independent booksellers from 12 cities between July 31, 2019 and Sept. 2, 2019. The results were analyzed in sections; opinions, suggestions, criticism and comments. Ideas for solution voiced by booksellers were brought together with observations and notes to finalize the report. Today it is accessible in the public domain. It became clear to me that independent bookstores are essential for independent readership and independent publishing, and supporting bookstores means supporting the



independence of our cultural realm.

During the pandemic, booksellers around the world sought, and are still looking, for ways to reach the reader through various methods, trials and errors. Some searched for critical support by taking pre-orders for books not yet published or offering gift vouchers and home delivery options. Others found readers in the digital world by strengthening and often re-building their websites... For sure, the most important factor is the incentives and support of the states.

An Inspirational Initiative

At this point, bookshop.org has inspired readers and publishers around the world as a remarkable initiative. The site went live two weeks before the World Health Organization announced that COVID-19 would be classified as a pandemic. Basically, bookshop.org acts as a roof structure for independent bookstores to sell. It carries out some services for independent bookstores which do not have a website and cannot carry out logistics operations. Moreover, it supports bookshop websites instead of Amazon by feeding from various literature sites. The site, where its users can open their own libraries or even their own bookstores, has turned into an island of culture where not only independent publishers are highlighted. All-time classics and underappreciated books are highlighted alongside the best-sellers. The site also shares its revenue with independent booksellers.

Despite these unusual days, I also continued my interviews. I used Kadıköy bookstores as the center and focused on the issues of independent bookstores and second-hand booksellers in the company of writers. With them, we talked about their contributions to our cultural sphere, the readers they shaped, wonderful coincidences, unforgettable encounters, and the years past with books... With the project of the OKUYAY Platform², our focus is the role of the bookseller in the dissemination and preservation of a flourishing reading culture.

It is hard to say 'when the pandemic is over.' But when the case numbers begin to ease, it will be a new world. We have already started to take notes for our new life agenda. The bookstores also play a

critical role in this. Autograph days, interviews, writer-reader meetings, workshops, activities for children and many more things will return again one day. We need independent bookstores more than ever, as islets of coming together, sharing and creating. Our need for these moments will increase even more in the upcoming days. You ask why?

So Why Independent Bookstores?

If there are independent bookstores, there is culture in a city. We know that the atmosphere created by the bookstore and the chemistry between the city, bookstore, and reader has a positive impact on the latter.

The independent bookstore stands out not only as a sales point, but also as spaces where the youngster or adult can socialize, acquire a sense of book etiquette, have those experiences of delving into, thumbing through, and choosing a book to take home and read.

Independent bookstores have a mission in literacy. Moreover, they have undertaken an important objective to serve as islands of culture, as spaces not only for mechanical trade, but also where the bookseller and the reader can connect. Here, books are suggested and shared, conversations on life and literature take place.

Unlike the website or the chain store, the independent bookstore offers a new approach and reservoir of culture and reading to await the reader. This is the story of shuffling shelves, choosing books, reviewing texts, getting to know the authors with the guidance of the bookseller. This is a story of being a book detective.

We know that the books of publishing houses which cannot enter the bestseller lists are circulated through the independent bookstores to reach their readers. There are certain books in chain stores, but all books can be made available in independent shops. Unlike chain stores, the independent bookstore also keeps secondhand books. This brings different dimensions and encouraging aspects to book shopping, through methods such as barter and book rental.

For an Egalitarian World of Books

Being able to create an atmosphere is unique to independent bookstores. We know that the majority of chain stores are hesitant about making book suggestions, due to various institutional bindings and

a lack of experience or knowledge. In this aspect, it is not difficult to conclude that the independent bookstore creates a more democratic and free environment for book sharing.

At this point, the fixed price law appears as a systemic change that most booksellers can agree upon. There are information gaps and there is confusion, and some bookstores express doubts about its applicability. But we know that the main issue in protecting independent bookstores from devastating discounts is the fixed price law. We also know that the studies on the "law for the preservation of written culture" are ongoing.

