



ISTANBUL FOUNDATION FOR CULTURE AND ARTS

Istanbul Mar. 13 1992

Ms. Lüice-de-Myttenaere
Consul General of Belgium
Istanbul

Ist. Biennial
Department :

Reference :

Subject Invitation

Dear Ms. de-Myttenaere,

I am writing you with the sincere hope that Belgium will participate in the Third International Istanbul Biennial organized by the Istanbul Foundation for Culture and Arts. The Biennial will take place between October 16 and November 30, 1992.

A member of European Association of Music Festivals, Istanbul Foundation for 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.

1. 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 main aims of the 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 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 the ubiquitous "there;" that what is being thought and done here is no different --in quality and 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 Lüpertz, François Morellet, Arnulf Rainer, Michelangelo Pistoletto, 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 Sol leWitt, Sarkis, 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. 1992 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."

The theme of The Third International Istanbul Biennial is the PRODUCTION OF CULTURAL DIFFERENCE. This will represent an umbrella concept under which individual countries will have their own curated shows and/or the interpretations of this concept.

We are more interested in younger artists, although artists who have operated around the theme of the exhibition, no matter their age or reputation, are also welcome.

In terms of Production of Cultural Difference, what is of particular interest to us is not merely the proper ratios of various races, ethnic backgrounds, gender,

investments in alternative histories or in the domain of 'low culture,' difference of sexual choice and other such criteria, but the actual works themselves, and the ideas a particular work may produce. To put in an other way, the overtness of the 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.

IV. ON THE PARTICIPATION OF BELGIUM

We would like you to contribute to the Biennial with a curated exhibition that takes into consideration the issue of the Production of Cultural Difference. This may be a one person exhibition or a group show. You will have approximately a maximum of 150 square meters of space allocated to you. Should this allocation of space exceed the size of your exhibition, we would like your early notice. The space is divided by iron columns that are at a distance of 5.5 meters from each other. We are able to put up temporary walls within the space. A plan of the space will be made available to you soon. You will also receive technical information and notices for dead-lines later on. The following is a general, preliminary summary of the conditions of participation and information on the building.

The Biennial will take place in a recently vacated 19th century factory, FESHANE, which is currently undergoing restoration as the first contemporary art museum in Istanbul ever. The Museum will be inaugurated with the Biennial. The impact of the Biennial is thus critical as both an example and a demonstration of the exhibitions to come there.

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. In the case of group exhibitions, each artist will have one work reproduced in the Biennial catalog.

We would also like to have an idea of the progress of your participation. 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.

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 space. 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 curator, 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 installation and deinstallation, provide 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 in and out of the country, the registration of the works 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 as soon as possible. Please keep us informed on the extent and the nature of your participation.

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,



Vasif K.Kortun
Director, International Istanbul Biennial