

The Contemporary Art Market in Istanbul

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Abstract

Istanbul has been a city that has the most active role in culture and art area in Turkey from past to present, hosted developments that have occurred in the field of traditional and contemporary Turkish art. Especially, with the increase of the number of gallery, museum and institutions that support art in recent years in Istanbul, the competition in the market and the number of collectors have increased. These developments have brought a new interdisciplinary formation to understand the art. In 1980s and 1990s, the exhibitions, carried out with the scope of the Biennial by IFCA, have been an impact on the expansion of conceptual art-based approach. Therefore, Turkish artists who used the developments in Western art and new expression practices in their works have prepared the ground for new ideas and debates.

In this study, an experimental research will be done on contemporary art issue and judgment with the frame of present art sector in Istanbul; the city having rich history, cultural heritage and geographical location.

The aim of this study is to handle discussing subjects in contemporary art sector and to mention the view towards the art object and subjects related to what the art is. In addition, the expression practices of conceptual art in the art galleries, the exhibition techniques, the methods and procedures followed by art institutions on reaching to collectors and art-lovers will be mentioned. In this research, literature review will be made and a study will be applied on situations placed in present market.

Keywords: Istanbul, Contemporary Art, Plastic Arts, Contemporary Art Market.

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Introduction

In the organization first works of curatorial exhibition and festivals has been began in today's context the formation of Contemporary Turkish Art towards in the late 1980s; Turkish Art has been entered a new era called as "Contemporary Art" started to spread in the art community after 1990. In 1990s, there was a serious progress in the contemporary art in this direction; exhibitions, biennials and events were organized especially in Istanbul. This activity includes different forms of expression and experimentation, beyond the traditional production methods of the art environment. The sense of interdisciplinary in contemporary art has begun to spread in countrywide, besides modern or classical understanding of art.

These developments have brought dynamism in commercial sense to contemporary art market in recent. Art galleries following closely innovations and contemporary art have been opened or some of existing galleries has entered into a way settlement in adopting different artistic expression. The artists who influenced by Western Art produced conceptual art works by making experimental venture and the number of artists who put the art works in this direction has increased in each period. In this text called "Contemporary Art Market in Istanbul", a literature experiment is aimed on effects of developments in Western Art on Turkish Art, with an analysis of operations and structure of the institutions and organizations that are based on contemporary art

If we talk about the scope of the text, in this essay, examines with an overview, city of Istanbul is selected to do research on contemporary art and the art market. After 1980 and present day has formed the historical frame of the research. This study does not mention the art galleries and museums that belong to the State which do not have active role in the contemporary art market. Generally, topics such as the work conditions of institutions, organizations and commercial galleries that have active roles contemporary art market in Istanbul, their roles and effects and etc. are discussed. Literature and interview are the methods used to analyze the research related periods and developments. Exhibitions and art fairs that organized in previous periods were visited and environmental review was done.

Istanbul, Art, Market

Istanbul, known as Constantinople in ancient histories, after the conquest; called as Islambol and taken the name of Istanbul in over time, has been one of the most important cities in the areas such as political, economic, historical and geopolitical situation from past to present. Istanbul, connecting Asia and Europe, is leading the largest city of Turkey with importance of geographical location and having social cultural life of the many areas. Information about historical establishment of Istanbul of 300 thousand years, contrary to what is believed, accuracy of information was increased that its history even earlier after excavations and researches carried out in recent years.

Except its geopolitical position, one of the main reasons that make Istanbul so important, known as the world's superpower empires, Roman Empire (Byzantine Empire) and Ottoman Empire used Istanbul as capital city for centuries. Both empires that have many elements in Istanbul; historical traces still exist in the field of architecture, urban planning and living socio-cultural issues.

