

DANØMARKA

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Dear Peter:

After the drab and uneventful days of Cracow which seemed to stretch and swell endlessly, I am back in Istanbul gearing up for what is going to be a difficult summer.

You may remember me talking about

-although it would have hurt me to hear an other person speak of my city in any derogatory way or with the authority of a few days experience, a contemporary art museum project in Istanbul, and my hope to install the 3. Istanbul Biennial there. Now the protocol between the municipality (owner of the building) and the foundation for the culture and arts (the organization that does the Biennial) is signed and renovation is due to start in mid-august.in the the Biennial) is finally signed and the of the building You will find information about the building and the Biennial in the enclosed sheet.

I now paste in some standard information about the building and the Biennial.

the building and the Biennial. As previously indicated in our letter of invitation to the 3. Istanbul Biennial, we have been working towards finding and renovating a monumental space for the exhibition where we can exhibit all the works together.

The location, Feshane, a recently vacated 19th century factory on the Golden Horn, with over 4000m2 of unhindered space, renovation plans are completed. The renovation, however, will unfortunately not be ready by September of 1991.

Part of the reason for this delay has been caused by bureaucratic reasons. The crisis in the Gulf has also created an unforeseen burden on our prospective sponsors. The severe economic crisis in the country has made it impossible to come up with the necessary funds in 12 months.

The Foundation Board has thus decided to postpone the Biennial to September 1992, when it will also celebrate the Foundation's 15th year in public service.

The most positive outcome of bringing Feshane into public attention is that negotiations are already being carried out to turn the building in to the first contemporary art museum of Istanbul after the Biennial. The Biennial has thus gained a further significance in providing Istanbul with a major international exhibition.

We are, however, very sorry about the postponement of the Biennial, and are hoping you will understand our situation, given the Gulf crisis and our desire not to settle for a second best.

Sincerely,

We are writing you with the sincere hope that you will participate in the Third International Istanbul Biennial organized by the Istanbul Foundation of Culture and Arts. The Biennial will take place between September and October , 1992

A member of European Association of Music Festivals, Istanbul Foundation of Culture and Arts (IFCA) is a non-profit organization which organizes a summer music festival (1973), a film festival (1981), and a theater festival (1988).

Since 1987, IFCA has also pioneered in creating a truly international Biennial of increasingly ambitious dimensions, taking on the arduous task of promoting an event which depends on extensive sponsorship in Turkey and abroad.

I. TURKEY IN FLUX

In the past years Turkey has been undergoing striking changes. The will to change, and to break down the barriers that have hitherto shut the country off from the rest of the world is producing unprecedented and happy results in every sphere of life.

The increasing number of art galleries, their participation in international fairs, and of Turkish artists in international shows, the publication of books and journals devoted to topics which, only a few years ago, would have found no readership in the country, the incumbent private broadcasting, the explosion of the fields of advertising and communication, and the emergence of aesthetic awareness in the private domain, are happy signs of a transformation which also point in the direction of profounder claims and deeper-seated desires.

Life in Turkey is acquiring a visual --even aesthetic-- dimension which is unprecedented in this culture's history. In both the public and the private domain, people are increasingly finding themselves obliged to comprehend novel visual phenomena as the media, and artistic events multiply. The explosion in the field of advertising reflects as much the competition among consumer products, as it does, perhaps even more fundamentally, a competition of images that addresses the capacity for visual attention and interpretation. There is as well a mature class of enlightened, culturally aware businessmen, women, and industrialists who take seriously efforts to propagate information about the rapidly changing face of this country, and who are prepared to assume the universal role such elite have always played in the proliferation of the arts.

One of the aims of the Istanbul Biennial is not only to educate people's capacity to discriminate, and to shape new ways of seeing, but also to lift the barriers between Turkey and the culturally leading countries of the world.

We find that Istanbul is not any different from other metropolitan centers of the world, nor does it have any the less to offer to world culture. Hence, a further aim of the Biennial is to reflect this fact in Turkey as well as abroad. We do not believe in cultural insularity, in an all-too-distant "over here" that is irreversibly divided from an "over there." To the contrary, we maintain that the "here" is simply a part of a ubiquitous "there;" that what is being thought and done here is no different --in quality and in nature-- from what is being thought and done elsewhere.

II. 1987 AND 1989 BIENNIALS

In the first Biennial held in 1987, Istanbul became host, for the first time, through the courageous efforts of its organizer Mrs. Beral Madra, to internationally known artists such as Jean Michel Alberola, Marcus LQpertz,

François Morellet, Michelangelo Pistoletto, Arnulf Rainer and Gilberto Zorio. Additionally, there were international exhibitions of Austria, Switzerland, Poland and Yugoslavia. Turkish artists, galleries and collectors also participated in the first exhibition.

In the second Biennial in 1989, the concept of "Contemporary Art in Traditional Spaces," came to maturation. St. Irene, the Treasury of Hagia Sophia, Hadrian's cistern, and one of the adjunct buildings of Süleymaniye Mosque were used as exhibition sites. Among the participants who created their works in situ, were Sarkis, Sol leWitt, Daniel Buren, Richard Long, Jannis Kounellis, Anne and Patrick Poirier, and Turkish artists. There were also group exhibitions of Germany, Austria, Italy, Spain, Yugoslavia, Greece, U.S.S.R and Turkey. Istanbul's galleries participated in the Biennial in their respective spaces.