Bookstores are becoming an element of trust in their towns.

An opinion voiced by many booksellers is that chain stores not only sell books, but also represent and disseminate a certain culture. In this respect, we see that the survival of independent bookstores is of vital importance that will pave the way for diversity, small-scale and alternative publishing, and the continuation of different styles and genres to reach the reader. Independent bookselling can also be seen as a representative of 'independent readers' against 'official bookselling,' an argument thought to be imposed by major, monopolizing publishers and distributors.

Today is the Day to Take Action

I believe the sustainability of an intellectual environment that will create new readers is directly linked to independent bookstores. So too, is the preservation of diversity in reading and free thinking. "When the last independent bookstore closes, we will read what the media groups deem worthy," one bookseller noted in a meeting. We need bookstores to maintain and nurture independent readership and independent publishing. The day of independent bookstores is celebrated all over the world every year in the last week of April. Let's hope we can celebrate it in 2021 with festivities; meeting at the bookstores, ordering that long-awaited book from our local store. It's time to add independent bookstores to the habits of our new lives. Right now, tomorrow is too late. As Maya Angelou once said, "I always felt, if I can get to a library, I'll be okay." In the new life, the motto has changed, or at least should change. My motto is, "If I can get to an independent bookstore, my future will be okay."

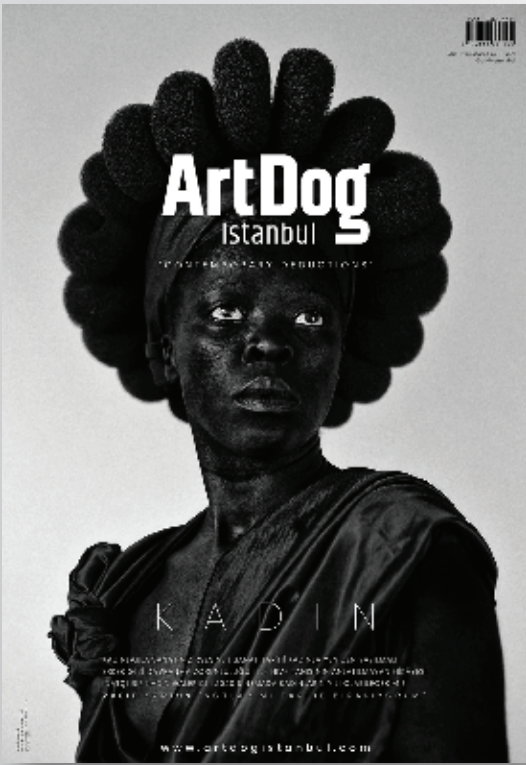
¹ The report originally published with the title "Bağımsız Kitabevleri Araştırma Raporu" is only accessible in Turkish at the moment. While the Turkish version is accessible through the website of OKUYAY Platform, okuyayplatformu.com, the website also holds other research data and sources in English.

² Platform for Dissemination of Reading Culture (abbreviated OKUYAY Platform) is a project co-founded by the Republic of Turkey and the European Union and aims to publicize exemplary practices from Europe and Turkey and spread them within and among Turkish communities. Mission and activities of the platform are accessible through their website: okuyayplatformu.com

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A look at Erdoğan Zümrütoğlu's works.



Zümrütoğlu by Hadiye Cangökçe, courtesy of Pilevneli Gallery

Life - Moments Frozen in Time

By HANS IRREK

“*The bear and the gazelle, god and the devil, the flower and the axe, the roughest, the most vulgar and the fairest, the most gracious should be side by side and this should look completely natural*”. E.Z.

In the thirties of the last century, none other than Spain's Picasso delivered a brilliant answer to the constant question of the myth of creation with his striking remark, ‘The painter goes through states of fullness and void. That is the whole secret of art... A painter paints to discharge himself of feelings and visions.’ For Picasso, as well as for his artistic friends, the question of ‘why’ was of no relevance in the face of an epoch of existential transformation. They reacted incessantly and without pause to the impulsive rhythm of a new era in which the parallel realities of tradition and modernity merged. One can almost speak of it as a psychological tactic, a technique that transforms the intense experience of the moment into tangible paintings. Here, the dilemma of human existence in its various facets is a central theme in the focus of the matter, a topic that has been a catalyst for the most important images in history.