According to the statistical migration and research data, Istanbul, has been the first in migration rank, with the migration received from home and abroad in Turkey for years, has an important growing population and it grows more and more every day. The city's income obtained from the industry and economic sphere is constituted a part of the national budget. Istanbul, not only leader in industrial sector, but also is the leader in the field of art. Therefore, Istanbul is also hosting to contemporary art market of the country mainly and played a fundamental role in this sector.

Istanbul, also leading in technology, economic, industry etc. areas in Turkey, has very important role in improvement of Turkish Art. In 1883, Sultan II. Abdulhamid period (Renda, 2002:143), art education has been given with an academic approach in the Ottoman Empire, as a result of the establishment of Sanayi-i Nefise and works in the field of fine arts by painter Osman Hamdi Bey. However, the first concrete steps have been taken to spread countrywide in Istanbul the sense of Western-oriented and academy in Turkish Art History. In the following period, many artists were trained and art works have been produced in the field of modern art and Turkish Painting Art. Therefore, in countrywide Sanayi-i Nefise has been as an example for art schools and colleges established in the next period.

After 1990, the number of art galleries and institutions that have supported produced the sense of modern and conceptual art works has increased in each period and made effects on the basis of today's contemporary art. The institutions that adopt the art formations and conceptual understanding of the origins contemporary art have placed as mission with the artists who reveal in this direction in Istanbul art market. Thus, have much bigger market than Anatolia, due to existence in a variety of ethnic art collectors with domestic and foreign tourism and migration in the market of art prepared the ground take placed contemporary art and artists in Istanbul's art around. Of course, it is located many art institutions can be examples for this in other parts of Turkey. However, in this area, Istanbul where can be qualified as "the heart of the art" among centers with historical and cultural identity.

It can be addressed in this topic there are many institutions and organizations in Istanbul. However, to make classification will be correct to summarize in understandable format in the text. Accordingly, most general institutions that have very important role and directed Istanbul contemporary art market; biennials and art festivals, providing funding to art support the holdings, prestigious art galleries, auctions, big art competitions supported for young artists etc. it is possible to reproduce more of these examples.

In this regard, to elaborate and explain the paths and methods some art organizations and institutions in the market, their impact on contemporary art can help us.

1.Commercial Art Galleries

Commercial art galleries are located in the districts have high potential in tourism sector such as Nisantasi, Galata, Karakoy, Taksim, Beyoglu in Istanbul. These places have had a role in shaping the Turkish Art from past to present as a center of visual arts and plastic arts since 1900 in Istanbul. The number of gallery on contemporary art showed increased after 1990, but the number of postmodern and conceptual art oriented galleries still have not reached a sufficient level.

In Istanbul, some of commercial art galleries make contribution to contemporary art and take place in art environment. They have an intermediary role on behalf of contemporary art to the transfer society, art lovers and collectors, innovation in the world of contemporary art, exhibition methods and to follow other developments. Arter, Nev Gallery, Pg Art Gallery, Pi Artworks, Pilot Gallery, Gallery Zilberman, Sanatorium, Gallery X-IST, Rampa, Elgiz Gallery, The Empire Project, etc. These are some of the galleries that have placed in Istanbul contemporary art market and work at an international level.

Commercial art galleries have an intermediary task between artist and collector and they have taken on a task very important other role exhibit to audience's regard. Group and solo exhibitions require very meticulous work for the best exhibit way to buyer and market. Operation and working conditions of each gallery in Istanbul can be different. Galleries are usually made contract comprising operating conditions and covering certain a period (6, 5, 4 or less years, it depends on the artist) they want to work with the artists. In the accordance with the contract, the artist's status and position some galleries take different commission from the sold art work. For example, while some galleries take commission of 20-25 % or 35-40 %, this figure reach up to 60 % in some of galleries. The young artist who wants to promote themselves and make a name in the market can have to go through this process.

Interest of some prestigious galleries in young artists in Istanbul has increased in recent years and existence of young artists in the market increased significantly. However, to be discovered by members of the selection committee determined some galleries organize contests with prizes for young artists. Apart from this, young artists' acquisition efforts to place easily in the periodic fluctuations at contemporary art market, this quest for opportunities and connections in the network of relationships are revived.

