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A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF "CONSERVATIVE ART" DISCOURSE WITHIN
THE CONTEXT OF AKP CULTURAL POLICY: YEDITEPE BIENNIAL

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AKP KÜLTÜR POLİTİKALARI BAĞLAMINDA “MUHAFAZAKÂR SANAT”
SÖYLEMİNİN ELEŞTİREL ANALİZİ: YEDİTEPE BİENALİ

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AKP: Justice and Development Party

CHP: The Republican People's Party

IKSV: Istanbul Foundation For Culture and Arts

ANAP: Motherland Party

EU: European Union

UN: The United Nations

UNESCO: The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

CI: Contemporary Istanbul

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ABSTRACT

This thesis focuses on the much-debated “Conservative Art” concept emerged in 2012 in Turkey, discussed among the art and literary communities at that time, reflections of the debate to the present and the “Conservative Art” concept within the context of cultural policies. Originated in France as a response to Enlightenment ideas and innovations brought by the French Revolution, the roots of “Conservative” thought in Turkey reaches until the Ottoman period and continued in the first years of the Republic of Turkey, especially up to the reactions to secularist implementations by the one-party regime. Lastly, AKP, which has emerged from political Islamist tradition, has positioned its party as the representative of the "conservative democracy" movement. The codes and symbols based on the tradition in which they come from and the concepts arising from their relationship with modernity will base the discussions on “conservative art”. The main purpose of this study is to investigate whether the reproduction of the power of the governing party tends to change the cultural atmosphere and turns its power into a cultural hegemony or not. In the light of in-depth interviews with five different people from different segments, the tendency of the AKP government on effecting cultural change is examined through the Yeditepe Biennial sample. Emphasizing the importance of traditional arts and primordial civilization, Yeditepe Biennial, the very first held in March 2018, is an example of the last point in the conservative culture and art discussions. This biennial, which is one of the steps taken by the government in order to dominate culture and arts, has turned into a political tool with its rhetorics.

Keywords: Conservatism, Conservative Art, AKP Cultural Policies, Local and National, Yeditepe Biennial

ÖZET

Bu tez, Türkiye’de 2012 yılında ortaya çıkan, sanat ve edebiyat çevrelerinde o dönemde çok tartışılan “Muhafazakar Sanat” kavramı, tartışmanın günümüze yansımaları ve kültür politikaları bağlamı üzerine odaklanmıştır. Fransız İhtilali sonrasında Batı’da aydınlanmacı düşüncelere ve ihtilalin getirdiği yeniliklere karşı oluşan bir tepki olarak ortaya çıkan muhafazakarlığın Türkiye’deki temelleri, Tek Parti dönemi laiklik uygulamalarına verilen tepkilerden, Türkiye Cumhuriyeti’nin ilk yıllarına ve hatta Osmanlı dönemindeki tartışmalara dek uzanır. Yıllar içinde siyasal İslamcı gelenekten doğan AKP "muhafazakar demokrasi" akımının temsilcisi olarak partisini konumlandırmıştır. İçinden çıktığı geleneğin dayandığı kod ve semboller ve bunların modernlikle kurduğu ilişkiden doğan kavramlar “muhafazakar sanat” tartışmalarını temellendirir. Bu çalışmanın temel amacı, iktidarın yeniden üretiminde gücü elde eden iktidar partisinin kültürel atmosferi farklılaştırma eğilimde olup olmadığını, gücünü kültürel hegemonya aracına dönüştürmeye çalışıp çalışmadığını araştırmaktır. Farklı kesimlerden beş ayrı kişi ile gerçekleşen derinlemesine görüşmeler ışığında, AKP özelinde iktidarın kültürün değişimine etki etme eğiliminde olduğu Yeditepe Bienali örneklemini üzerinden incelenmiştir. Geleneksel sanatların ve kadim medeniyetin önemi sıkça vurgulanan ve Mart 2018’de ilki gerçekleşen “Yeditepe Bienali”, muhafazakar kültür ve sanat tartışmalarının son örneklerindedir. Kültürde hakim olmak adına hükümetin atmış olduğu adımlardan biri olan bu bienal, içerdiği söylemleri ile politik bir araca dönüşmüştür.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Muhafazakarlık, Muhafazakar Sanat, AKP Kültür Politikaları, Yerli ve Milli, Yeditepe Bienali

INTRODUCTION

As the key word of this study, "Conservatism" is a highly debated concept and primarily considered in its political meanings, it has also become the topic of art and cultural politics in Turkey. Debated by the art and literary community, the concept became a significant focus of attention in 2012. By taking its impact on the policies in question for granted, this thesis focuses on the greater complexity in the transformation of the conservative discourses in Turkey. The influence of what has been called "conservative art" remained on the agenda up until now.

In this introduction, I will explain the main problematic, order, problems faced, significance and methodology of this study. In the most general manner, the subject of this thesis is 'conservative art' debates in Turkey. However, this is rather indefinite claim that needs to enlarge the scope of its perspectives. It will be discussed within the context of AKP cultural policies with a broader perspective including the historical roots of conservatism in the world and specifically in Turkey. To investigate the statement of 'conservative art,' I will examine a case study.

AKP's party leader and the President of Turkey, Recep Tayyip Erdogan had an evaluation and auto-criticism for his party in 2017: "We have been in power for 14 years without interruption but we could not achieve authority on social and cultural life" (CNN Türk, 2017). Right after that speech, AKP interference attempts on culture and arts has accelerated. What has influenced me to work on this topic is Yeditepe Biennial held by Fatih Municipality under the auspices of the Presidency in 2018. The rhetorics of the Biennial is also remarkable in the sense that they are reflecting the perception of AKP government on culture and art. So, I chose the Yeditepe Biennial as my case study in this thesis.

The aim of this thesis is three fold: First, it is aimed to present a critique of the dominant ‘conservative art’ debate and to provide a description of it as it is perceived by the literary and art community. Secondly, it is aimed to frame this description absolutely not to form a base for it but rather to understand the intervention attempts of the government on culture and arts. Lastly, in particular, the philosophy of the AKP government which appears in the art scene in different ways since 2002, is reflected in the latest attempts especially in Yeditepe Biennial in which the contemporary art scene is defined from the eyes of the government. In the light of cultural power discussions, the biennial is the epitome of the domination attempt of the government on cultural area.

In the introduction part of this thesis, the significance of this study will be put forward in order to express the justification of it. The importance of the research will be revealed by showing its originality and separated parts from other studies. It includes what kind of approach, perspective or method will be put forward for this study. This part also discusses the problems faced during this study such as sourcing, identification, limitation, and positioning problems.

The origin of conservatism is introduced in the first chapter. The definitions of “conservative” and “conservatism” which have variety of meanings will be given in this chapter. Occurred as a response to the Enlightenment ideas and innovations brought by the French Revolution, “Conservatism” has become a term used by politicians in a wide variety of fields up until today. A historical glance to the rise of conservatism is also located in the first chapter. To go deeper, a literature review is conducted to give a comprehensive overview on the topic. The last two subchapters addresses the origins of conservative thought in Turkey which has started since the first years of the Republic of Turkey, especially with the secularist policies of the one-party regime. As a conservative democrat party AKP will be analysed through the party’s official documents with their own definitions

and terms on their specified conservative attitudes. Emerging from political Islamist and the conservative tradition, AKP has directed the cultural policies of Turkey towards the so-called primordial (kadim) arts since they came to power. A historical overview of AKP cultural policies and the so-called ancient arts will be given to better understand the concept of so-called “conservative art”.

The second chapter focuses on the conservative art debates in Turkey. The discussions initiated by the Presidency General Secretary Mustafa Isen in 2012 were flared up in a little while with the publication of “The Manifestation of Conservative Art” by Iskender Pala. The beginning, definitions, content and scope of “Conservative Art” in the debates will be revealed in this section including the Conservative Art Manifestation and the following critiques made by arts and literary communities. Lastly, the chapter will end by looking at the definition of the new discourse “local and national” which will be given as the opponent of ‘global’ but also as a way of defining its self.

As the unique example of the “us versus them” argumentation verbalized by Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, so-called local and national “Yeditepe Biennial,” the very first held in March 2018 and the second has not been repeated yet, will be given as a case study on conservative art discussions in Turkey in the third chapter of this study. Espoused by five in-depth interviews, the biennial will be analyzed from the starting point to its last status in detail. The biennial notes and the visual documentations will also be put forward in this chapter. The concluding chapter of this thesis offers a compilation on all these above mentioned topics by highlighting the major findings of this thesis and giving place to the possible questions.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The Republic of Turkey went through different stages of the cultural policies and interventions that are related to art till now. Art as a political instrument has been used to protect the legitimacy of the governments. Despite the below-mentioned limitations, the inferences of this thesis will redound on how arts and culture have been tried to be shaped in the recent political climate of Turkey. The mainstream art environment has resulted in government having reassess its authority. Especially in the last 10 years, interventions are being imposed to the art world by the government. The necessity of “conservative art” proposed by the government is a matter of debate that tend to sink into confusion between those who wants politics everywhere and those who don’t want to see them anywhere. This study shows us how the reproduction of the power of the governing party tends to differ the cultural atmosphere as soon as they came to the power. It is also a rich ground to analyze not just the current debate on art but also to perceive the historical roots of the issue. The research is aimed at supplementing the literature on the ‘conservative art’ discourse within the context of AKP cultural policies.

There are remarkable books and articles focusing on conservatism in Turkey but they all remain limited at one point in considering the arts & culture in particular. Even though all of the researches on conservatism have a major contribution to the academic field, they are mostly conducted before 2010s. It is a necessity to have a fresh look within the academic field. Envisaged that this thesis could furthermore contribute to the academic literature on the current government’s perspectives on art. Also, the interviews with the curator and an artist attended to the Yeditepe Biennial, which is the case study of this thesis, will present the perspectives and the criticisms of the people who are included in this project.

Also, I would like to add my personal reason for focusing on the “conservative art” debate. The first reason is that I have chance to observe the developments on arts in Turkey because I am working in an art gallery for 4 years. The Turkish Art is expanding in such a connected world that we live today independently of the state’s prescribed system. As a professional who shoulder the responsibility of the artists I work with and as a person who see art as a free zone, I feel myself obliged to contribute this debate in an academic way. It is because, this issue has begun to be forgotten over time as any issue in Turkey, the debate lost its value but it is still worth to approach this subject academically. Although it has been nearly 8 years since this debate occurred, I want to create a written text about it to not make it forgotten. It will be a note on *history*.

LIMITATIONS

While there is a so-called manifestation on conservative art, the opportunity to follow the government's perspectives on this issue is through only from the discourses. There is no official pronouncement or publication on “conservative art” claim. Almost all discussions were made through on the newspaper by the literary community or on some meeting speeches by the government officials. It might be because some artists and the art critics did not take it serious at that time, even some people from art circle haven’t heard it yet. So, the debate has not moved to an academic level.

This study is aware of the risk of identification which leads the writer to an over-generalization by doing specifications like “conservative,” “non-conservative,” “our primordial (kadim) civilization,” “our values” and such. With the awareness regarding the generalization, the choice of the terms is under my responsibility. Conservatism is a political term in the global sense, and so, it is hard to describe it

in the sense of art. Also, the translations of those words entails a risk of not defining them correctly as peculiar to their historical and political context. Nonetheless, by considering this risk, it is indispensable to use such words as long as they are critically put in a sentence. Indeed, the word “conservative” will be given with its multiple meanings from the different dictionaries and from the different time periods. Inevitably, the question of “Are these (Western) concepts far from explaining us?” will also come to our minds.

It is crucial to know that the culture is a living organism which interacts with ideas and practices consistently. Yet, a text is in front of us with all its limits but culture is actually in interaction with numerous things; art, politics, social life, economics which are all associated with each other. At this point, it is considerably difficult for the writer to determine the framework of a study on culture. By taking the topic of this study, “conservative art”, in consideration, I was fully aware of the fact that art as the manifestation of culture, is inevitably embedded with the lives of the people who involved in arts either as artist, collectors, viewers, art critics and so on, and their prosperity levels, and also the state's economy, cultural policies, and its position on the global world. Although I was well aware that art has such a multivariate structure, this study is shaped by recognizing the necessity of putting some limits.

On the one hand, it is of note to mention the ambiguity and the dilemma on writings and hermeneutics of the history of political thought in Turkey, in global more general sense. At one point, the position of quite a few political historians are obvious in their studies. This creates one-sided perspective for a researcher. On the other hand, it needs to be highlighted that all definitions are reductive. All generalizations and classifications are philosophically problematic because of the fact that there is not only black and white, but also grays and other colors. The classifications and definitions that I used in this thesis are not indisputable.

METHODOLOGY

Since relatively less is written about the “conservative art” debate in Turkey, an explorative qualitative research approach was chosen for this thesis. Compared to the quantitative approach, qualitative data provides deep insights into the case by considering context-specific factors, complex patterns and multivariate structures. To approach this topic from a qualitative and historical perspective allows me discovering the background of the issue and developing my own thesis. In line with this, this research is conducted by aiming the exploration of the logic of the governing party by focusing on the concept of “conservative art” stated by a government official. Followed by the discussions on the newspapers and by tracing the AKP government’s policies on culture and arts, all the discussions and the policies draw a frame for the general perspective of the government upon arts and culture.

The main problematic of the study is to search out how the reproduction of the power of the governing party tends to use its power in establishing the mechanisms of cultural hegemony and to change the cultural atmosphere against its predecessors. A subassumption is that whether the conservativeness in the political realm reverberates the cultural and artistic tastes of the society or not. To specify these questions, this thesis is focusing on the ‘conservative art’ debates in Turkey, the reasons for choosing the word “conservative” with its historical background and the practices on this symbolic reference on art. Arts and culture which have dynamic, unrestrained, and changing features are trying to shaped and reconstructed by the AKP government. The Yeditepe Biennial held with the auspices of the Presidency in 2018 will be put forward in detail as the reflection of the above-mentioned assumptions.

Firstly, with the purpose of taking a macro picture, it is required to begin by trying to answer to the question of “*what is conservatism?*”. So, first conservatism, then the conservative art discussions are focused in the thesis respectively. In the following chapters, the historical background of conservative thought specifically in Turkey and the “conservative art” debates which was proposed by a government official are discussed. To strengthen the theoretical framework of the study, a documentary analysis by working on the items written or produced on paper, such as newspaper articles, Government policy records, leaflets, and reports of meetings (Şuras) and also the items in different media including paintings, videos, websites, and photographs has been done.

In addition, the recent policies of the government on arts and culture, related news on conservative art, discussions made by the arts and literary community, speeches and declarations of the President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and the other officials, and the reactions coming from academics, literary, and artists’ community have also been followed and gathered. Furthermore, in order to trace the “conservative art” debate, the websites and the printed versions of the publications from the conservative side have been scanned like *The Journal of Conservative Thought*¹ and *Gelenekten Geleceğe Culture and Arts Journal*².

In order to enlarge the scope of the field, observations on a specific case, the Yeditepe Biennial, were made through photography. I attended to the first and last Yeditepe Biennial held on the dates between 31.03 - 15.05.2018, the second of which haven’t repeated yet. I collected photographs and printed materials from the biennial which will be placed in the appendix section.

¹ The Journal of Conservative Thought is a national refereed academic journal that is published every six months and includes translated articles, book analysis and themed articles. It is a scientific journal indexed by Tübitak-ULAKBİM.

² Gelenekten Geleceğe is a quarterly journal which covers the years 2013-2016 whose main purpose is to reveal traditional and ancient values. Mustafa Isen, Besim Dellaloğlu, Beşir Ayvazoğlu, Hasan Bülent Kahraman, and Hilmi Yavuz are on the advisory board.