III. 1991 BIENNIAL

The 1980's witnessed the signs of a crisis of unforeseeable proportions. The changes all over Europe in 1989, were in some respects a maturation of this immense transformation. As the writer Thomas McEvelley mentioned, "Western culture as it enters the 1990's is somewhat inchoately seeking a new definition of history that will not involve ideas of hierarchy, or of mainstream and periphery, and a new, global sense of civilization to replace the linear Eurocentric model that lay at the heart of Modernism."

In this respect, the Third International Istanbul Biennial will have two main themes; youth; cultural liberalism and pluralism.

We are not interested in already re known artists with long careers, but rigorous young artists. As a youthful Biennial we would like to focus on new directions in artistic creation.

In terms of cultural pluralism and cultural liberalism, what is of particular interest to us is not the proper ratios of various ethnic backgrounds, gender, difference of sexual choice and other such criteria, but the actual works themselves, and the ideas a particular work may produce. To put it in an other way, the overtness of cultural difference --although such work is also welcome-- is not the sole concern of this exhibition. We are all very much in the same world and have different ways of being part of it. Cultural difference may also be imagined as an "extra," something which can not be readily stated or immediately perceived.

The isolationism of Biennials such as the Venice Biennale, in terms of pavillions (borders and walls), reproduces, old notions of national exhibitions that draw the increasing criticisms of critics, curators and artists. Thus, although all our invitations are on a national basis, we are hoping to install the works together with the collaboration of the guest countries' commissioners. We believe, a truly creative and fruitful collaboration and interesting results will take place with this method. This will also promote a critical duality between the catalog and the actual exhibition.

IV. ON THE PARTICIPATION OF THE GUEST COUNTRY

We would like you to contribute to the Biennial with a maximum of forty works of art (painting and sculpture), by young artists with particular emphasis on cultural plurality.

A catalog essay by the exhibition organizer of the guest country, accompanied by publishable color transparencies, should be made available to us by the second week of May 1992. All this material will be returned to the guest country, after type-setting and color separations.

We would also like to have an idea of the progress of the participation of the guest country. If slides, and published material on the artists is sent as soon as possible, these will then be made available to national and international press.

The Biennial will take place in a recently vacated 19th century factory, Feshane... Renovation of the space is due to start in early 1991. This space is planned to be used as the first contemporary art museum in Istanbul. Given the lack of a museum or a contemporary art center, the Biennial is of paramount importance to Turkey. It is through this activity that we can raise the demand for international exhibitions and a modern art museum to an absolute need. Your participation is therefore of utmost importance.

Proper security, and conditions for proper maintenance of the art works will be provided throughout the exhibition. Storage will be ready for all crates and other transportation material.

While Istanbul is not a humid city in the fall, we are currently engaged in securing dehumidifiers for the exhibition spaces. During the past two Biennials, we had no incidents in terms of security and protection of the works, and building upon past experience, we will be bettering the conditions.

IFCA will pay for lodging, and secure a per diem for the commissar, the artists, and the press invited by the guest country during their stay in Istanbul.

IFCA will also arrange for multi-lingual guides, assistants for hanging and other help, and all technical support including lighting and transportation in the city. Transportation of works, and the fares of the people travelling to Istanbul will be the responsibility of the guest country. The works' clearance through the customs will be done by the IFCA.

International press will be provided with guides for easier access to the Biennial and Istanbul in general. The Biennial will be advertised in international art magazines. Critics will also be invited to Istanbul, for the coverage of the Biennial in the international press.

We will greatly appreciate the confirmation of the participation in the Biennial no later than February 1, 1991. Please keep us informed, if the extent and the nature of the participation is still in discussion by the time of the dead-line.

V. OTHER ACTIVITIES DURING THE BIENNIAL

As part of the activities of the Biennial, we are organizing an international series of lectures focusing on the issues of the 1990's, within the parameters of the end of isolationism, redefinitions of margin and center, and cultural pluralism. There is more than ever the need of coming together and inducing the free flow of cultural exchange without the archaic notions of hierarchy.

A scholar from the guest country could be invited to the conference on the guest country's part. Honorarium and lodging expenses would then be met by IFCA.

The Biennial will also include a two part video section; the first documentary and educational, geared towards the viewing public in Istanbul, and the second

video art. This will also provide a way of bringing the public's attention to the exhibition.

I am looking forward to your positive response in these matters. It will be a great pleasure to see you participate in the Istanbul Biennial.

Sincerely,

Vasıf Kortun
Director,
Third International Istanbul Biennial

ps. all inquiries and correspondence should be directed to Vasıf Kortun, or to the assistant of the Biennial at IFCA, Mrs. Ayşıl Kurtulan. This space will be the first contemporary art museum in Turkey and will be inaugurated with the Third Istanbul Biennial.

Peter,
I would like you to participate on behalf of Denmark with a maximum of five works. Installations may surely make our job easier considering the decrease in the transportation money, but these are matters you have to decide on. After your response, I will set up a meeting here with the Danish Consulate and see to it that they will provide the sponsor the transportation and the travel fares. It would also be great if you can also send me preliminary visual and other mat

I will also be calling you soon,

With Love,

Vasıf Kortun

ps. Please send all communication to my Foundation address.

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