The high amounts and figures in the works of old master artists are other factors for the buyers to direct them into young artists. Thus, young artists can find a place in the art market relatively easier than before and able to share their works with art lovers and collector. Young artists take part in events like this considered as a method to produce the incentive structure. In this sense, it has been particularly intense interest to canvas painting among the preferred art works.

Painting and sculpture weighted structures still maintains its popularity in contemporary art, as in the past. In particular, hyper-realist, figurative functioning of social issues and large sizes painting works in acrylic and oil techniques is one of works on the buyer's agenda. Tradition of painting continuing since from the past can influence the conditions of merchantability. Photography, video and installation attract the attention of collectors, after painting and sculpture (Gül, 2016).

According to Curator Beral Madra (2011): "Collectors in Turkey have invested in a certain style in painting, a style that sustained modernist content and aesthetics, and overlooked works produced throughout the 30 years of postmodernism and relational aesthetics" (p. 26).

Prestigious fairs organized in certain periods in Istanbul such as Art International, Contemporary Istanbul Art are pretty important on behalf of the visibility of the gallery and market popularity by arts community and seeking new markets. However,

some galleries are taken care to part in trade fairs organized abroad; it can be said given weight in international events. As known, such fairs are important events that bring together all the arts community and art collectors and give the opportunity to reach various collectors and artists from different countries for gallery as a commercial company. Each gallery is exhibiting to provide the audience the most private parts from the artists. Some galleries can also be mentioned in a competition is felt in these fairs.

Some mid-level galleries organize group exhibitions under a title with outside participations fee. The main purpose of this exhibition; to ensure the participation fee income, to increase the population of the gallery and having a spacious environment, bring together art lovers. The value of these art exhibitions may not be too much, but what is important for gallery is to create a business cycle and active participation.

In the public areas and central locations in Istanbul banner, panel and billboards placed the announcement of the social and cultural activities such as exhibition, panel have increased to reach people from all classes in recent years. These credentials are seen, as particularly, in the university, subway and public transportation. Reveal new ideas in the active sense of the gallery, processor, working, creating project an impression have become important on behalf of attention of competitors and collectors and both the contemporary art market and in corporate strategy.



Image: (Left) University Campus, Exhibition Poster, 2016. (Right) The exhibition poster that belongs to Borusan Contemporary in the subway billboard, 2016. Photography Archive: Tugba Renkci Tastan.

2. Institution, Organizations and Banks

In recent years, trends in the art market have attracted the attention of major holdings, enabled them to be involved and provided support and funding to the art institutions. These developments in the contemporary art market, the search for sponsorship of artists, large-scale international exhibitions and structuring of contemporary art in Turkey –especially in Istanbul- have increased the curiosity of art collection of holding companies. In this regard, main institutions in the field of contemporary art in Istanbul are as follows; Eczacıbaşı Holding, Sabancı Holding, Koc Holding, Dogus Holding, Borusan Holding and Zorlu Holding. Some of the art institution related to the holding companies and banks are; Akbank (Aksanat), Garanti Bank (SALT, Beyoğlu, Galata ve Ulus branch office), Koc Holding - Arter, Is Bank (Is Sanat) and

Borusan Holding “Borusan Contemporary is the first office museum in the field of contemporary art in Turkey” (Vural, 2016:46).

Strongly in commercial sectors but non-profit holdings and companies are in the leading position of contemporary art and artists. It should be also noted that, the number of museums and galleries which present the collections of art lover holding founders or managers have increased. For example, Sabanci University Sakip Sabanci Museum and Akbank Culture Art Center were established by Sabanci Holding.

Banks in West, by exhibiting their collections in museums, become an example to the banks in Turkey. Like rich painting and sculpture collections of Deutsche Bank in Germany, Turkish Central Bank and Turkish Rural Bank have pretty rich painting and sculpture collections.