Erdogan Zümrütoglu's ‘premier regard,’ on large pieces of canvas takes on a cinematic scale; as if it were a ‘first look’ one cannot keep his eyes from. It inevitably reminds the viewer of Picasso's spectacular statement almost a hundred years ago.

Without a doubt, the question here is a painting that differs fundamentally in its intensity and presence from the shallow mass productions that are currently flooding the markets. One may even assert that the viewer's gaze is sharpened in the process of seeing these images. In the process, the focus is first on a compendium of fragmented bodies, streaky drawn portraits of real and fictional people; or ethereal, ghostly apparitions located on the wafer-thin line of separation between natural representation and vital abstraction. Then, one is quickly drawn into the vortex of perception: twisted bodies, colorful exploding portrait busts, skulls and skeletons absorb the viewer. It's like being on Rimbaud's ‘Bateau ivre’ (Drunken boat), and keeping up with the madness of the world while soaking up all the beauty of the moment. It quickly becomes clear while looking at the images, that the

origin of such shadowy depictions have their roots deep in the ground of existential philosophy, poetry and music.

After studying Art in Izmir, Zümrütoglu had quickly headed for Europe, immersing himself in the cultural history of the old European metropolises. However, the targets of his insatiable curiosity were not limited to the monoliths of art history such as Max Beckmann, Karel Appel or Francis Bacon. In fact, he kept his distance from these painters in the process of discovering his own style of pictorial invention. Furthermore, his encounter with the philosophy of Martin Heidegger opened up a new dimension of thinking for the young artist. The essential ‘Being and Time’ and ‘The Origin of the Work of Art’ from the mid-thirties were particularly influential. He was fascinated that, according to Heidegger, the concept of truth can no longer be seen as an ultimate state, but that truth is a happening. Viewed in such perspective, the processuality, or the emergence of art, is a stance beyond aesthetic experience.

Pure-biographical observations would not suffice in the classification of his collection of work. The monstrous vocabulary of form, the ever-renewing bestiary of mythical creatures, the painted-out physiognomies appearing out of nowhere, and ghostly figures followed by their own shadows open the door to a very up-to-date perception of the world.

One can speak of a kind of augmented sensitivity with which the artist reacts to the scent of death and existential suffering of the modern age. One has to read these pictures very carefully in order to properly follow the action within this extraordinary creation process. The trace of the brush is key. No one has described this better than Karel Appel: ‘If the stroke of the brush is so important, it is because it expresses precisely what is not there.’

Indeed, in this regard, we must speak of the conquest of the canvas. A quick glance at the artist's energetic and enthusiastic way of working would suffice as proof.

Zümrütoglu often works on several canvases in parallel; with a large triptych on one side, and a wall-sized canvas on the other. For the most part, his formats take on dimensions that leave no doubt as to the physical presence of the artist in the picture. These are the dimensions that we are familiar with, from the vast statements of the Abstract Expressionists, spaces from which there is no escape for the viewer.

However, the effect of such imag-

es are not purely meditative. Erdogan Zümrütoglu's pictures do not make use of a vacuum or unconditional void. Minimalism and Zen fail to express the erosion of being.

His virtuosity in engraving abundance lies in the very heart of his approach to pictorial space!

Moliere and Shakespeare provide the blueprint for the unconditional fascination with the spectacle of existence, which Erdogan Zümrütoglu brings to life so uniquely.

The background often appears in an illusionistic depth, out of which the portraits seem to jump out to the viewer. In this sense, it is no more possible to speak of a painting. Bodies and faces give the impression of a puzzle in which two different objects are hidden in one, but remain in a gel-like state of dissolution and growth. Zümrütoglu has devoted an entire work to this subject. Insistent visions of eroded bodies that look like faded photographs from anatomy tomes of the late 19th century. They reveal nothing less than the beauty of decay and the merciless work of time on the body. As with Velasquez, here we feel the glowing black as a color with which eternity inscribes itself into the picture.