For offering more complete framework about the conservative art debate and the reflections of the government's attitude on culture and arts, in-depth interviewing which offers opportunity to capture more detailed information and deep understanding of a specific subject is chosen as a qualitative research technique. To shed light upon the issue, this study is supported with five in-depth interviews with the people who have different perspectives on conservative art debate. This has a prime importance in such an intricate subject where art and politics are embedded. The informants were selected from different disciplines of the art field and from various positions and were deliberately chosen to be as different as possible from each other. The dialogue with the participants by maintaining the balance, gives more value to the thesis.

The first interview was done with the curator of the Yeditepe Biennial on May 18, 2018, immediately after the Biennial was over on May 15, 2018. While the impact of the Biennial was still on, it was important to speak with the curator Serhat Kula about the starting point, the content, and the outcomes in a 2-hour interview. While the conversation with the curator was of great priority in terms of understanding the subject at first hand, the opinions of the artists either from traditional or contemporary ecole are also included in this thesis in order to look at the subject from the artistic perspective. In the interview with the Kat'1 Artist and the Biennial Attendee Ayşe Kiraz held on May 8, 2020, there are important details about the application processes to the Biennial, the difficulties she was experienced in the operation, her perspective on the subject, and many issues she likes and dislikes. So, this thesis is highly important in including the ideas of the people who personally organized and participated in the Biennial.

In addition, interviews were made with 3 artists who adopted the painting technique and made a career in that field but did not participate in the Biennial. The first interview was done on May 6, 2020, with the artist İsmail Acar, a very

well known artist among the art circle but also very famous with his paintings including Turkish and Islamic patterns among the conservative side. He clearly shows his support to the President and even asserts himself as the one who expressed conservative art concept first in 1997. Although not attended to the Biennial, Acar's opinions on the conservative art debate are worth to hear in terms of his closeness to the conservative segment and of his position in contemporizing the traditional and historical elements via painting.

The second interview was done on May 26, 2020, with Prof. Dr. Halil Akdeniz who is a contemporary artist and an academician at Işık University. Over the years, he served in various positions at universities as a department head, faculty board member, university senate member, and as a member of university board of directors. Between 1996-2001, he worked as the Cultural Consultant of the Turkish Embassy in Bonn and Berlin and in 2001 worked as the Consultant of Ministry of Culture. While he has published books on the history of Turkish painting, he, as an artist, focuses on the cultural signs in his paintings in a contemporary way. Both an artist and a professor who represent the Republic of Turkey as a consultant in Germany, the opinions of Prof. Akdeniz on the conservative art debate are valuable in seeing the subject from a broader perspective.

The third interview was done on May 26, 2020, with a contemporary artist Nadide Akdeniz who has an interest on 'tradition' in art. The artist adopts a critical and ironic style about nature in her paintings and her compositions do not embrace a traditional narration. As a well-known contemporary artist, her views on the conservative art issue are venerable in looking differently to the topic in terms of belongingness of the tradition. All these above-mentioned interviews can be seen in the appendix section at the end of this thesis.

1. CONSERVATISM IN TURKEY

1.1. GENERAL OVERVIEW

1.1.1. Definitions of the Word ‘Conservative’

The term “conservative” (translated as ‘muhafazakâr’ in Turkish) has several meanings used in different parts of our daily life. Either it describes people or society that does not trust change but holds traditional values as a lifestyle, or in a political context, it means preserving the existing institutions or conditions.

Etymologically, in the late 14th century, the word ‘conservatif’ used in Middle French refers to the tendency to preserve or protect rooted from the Medieval Latin conservativus with the meaning ‘who keeps’, the later form of Latin conservatus with the meaning ‘conserver’ (“Conservatif,” In *Centre National de Ressources Textuelles et Lexicales*). As a modern political tradition, conservatism is used to describe being opposed to change in the institutions and in the preexisting conditions. Although it is identified with one of the classic political thinkers, Whig politician, and the father of conservatism Edmund Burke’s opposition to the ideas and principles of the French Revolution (1789), the word “conservative” is not used in his writings. Politically, the first use of the term “conservative” was in the early nineteenth century and formulated by the followers of Edmund Burke such as François-René de Chateaubriand, the publisher of the journal “Le Conservateur” published between October 1818 - March 1820.³

Marked the history of political thought in the last 200 years, a tradition of thought and an ideology in Western history, “Conservatism” is a frequently used word in

³ Conservative as the name of a British political faction was first appeared in an 1830 issue of the "Quarterly Review," in an article attributed to John Wilson Croker.

Turkey either to praise or to criticize, but actually its meaning is not known very well. Broadly speaking, it is considered as being against the change and advocating the status quo. It is used as synonym of reactionism which is tutuculuk in Turkish in a contemptuous way. Because of the fact that it seems equal with reactionism, it is also understood as an obstacle for advancement.

Conservative, as defined by the Redhouse English-Turkish dictionary, is “tutucu, muhafazakâr” in Turkish which can be translated as “reactionist, conservative” in English. Conservative, as a noun, is described as the conservative party member in England. (“Conservatism,” 1979: 202)

The dictionary that the most reference are given by Turkish intellectuals, is Kubbealtı Lügatı. “Conservatism” is defined as the first meaning “the situation of trying to preserve national, moral values, artworks, customs and traditions, and of keeping them alive” and the second meaning is “reactionary, religiousness”. (“Conservatism,” 2005: 2115) “Conservative” has two meanings described as those “who committed to national, moral values, artworks, customs and traditions and who want to protect and maintain them and keep them alive,” and those “who cannot keep up with innovations, even if they are positive, and who wants to keep the existing order, thoughts and institutions as it is, reactionist, religious.” (“Conservative,” 2005: 2115)

In the Ötüken Turkish Dictionary, “Conservatism” is described as “the attitude of those who are against any evolution or innovation; being conservative; reactionary.” (“Conservatism,” 2007: 3278) Followingly, “Conservative” is identified as the one “who wants to protect the social order, thoughts and institutions of the past; reactionist” and as in the second meaning it is the one “who wishes to preserve what is currently existing and not to accept innovations; reactionist.” (“Conservative,” 2007: 3278)

Turkish Dictionary published by Yapı Kredi Press redirects directly to the word “Tutucu” as the equivalent of conservative. Tutucu (Reactionist in English) is “people or thought which opposes all kinds of social and cultural changes and wants the established social and cultural order to continue as it is, non-revolutionary, adherer of the past.” (“Conservative,” 1995: 1264) In the Turkish Thesaurus, “Conservative” is “who is reactionist”. Its antonym is “open to change, progressive, liberal, modern.” (“Conservative,” 2013: 494) Similarly, The Dictionary of Turkish Language Association defines it as “Reactionist.” (“Conservative,” 1983: 1414)

As it is seen in the definitions partaking in the above-mentioned dictionaries, “Conservatism” is substantially translated in Turkish as “reactionism”. The perception of conservatism in Turkey is in the direction of being right-wing, illiberal, religious, reactionist, even bigoted. As many subjects in social sciences, it is not easy to make a definite judgement on conservatism. The first thing we should keep in mind is that the evolution of word usage, in other words semantic change, may alter in time with a variety of senses and connotations. It means that a modern meaning of a word can be totally different from the original usage. Secondly, it is necessary to state that the perception of words varies from country to country like in our case; more liberal English conservatism, more authoritative German conservatism, more reactive French conservatism, Turkish conservatism, etc. It is also quite comprehensive in terms of directing criticisms to all areas of social life. This leads to the formation of different conservative perspectives and trends like classic / traditional conservatism, neo-conservatism, ultra-conservatism, liberal conservatism, etc.

1.1.2. The Birth of Conservatism

The examination of the historical background of conservatism would be meaningful to understand the starting point and the today's context of the concept. The Modern Western World has become an arena for the clash of ideologies such as liberalism, socialism, marxism, secularism, fascism in the last two hundred years. These clashes have occurred aftermath of The French Revolution, which shattered the social structure of the Middle Ages and established a new order based on Enlightenment and rationalist ideas. The social unrest turned out to a violent upheaval with the aim of ruling out the traditionally and hierarchically structured the *ancien régime* in France namely the monarchy, the privileged nobility, the politically powerful Catholic Church and so. The aim of the revolutionaries was to established a new reason-based regime on the grounds of advance ideals like liberty, equality, progress, constitutional government, and the separation of church and state.

As an intellectual and social movement *par excellence*, the Enlightenment which is the outcome of the social unrest in France in the 18th century, paved the way of new thinking concerning nature, humanity, and reason against the old beliefs, God, tradition, customs and revelation. With the idea of rationalism, reason was put in the center of life worthily called in the "Age of Reason" as having its origin in the Scientific Revolution of 16th and 17th centuries. The success of the new science methods was in explaining the world independently from theology or God, but with the nature's own principles with its force to change the old and to bring the new.

The radical consequences of the Revolution for the people have an effect on not only in France but also in other parts of the world. This ended up with the reactionary ideas to the Enlightenment ideas and rationalism by the religious,

romantic and conservative thinkers. That is to say, the emergence of the concept “conservatism” is rooted back to the Enlightenment Era. It was a natural consequence of the critical environment of the French Revolution which triggered social, political, and cultural transformations first and foremost in Europe but extended out of its boundaries.

1.1.3. The Ideological Background and Interpretations

During the time of the French Revolution, the most critical reaction came from a British thinker and a statesman who began to work in the British Parliament in 1765, Edmund Burke. As the famous representative of conservatism, he questioned the devastating effects of the French Revolution, and examined the reasons behind the revolution and tried to show the dilemmas of militant rationalism. Burke’s criticism against the French Revolution has influenced hundreds of thinkers and it has turned to the most fundamental reference on the subject of “conservatism” until today. Known as the father of conservatism, the inspirational scholar Edmund Burke criticized the theoretical notion about the rights of man. (Burke, 1982)

The one of the most influential philosophers, Immanuel Kant (1724 - 1804) described the Enlightenment as ‘man’s release from his self incurred immaturity’ through the use of reason without guidance from others (Outram, 1995: 2) and the well-known Enlightenment writer Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712 - 1778) believed in "natural rights" of man which can lead creating the perfect society. (Noone, 1972: 23-42) For certain thinkers of the time, the Enlightenment led to the captivity of man rather than freeing him contrary to what is expected. As one of the same mind, Edmund Burke, criticizing Rousseau’s notion of a social contract between the sovereign and the people: “Society is indeed a contract. The State is a

partnership not only between those who are living, but between those who are living, those who are dead, and those who are to be born.” (Clark, 2001: 261)

According to Burke, social life is not only driven by the rational activity of man, but requires other complimentary elements such as feelings, habits, emotional bonds, customs and traditions. Sudden changes may induce to the dissolution of old venerable institutions and more dramatically it will deal a major blow to the continuity of history. (Burke, 1982: 139)

The aim of the revolutionary thought that Burke opposed was to detach the peoples of the world from the chain of the past. However, Burke advocates the change in the formation of the political society without disturbing the harmony of the existing order. He was against the idea of ignoring guidance and prejudice. In his belief, the existing orders contain the habits of people, which cannot be ignored. Although changes and reforms might be needed, it is not required to destruct the legacy of the nation’s forefathers. Rather, the wisdom of the past generations should contribute to the ruling of today. (Burke, 1982: 28)

Burke insists on the limitations of logic in relation to the complexity of things. If people realistically realize the lack of human mind and follow respectfully what their ancestors have created and lived, then they can become the active members of their social destiny. (Thomson, & Beales, 1969: 122)

Burke argued that experienced in time widely excepted behavior patterns also represents some sort of mind. Burke described society as an organism extending into the past and the future rather than a mechanical union. Any external intervention may cause a break down in such organism and destroy the entire structure that a civilization built. It is possible that societies stand in need for

gradual changes but the French Revolution, Burke indicated, has no chance of success by overthrowing the years of experience. (Burke, 1982: 58)

Burke has developed 6 themes as the attributes of conservative thinking in *Reflections*. Zürcher summarizes these themes by citing Hugu Cecil's *Conservatism* monographs⁴ (1912) : 1. The importance of religion 2. The danger of being unfair to people in the name of reform 3. The reality and desirability of rank and duty order 4. The immunity of private property 5. The view that the society is an organism rather than a mechanism 6. The value of established continuity with the past. (Zürcher, 2017: 40)

Burke's attitudes towards the French Revolution made him the father of conservatism. Yet, one of the most important commentators of modern conservatism is Robert Nisbet. For him, began as a reaction to the Enlightenment's rationalist projects, conservatism was purely a modern ideology centered upon the human person. In his book, *Conservatism: Dream and Reality*, Nisbet's antistatist and social pluralist conception of conservatism voices criticism upon the one who called themselves conservative. For instance, antistatist libertarians are not conservatives because they are not social pluralist. Besides militarists, populists and some new-right groups are not conservative too because they are trying to build up the power of the state or to take control of the state in order to impose their moral vision. (Nisbet, 1986: 110-114)

One of the main discussion points on conservatism is whether conservatism is ideology or a tradition of thought. Nisbet defines conservatism on the context of ideology which refers, in a general sense, to a system of social, moral, economic, and cultural ideas and ideals referenced as politics and political power. (Safi,

⁴ Hugh Cecil, whose *Conservatism* (1912) was among the first monographs to define Conservative identity and to trace Conservatism's origins to Burke.

2005: 13) Heywood also describes conservatism as the most modest ideology among the other and claims that because of its modesty, it also has a flexible feature which enables it to be in an ongoing development process. (Heywood, 2010: 83-86)

Mannheim considers conservatism in the context of ideology because it depends on a certain time and social situation. According to Mannheim, liberalism addresses bourgeois ideology, socialism proletarian ideology, and conservatism addresses the aristocratic ideology. As Zürcher states that Karl Mannheim, distinguished representative of European conservatism, sees the transition from semi-conscious traditionalism to conscious political conservatism as a result of the emergence of class-based capitalist society, and points out that some factors must emerge together, which will create the necessary historical and sociological conditions for the birth of conservatism. (Zürcher, 2017: 40)

The symbol of cultural conservatism, a British poet of the 20th century, T. S. Eliot maintained that only who listen to the dead can capture the meaning in their beliefs. “He makes clear that the most important thing that future generations must inherit from us is culture. Culture is the repository of an experience which is at once local and placeless, present and timeless, the experience of a community as sanctified by time.” (Scruton, 2006: 207)

One of the most important representatives of the conservative thought tradition Russell Kirk's “The Conservative Mind: From Burke to Santayana” is Kirk's doctoral dissertation first published in 1953 but more importantly it is a prominent book of Conservatism. Kirk developed six canons of conservatism. In brief: 1) Belief in a transcendent order based in tradition, divine revelation, or natural law. 2) Affection for the variety and mystery of human existence rather than the uniformity, equality and the pragmatical aims of the more radical systems. 3)

Belief on a society requires orders and classes that emphasize natural distinctions. 4) Belief that property and freedom are closely linked which means that bringing people economically at the same level is not an economic progress. 5) Faith in custom, convention, and prescription, and distrust in sophists, accountants and economists who want to rebuild society according to an abstract design. 6) Recognition that innovation must be tied to existing traditions and customs, which entails a respect for the political value of prudence. Hasty innovations can be devastating for the society. (Kirk, 1960: 8-9)

These cannons that Russel Kirk bases his formulations about conservatism mainly on history and tradition are referenced a lot, even in our Turkish case. It can be said that from Edmund Burke to his followers, the essential themes of political conservatism remained the same by concerning history, tradition, property, authority, liberty and religion.

1.2. PERCEPTION OF CONSERVATISM IN TURKEY

Generally, we come across with two main perceptions of conservatism: political conservatism and philosophical conservatism. The philosophical conservatism born out of British conservatism in which social changes in the UK occur spontaneously, without a rupture between changes and tradition. In philosophical conservatism, society is seen as an organism; interventions and social engineering practices brought by a revolution are disapproved. Another example of conservatism bringing change over time has been experienced in the American Revolution against the British to protect the organic structure of American society.

Political conservatism, on the other hand, originated in the French Revolution as a reaction to the sudden changes that took place during the revolution. The deterioration of the organic structure of the society, the disruption of continuity

between the past and the future brought a defense of tradition against change. So, in the countries where changes take place by a revolution, conservatism came out in a reactionary way.