Banks offer artists whom they sponsor a variety of opportunities as well. For instance; providing free place for artist an catalog-advertisement, transportation of works, insurance and purchasing work from artists. In this context, commercial institutions such as banks, support the artists and also develop their own collections.

Many reasons could be shown for this development. Main reason is to take an active role in cultural and modern art field, like any other field, with an entrepreneur understanding. In addition, with prestigious international fairs, increasing the recognition of the company and creating advertisement campaigns are important commercial activities for companies. Also, to show up in not only industrial sector but also in open-public galleries and museums with appropriate concept affects prestige of companies positively. More reasons or benefits can be given but it is highly known that, heart of modern art beats in Istanbul in Turkey.

Every year, in fall semester, modern art fairs such as Contemporary Art and ArtInternational held in Istanbul. Fromm Conceptual art to modern art, works in different styles meet artlovers and collectors in these prestigious fairs. Leading institutions in Turkey demonstrate a serious effort to consolidate their places in contemporary art. For example; events are spread over central and large areas, to attract the attention of the public in this way.

In these company supported galleries, it is possible to see curatorial based exhibitions. These exhibitions generally involve modern and conceptual art and they are organized by an expert curator who takes part in large projects. The interaction of the works in the exhibition with the life, integration into the global art scene is important for moving the exhibition project into the international environment. (Gül, 2016). Therefore, various exhibitions which discuss contemporary art with different concepts held continuously along the year.

In addition, Istanbul Biennial, with a past of 30 years, has been organized by cultural and art foundation connected a holding. Known as most significant organization of modern art, Istanbul Biennial has lead different forms of expression to develop, be exhibited and take place in the art market.

3. Istanbul Culture and Art Foundation and Istanbul Biennial

Turkey's one of leading organizations, Istanbul Culture and Art Foundation, is a subsidiary foundation of Eczacıbaşı Holding, has been established under management of Dr. Nejat Eczacıbaşı management in 1973 (Yardımcı, 2005:14-15). The interest of Eczacıbaşı family in culture and art has paved the way for establishing the organization. No doubt that, IFCA is the leading foundation among major contributors for dissemination of contemporary art. After 1980, they hosted music, cinema, and plastic arts exhibitions events. Today, Istanbul Culture and Art Foundation has become one of the leading art institutions in the country. Known as the most prestigious event of Today's Contemporary Turkish Art, the Biennial firstly carried out at the end of 80's, regardless of the other activities. From past to present, in Istanbul, they have been arranged and located in historically, traditional and modern spaces in Istanbul. Biyearly organized, local artists and many internationally named, famous, foreign artists have participated.

Biennials often create an important part of Istanbul contemporary art dynamic. It contributed a new dimension and understanding to Modern Turkish Art with the concept of "Art and Life" togetherness. According to Yardımcı (2005): "Panels, speeches, performances and activities such as film screenings and publications organized as part of the Biennial made them away at the traditional biennial exhibition model. Biennial's articulation format with space-time of the city has changed; the interaction between the city people has gained a new dimension. It is impossible to assess the biennial as a traditional exhibition in its present form" (p. 12-13).

According to Akay (2008): "The change is not market change, but something which concerns the market began after the biennale, held on 1995. Because, after 1995, a kind of visibility of the artists who make business in Turkey, has appeared in international area." The sociologist, by opening exhibitions of various artists in many countries abroad in subsequent years, has stated that foreign collectors bought the works in this exhibition (p. 24).

Unlike the other contemporary fairs, the sales concern is not seen in Istanbul Biennial. It helps the artist increase his/her value and his/her work's value increase. The majority of the work which will be exhibited is designed for exhibition space. They consist of installations that use non-permanence mediums. However, at the end of exhibition, there may be buyers for works.