The visual appeal of the deformation of the body and physiognomy is expressed in numerous variations. This is particularly evident in the portraits. The approach occasionally reminds us of Giacometti's peculiarity of obscuring the faces of the portrayed with paint, almost beyond recognition. However, this style, remembered as a melodramatic convergence in Giacometti, transforms into a visual feast under Zümrütoglu's swiftly-working brush. Everything seems to be brought into existence in a state of ecstasy. Skull and facial features morphologically dissolve under rapid brushstrokes. To compensate for the horror of such mask-like grimaces, the painter uses a palette comprised of delicate color combinations, which relieve the unbearable tragedy of the scene. In any case, the painting skill, subtle technique and talent of the artist resonate in every picture with surprising and captivating approaches. The powerful sentiment that transfers from the images to the viewer does not originate from the art of painting itself, but from the primary nature of creativity in the first place. Approaching from such perspective justifies the fact that Zümrütoglu's pictures cannot be compared to paintings made using paint and a brush. The effect is similar to the ver-

bal dominance of Ezra Pound's Cantos or Rimbaud's fierce poems. They establish a framework for a level of quality with which Zümrütoglu paintings can be classified. Ultimately, it is the anomalies and the inconsistencies of life that drive productivity.

It is not a myth that artists can rarely find peace. As such, the emotional and uninterrupted reaction to the world is an automatism that demands ever-new discharges, ever-new motifs, ever-new images.

Erdogan Zümrütoglu's remarkable aspiration to create can best be described by the witticism of Picasso, which hits precisely the nerve center of such an attitude: ‘Work is restful to me. When I stop, I get tired. Some people drink Pernod all day long. My Pernod is work. I work all day long.’

Among the aspects of such an approach is the continuous struggle over the thought that life is finite. Indeed, repetitive encounters with death and vanitas crystallize as a central theme in Zümrütoglu's work cycles, where the philosophical construct of being is illuminated from ever new perspectives. With sarcastic humor, the artist occasionally finds himself in a world scheme dominated by decay and vanity. Indeed, a recently-developed cycle of images is a very fitting example of this. Superficially, the pictures provide a tasteful fusion of baroque vanitas symbolism with the echoes of a spontaneously gestural painting, emerging from the freedom of pure intuition. This is the exact recipe Zümrütoglu uses: a daring balance between figurative painting and the extravagant gesture of abstraction. Skulls, bones and skeletal fragments float within the deep spatiality of the canvas, as if placed there by a magic hand. Color streaks and splashes, placed as a result of pure impulse and to create distraction, give the pictures a strangely delayed rhythm of motion. It's almost like we can speak of a slow motion requiem. Beyond the sublime attractiveness of the pictures, we find another exclusive composition characteristic of the artist: an impulsive limitation of the pictured space through the painter's intervention. Similar attempts to segment the canvas area can be seen in early paintings by Cy Twombly, or more drastically in Francis Bacon's work. We often find Bacon's blurred, deformed bodies locked in cage-like architectures. This is, at the same time, a compositional trick to lure the eye of the audience towards the center of the picture. We see a similar but differ-

ently constructed effect in Zümrütoglu's painting style. Here, we can literally speak of a ‘trimming’ of the canvas, achieved by the painter through biomorphic areas placed at the edges of the paintings. Like loosely arranged curtains on a stage, they focus the gaze on the essential events and are great testimonials to the flexibility of the art of painting that captures the horror of the depicted in a bearable grid.