There is also a philosophical-based German version of conservatism which has philosophical features as in the Anglo Saxon conservatism and it has not a practical political style. Known for his sensitivity on the state and authority, Hegel is regarded as one of the German conservative thinkers. He puts the state at the center of all spheres of social life and accepting all the areas of life as an integral part of the state. (Çaha, 2004: 17-18)

Although conservatism incapsulates such perceptions, it needs to beware of restricting conservatism on just three main lines. As it is seen, conservative thought and politics are originated from Europe. Conservatism owes its existence to the French Revolution and as a political thought, it is one of the breaking points of the Modernity. Over years, a version of political style has developed based on the conservative thinking and it formed a reference point for some political parties. In fact, it has multiple variations differs from society to society.

A question is needed to be highlighted: Is conservatism a universal phenomenon or is it bounded with personal or collective psychologies? As sociologists define like ‘non-western modernizations’ (Göle, 2000) or ‘multiple modernities’ (Einsensdadt, 2005), conservatism also has emerged not only in one form but rather emerged in different forms in the different societies.

For Çaha, when we look at Turkish conservatism, we can see almost all the features of conservative perspectives emerged in Europe. From liberal Anglo-Saxon conservatism to the German and French conservatism putting the authoritarian state understanding ahead, Turkey embraces diverse perspectives on

conservatism. Complexity and ambiguity of Turkish political thought pairs off the ambiguity of conservatism. In Turkish politics, there was a conservative wing that supported Turkish liberal and democratic thought, and on the other hand, there was an understanding of authoritarian conservatism. Center-right politics in Turkey mostly ground on a liberal conservatism, however the nationalist politics ground on more authoritarian conservatism. (Çaha, 2004: 18)

As Yahya Sezai Tezel says: “Cultures and societies are multi-axis and complex. Shaped around politics, law, public sphere, art, religion, science, economy, family, sexuality... and other axes, institutions, values and processes that constitute "that" culture and “that” society are actually organized in an inseparable unity.” (Tezel, 2017: 21) So, conservatism in Turkey is also not a case which can be evaluated on a single axis. There are continuities and changes.

As Zürcher states that political and philosophical conservatism in the Ottoman Empire and in the Republic of Turkey did not have a strong influence at least until the second half of the 20th century. (Zürcher, 2017: 41) Even so, to better understand the perception of conservatism in Turkey, we have to go back in time when the Ottomans faced with the westernization problems in the 19th century. In the article “The Institutionalization of High Arts as A Public Service in The Republican Era," Murat Katoğlu states that: “We see that modernization, or joining the developed world has continued to be of primary concern for Turkey for over two hundred years now. During this period, the arts and cultural life in general have been an important issue in conjunction with the country’s most important goal of development conveyed with concepts like modernization, renovation and Westernization, or getting richer and more powerful in layman’s terms, since the 19th century.” (Katoğlu, 2009: 27)

With the Edict of Gülhane (Tanzimat, 1839), The Edict of 1856 (Islahat) and The Constitutional Era (Meşrutiyet, 1876-78) movements, changes were wanted to make on the imperial government system over heterogeneous population and cultural richness of the Empire. The new state design came with Abdulhamid II, with the notion of “Zıll-ullah fi-l arz” which means “Shadow of God on earth” expressing the divineness of the Khalife-Sultan. In order to prevent the Ottoman Empire from fall, it was wanted to be transformed and reconstructed according to the European example, but on the other hand, in public sphere, Islamic symbols and values that attribute holiness to the authority of the Sultanate and the Caliphate became dominant.

Çiğdem mentions that there is a kind of conservatism which can be named as traditionalism in the Ottoman Empire. The administrative and political mechanism of the Ottoman Empire had succeeded in preserving the existing institutions for a long time. However, westernization and/or modernization either by the will of the Ottoman elite and by the external conditions had disputed with the settled positions and powers in the Ottoman society. As we have seen in the Western examples, we can see the effects of Enlightenment ideas on the breaking of religionism, the effects of commercial capitalism, and the breaking of the traditional notion of the state. Nonetheless, Ottoman modernization was not faced with a serious opposition neither from the society nor from the intelligentsia. The main aim for all is to preserve and maintain the Ottoman order. (Çiğdem, 2003: 17)

Niyazi Berkes summarizes the highly charged debates on Westernization movement in the last period of the Ottoman Empire under the three heading: 1. The method for progress is to do what the Westerners do, in other words, to imitate them. 2. There should be the total rejection for the Westernization. 3. The separation of the parts which can be westernized and which cannot be

westernized. In this way, it is possible keeping a part from 'us,' and becoming not total but half Western. (Berkes, 1975: 203)

Radical rejection came from the Islamist movement, which was trying to reintroduce the Sharia rules to the Ottoman society, claimed that the cultural self was in danger of losing its essence with the modernization reforms of Tanzimat. (Mardin, 1995: 91-92) The corruption, imitation, impoverishment, 'degenerated' individuals who became alienated to their 'essence,' their values and to their 'past' even became an inspiration to the writers and poets of the period like in the novels Felatun Bey ile Rakım Efendi, Araba Sevdası, Mai ve Siyah and Şıpsevdi. Yet, when the Ottoman Empire collapsed, modernization and westernization continued to be seen as the solution or remedy. In The Journal of Conservative Thought, issue 40, H. Aliyar Demirci says that: "With the Republic, the disclaimer of inheritance happened. Even the 19th century modernization process, like the French Revolution, was treated as "ancien régime" since the second half of the 1920s." (Demirci, H. A., 2014: 52) To understand the mentality of the Journal of Conservative Thought, it is important to see the claims that the Republican Turkey is trying to overthrow the old regime as in France, and the West seen as a solution for modernization is an imported concept.

On the article, in the Journal of Conservative Thought, Güngörmez examines the mentality of the Turkish elites which she divides into two groups as: Jacobin modernists or West Lovers (Cemil Meriç's categorization) and uneasy moderns or the modern conservatives. The Turkish elites have different mentality on the modernization in the Early Republican Era. Güngörmez states that they united in modernity, but they have different perspectives on the style of modernization. It is because our modernization is not from our own social and intellectual dynamics, but it is a process that we imported from the West. So, we have been modernized. (Güngörmez, B., 2014a: 8)

As Güngörmez states the conservatism in the West does not exclude modernity and it is a modern ideology that wants to protect the tradition against modernization, ours is so. When we compare the Western conservatives and Turkish conservatives' thoughts, it can be claimed that our conservatives are much more 'modern' than their Western counterparts because of their approach to modern state apparatus, technology and science. (Güngörmez, B., 2014a: 7) Güngörmez supports her claim with saying that Turkish conservatives unlike their western counterparts, they did not settle an account with the modern state, but only with the current regime, they did not make an in-depth criticism about industrialization and technology, unlike the western conservatives, they were even volunteers of the development movements. She claims that Turkish conservatism is not based on a distinct social class as in the West, and did not exist as an intellectual and a political tradition, but as a 'cultural conservatism' based on Islamic tradition. (Güngörmez, B. 2014b, 161-178)

By claiming that the Turkish conservatives are much more modern than their Western counterparts, Güngörmez, in a way, tries to provide a solid foundation for conservatism in Turkey. Like Güngörmez, Haydar Demirci states in his article in the Journal of Conservative Thought, just after the emergence of the new republic, the cultural conservatives tried to find solution to the westernization problems. Those conservatives were, starting with Yahya Kemal, Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar, Samiha Ayverdi, and Nihat Sami Banarlı. Demirci argues that the cultural conservatives see Istanbul conquered in 1453 by the Turks as 'the summary of a civilization'. However, during the Ottoman-Turkish modernization and industrialization period, Istanbul has begun to be open to the western influences and this gradually damaged the nature of the City. (Demirci, H. A., 2014, p. 25)

Nazım İrem mentions about the Republican Conservatism in 1930s and claims that the first conservative interpretation of the Turkish Revolution caused the birth of ananeci (traditionalist) radicalism. The Republican Conservative intellectuals had the opportunity to evaluate the Turkish revolution as a conservative reform and to interpret it as an instrument of traditionalist (ananeci) politics opposing to liberalism or socialism. (İrem, 2017: 110) “The conceptual matrix of the modern Turkish conservatism, in general terms, has shaped by the intersection points of the philosophical understandings of “ananeci / traditional” and “culturalist” Ismail Hakkı Baltacıoğlu, “conservative” Peyami Safa, “Turkist” and “liberal” Ahmed Ağaoğlu, “moralist” Hilmi Ziya Ülken and also Bergsonian Tunç.” (İrem, 1997: 141)

“The Turkish conservatism, which had its initial phase around the Dergah Journal⁵, was previously under the influence of the Bergson philosophy. While Turkish conservatism criticized the extremism that came with the reforms of the Republic, it did not conflict with the regime and defended its sensitivity in the fields of tradition, history and religion on the basis of cultural conservatism. With the transition to multi-party life, the effects of political conservatism have also emerged.” (Özder, 2006: 6) It should be noted that Turkish conservatism criticized the excessiveness of the Revolutions of the Republic but didn’t clash with the new regime. Its scope stayed on cultural conservatism by focusing tradition, literature, history, and religion. The Republican Reforms are the bearers for the reflections of Conservatism in Turkey. It should be noted that the Republic did not only target a change of political regime, but also a radical social, political, cultural and ideological break from the Ottoman Empire. In the aim of the consolidation of the state's hegemony, the reformation (Turkification) and the instrumentalisation of religion shows that the Republic aimed to break any conservative resistance came

⁵ The literary journal, Dergah, established by Yahya Kemal in 1918 and became effective in the cultural field.

from religiousness. (Çiğdem, 2003: 17-18) There is a shared viewpoint (Bora, 1998; Çiğdem, 1997; Mert, 2003) on the question of conservatism in Turkey based on the idea that conservatism did not transform into an ideology which is seen in the Western example but rather it adopted as an attitude against the secularist reforms especially during the first years of the Republic. When we come to the 1950 and 1960s, Süleyman Seyfi Öğün states that it is possible to associate the existence of Turkish conservatism in the center right line with the elements of the CHP, including the key figures of the Turkish center-right mostly from CHP origin such as Celal Bayar or Adnan Menderes. (Öğün, 2017: 539) As Öğün claims, Turkish conservatism, especially in the context of the tensions during the Cold War, had shown sharp political attitudes even turned into violence at times. Anti-communist campaigns had been extremely effective on that. The style of the authors such as Necip Fazıl and Peyami Safa were more sharp than the racialists such as Nihal Atsız and Reha Oğuz Türkkan. (Öğün, 2017: 556)

Born as a reaction to the upheavals of the social life of the 1970s and to the left movement which was seen as the reason for this upheaval, Aydınlar Ocağı was established by a group of academicians and writers who were concerned about the influence of leftist thought in political life. They attempted to gather the rightist group under the same roof of nationalism and Islam with a conservative understanding. In this framework, the members of Aydınlar Ocağı formulated their thoughts under the title of Turkish-Islam Synthesis⁶ with the purpose of ensuring the maintenance of state authority by influencing the state elites firstly. (Taşkın, 2007: 246).

⁶ Turkish-Islam Synthesis emerged around Aydınlar Ocağı in the mid-1970s as a right-wing ideology based on the harmony between Turkishness and Islam. Names such as Ziya Gökalp, Yusuf Akçura, Ali Kemal, Cemalettin Efgani, Hüseyin Cahit Yalçın, and Ahmet Ağaoğlu tried to show how Turkism and Islamism are compatible with each other. During the Cold War period, in 1940s and 1950s, the Islamist movement also directed its reactions towards modernization and communism especially with the Democrat Party government. Aydınlar Ocağı, which identified with the doctrine of Turkish-Islamic synthesis played an important role in the establishment of the Nationalist governments between 1975-78. The Turkish-Islam Synthesis also provided the legitimacy that the 1980 coup was needed.

As the leader of the Motherland Party, who came to power alone between 1983-91 and who served as the President between 1989-93, Turgut Özal was a typical representative of the New Right, combining nationalist-conservatism with neo-liberalism. Özal had adopted a kind of authoritarian populism. His initiative on populism was the construction of an image of a Muslim-Turkish people who keeps up with the times, protects customs and traditions, and is selective on modernization. (Bora, T. & Erdoğan, N. 2017: 644) The Journal of Conservative Thought has a special issue for the 25th anniversary of Turgut Ozal's death by emphasizing his significance in earning the reputation of the conservative politics in Turkey. Özal was expressed as the first politician to realize that the conservative worldview is perhaps the main element of Turkish politics. (The Journal of Conservative Thought, n.d.)

1.3. CULTURAL POLICIES BEFORE AKP: A SYNOPSIS OF CULTURAL POLICIES IN TURKEY (1923-2002)

“Art is not a mirror held up to reality but a hammer with which to shape it.”

— Bertolt Brecht

Culture and arts can help to identify and target particular policies and create alternative political culture. “The process of constructing alternative realities entails constructing new images, stories, songs, and other symbols that are rooted in human experience.” (Turpin, 1993: 139) As the carrier of the social values, symbols, and identities, culture and arts are seen as an influential policy issue in many parts of the world. Further, in the last decades, their potential economic added value has come to be realized either in international, national or local level.

In brief, “Cultural Policies” has emerged at the international level in the twentieth century. In addition to the common rights that all people can enjoy in the 1948 UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights, culture is also included. In 1966, UN General Assembly recognized culture as a universal right accessible to all. Cultural policies became the subject of an intergovernmental conference for the first time in 1970 at the Venice Conference with the Article 27 “The duty of those responsible for communities goes beyond simply respecting the right of their members to participate in cultural life. They must provide them with the effective means to do so.” (UNESCO, 1998: 81) So, the member states have entered legal obligations for the democratization of culture.

While these developments occurred in the world, to explain the development of cultural policies in Turkey, one of the examination is made within the framework of the tripartite periodization based on the scope, content and formation of cultural policies. I will follow a similar periodization with Serhan Ada (Ada, 2009: 94-98) to give a brief information about the cultural policies in Turkey as follows;

1. The Period of Powerful and Central Institutions (1920-1950)
2. The Period of Privatization and Ministries (1950-2000)

This thesis suggests to add the 3rd period beginning with 2000s up until 2020. It will discuss in the following subchapter.

3. The Period of AKP (2002-2020)

The period of one-party rule between 1920-50 can be defined as “national foundation and structuring”. (Ada, 2009: 94) The construction of a new Turkish identity began with the establishing new institutions in the new nation state. The reformations which were an important place in the formation of modern Turkey, began right after the proclamation of the Republic on 29 October 1923. The Republic focused on creating a national cultural policy after the War of Independence. On March 3, 1924, the Caliphate of the Ottoman dynasty was sent

abroad. The Musiki Muallim Mektebi (Music Teacher School) providing education in polyphonic Western tonal music and the Riyaseticumhur Filarmoni Orkestrası (Philharmonic Orchestra of the Presidency) was established in 1924. The campaign for the compilation of folk music began in 1925 in Anatolian cities until 1929. 'Antiquities and Museums' department was established under the Ministry of Education in 1926 followed by a series of city and ethnography museums opening in different cities. The Academy of Fine Art was established in 1928 and followed by a popularization of painting and sculpture project. Run by CHP (Republican People's Party), the artists were sent to country tours from 1938 to 1943. As of 1939, 'The State Painting and Sculpture Exhibition' was held annually in Ankara by the Ministry of Education. The monumental sculptures are erected in the public squares of the cities of Turkey like Istanbul, Ankara, Izmir, Konya, and Afyon. The Turkish Historical Society was founded in 1931 for the study of the history of Turkish Nation State. In 1932, The People's Houses (Halkevleri) for the formation of the modern citizen and also Turkish Language Institute (Türk Dil Kurumu) as the symbol of language revolution were established. The National Library was opened in 1946 in Ankara. The Village Institutes (Köy Enstitüleri) was established as rural development project in 1940 to create a national identity and citizenship as part of the education policies.