Along with these, the Istanbul Biennial has a significant impact on formation of Istanbul contemporary art paradoxical in and debates on contemporary art. Istanbul Modern, one of the places where the Biennale takes place, plays a leading role in the discovery of contemporary art. Exhibitions for contemporary art which are carried out by the IFCA, often creates a social and artistic impact in the city. It can be said that it has a router role for free art market dynamics.

Istanbul Museum of Modern Art, subsidiary of Istanbul Culture and Art Foundation is first private museum of modern art in Turkey. It is one of the most prestigious art places. The museum collection is consist of works of artists who managed to obtain a permanent place in the free art market and attracted the attention of major collectors. Some of the works belong to the Museum, Eczacıbaşı family and the other collectors. The museum has important and valuable works of arts from Turkish Art History and world famous foreign artists. In addition, Istanbul Modern Art Museum also carries

out various events such as contemporary exhibition project and educational programs. The museum, as an institution, without any sales concern, achieves to be one of the major art museums of the city with exhibitions of modern and contemporary art managed emerges.

4.Auctions

Undoubtedly, auctions are one of the most important institutions those drive Istanbul contemporary art market in Turkey and in the world and. In general value of work is determined in accordance with supply-demand relationship in the market and the past sales data. In addition, collectors who participated in the auction and their demands, advertisement of the work, are other important elements in increasing the competitiveness and value of the works offered for sale auctions.

In the auction that will be held, predictions about the price of the works of some artists are made before the sale. The works that will be available for sale are previously determined, advertising campaigns for prominent names are carried out. Therefore, the more participation is better result for the auction. Online catalogs are organized to get information about artworks.

In recent years, the interest of collectors in Istanbul in particular in the Contemporary Turkish Art has increased. It has become a fiercely competitive factor in the auction. Leading names of business world has begun to be contemporary art collectors and made a kind of venture investment. Some of the leading collectors in Istanbul and in Turkey are; Sabanci family, Koc family, Eczacibasi family, Demiroren family, Borusan Holding Chairman Ahmet Kocabiyik, Mudo Inc.'s founder Mustafa Taviloglu, Yildiz Holding Chairman Murat Ulker, Elgiz Museum's founder Sevda and Can Elgiz. Some of these names usually play active role in auctions among the collectors.

An article about collector Mustafa Taviloglu, MUDO A.Ş.'s owner, says: "He hasn't bought old pictures for 10-plus years, he prefers recent works; he stays away from names have reached a certain maturity" (Bay, 2016:78). About collectors Sevda and Can Elgiz "Their works usually exist of abstract painting, large works and statues" (Özata, 2016:58).

In the auction, apart from the antique pieces, works of the artist who have an important place in the history of Turkish Art are take part. Some of the favorite names in Contemporary Turkish Art of Painting and Sculpture are: Burhan Dogancay with the work of "Blue Symphony" (1987) " world sales record of 2.77 million TL – 939,000 \$ in Turkish artists alive " Artam Antik Cor., Record sales, <http://www.artam.com/eser/mavi-senfonu-6e5c/0>), Erol Akyavas, Bedri Rahmi Eyuboglu, Cihat Burak, Komet, Adnan Coker, Fahrel Nisa Zeid, Mubin Orhon, Ali Celebi, Fikret Mualla, Abidin Dino, Ergin Inan etc. This list can be extended. The thing that makes these pictures special; color in their works, composition, format issues are in a unique style. These artists also represent Contemporary Turkish Painting Art in terms of their period.

Artam Antik Corporation and Beyaz Auction are one of the major auction companies in contemporary and modern art in Istanbul. In 2013, the Turkish artist Erol Akyavas's the "Kaaba" table has had the most valuable contemporary works record,

sold of 2.9 million Lira – 983,000 \$" (Artam Antik Cor., Online News, <http://www.artam.com/haber/yeni-yila-girerken-18e5>). Erol Akyavas's works, sold in very high price, were included prominent among the works in the auction. Contemporary Turkish Art mobility has increased substantially in recent years on the market. These sales found a great echo in media in terms of sales record in Turkey. Even the starting price is too high in this auction. Price bids from buyers determine the value of the artwork in the market.