A glance at Zümrütoglu's specific working method razes all assumptions to the ground, especially those regarding oversized formats. There are no small-scale pieces, sketches on details or draft drawings. The panorama formatted canvases are like a terrain waiting to be conquered with full physical commitment. Zümrütoglu has transferred the function of sketch blocks and scribbled paper fragments into music, thanks to his love for synesthesia; a tip that would be helpful in the assessment of his work. While pointing out that his painting finds its equivalent more often in philosophy and poetry, the structural and improvisational effects of music should not be overlooked. In fact, we must admit that every picture has its own melody, an implicit tune that goes hand in hand with the colors used in the paintings. Thus, the radical nature of working on a painting is driven by music. Everything points to the fact that the artist's development draws its energy from coping with ever-larger canvases. In this cinematic format, hybrid beings and dark spirits wildly indulge in a surreal backstage of multilayered sunsets, together with wild limbs and skeletal fragments. These are images that capture the viewer instantly and lead him into a diffused world; half nightmare, half *Disneyland*. Again, the eye of the viewer is constantly forced into action. Finding a balance between experiencing the highly attractive colorfulness of the picture and its surreal figurative elements does not seem possible. The decanted mindset of the picture must be rearranged by the viewer. It is no coincidence that de Kooning has transferred this responsibility onto the viewer with his charming request: ‘|’ through your eyes, it again becomes an emotion or idea.’

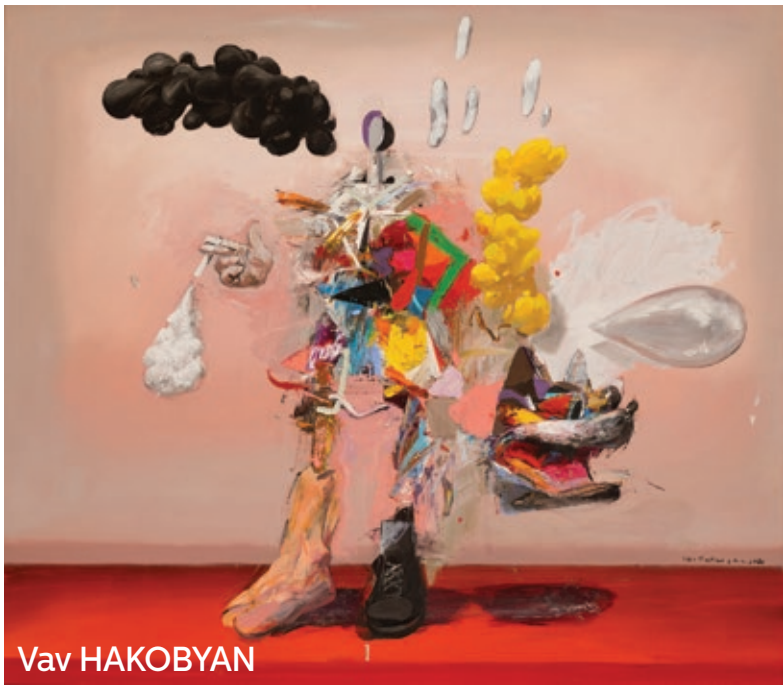
Zümrütoglu leaves us no doubt that his paintings feed on the tragedy of man, the coexistence of failure and chance. His highly energetic and powerfully-enacted scenes leave the viewer in shock, like a frozen moment of life. They, too, are waiting to be re-transformed into emotions or ideas. However, maybe the most important of all, they show that we carry the whole world within us.



Daron MOURADIAN



Gurgen BABAYAN



Vav HAKOBYAN



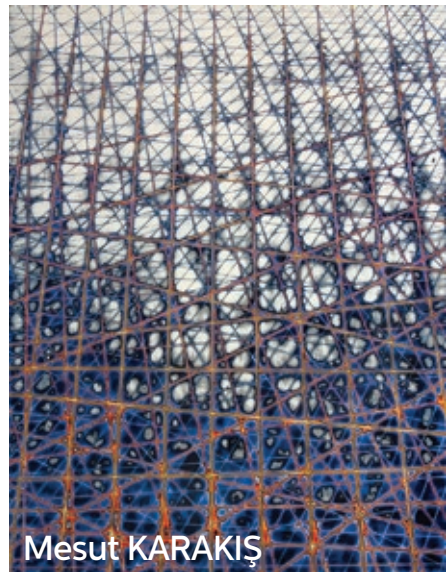
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