The second period for the cultural policy progress in Turkey is regarded as the privatization and ministries period. This period accelerated with the establishment of multi-party political life in 1950. By de-seating the Republican People's Party (Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi), the Democratic Party was elected in 1950 by receiving support from the conservatives. While the national and moral values of the party were reflected in the party program, the first attempt was to abolish the Arabic azan ban in 1950. Secondly, The Village Institutes (1940) were transformed into regular teacher-training schools in 1954 by the Democrat Party government. One of the organic institutions of CHP, The People's Houses

(Halkevleri) were closed in the same year. One of the important case of this period is the 1961 Constitution that mentioned cultural rights. According to the Article 41 of the Constitution, “It is the duty of the State to encourage economic, social and cultural development by democratic processes and for this purpose to enhance national savings, to give priority to those investments which promote public welfare, and draw up development project.” Another turning point is the emergence of the Ministry of Culture in 1971 under the first Minister of Culture, Talat Sait Halman. The Undersecretariat of Culture and affiliated General Directorates, which were previously under the Ministry of National Education, were transferred to this ministry. However, in 1977, the Ministry of National Education was returned into the Ministry of National Education and Culture. A year later, the Ministry of Culture became independent again. In the 3rd Five Year Development Plan, ‘culture’ was included as an independent section in 1973. The Istanbul Festival started for the first time with the direct initiative of the Istanbul Foundation for Culture and Arts (IKSV), headed by a private foundation Eczacıbaşı group in 1973. After the coup d'état of September 12, 1980, the Ministry of Culture became the Ministry of Culture and Tourism again in 1989. In social life which inevitably affects culture, a social erosion came up with the masses who migrated and tried to hold on to the city by considering the kinship relations in slum conditions during that period of time. By rural-urban migration, industrialization and rapid urbanization, slum housing, arabesque culture was formed that can be seen in the formation of a new type of music and in Yeşilçam films.

It is important to mention some cases of censorship on art at this point to understand the conservative attitudes of the time. In 1972, the commission, which was assigned to order 50 sculptures to be placed in the public areas of Istanbul due to the 50th anniversary of the foundation of the Republic, selected only 20 of the designed works because of financial problems. In 1973, one of the selected

works, the artist Gürdal Duyar's statue of a woman leaning back, named 'Beautiful Istanbul' was removed from the Karaköy area because of its nudity with the suggestion of Necmettin Erbakan who was the chairman of the National Salvation Party (Milli Selamet Partisi) served in coalition government with the Republican People's Party of Prime Minister Bülent Ecevit during the Cyprus crisis of 1974. (Brehm, 2007: 49). This removal of a nude woman sculpture got reaction from the initiatives of intellectuals and artists against this censorship. Later, the statue was placed in Yıldız Park and as a response to it, the Istanbul Sculptors Association organized an exhibition called "Nude" at Taksim Art Gallery in the same year.

The global economic crises of 1970s gave rise to the liberal market economy rather than a social state approach seen firstly in USA. The liberal thought in the economy brought new approach called new right or liberal conservatism with the acceleration of conservatism which emphasizes social values. In 1980s, beginning with the election of ANAP (Motherland Party) led by Turgut Özal as the governor of Turkey can be considered as the period of globalization that neo-liberal economic processes started to be developed in Turkey. While the Turkish-Islamic thesis based on a national culture was tried to be established, Özal introduced a pragmatic and liberal approach in politics and economics with a focus on conservative values. This period of time is worth to keep in mind that the conservative attitudes is not incident to merely the Justice and Development Party (AKP) which will gain the power by winning of the general election in 2002. It is worth to mention the Biennial format was first applied in 1986 in Turkey, in Ankara with the name Eurasia International Art Biennial. It was launched by the Ministry of Culture, held only four times. The President Kenan Evren censored a "nude" painting which possibly the reason for the biennial not to continue. Evren also got the Prometheus painting (1976) by painter Orhan Taylan erased in Antalya after the coup d'état September 12, 1980.

In 1990s, a series of “National Councils on Culture” was held by the Ministry of Culture. It is important to recapture the speech of Aziz Nesin, one of the well-known humorist of Turkey, “The culture of Turkey is not only the Turkish culture” by highlighting the importance of the cultural diversity. The symposium held for approaching to the EU in 1998 was also an important step for creating an official text on cultural policy. This was, in a way, a beginning for the non-state actors to be visible in the field of culture. The State was the monopoly in the cultural field earlier, but new regulations had been introduced like sponsorship. From the sociological point of view, the new middle class began to seek a cultural language. Regardless of the ideological orientation, many social issues has been politicized in a consumption-oriented manner in the 90s. The 90s also indicate an important period of change in which patriarch, militarist and statist structure were criticized by the artist of the time with art works. The identity issues were questioned and criticized harshly at that time.

1.4. CULTURAL POLICY PRACTICES AND DISCOURSES OF AKP PERIOD (2002-2020)

Abbreviated as AKP, The Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi in Turkish) was entered the Turkish political scene as a Conservative Democrat Party in 2001. One of the founders and the part leader, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan who is the current President of Turkey defined his party’s political position as conservative democrat mass party within the context of politics.

From the perspective of cultural policy practices, one of the first thing that AKP imposed when it came to the power was the unification of the Ministries of Culture and Tourism in 2003. The aim was to make the Ministry of Culture guided by the Ministry of Tourism. However, tourism in a way an industry which needs

investments but culture is a branch of art nourished by creativity. The status of natural, historical, archaeological and urban sites under the management of the Ministry of Culture earlier has become open to change to rent areas. Rather than the latest issues of cultural policy in the world such as culture industries, accessing to art, cultural diversity, creative city, and culture-oriented development, culture is seen as a tool of tourism attraction by focusing on the immovable cultural heritage. By uniting the ministries, the protective effect of the Ministry of Culture on those sites reduced and later the General Directorate of Protection of Natural Assets connected to the Ministry of Environment and Urbanization. Emphasized in all texts of 5-year development plans of the government, the main objective of the Culture Departments stated as the promotion of Turkey.

It would also be convenient to state that the AKP government which came into power after the 2001 crisis, had an attitude towards being highly visible in arts in its early years. In the early 2000s, the AKP government and the Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan tended to support the private sector's initiatives in the contemporary art field. Both by attending to the openings and also by supporting institutionalization of museums and art centers, the early 2000s were eventful and reconciled with the contemporary art circles. Pro-AKP businesspersons and a former AKP deputy also serve on İstanbul Modern Museum's boards of directors. (İstanbul Modern, n.d.)

Privatization policies have been increased within the scope of the state's goal of staying supportive in the cultural field. A series of laws and regulations were made in 2000s to encourage private sector for cultural investments. These laws are as follows: Law No. 5225 on Encouraging Cultural Investments and Initiatives (2004), Law No. 5226 on Protection of Cultural and Natural Heritage and Amendments for Various Laws (2004), Law No. 5228 on Cultural Investments and Entrepreneurs' Encouragement, Law No. 5366 on Preservation by Renovation

and Utilization by Revitalizing of Deteriorated Immovable Historical and Cultural Properties (2005), Law No. 5520 on Corporate Income Tax [10. In the sub-clause of the article, discounts on the articles "supported or approved by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism"] (2006), Law No. 5737 Law on Foundations (2008). These laws and regulations have been made for assignation of the cultural heritage sites to local governments and the private sector. According to the State sponsorship law, all expenditures, donations and reliefs related to the activities supported by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism can be deducted from the income tax and company tax. (Çelik, 2012: 259)

In first years of AKP, the priority was democratization of culture by claiming to make culture accessible for everyone. Cultural democratization ideas of the government got support from the civil society but then turned to an ironic situation the democratization dreams of civil society should end up limiting the participation of members of civil society. (İnce, 2013: 75-92) It was because, as İnce states, the AKP chose to take the role of facilitator rather than investor on private enterprise but those private enterprise had already started to build its own museums and its own cultural centers. "The AKP government offered support in the form of tax relief, public-private partnerships and privatization of administration by new laws. Yet, the number of (semi-) private bodies benefiting from these laws remains limited, as does the involvement of civil society in a model termed 'collaborative.'" (İnce, 2013: 75-92)

Associated with the tendency of the AKP on the democratization of culture, one of the first steps was towards the solution of the Kurdish problem. The Kurdish channel TRT ŞEŞ of the state television TRT was opened in 2009. According to this project, all obstacles on learning, teaching, speaking, listening of people's mother tongues through radio and television channels by the state or private sector would be removed. Until today, it seems there are still serious obstacles about

teaching, publishing, and speaking according to academician and poet Selim Temo's 17-year summary on Kurdish. (Temo, 2019)

The cultural policy arrangements began to increase with Turkey's European Union membership oriented structural reforms. "In tandem with Turkey's application for EU membership, important steps have been taken towards the adoption of an officially ratified cultural policy." (Ada, 2009: 88) The one of the crucial steps took during the AKP governance on cultural policy was to be included to the European Council National Cultural Policy Review Program and to constitute Turkey's first written cultural policy report. (Ministry of Culture and Tourism, 2013) There was not a written a cultural policy or a comprehensive basic document guiding the cultural life of Turkey up until that time. By means of the commitment made to the Council of Europe in 2007, for the first time, writing a national cultural policy was attempted. It was presented to the Council of Europe in 2013 and thus Turkey was included in the National Cultural Policy Review Program launched by the Council of Europe began in 1985 across Europe. With the subtitles such as Legal and Institutional Framework of Cultural Policy, Cultural Heritage, Cultural Economy, Supporting Culture and Arts, Studies in the Cultural Field, Cultural Developments between 2002-2012, this report is the first official cultural policy report in Turkey made in the national and international level. (Tanır, 2016) In the 7th section of the Report, a statistical data of the development in between 2002-2012 is given in cultural fields like cultural centers, state theaters, cinema, books and magazines, museums, and historical sites. (National Report, 2013: 97-107) However, this report seems as an activity report that outlines what the government has done so far, rather than a policy text that draws a long term roadmap targeted the current cultural practices and concepts in the world.

In the Cultural Policy Report of Turkey, the fundamental aims and targets are remarked as follows: The Ninth Development Plan covers the period between 2007-2013 with an approach considering the Republic of Turkey's EU membership preparation. (T.C. Cumhurbaşkanlığı Strateji ve Bütçe Başkanlığı, 2006) Determined fundamental aims and targets of the Tenth Development Plan, covering the period of 2014-2018 states that: "Preserving and improving the cultural richness in the process of social change, passing it on to future generations, and enabling all individuals to live with tolerance and solidarity around common cultural values by respecting distinctions are the fundamental aims." (T.C. Cumhurbaşkanlığı Strateji ve Bütçe Başkanlığı, 2013) In the Tenth Development Plan, it is stated that it is intended to protect cultural richness in tolerance and solidarity and to transfer it to future generations. In the subtitle 'The Main Actors of Cultural Policy,' the report has addressed the key actors creating cultural policy as the Public Institutions and Organizations, Local Managers and Non-Governmental Organizations.

The share of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism takes from the central government's budget is also quite low when we compare it with other European countries and even the share of it in Turkey before 2000. According to the report of Mustafa Mert Bildircin on Birgün Newspaper, while the AKP government offered to increase the 2020 budget of the Presidency of Religious Affairs by 1.1 billion TL to 11.5 billion TL compared to 2019, the government decreased the budget of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism. (Bildircin, 2019) For 2020, among the order ministries, the appropriation of Ministry of Culture and Tourism was put into process as 3.512.175.000 TL while it was 4.168.578.000 TL just for the last year. (AA, 2019)

The government provides financial supports to cultural sectors, however there are injustices on the subsidies reserved for the different sectors. For example, culture

is presented as the tool for the promotion of the country and the priorities are given to the traditional assets, urban transformation, Turkish cinema, and Turkish language. Contemporary arts including painting, printmaking, sculpture, ceramics, photography, video-art, design, architecture, performing arts, conceptual art, textile art, industrial design, graphic design, fashion design, interior design and also decorative art are seen excluded from the government's priority list. Even the production support is given to the cinema sector but not covers distribution and promotion. In addition, despite the high tax rates on the music industry, there is no support mechanism for the music sector. In a few years ago, the support of opposition theater groups has been cut. The artists who are supporter of AKP can be seen in the AKP municipal activity programs as well as in the central budget distribution. And also, the state protection on the State Opera Ballet, the State Symphony and the State Theater revoked. Asu Aksoy & Burcu Yasemin Şeyben in their article questions whether the government intending to demobilize, or de-centre, the westernizing and secular cultural orientation that has characterized Turkey's official cultural identity until now, by closing the State Theatre and State Opera and Ballet directorates. This reasonable question is linked up to the attempt by the AKP to formulate a new cultural strategy for Turkey in the changing global context. (Aksoy & Şeyben, 2015)

Another important undertaking of the AKP is building more cultural centers large and small in whole Turkey. Like Tanıl Bora, who bonded between Turkish conservatism and the construction lust, İnce contributes to this claim by saying that: "Seen through the lens of the AKP's ideology, the wave of cultural centers seems as much an expression of symbolic values as opportunities for attracting investment and generating employment." (İnce, 2013: 75-92) Building more cultural centers is an issue that needs to be discussed in multi-dimensional way in regional, national, urban, and neighborhood scale. It is not just building or erecting as a construction but as a source of creating a culture. In the cultural

centers, there are activities such as signature days, speeches for women and children, kid activities, handicraft workshops and exhibitions, and even include wedding hall, masjid, and many more. As Recep Tayyip Erdoğan expressed in one of his speech by referring to the CHP: “Throughout the history of the Republic, reveal one piece of artwork or one physical place that you did! They couldn't reveal even one physical place. So that means, they waited for us. We came, we make these works and we will do even more. We will do in our 81 provinces. We will make cultural centers large and small. Why? Because a nation without art means it lost its lifeblood.” (Tüfekyapan, 2018, 20:40–23:03) So, we see the close connection with the perception of the AKP on art and building construction lust.

Yunus Emre Foundation, Institute and Cultural Centers⁷ is also remarkable as part of this policy on defining and spreading the “national culture”. (E-Skop, 2012) Also, to promote Turkish culture and art, “Special Awards of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism”, is given to the Republic’s citizens, institutions and organizations in the field of culture; under the titles of artworks, practices, interpretation, exhibition, publication and analyzing and for the branches such as Turkish history, Turkish literature, Turkish language, plastic, phonetic and performing arts, art history, architecture, archeology, folklore, traditional Turkish decoration and handicrafts, cinema, librarianship, and museology. It can be said that most of the awards are given to the artists, the artisans or the institutions coming from the Islamist tradition for instance Kubbealtı Neşriyat⁸, Ötüken Neşriyat, Islam Science and Technology History Museum, and Emin Ongan

⁷ Yunus Emre Foundation is a public foundation, which was founded under the law dated 05.05.2007 and numbered 5653 to promote Turkey, Turkish language, its history and culture and art, make such related information and documents available for use in the world, provide services abroad to people who want to have education in the fields of Turkish language, culture and art, to improve the friendship between Turkey and other countries and increase the cultural exchange. (“Yunus Emre Institute,” 2019)

⁸ A modern-conservative culture and arts foundation founded in Fatih in 1970.

Üsküdar Mûsikî Cemiyeti. (“T.C. Kültür ve Turizm Bakanlığı Güzel Sanatlar Genel Müdürlüğü”, n.d.)