Having the opinion that the excessive works price rise in some periods must sit on the balance, according to Sotheby's' Oya Delahaye, the possible cause of visual art has little support at the international level in Turkey is this imbalance. Because, domestic collectors look for a safe port themselves, too.

The report related to the auction that is carried 288th time at the date of 7 November 2015 as follows: "In the auction, held at Antik Corporation Auction House and with sales rate of 95%, highest sales ratio average, Bedri Rahmi Eyübođlu's "Çiftçi Ailesi / Farmer Family" sold at 415,000TL -139,000 \$ and became most valuable work of the auction. Erol Akyavaş's "Zaman Herşeyi Siler / The Time Wipes Everything" work at 380,000 TL – 129,000 \$, Adnan Çoker 215,000 TL – 73,000 \$, Orhan Peker 200,000 TL – 68,000 \$, Ferruh Başađa 190,000 TL – 64,500 \$ got sales price. Ömer Uluç 190,000 TL – 64,500 \$, Mehmet Güteryüz 180,000 TL – 61,000 \$, Ergin İnan 145,000 TL- 49,000 \$ were sold. (Artam Cor., 288.th Auction, Contemporary Artworks, <http://artam.com/muzayede/288-muzayede-cagdas-sanat-eserleri-16cc>).

Conclusion

Contemporary art in Turkey seems to be developing about the last thirty years. The main center of the state is Istanbul that has been a cultural capital for centuries. This situation in Istanbul is also affects the understanding of art in Anatolia, is a pioneer in Turkey in this context. Some galleries in the art market can be said given both modern places to conceptual art focused exhibitions.

The topics that are often discussed by artists in Turkey; popular culture, social life, gender, body, installation, identity and so on. Except these, works of plastic arts, visual arts and media plastic arts are exhibited and offered for sale. This situation has enable to increased interest the narrative methods for taking concrete steps in postmodern and conceptual art. Thus, collectors who are interested to works in the social, cultural, political fields of contemporary art have helped about create an awareness what contemporary art is. In public, the fairs and exhibitions those are creative and awareness with effective marketing and advertising activities in the city have taken a turn attracts the attention, even unrelated of people with art from the society. In fact, to be such contemporary art fairs and exhibitions has added prestige to individual in social sense.

The art lover families who have quite good economic situation and famous people world of music, cinema, theater or show with collection of the interest they have been in the exhibition or art fair opening ceremony. Even some of the galleries invite them the opening cocktails to increase the exhibition or event of advertising through media and to draw attentions. This situation has not included only the art and television, also from the food industry to the automotive sector; some of holdings, companies and organizations of interests have increased and followed the art works closely. The interest of contemporary art can be also said a beginning new trend interagency.

Famous collectors in Istanbul, while exclusive galleries, auctions and fairs take turn to contemporary art in the country, the rate of sales and management strategies of institutions can be considered as a source of formations in the market. Financial value attributed has considerably increased to known famous artists and painters' works in Turkish Contemporary Arts. Relatively the little collectors have been directed to the artists whose works are sold at affordable price. This organizations that tend to young artists in the state has entered into ways to promising to young artist's works which they see potential and promising talent to buyers.

Besides all these of contemporary art in Istanbul can be said that currently only stay in a certain environment. There are positive opinions about spreading of contemporary art in Istanbul and the exhibitions and events will produce and increase in the near future in this direction. Indeed, the increase in visibility of Turkish artists in the global art scene is among important developments. The mass media has a very large share in providing their environment both in the development of artists in arts education with the development of technology. The art market will proceed towards more advanced plans as parallel the artist's knowledge. Large or small art collectors and art lovers of participations from the world of business will increase in the coming period.

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