Rather than contemporary arts, the large volume of budgets and sponsorship supports for the traditional arts are also noteworthy. For example; under the auspices of President of the Republic of Turkey, the festival of the World Ethnosport Confederation was supported by 12 institutions and companies. 6 of the sponsors were from the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality. Established in 2015 to support traditional games and sports, the head of the confederation is Bilal Erdoğan, the son of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. Apart from the expenses spend for the organization, the prize budget of the contests was 457.000 TL. (Tarafsız, 2019)

In April 2016, the Cultural Development Plan was announced by the Prime Minister of the time Ahmet Davutoğlu. He claimed that they will build a Cultural Center in Istanbul and a Anatolian Culture Center in Ankara, which will be an international symbol in size and content. He announced that 18 new museums will be opened in 2016, the support for the private theaters will be increased in 2016 by 100 percent, the Copyright Act of the 5846 Intellectual Property Law will be delivered from the TBMM, easy retirement will be facilitated for the artists. (AA, 2016) Although the content and the aims stated in the plan are noteworthy, the goals and aims have not totally put into practice since then. One of the foremost activities of AKP in the field of culture is the 3rd National Culture Council held in 2017 after 28 years. 17 different commissions were gathered to create short and long-term road maps for the Ministry of Culture and Tourism. Namely, they are as follows; Cultural Policies, Cultural Diplomacy, Cultural Economy, Cultural Heritage, Museums and Archeology, Performing Arts, Cinema, Radio and Television, Music, Visual Arts, Language and Literature, Publishing and Librarianship, Media and Culture, Children and Culture, Architecture and Culture,

City and Culture, Local Administrations and Culture, Turks in Abroad and Culture, Family and Culture. As the result of this council, a comprehensive book was published. However, although it seems a needful attempt, this is all to say, the government's effort admits that it is in an unsuccessful position in the field of culture.

In the report of the AKP on 2015 election declaration, it is said that: "The Republic of Turkey is the last link of a deep-rooted and primordial civilization that goes back to the Ottomans, Seljuks and even earlier." In this regard, "As the AKP, our goal is to preserve and reproduce our values of civilization, culture and art, and to transfer them to the next generations in a qualified way, to see the cultural differences as wealth, and to contribute everyone's in contributing and accessing the cultural and artistic activities, to strive for a sophisticated society that has a strong aesthetic sense. According to us, culture should accumulate, reach maturity, diversify, multiply and become common with this richness." The report consists of two sub-titles as "What We Have Done" and "What We Will Do". (Kaymakçiođlu, 2015)

Citing very crucial points, İKSV⁹ (Istanbul Foundation For Culture and Arts) prepared an evaluation report on 2015 election declaration of the political parties in Turkey from the perspective of Cultural Policy. According to this report, in the 2011 election declaration of AKP, only the title "Culture" was included. However, in the 2015 election declaration, the title includes "Art and Culture" without diving into subtitles. (İKSV, 2015: 1)

⁹ Istanbul Foundation for Culture and Arts (İKSV) is a non-profit cultural institution established in 1973. İKSV regularly organises the Istanbul Festivals of Music, Film, Theatre and Jazz, the Istanbul Biennial, the Istanbul Design Biennial, Leyla Gencer Voice Competition, autumn film week Filmekimi. Also, İKSV organises the Pavilion of Turkey at the International Art and Architecture Exhibitions of la Biennale di Venezia. İKSV is a member of the General Assembly of the Turkish National Commission for UNESCO, since 2018. For more detailed info: <https://www.iksv.org/en/about-us/iksv>

On of the conspicuous point in the report of the AKP is the rights to access and participate in culture. AKP states that they will increase the mechanisms to enable “the active participation of civil society in culture and art activities” while envisioning a society that: “everyone contributes to culture and art activities”. This claim can be bounded in a way with the democratization of culture ideas of the AKP especially during the first period of their government.

While the AKP declaration does not contain the principle of freedom of expression, it is stated that: “the legal infrastructure will be developed that will open the way for the free production of cultural and artistic works," but what kind of regulation is foreseen in this issue is not explained. (IKSV, 2015: 2)

As it is stated in the IKSv report, (IKSV, 2015: 2), the most emphasized issue in the AKP's election declaration that the words such as ‘conservation’ and ‘preservation’ are frequently used in cultural heritage. “Cultural assets attributed to symbolic value and sanctity will be preserved” and “a holistic reveal and protection of the texture in the urban areas” are promised. In order to implement these promises, according to IKSv report, it needs to be a policy change compared to previous periods.

The fact that the role of the state in the field of cultural policies should be encouraging in creating infrastructure to make art and culture can be lived freely by every citizen. So, as stated in the recommendation text of IKSv (IKSV, 2015: 2), the budget of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism in culture and arts should be at least 1% as in the other counterpart countries. In the AKP's declaration, it is said that the share allocated to culture and art from the general budget will be increased, but the estimated rate of the increase is not expressed. Plus, in the 2018 budget presentation of The Ministry of Culture and Tourism (T. C. K lt r Bakanlıđı B t e Sunumu, 2018: 14), it is said that while the share of the

Ministry's budget from the general budget was 0.55% in 2017, it was 0.53% in 2018. For the year 2020 budget of The Ministry of Culture and Tourism even came down by about 1.6% compared to the previous years. (0.59% in 2019 to 0.43% in 2020)

The AKP 2015 declaration emphasizes “increasing public contribution through support and incentives,” but there is no clear statement regarding the role of the public. And also, there is no step on sponsorship for culture and art activities or on the lowering the tax rates upon the culture and art. The support for the cinema sector, on the other hand, mentioned in the declaration will be given for the projects which is "processing of national, religious, moral and folkloric values". (IKSV, 2015: 3) The expression of “raising culture and art people who are at peace with their society and history” in the AKP declaration contains uncertainty as IKSv report states. (IKSV, 2015: 4) Clearly, the support should be given all artists from all backgrounds and branches. The words like “our culture” and “our history” are ambiguous in any respect.

Localization is highly attributed in the declaration of AKP. It is important to give active role to the local governments in the formation of cultural policies but also it is important that the local cultural spaces should be designed in accordance with the requirements of culture and art activities. It is an important development in the AKP declaration that: “the activities of the local governments will increase in the field of culture and arts” and “cultural facilities will be transferred to local governments”. (IKSV, 2015: 4) It is vital that culture-arts activities should go beyond the AVMs. The fact that the venues are built as being multi-functional when they should be targeted on a specific activity. (IKSV, 2015: 4)

The decisions should make about the places with high symbolic importance in the eyes of the society and the apparatus of the social memory like Atatürk Cultural

Center. For instance, Karaköy Passenger Hall which was a part of the identity of Istanbul and was the first modern passenger farewell hall, was demolished for the Galataport project. Next to it, the Paket Postanesi, a historical building under the first degree of protection, was also destroyed in large part in the same way by keeping only the façade wall. In addition, as the places that gained a place in the memory of the people of Istanbul, Emek Cinema or Beyoğlu also got their share from the occupant attempts. Some symbolic buildings are still waiting to have some attentions like Istanbul Painting and Sculpture Museum waiting to open its doors since 2012 and even before. (Köksal, 2012) For example, the Madımak Hotel where the Sivas massacre happened, opening a kebab restaurant to the lower floor of the hotel caused reactions, and in 2010, the kebab restaurant was closed. In 2011, the building was transformed into Sivas Science and Culture Center, 18 years later.

In the AKP declaration, there is an emphasis on keeping the nonprofit organizations alive. It can be said that this can facilitate the activities of all nonprofit culture and arts institutions like foundations, associations, NGOs. Plus, in the AKP declaration, it is claimed that promotion and translation support will be given to the cultural sector. Digitalization, digital archives, inventory studies are also mentioned. (IKSV, 2015: 5)

As one of the basic elements of the right to access culture, art education is included in the declaration in some way for instance “teaching world classics” and “transforming cultural centers into places where amateur and professional artists receive continuing education”. It is also stated that: “our cultural and artistic values will be taught in educational institutions” with the aim of “strengthening the sense of identity and belonging”. (IKSV, 2015: 6)

According to the newly designed secondary education model, painting, music and physical education and sports courses will be no longer common course. Contrary, the Turkish Language and Literature and Religious Culture and Moral Knowledge courses will be common. (Habertürk, 2019) Art classes, which are very important in the context of the development of cognitive, emotional, social, and motor skills of children, were gradually reduced to 4 credits after 2006 and 3 credits after 2018 in contrary to 8 credits before 2005.

In the context of basic human needs, MEB expresses that art and design is an important driving force in the socio-economic development. Likewise, when we look at the 2023 educational vision, similar goals will be seen. The importance of art education is emphasized in the curriculum. However, the wisdom in the structuring of the undergraduate Education Faculties (classroom and pre-school teachers college) by YOK (Council of Higher Education) does not coincide with these objectives. The art classes in the curriculum for the teacher candidates were removed or credits were decreased. (Gümüř, 2018)

IKSV concludes the report with the following implications. In the 2015 election declarations the main parties of Turkey including AKP, culture and art are given a larger place than previous years, but they are placed towards the end of the declarations. The promised policies are not included in detail and some cannot be called as politics, plus they have many ambiguous statements for voters. The scope of cultural policies needs to be well defined. Rather being conservative and protectionist, better to be more supportive, liberating, holistic, and equalitarian.

The censorship issue is also another issue worthy of note. Although the history of the Turkish Republic has many examples of censored works, unfortunately the situation during the period of AKP has not changed even led to the total exhibition cancellations. In the Artist Art Fair held by TÜYAP in 2013, Nova Kozmikova's

portrait of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan attracted the attention of one conservative (!) citizen and it was resulted with a total cancellation. Plus, it was witnessed that Akbank Sanat, which did not want to contradict with the AKP government, canceled its exhibition. (Arapoğlu, 2016) Reporting to the censorship cases that took place after 2000, Siyah Bant¹⁰ aims for solidarity to defend freedom of expression through a website. There is a quite long list of censorship cases including the work of artist Ahmet Güneştekin called “Konstantiniyye,” exhibited at the Venice Biennial, award winning director Yeşim Ustaoglu's film ‘Hesitation’, an artwork of Rahmi Ögdül at TÜYAP as a result of the police intervention, Seyr-i Mesel Theater which displays plays in Kurdish, the painter Ali Elmacı's painting of the Ottoman Sultan Abdulhamid's face with a statue in the form of a female body exhibited at CI fair, Batman City Theater, the play “Nazım and Brecht at the Sun's Table” by the theater artist Genco Erkal in Dostlar Theater, the cancellation of the concerts of the musician Sıla Gençoğlu's because of her statement about the Yenikapı Meeting and many more. (Siyah Bant, n.d.) In the European Commission's Report in 2015 about Turkey, it is pointed out that there has been a significant decline on the protection of freedom of expression in the past two years. It is stated that the number of writers and journalists are in prison and the lawsuits opened with the accusation of insulting the President have become an increasingly widespread practice, with more than 200 lawsuits. The report presents a detailed list of the artists, writers, journalists, and actors, who have been sued and fined for their depiction / critiques about Recep Tayyip Erdogan. (Siyah Bant, 2015)

The government has not enough attempt to protect Turkey’s historical objects that have been stolen from museums in the past. In 2010, a commission of experts

¹⁰ Siyah Bant is a website which investigates the actors and methods of censorship on art in Turkey, an initiative by a group of people working in culture and arts area in 2011 publishing documents in its website and defending the right of artistic freedom of expression. To see more: <http://www.siyahbant.org/proje-hakkinda/>

assigned by the government wrote a report saying that several hundreds of artwork from the Ankara State Art and Sculpture Museum were missing, and some replaced by replicas. On the other hand, based on the 1906 iteration of Turkey's cultural property protection law, Turkey claims its assets from the Louvre, the Met, Christies and well-known art collector Michael Steinhardt. "Under the leadership of Cultural Minister Ertugrul Gunay, Turkey is refusing to lend objects for exhibitions unless antiquities with a unknown provenance are returned to the country, delaying all licenses for archeological excavations, and publicly denouncing museums as enablers of illicit looting." (Center for Art Law, 2012) Lately, the Minister of Culture and Tourism, Mehmet Nuri Ersoy declared that tourism will be a strategic sector in 2020. Mentioning about the excavations, he notified the establishment of the Turkey's first national archeology institute, "Institute of Anatolian Archeology and Cultural Heritage". Ersoy stated that between 2004 and 2019, 4 thousand 437 cultural assets were returned to our country. (Turizm Günlüğü, 2019)

The 4th Great Ordinary Congress document gives us hints about the perception of AKP on conservatism and its conservative position on the culture of Turkey. Stated in the document, (AKP, 2015) in which the 2023 goals were held, the Justice and Development Party's "conservative-democrat" political identity has been institutionalized and turned into a major political attraction. It has become an exemplary source of inspiration for other countries in the region. The political "conservative-democrat" identity that AKP is trying to develop has overlapping features with the conservative practices around the world, while it has a content and a political style shaped by socio-cultural features of Turkey and shaped by local dynamics.

In regard to the AKP vision, the structure of conservatism defending the limited power against all kinds of authoritarianism, advocating a change shaping by social

dynamics within its natural process, emphasizing a freedom which will have meaning in a concrete form rather than abstract, regarding social protection mechanisms such as family, voluntary organizations, and foundations, reveals a political core that can be compiled by a democratic understanding. (AKP, 2015: 4)

According to the document, conservative democracy that AKP is adopted is based on a gradual change occurred in a natural process rather than top down reforms. As it is stated in the document, social transformation is the most basic and permanent form of change. The potential of conservatism that protects the traditional structure against totalitarian revolutionary interventions and top down reforms and its potential that reflects historical gains into the future are important. Conservatism rejects radicalism and social engineering. Politics should be based on reconciliation, integration and tolerance rather than conflict, camping and polarization. It is necessary to provide a change preserving historical values and gains of the traditional structure. (AKP, 2015: 6)

The AKP positions itself as the meeting point of people from different political stances on certain values and principles. The discriminatory identity policy that distinguishes “us and the others” by placing a single religious understanding, sect or ethnic feature at the center of its movement has caused polarization in the political field and made parties marginal.

Rather than any other party, as it is stated in the document, the AKP has tried to embrace all the issues from all social segments as the subject of its politics, and tried to solve problems within the framework of democratization. Following more inclusive policy based on unity has made the AKP enlarged and has also made it the insurance of Turkey's unity and integrity. They claim that they see our people's differences as wealth. AKP is determined to sustain and develop the diversity and

pluralism inherited from our civilization. Their most important goal is to live the citizens together in fraternity. (AKP, 2015: 7)

The document enunciates the conservative perception of AKP. As a conservative and democratic party, AKP makes a definition of conservatism which is “not the conservation of the old, but the conservation of what is ageless”. (AKP, 2015: 47) Conservatism for the AKP, which claims to have carried out change and reform in all areas, is a policy that reproduces our social and cultural principles and values and our unique features and beauties that makes us who we are, to meet today's needs.

Under the title of Education and Culture in the same document, AKP sees “culture” as a fundamental area that builds people, society, future and civilization. Their vision is a society that combines tradition and modernity, local and global, old and new, primordial and contemporary, abstract and concrete, based on our own values and culture. (AKP, 2015: 47) They emphasize on the idea that culture is the basic phenomenon of our lives, and so they claim that they will accelerate the activities that will improve our cultural values, enhance the cultural resources affecting our personal or social life practices and behaviors, and strengthen the cultural texture. They will endeavor to keep alive and develop all kinds of different colors in our cultural environment.

AKP clearly declares that if Turkey becomes one of the world's 10 most powerful countries, it means that it also becomes a cultural production and cultural sharing center of the world and its region in the field of culture. In this context, they say they will develop richer and stronger programs in content to introduce our cultural heritage, tradition, artists, thinkers and their works to the world. In the 100th anniversary of the Republic, as they claim in the 2023 goals, our cultural and artistic values in Turkey will be conserved, reproduced and passed on to the future

generations. With the self-confidence of having our own values, our people will see the world as a field of trade, knowledge and also as a field of cultural interaction. A social structure will be created where everyone can access cultural and artistic activities. (AKP, 2015: 48) In brief, since 2002, AKP has gradually increased its focus on the culture and arts in Turkey, beginning with the unification of the Ministries of Culture and Tourism in 2003, privatization policies, democratization of culture in the first years, preparing of cultural policy report for EU membership, building cultural centers large or small, application of censorships on arts, conservation and preservation claims. However, the underlying thought on these seems the issue of ‘cultural power’ expressed by the government in public. In the following chapters, it will be investigated whether culture is used as an apparatus in the context of AKP policies or not.

2. CONSERVATIVE ART DEBATES IN TURKEY

2.1. THE BEGINNING OF THE CONSERVATIVE ART DEBATE

On 14th of February 2012, Iskender Pala, a Turkish Divan Poetry Professor, novelist, and writer in Zaman Newspaper, wrote a critic on a play performed in Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality City Theaters in Zaman Newspaper.¹¹ The critic was about “La Secreta Obscenidad De Cada Dia” (“Günlük Müstehcen Sırlar” as adapted in Turkish) the famous play of the Chilean writer and director Marco Antonio de la Parra which was played in Turkey and directed by Yıldırım Fikret Urağ. (HaberTürk, 2012)

Iskender Pala's article published in Zaman Newspaper was questioning how an 'obscene' play with the phrase '16+' on the poster could be staged by a paid theater sustaining with our taxes. For Pala, there was neither a life lesson that will interest the audience, nor a virtue, or a public critique which is the general purpose of the theater. It is a banality with the State money. He was, in a way, inviting the paid theaters to stay within the limits of public morality.

However, these critics made by Iskender Pala had reactions from the writers and intellectuals. The discussions are gathered around the “obscenity” naming. The play was actually not an ‘obscene’ or ‘erotic’ play but a politic comedy. Pala replied to the critics as it has not an art value for him, he did not watch the play but read the text. (A Haber, 2012) Pala claimed that: “I did not watch the play, but I read the text from the beginning. Why do I watch it? Since I didn't believe it is an art, I didn't give it a value to watch it. But of course I read the text, and then I wrote the my thoughts.” Explaining the reason for not watching the play, Pala said

¹¹ Zaman Newspaper was closed on 27 July 2016 as part of an investigation about the Fethullah Terrorist Organization (FETÖ). Inaccessible

that: "I was actually against the poster. Those who read the article correctly should understand that I am against the 16+ sign on that poster. 16+ marks cannot be put on any art supported or produced by a State, all over the world." (A Haber, 2012)

In Radikal Newspaper, Bahar Çuhadar explained that it is a play written to criticize the oppressive Pinochet regime in 1984 which includes sociological, psychological and ideological debates and revolutionary songs and anthems. She criticized the writing of Pala without seeing the play and his dwelling on the word 'obscene' and the phrase 16+ on the poster. Çuhadar asked "Couldn't art point out beyond the first meaning of a word in theater, in literature, etc.? Was it a Marxist, Freudian, an oppressive anti-regime text with a revolutionary anthem that makes the game 'obscene' for Pala?" (Çuhadar, 2012)

Çuhadar reports a section from İskender Pala's column in Zaman Newspaper: "The duty of the paid theaters in all over the world is to be able to make social criticism freely by creating art for the benefit of humanity by creating a repertoire with classical works and national culture. The State-owned theaters are established and supported for this purpose in almost every country. Thus, it will be the mirror of life, raise the awareness of the society and educate it through art, but it will not allow to fantasies with a pertness like 16+. Otherwise, it is not among the duties of the state or municipalities to open businesses that try to pass the topics far away from the society off on society as art with sexuality and erotic dressings." (Çuhadar, 2012)

Çuhadar questions whether the theater, which is said to be 'the mirror of the society,' should reflect the real society or the society composed of 'good' individuals that the state is trying to create. "The State and City Theaters, which have been acting classical plays for a long time, have been criticized for their 'boring' attitudes. Why is there such a limitation and warning when they started to

prepare more diverse programs?" She asks. (Çuhadar, 2012) The Head of International Association of Theater Critics (IATC), which is one of the UNESCO's non-governmental organizations, Üstün Akmen reacted to the words of Iskender Pala by asking that: "Whether the means of production turning to public property or the howling society under the repressive regimes, which one provokes him? This kind of behaviors mean targeting institutions and encouraging certain groups for provocation." (soL Haber Merkezi, 2012)

Committing a blunder by writing on a play that he did not watch, Pala hardly criticized the theater plays paid by our taxes and said these are not art but banality. These critiques were followed by another discussion coming from a government official which got further reactions. Prof. Dr. Mustafa Isen, The General Secretary of the Presidency, was the guest of honor of the Suriçi Group Platform Istanbul Meetings in March 2012. Isen mentioned that the AKP government did very well in its first 10 years, made Turkey compete with other countries, made innovations on juridical and economic issues. Now, in cultural terms, there is a need for a move going neck and neck with other activities. (Habertürk, 2012)

The editor of the book *Çağdaş Türkiye'de Muhafazakâr Sanat Sorunu: Perspektifler & Diyaloglar*, Gündoğdu gathered the whole text of the speech by Mustafa Isen in Suriçi meeting. "In the Republican era, the State has been in the position of directly providing and organizing services in the field of culture and arts. The current repertoire and sense of art of the organizations such as State Opera and Ballet, State Theaters, State Folk Dance Communities, State Turkish Folk and Art Music Communities, etc., has been continued from time to time by some successful administrators with relatively qualified way. However, the expected creative momentum under the limiting and bureaucratic influence of the state system has not been achieved, and there has been no major change in the last 10 years. The original structure continues exactly." (Gündoğdu, 2013: 14)

As Isen states that Turkey is the world's 16th largest economy in economic terms, however Turkey ranks 92 in the world in regard to humanitarian development. By seeing the culture and art as a part of development project, he stated that in order to draw the humanitarian development criterion to a better point, there should be endeavor in culture, education, science, art, sports, and health. Professor Dr. Isen said that new and original artistic conceptions did not emerge as a result of the statist understanding, and this should be solved. (Gündoğdu, 2013: 14)

Isen noted that as KOYDES (project of supporting the infrastructure of villages) and BELDES (project of supporting the infrastructure of municipalities), there should be a project called KULDES (project of supporting the infrastructure of culture). His proposal is a small-scale, multi-purpose cultural center in every town. People will hold their wedding, high school ceremonies, memorial days and political meetings in these centers. There will be a small library next to it. They will consist of small rooms that arts can be practiced. After this is done, to transform Anatolia into an art nursery garden with a mechanism that the state can make small contributions such as instrument, stage, and clothing support to the people and institutions that demand to perform the culture and art of the region. The state will not do social engineering and will not dictate that: 'You will be in this cultural form'. (Gündoğdu, 2013: 14-15)

Listing the above-mentioned suggestions, Isen gives examples from the institutions which does not work well. By expressing the state's folk and art music choirs established after 1970s, "I express with sadness, by exception of Istanbul, they did not work well. In other words, not only theater, opera, ballet, symphony but these choirs also did not work well. They did not contribute to the cultural structure of the city in which they are located. On the contrary, there are non-governmental folk music associations and it is not possible to find a place in their concerts. Because those people pay their rents with the money they cut from their

salaries, they buy instruments and costumes out of their pockets. I believe that if the annual cost of the two artists in the State Choir will be given to this choir as a state contribution, their efficiency will be much more from their current position. Because such choirs are the structures that those region need. There won't be a positive outcome when you try to do this with a top-down and differential approach.” (Gündoğdu, 2013: 15-16)

Stating that the State cannot use at least one-third of the artists who are employed in theater, opera, ballet, symphonic orchestras, for example, 60-70% in ballet, Isen said, "Therefore, in the institutions which are managed with bureaucratic understanding, closed to innovations and participation of new generations, it is never possible to see the expected creative development with contemporary, innovative and civilian perspective.” (Gündoğdu, 2013: 16)

Moreover, Isen stated that these artistic categories neither integrate nor embrace with the society and also could not produce activities that would attract the attention of the society. This explanations of Isen were followed with an example:

“Last week, Iskender Pala wrote a critical article about a play of the city theaters. In the city theaters, the situation is not different. As always, these fractions responded by saying: ‘Sir, this conservative group does not understand from art anyway. It is kind of saying what is it to you and you get involved in these jobs? Mind your own business!’ However, the bird does not fly with one wing. If the system will transform the works into a civilization, civilization is obliged to be in an absolute framework going hand in hand with culture and art. *If the conservative fraction has a sense of democracy, if we can talk about something like conservative democracy, then we are obliged to talk about something called 'conservative aesthetics' and 'conservative art' and to establish the norms and structures of it.* There is a need for institutional restructuring which

takes into account civil initiative, local approaches and the core dynamics of culture.” Isen stated that the old structure should be changed and followed: “It is absolutely necessary to give up the logic of civil servants and civil artists.” (Habertürk, 2012)

Prof. Dr. Isen came up with a suggestion of establishing a Culture and Art Council. He explains why this is necessary as such: “In 2009-2010, the State theaters performed 126 games with a subsidiary payment of 126 million 313 thousand 864 liras, on the contrary, private theaters were performed 152 plays for 3 million liras, and the cinema sector produced 193 films for 12 million liras. The Culture and Arts Council affiliated to the Prime Ministry should be established, like the examples in the contemporary world, and the state's possibilities should be transferred to the right channels through this council.” (Gündoğdu, 2013: 17)

Reminding that there was a news in a newspaper after the discussions on the city theaters as "The number of seats in the city theaters has been increased, but the number of spectators has decreased in return" Isen continued: “The next day, one of the directors said: "We have nothing to do with numbers, we don't care whether we have less audience or more, we are responsible for the quality” Like these are the opposite things. In a way, it is a kind of perspective that: ‘This society does not understand quality, so what.’ This society understands from the quality. If you offer a real quality, the number of spectators will increase.” (Gündoğdu, 2013: 17)

Presidential General Secretary Isen completed his speech by emphasizing the archaic structure should be replaced by the new. “The mentality of state official and state artist must be definitely given up. Turkey’s 21st century arts and culture strategy must be set. The resources allocated to this field should be used effectively and efficiently. By doing all these, the state should be moved to the position of ‘supporting actor’ rather than ‘executer actor’ as much as possible and

the perception of 'civil servant artist' and 'bureaucratic art institutions' should be ended. Now, Turkey has the potential and infrastructure of doing this." (Gündoğdu, 2013: 17)

In brief, The General Secretary of the Presidency Prof. Dr. Mustafa Isen attributes the needs to focus on culture and art. Turkey which ranks 92nd in the world in regard to humanitarian development needs to be drawn to a better point. So, according to him, the top-down approach which has been exposed to us for years should end. The State should stop doing social engineering and dictate a cultural form to its people. For him, the old structure should be changed. We are in a new Turkey with increasing conservative fractions. With his words: *"If the conservative fraction has a sense of conservative democracy, then we are obliged to talk about something called 'conservative aesthetics' and 'conservative art' and to establish the norms and structures of it."*

An interview done by Eyüp Tatlıpınar in Akşam Newspaper with Prof. Hasan Bülent Kahraman who is known with his closeness to the government and whom Iskender Pala will also give reference on the next following chapter, is valuable in order to understand the government's perspective on this subject. Kahraman says: "It is not easy to discuss conservative art or to declare that art has a conservative type. This is unique to us. For example, England is a conservative country in terms of popular consciousness but there is no conservative art discussions in England. If you insist on making impressionistic art in England, maybe, you will be in more conservative side. However, we try to create a conservative space. This is because we are a society that has been severely disconnected from its cultural past." Following his explanations, Kahraman addresses that the conservatives in Turkey are, interestingly enough, looking from the perspective of the West. "When we discuss the conservatism issue, the opposing concept we put against conservatism is actually the West, not modernity. Anyone can criticize me at

choice, no one can convince me that the West is not the prior cultural perspective for the conservatives of Turkey. The West is a phenomenon that Turkish conservatism also have an eye on and is influenced by.” (Tatlıpınar, 2012) To the question whether he feels apprehension on the conservative art discourse, Kahraman answers: “I am one of the who says: ‘Don't be afraid, we cannot get nowhere without achieving peace with the cultural accumulation, without updating it, or without internalizing it’ since 30 years. There is nothing to fear. I would like to add Ottoman divan literature or Ottoman music lessons to curriculums as elective. So let me say this; a more liberal perspective is occurring in Turkey whether a conservative government does it or not. A perspective formed in Turkey is not a more conservative perspective than that.” (Tatlıpınar, 2012)

As one of the prominent figures in this heated debate of 2012 about building a conservative identity, Kahraman had already a 'conservatism discourse' in a discussion about Istanbul's urban architecture in 2011 by saying that when we become conservative, we will change in a good way. For him, "To create a new by preserving the old one requires switching to a completely different mindset. This needs a bourgeois-up, to have a capital, and to become satisfied. Turkey is not yet at that stage. We still live with our most vulgar ambitions. We are trying to be an urban society. In time, we will get rid of this 'modernity', and we will acquire our 'conservatism'. The old Istanbul will be survived, when we become conservative.” (Kahraman, 2011) It should not be a coincidence that people close to the government frequently talked about the conservatism in the peak years of the AKP government. ‘Conservatism’ seems to be used as a strategy to affect the populace contrary to the party’s first years in more liberal and comprehensive party line. The AKP government has already admitted that they could not become a cultural power. ‘Conservative art’ discussion was the prominent attempt for establishing the cultural hegemony.

2.2 CONSERVATIVE ART MANIFESTATION

Right after his critique or allegedly his gaffe on the State Theaters on February 14, 2012, Iskender Pala, a Turkish Divan Poetry Professor, novelist, and writer in Zaman Newspaper, published 'The Conservative Art Manifestation' on April 10, 2012 in Zaman Newspaper. (T24, 2012) No coincidence, the manifestation of conservative art by Pala came after the speech of the General Secretary of the Presidency, Prof. Dr. Mustafa Isen, stating the necessity of establishing the norms and structures of conservative arts and aesthetics. The text of the manifesto created by Iskender Pala in Zaman Newspaper, which was closed on July 27, 2016, will be placed as is.

“While cultural and artistic issues have always been behind political issues throughout our Republican history, fortunately, we have entered a period in which society wants to hold a view about culture and art and they have become to discuss conservative art. The reason for this is the raise of the economic adequacy which shown by the essential and non-essential needs theories of Maslow or Ibn Khaldun. For us, it is so important to conduct this discussion on a rational and solution-oriented platform.

To the debate that Mr. Mustafa Isen added a new dimension by saying that: "We have an obligation to create the norms and structure of 'conservative aesthetics and conservative art,' just as the conservatives has an understanding of democracy.", Mr. Emre Aköz joined to the debate by asking “Is something called Conservative Art (and Aesthetics) possible? If it is possible, what it is? Based on which principles, how it is done?”

I think it is necessary to discuss the concept of conservatism before discussing conservative art. Because, according to the opponent side of the

debate, conservative is the name of an identity consisting of "the people who sees everything through the window of religion and takes religion as the only reference." However, for culture and art community, conservative is who "rides on, wants to protect, keep alive and sustain national and moral values, artworks, customs and traditions". (Kubbealtı Dictionary, II, 2115) According to this second definition, I am a conservative.

With my above mentioned identity, I will write a 20-article manifesto that defines art instead of "conservative art" (because I find it restrictive) as a conservative, as the first things come to my mind and as clearly as possible. In my opinion;

1. Conservative art (CA) is the aesthetic dimension of the reconciliation effort of the society which was traumatically disconnected from its past, with its self.
2. CA is the art that is derived from the identity of the society and visible from the heart of the society.
3. CA is an aesthetic field for a nation whose economic development is in the 16th rank but the human development is in 92nd rank to be able to complete its structural change and to express itself freely. It opposes those who prevent the river from finding its natural way out and those who want to change its way artificially.
4. CA aims to contribute to social peace, enlightenment and material-moral development with its productions.
5. CA accepts that freedom and free environments are prerequisite for each artist. However, it opposes vulgarity, cheapness and discrimination made in the name of art.
6. CA is civil; it opposes the control of the state over art, it takes the part of the state as a sponsor, not as a boss.

7. CA is not a religion-based art, but it takes into account religious sensibilities.
8. CA does not fight with the public. In this respect, it supports the conservative art environment in England and for instance it is troubled with the blaspheme against the Islamic values in a society whose the population is predominantly Muslim.
9. CA does not reject the West, accepts its methodology and productions, but it remains distant to its soul.
10. CA knows, for example, Fuzuli or Dede Efendi, Shakespeare or Molière, Brahms or Vivaldi, Kurosawa or Coppola, but instead of producing a fake time and again version of them, with the ideal of being a Fuzuli, a Molière, a Vivaldi or Coppola it produces his own work.
11. CA carries the ideal of producing by syncretizing Nazım Hikmet or Orhan Kemal, Karacaoğlan or Sheikh Galib, Dostoevsky or Dante etc. without being dwelled on Mehmet Akif or Necip Fazıl.
12. CA, based on the principle that the classic is always open to interpretation, is determined to reinterpret and reproduce classical understanding, classical art and culture, rather than repeating or imitating.
13. CA is aware of its own cultural geography and it is far from being in chick complex that does not like its shell.
14. CA aims to produce in the same quality of his own before the Western artist, who tries to discover the products of our geography because he consumed his own cultural dynamics.
15. CA is art that criticizes but never excludes non-conservative art products, even if it is always ignored and excluded by the non-conservative art platforms.
16. CA is ‘the future rooted in the past’ with Yahya Kemal’s words of a natural organism which ‘continues by changing and changes by continuing’ with the words of Tanpınar.

17. CA is a civilization perspective and it strives to produce a balanced objects and meanings civilization in its most advanced form from the rich history and cultural heritage.

18. CA questions tradition and adds it to the contemporary experience by interpreting it.

19. CA produces artworks by using all the possibilities, techniques, knowledge and instruments of civilization and modern age, but it is inspired by its own past when blowing the soul into that artwork. (Remember Barış Manço known by young and old. That's why we liked him.)

20. CA knows that the nonsense "Conservatives do not have a proper understanding of art and a developed aesthetic standart" is a vulgar and unjustified deliberate act made up to ignore some things.

Let us conclude the topic with a sentence that Hasan Bülent Kahraman implicitly says to those who feel apprehension from CA (Akşam, 2012 April 08): “Don't be afraid! We cannot get nowhere without reconciling with the cultural accumulation, without internalizing and without updating it by ignoring.”

2.3 CRITIQUES ON CONSERVATIVE ART

The critiques came rapidly from the intellectuals to the above mentioned manifestation and this heated conservative art debates. The writer Zekiye Antakyalıoğlu criticizes the writing of a manifestation created by Pala by saying that: “The rules are formed according to customs and traditions, ethical values, issues that society is sensitive to, values that are known supreme, and of course the rules of religion. These rules are turned into a ‘manifesto’ and transformed to a credo, so that the artist does not deal with ‘absurd’ works.” (Antakyalıoğlu, 2012)

“If such manifestos aim for something good for ‘art’ and aim to increase sensitivities on art, why the word ‘conservative’ should be included in the title?” She is asking.

As Pala laid emphasis on the delay on cultural and artistic issues staying behind political issues throughout the Republican history and based it on Maslow’s needs hierarchy, Antakyalıoğlu criticizes him for pointing Maslow's need hierarchy as a scientific reason for it. And she adds; “The intellectuals, highbrows, and academics who theoretically think over art did not even think about it, as they are still in the lowest part (working for peanuts) of the hierarchical needs list. So the job left for the journalists and columnists.” (Antakyalıoğlu, 2012)

Antakyalıoğlu draws attention to the point that some articles in the manifestation are moderate than the others to prevent people from being terrified. She says: “This is a popular tactic for our country” by giving example of Article 4 of the Manifesto “CA aims to contribute to social peace, enlightenment and material-moral development with its productions.” In this way, by adding some moderate and some striking sentences together, a perfect balance is achieved. (Antakyalıoğlu, 2012)

As Antakyalıoğlu understands conservatism which tries to “preserve” art within certain rules and “manifesto” is a kind of declaration that lists certain principles. She gives examples such as the Communist Manifesto (Karl Marx), Dadaist Manifesto (Tristan Tzara), Surrealist Manifesto (Andre Breton), Futurist Manifesto (Marinetti), etc. The common feature of these manifestos is a revolt against the established order. Antakyalıoğlu asserts that conservative art manifesto is “oxymoron” bringing together the two contradictory expressions like “hot ice”. “The ‘manifestation of conservative art’ may have some absurd meanings as in ‘the declaration of a free man wanting slavery,’ ‘the declaration of a living

creature asking the right to die in the dry desert sand,' 'the declaration of a man who can see wanting to be blind.'" And follows: "Declarations are not written to eliminate things that go well. They are written to change the things that are problematic, to break the chains, and to allow change. Unfortunately our country has become a strange country that is embarrassed by the things to be proud of, found the unproblematic issues strange and loved and glorified problematic situations." Antakyalıoğlu says that: "Conservative Manifesto is a kind of comedy. Conservative Art is another comedy with the same logic. However, it has not yet been found funny. Because Aziz Nesin is dead! The laughing ability and the humor tolerance of the society also died." (Antakyalıoğlu, 2012)

Taha Akyol wrote about his ideas on conservative art in his column in *Hürriyet* Newspaper in 19 April 2012 by giving reference of Russell Kirk's six canons on conservatism as he interprets them; the limitedness of rationalism, interest in tradition and mystical believes, the idea of class and order in society, ownership and freedom, self-control culture, desire of a change gradually not revolutionary. (Akyol, 2012) Akyol asks: "Why should art does not include these values?" As he states that there are so many artworks which are conservative in content. Akyol gives examples of conservative arts as such: aristocratic art, religious, Islamic, Christian, Jewish, Buddhist arts, classical arts, neoclassical arts of the modern times and asks "What about the arts that were not born with any revolution, but developed in centuries, and inspired by religion, tradition, and history, aren't they 'conservative'?"

Akyol sees the novelist Stendhal, who wrote the French revolution, as well as the royalist Chateaubriand as equally artist. The counter-revolutionary Soljenitsin is an artist as much as the Revolutionary Gorky or fascism passionate Ezra Pound or Wagner. He also mentions about Divan Literature in certain patterns, Ottoman architecture, decoration and music are the perfect examples of art as the

expressions of tradition. Akyol asks: "Would there be a genius like Âşık Veysel if there were no folk literature and mysticism? Where would we put Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar, Yahya Kemal, Peyami Safa rather than excepting them as conservatives?" (Akyol, 2012)

Taha Akyol commentates to the issue in terms of the relationship between art and political philosophies by saying that: "In fact, there are both relations and problematics between all political philosophies and art." (Akyol, 2012) By giving reference to Ahmet Hakan's explanation "There is no conservative art because art is revolutionary." Akyol criticizes him by saying that: "I don't think there is such a necessary link between revolutionism and art. There may be 'revolutionary' leaps on art, but 'tradition' is no less important. Conservatives can also have objections, rebellions, strong inspirations, aesthetic perceptions, and they can produce art as revolutionaries, liberals, socialists, or feminists. In fact, these concepts are in our minds, life is not divided into such definitive categories. If the art environment has a tradition and consciousness, art can gush out from any idea. Otherwise, any idea can become obsolete on art." (Akyol, 2012)

In Sabah Newspaper, Emre Aköz questions what exactly Professor Isen meant by saying a term 'conservative art'. He is asking two questions: "When Isen says conservative art, does he mean the 'subject' that the artist work on it? Or, is it the 'approach' that the artist carry out by dealing with the subject?" These two fair questions comes up with an example of 'praying man'. Aköz asks whether it is enough to paint a conservative world image such as "praying man" to make a conservative art. He finds the most of the buildings constructed during AKP period aesthetically weak. The reason for that is placing a few motifs from the Ottomans or Seljuks on the buildings. He asks "Is conservatism in aesthetics made in this way?" By looking at the rich of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's period, Aköz states that the issue has also a humanistic manner. "When I look at the

consumption habits of the conservative rich, I often see gaudiness, incoherency and even stylelessness.” (Aköz, 2012)

On April 2, 2012 in Sabah Newspaper, Engin Ardiç criticizes the discourse of “Artist are left-leaning” and gives examples from the literary world: Marsel Proust, Ezra Pound, T.S. Eliot, Louis Ferdinand Celine, Mehmet Akif, Yahya Kemal, Abdülhak Şinasi, Nahit Sırrı, and Ahmet Hamdi. Ardiç says that art can be conservative but it is not appropriate. He puts forward two essentials for the work to be regarded as qualified art, that is, innovation in essence or innovation in form. If you cannot achieve originality in other words, then, you are conservative. If you repeat the old as a Muslim artist, you are conservative. Ardiç also addresses to the conservative artists: “be local, be one of us, but not be conservative. Do not try to repeat Ottoman motifs like a parrot. Try to create a contemporary Turkish and Muslim aesthetics.” (Ardiç, 2012)

On April 8, 2012 in Sabah Newspaper, Emre Aköz claims that Prof. Dr. Mustafa Isen sent his ideas on conservative art to the press to make the issue discussed. (Aköz, 2012) However, the debate could not go far beyond the press community, and did not move much to the artists, curators, or art historians. On April 13, 2012 in Taraf Newspaper, Murat Belge says that there will be no such thing as conservative art. He looks to the discussion in terms of literature and claims that every word is a new word even if you recompose a poetry of the famous Divan poet Nedim today, you would still change it. Because you are in another context. So, each word is new thus it is not conservative. However, Belge states that the content can be conservative. For him, a conservative or rightist one also can be an artist, like Ezra Pound and T.S.Eliot. (Belge, 2012)

One of the most critical arguments came from Yusuf Kaplan who directed his questions towards the government. By pointing the rightist parties in governing

Turkey for 60 years: “You have been in power for 60 years, where were you until now? Why haven't you made a cultural leap in 60 years?” He questions why they could not have an idea of civilization, why they condemned us to a self-colonizing educational system and cultural order, and why they could not bring up a new Cultural Minister who could make a cultural revolution in this country for 10 years. He also says that he expected them to question why they could not raise pioneering generations that would create new waves in cinema, music, literature and all other fields of art. Kaplan remarks that today, the spirit of the Age (Zeitgeist) is in the West. So, we do not determine the flow of history and we just drift. But yesterday, the spirit was in Damascus, Baghdad, Sarajevo, Skopje, Konya and Istanbul, Mecca, Medina, Basra and Kufah, etc. Now, it is the age of culture. The government's saying: “We do not have a cultural competence” is because of their right-wing, conservative, spiritless, rootless, and pragmatist governing style. (Kaplan, 2012)

In Zaman Newspaper, on April 15, 2012, a poet and writer Hilmi Yavuz says, on the other hand, "Thanks to Mustafa Isen, conservative aesthetics issue that did not need to be addressed since Yahya Kemal, is now brought back into question." For Yavuz, it is a matter of reconstituting the aesthetics of the Islamic civilization and of rebuilding the norms and structure of it. Yavuz underlines that the ones who attributed Islamic identity for themselves in Turkey ignore that Islam did not built a civilization. (Gündoğdu, 2013: 77) In the interview held by Neşe Düzel on Taraf Newspaper, Hilmi Yavuz sums up the issue as follows: “Due to the aesthetic criteria in Turkey does not happen in the form of reproduction of traditional values, today a serious pleasure fiasco is experiencing in all areas of the arts in this country. The key reason of this is Kemalist ideology.” Düzel ask Hilmi Yavuz a further question: “Could conservatives and conservative art give meaning to society?” Yavuz criticizes both parties by saying no. “Same thing happened in all Islamist, conservative and Kemalist sections. Just as Kemalism puts forth tie and

hat, Islamism has been reduced to dress and headscarf. They did not see Islam as an aesthetic civilization but just as shariat.” (Mimesis, 2012)

Dücan Cündioğlu looks at the subject from the point of art criticism. For Cündioğlu, “Conservative art is the name of a style of art that is desired (to be ordered), not the name of an already existing art. It doesn’t exist, but it has even a manifesto. That’s why it is intolerant of differences. It doesn’t want to see opposites. It expects a compliance with public, past, tradition and values. It does not tolerate elite pride. It is just intellectual babbling, bohemian tenue, snob cheapness, modern pertness... As long as the artist pursues his/her self, art cannot avoid being extraordinary, outcast or even illegal. Art does not manage to exist without confronting with law, morality and power. The reason for the existence of art is imagination. Art exists as long as man can imagine. Imagination, in other words, with no exaggeration, has no borders. Art has no borders, too. That’s why there is no conservative art because of the essence of art. There is no conservative artist, too! (Cündioğlu, 2012)

One of the leading figures in contemporary art in Turkey, who is founder and director of many institutions including SALT, and curator Vasif Kortun says: “There is no such thing like art which is appropriate to the values of the country. In the visual arts, there is a few country beware of the body presentations like nudity, erected penis and such so as in Turkey. I don’t understand the problem of those who say art should be conservative. I can only say to them ‘Rest assured, our art is more modest than necessary.’” To the question whether the reason for this is the Republican ideology or not, Kortun explains that the unity of the Republic ideology and the cultural engineering ended after WW II. For him, we have already moved to another phase after 1946 and his follows “It is a handicap to criticize the social engineering of the early Republican era from the point where we are today. We have to look at that period through Hitler’s Germany and Soviet

Russia. The agenda of today is not the same with that time. Today, we know that culture is not a service. Engineering of it cannot be done in 2012. Also, the government does not have the tools to do this engineering. Because culture cannot be produced. Culture is a description of something happened. But recently, when I encounter the words like 'immoral plays with the money of the state,' 'immoral films' or 'conservative art,' I see a business or managerial plan rather than a visionary initiative. In other words, changing the way of managing the art environment is on the agenda rather than creating a total alternative art environment.” (Başaran, 2012)

On the specific questions about the conservative art, Kortun states that he is completely against it. “Turning art production into a tool and writing a recipe to it is against the nature of this work. Culture cannot be produced through the five-year plans of the great men. If you try to do this, you can find yourself on doing work with the ideal artist descriptions of Hitler Germany. For example, in Egypt, I have devout artist friends. When you look at their work, you cannot see anything about their beliefs because it is not something to be denounced. Look, we're not talking about Islamic art here. Badly, we cannot figure out what kind of art is mentioned when it is called conservative art.” (Başaran, 2012)

2.4. LOCAL AND NATIONAL DISCOURSE ON CULTURE AND ARTS IN TURKEY

Nation states question and restructure preconceived identities of their nation and redefine them in time. There might be a reason for such attempts like coup d'états, migrations, wars, globalization, or religion. Similarly in Turkey, constructing a nation state after the fall of Ottoman Empire caused some traumas which led intellectuals and politicians to recreate already existed definitions. From one party

state of CHP in the first phase of the Republic to multiple party system of 1940-50s, later 1960 and 1971 coups, also the cultural influences of the coup d'état in September 12, 1980 began to manifest itself more intensely from the beginning of 1990 to the 2000s. In 2002, AKP won the 15th Turkish general election as a right-wing party and it is still the ruling party trying to create a nation with one homeland, one state, a single nation and single flag by saying the motto of "one-party and one man" regime. From literature to cinema, from theatre to music, from art to sport, there is a drastic change in the definition of "intellectual and artist". Not enough attention is paid to the original work with an artistic value. Instead, the productions that are humorously absurd are preferred mostly or who is on TV is perceived as an artist. A generation of (so-called) intellectuals and artists who do not criticize but support the government, who are kept under control, and who are close to the public, was created.

When we try to define carefully the adjectives 'Local and National,' we can see that they do not really match up with each other. It is a dilemma that: 'Local' actually carries domestic values and needs to belong to one region, however, 'National' is a construction that works with the suppression of the local. Therefore, it is so hard to be both local and national at the same time.

For a long time in Turkey's political history, 'National' is also used as legitimacy, 'Local' is added lately to it. For instance, the novel writers of early Republican period focused on the question of Westernization but what meant is 'Western, but actually national'. The main ground here is the idea of "protecting yourself" but to protect itself is to build a "self" to need to be protected at the same time. So, it needs to define a 'nationality'. As Tanil Bora says, 'Locality' can be a concept of considering the special conditions of a place without glorifying them, or making them unique or utterly different. It may be the 'praxis' notion that establishes a close relation between ideas and desires via human experiences and relations.

With the settled (nationalist-conservative) use of the term, 'Locality' is a narcissistic and idiosyncratic claim comes out of a paranoid fear of alienation. It's the cage where 'Us' is closed. (Bora, 2016)

Anthropologist Anthony D. Smith developed the idea of "localization" in the creation of nation states. (Smith, 2014) The reason to create a discourse like "local and national" could be an attempt to create an endemic nation contemplation. The Kemalist ideology established a secular vision opposed to bigotry, the AKP regime focuses on the nation but opposed to the bureaucratic elite. So, one can say that in Turkey, the process of transition in cultural policies evolved from "Modern and Civilized" to "Local and National".

The "locality" motif has used as a tool against the hegemony of the Turkish leftwing, but why "Local and National" has turned to a means of cultural hegemony? 'To be able to define himself in the face of the other' could be an answer for this. AKP expresses all the time that they made roads and had a success, but they have an intention to make the culture "local and national" which they have still no considerable achievement. However, it is a paradigm that the "self" is always in a state of being, it is open to changes in time and it is never consistent. The arguments of the conservative AKP power claiming that they cannot come to the point that they want on "the localization and nationalization" in "education, culture, and art" are frequently seen in the press. The power develops a method of targeting artistic activities, but only when their ideology is supported. They call it "local and national art" by intending Turkish-Islamic ideology rather than a critical language of culture and arts.

Getting into deeper, since 2010s, there is an overuse of the concept "local and national" that we will question the concept when we see the imputed figures. Following questions come to the minds: Who are the figures taking part in the

frame of culture and art and associated with this concept? If this is an effort to create a national identity that covers everyone, why is there so many people who cannot find space in this discourse? How is it possible to run this as an identity creation task? Is there a settled criteria for the determination of ‘courteous (incelikli)’¹² and "local and national" artist? Which authority determines these criteria? Along with these questions, in the upcoming paragraphs, there will be an critical overview of ‘local and national’ ascription by following the different cultural and artistic disciplines.

From the literature perspective, there are some names who influence the masses and have many followers from the conservative circles. For instance, the “Local and National” literature magazine, Divanyolu Magazine, the writer Yavuz Bahadırođlu from Yeniakit Newspaper, the writer Mustafa Kutlu from Yenişafak Newspaper, the novelist Rasim Özdenören, the journalist and writer Şule Yüksel Şenler, the poet Bedirhan Gökçe, the writer İskender Pala are some figures who are close to AKP and supporting the “local and national” ideology in their writings.

Before the concept of “Local and National” has politicized that much, there was a prize of "State Artist” (“Devlet Sanatçısı,” 2020) which was given to the artists by the Republic of Turkey as a result of their service and contributions to the arts. Since 1971, with the recommendation of the Ministry of Culture and the approval of the President, the title was given to the artists representing Turkey on the international level. The artists who earned salary thanks to this title have also the right to retire at the age of 65 and gained a number of privileges. However, this

¹² The General Director of State Theaters, Necat Birecik, by pointing out the coup attempt of July 15th, said that: “As nationalist artists, we will held only domestic plays this year in order to reinforce national, spiritual feelings in order to contribute to the unity. Rough politics is like damp, refutes the art. Our job is to produce aesthetics with a courteous artist consciousness. For this reason, the state theaters will continue to work by integrating with the people, with the responsibility of a courteous artist being far from rude politics.” (İleri Haber, 2016)

title caused a number of rejections. The artist Mehmet Gülerüz applied to the court in 2000 for the cancellation of the title 'state artist'. The court in 18 January 2002, canceled out the title given to 89 people. The photograph artist Ara Güler criticized the concept of state artist by saying that: "the artist of the state can be seen only in communist countries." However, later we will see Ara Güler getting support from the state. Then, since 2008, on the occasion of October 29 Republican celebrations, "Presidential Culture and Art Grand Awards" ("T. C. Cumhurbaşkanlığı Kültür ve Sanat Büyük Ödülü Sahipleri," n.d.) began to be given by the Presidency in the fields of culture and arts. These prizes, according to their definition, are "to honour and encourage persons or institutions who give unique works or services which have contributed to the Turkish culture and arts in the name of the state." On the first years of the award, it was given relatively artistic based but later in 2010s, the award was given to the figures who are close to AKP such as Iskender Pala, from the Wise Men committee the arabesque musician Orhan Gencebay, another name from the Wise Men committee the actress Hülya Koçyiğit who says that "Nobody is under pressure in this country, but everyone is too much free" and soon the Konyaaltı Beach tender was given to the son-in-law of her, the writer in Yenişafak Newspaper Rasim Özdenören who is close to the government, professor of Islam Bekir Karlığa, the film director Mesut Uçakan who said "Sculpture is forbidden in our religion and this provision is final and not open to discussion" or the intellectuals that the leaders of AKP have gained inspiration even they were died when this award was given to Cemil Meriç and Nurettin Topçu.

As one of the first the "local and national" names in literature is Iskender Pala, who is a conservative democrat, always supports the "local and national" arts and culture in his writings was deemed worthy of the 2013 Presidential Grand Prize in literature branch on the aftermath of the conservative art debate. Also, in 2013, another title came up. "The Wise Men" ("Akil İnsanlar Heyeti," 2020) committee

was created by AKP to contribute to the Peace Process with the following names: Yılmaz Erdoğan representing the Southeast Anatolia Region, Orhan Gencebay representing the Black Sea Region, Kadir İnanır representing the Mediterranean Region, Hülya Koçyiğit representing the Marmara Region, and Lale Mansur representing the Mediterranean Region.

In 2014, when Presidential Candidate and Prime Minister Erdoğan explained "The Vision Document of the Republic of Turkey" which took place in Haliç Congress Center, the names from the art world were among the invited guests. The famous names announced their full support to the Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan who committed to become the President in the Presidential elections. The attendees were Orhan Gencebay, Alişan, Metin Arolat, Hande Yener, Mustafa Sandal, Kutsi, Berksan, İsmail YK, İzzet Yıldızhan, Alişan, Bülent Ersoy, Zerrin Özer, also from the sports world Ömer Onan, Yıldırım Demirören, Rıdvan Dilmen, Hidayet Türkoğlu, Hamza Yerlikaya, Ahmet Dursun, Ünal Aysal, Fikret Orman, Harun Erdenay, from the movie actors Hülya Koçyiğit, Şahan Gökbakar who is the creator of the character of Recep İvedik, Hayri Çolak, Şafak Sezer and the TV speaker Ece Erken. They accepted Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's invitation, and offered their support for Erdoğan's presidential candidacy. Erdoğan reacted to the criticisms of the artists who participated in the vision meeting by saying that: "a lynch campaign has started to implement towards our artists. If artists, athletes, writers join their meetings, all is good but it is bad if they attend our meetings. These habits are now left in the old Turkey, and we will not allow such lynching campaigns in the new Turkey." (Sözcü, 2014) Erdoğan skillfully creates the duality of our artists and their artists through a discriminatory discourse. Here, the group he calls 'our artists' is patriotic, nationalist, but the excluded artists are in the position of traitors.

The debates on “local and national” mostly focused on theatre field. The theatre actor Hüseyin Goncagül mentioned about Necip Fazıl Kısakürek's play "Creating a Man" and said, "We were working with our hearts, in order to put a work into the scene integrated with ‘local and national’ sensitivity.” Another actor Ismail Yeşilbağ explains the “local and national” theatre as “a theatre based on our culture, on the taste and smell of our land, based on our national values, a theatre that does not attack to the old and new books of our beliefs, to our language, to our national and domestic values and a theatre which is not disrespectful and disobedient.” Yeşilbağ added that: "currently in Turkey, there is no local Turkish theatre. There are Shakespeare and Greek theatre imitations. Hasan Nail Canatan made the local theatre, Hüseyin Goncagül is doing now. We are trying to do.” Another actor, Yaşar Elmas also said, “If we watch Fuzuli or Dede Efendi in London or in Paris, we play Shakespeare. There is no Turkish theatre. We have put the plays by local figures to the stages.” Birol Cürgül, a theatre player and director, argued that: “The European states that invaded our country have gone, but the culture they put forth to destroy us is still very strong.” (“Yerli ve Milli Tiyatroya Doğru”, 2015)

As of January 2016, Prof. Dr. İskender Pala who let the theater discussions began in 2012 by saying that the state paid theaters are in banality and who writes the manifestation of the conservative art has been appointed as the Chief Advisor to the Prime Minister. Pala was appointed as the Deputy Chairman of the Culture and Art Policy Board by President Erdoğan. Repeatedly, “local and national theater” discussions were brought to agenda in 2016. The State Theatre General Artistic Director Nejat Birecik announced that they will only undertake the local plays to the program in order to reinforce national-spiritual feelings in order to contribute to the national unity. So, the foreign plays were removed from the programme. Some plays from the theatre program; Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar’s

'Huzur', Recep Bilginer's 'Yunus Emre', Nahid Sırrı Örik's 'Düşüş' and "Murat IV", 'Ya Devlet Başa Ya Kuzgun Leşe', 'Goncagül' were played. (Diken, 2016)

In 2016, in the Presidency Complex, the President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan accepted the artists, actors, radio hosts and athletes who came together with citizens keeping the 'democracy watch' in front of Beştepe Millet Mosque by protesting the coup attempt held on July 15th. Participating names are again similar names.¹³ In the same year, in 2016 the fast-breaking dinner was opened with the Azan read by the popular singer Mustafa Ceceli as it was done in the previous year.

On March 3, 2017, in the II National Cultural Council, President of the Commission on Performing Arts İskender Pala stated that artistic and administrative administration should be separated and the repertoire and texts should be based on the "national values" for the theaters. In April 2018, General Director of the State Theater Mustafa Kurt stated that they give great importance to the growth of young local writers and said: "We want to have our own 'local and national' works." He introduced new "Incentive System for Play Writers". He explained the aims as; "First of all, we will carry our own culture, our 'local and national' works to the world." Kurt stated that their primary task is to find local authors with this "Play Writing" project. (haberler.com, 2018)

In 2017, the President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan met with the artists and sportsmen at the Tarabya Mansion for Ramadan fast-breaking dinner. Here are again the attending names: Ibrahim Tatlıses, Bülent Ersoy, Emel Sayın, Orhan Gencebay, Mustafa Keser, Cengiz Kurtoglu, Ayberk Pekcan, Murat Yildirim, Hakan Peker,

¹³ Cengiz Kurtoglu, Mustafa Ceceli, Alişan, Doğuş, Kutsi, Nihat Dogan, Berdan Mardini, Davut Güloğlu, İntizar, Serkan Kaya, Umit Sayın, Ahmet Selçuk İlkan, Ece Erken, Saruhan Hünel, Erdem Kınay, Yaşar İpek, Uğur Arslan, Sinan Akçıl, Ersin Düzen, Vatan Şaşmaz, Sefa Doğanay, Polat Yağcı, Hopededik Ayhan, African Ali, Planet Mehmet, Adem Methan, Güvenç Kurtar, Tanju Colak, İsmail Özkan, Melih Kurtuluş and Nagihan from Survivor.

Mustafa Sandal, Hülya Avşar, Hande Yener, Kutsi, Sibel Can, Alişan, Cengiz Kurtoglu, Muazzez Ersoy, Muazzez Abacı, Seda Sayan, Sinan Akçil, Yavuz Bingöl, Ümit Besen, Melihat Gülses, Radio programmer Mehmet Akbay, actors Necati Şaşmaz, Nurettin Sönmez, Cemal Hünel, Necati Şaşmaz, Kadir Çöpdemir, Wilma Elles, Murat Yildirim, from the sports world Aykut Kocaman, Rıdvan Dilmen, national rally racer Burcu Çetinkaya, national diver Şahika Ercümen, national volleyball player Neslihan Demir, and Abdullah Öztürk who won the gold medal in the table tennis branch in the Paralympics Games, and also the names from TV shows like Şoray Uzun, Ece Erken, and Esra Erol. To the reactions towards the AKP's artists, the Prime Minister Erdoğan immediately gave support by saying that the criticisms in the social media are extrinsic, outrageous and inhuman. "Since when do you find yourself capable of embargoing the will of the artist? Both those artists and the people of Turkey had chance to see and recognize your masks' falling. I call out once again to our artists. They do not be nervous, they do not hesitate and not be disturbed. The former Turkey's doors are closing and become history. Art is not monopolized by anyone. We will not allow to repression on the art and the artists. We will not allow our artists to be victims of this. They can give their support without any fear for the sake of Turkey." (Işıtır, 2014)

As it is seen from the news, the pop artists who are standing close to the ruling party held concerts easily in the municipalities or the producers are easily creating the tv series with a good budget. So, all these result with a political breakup by dividing those who attend to AKP's meetings and those who do not attend. As the most trusted figures in the eyes of people, and the voices of the street, are attending each invitation by the President. On February and March, 2018, some of the above-mentioned artists went to the Hatay border, Afrin, to give morality to the Turkish soldiers with Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. Cengiz Semercioğlu from Hürriyet Newspaper asked "Are you aware that the same artists are going to the

Huber Mansion, to the Kulliye, to the promotion of the new AKM, to support Hatay and Mehmetçik?" (Semercioğlu, 2018)

In the 3rd National Culture Council, held in March 3-5, 2017, the President of Cinema, Radio and Television Commission Deniz Bayrakdar suggested that there is a need for the films of 'the national and historical figures' and it should be supported with a big budget to introduce them globally. Held the premiere of his film "Wheat" in Beştepe Culture and Congress Center with the courtesy of the President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Semih Kaplanoğlu who is known for his closeness to Erdoğan seems as "local and national" cinema director. In 2019, Kaplanoglu's film "Bağlılık Aslı" chosen as the candidate of Turkey in the category of "Best Film in Foreign Language" in the Oscar nominee by the Culture and Tourism Ministry and Cinema General Directorate. This sparked a heated debate in the arts community. On the other hand, Şahan Gökbakar, the creator of Recep İvedik character and a series of popular comedy film, is making huge sales contrary to Nuri Bilge Ceylan whose films gains prestigious awards in world wide. We see Gökbakar in each invitation of AKP. Also, actors like Hayri Çolak, Şafak Sezer and actresses like Hülya Koçyiğit who gained the Presidential Culture and Art Grand Awards in 2014, are besides with Recep Tayyip Erdoğan in each invitation. We also know the producer Sinan Çetin who explained his disgust for the opponents of AKP and the director Mesut Uçakan who is close to the AKP. In 2018, Türker İnanoğlu who shoot so many of Yeşilçam films for the lower-middle segment, was deemed worthy of the 2018 Presidential Grand Prize on the cinema sector.

Since 2002, the AKP came to power, most of the TV series of Turkey were exported to abroad. Approximately 150 Turkish TV series have been sold to over a hundred countries including the Middle East, Eastern Europe, South America and South Asia. Apart from that, the TV series supported by the government with

a nostalgic and conservative attitude are mostly shown on the state television TRT channels. One of the first series *Diriliş Ertuğrul* has gained support from the government and deemed worthy for prizes because of embracing more introverted and nationalist vision. Even Recep Tayyip Erdoğan himself says that: “‘Diriliş Ertugrul’ is the voice of the conservative society”. (Armstrong, 2017) Also, an ‘Neo-Ottomanism’ trend can be seen in the TV series whether to aim the revival of the past or not, it might be the product of 'creating a root' effort. For the AKP government which believes that the denial of inheritance took place with the Republic, the TV series focusing on the historical roots are worthy of support like *Payitaht Abdulhamid*, *Diriliş Osman*, *Bir Zamanlar Osmanlı: Kıyam*, and *Osmanlı’da Derin Devlet*.

From the plastic arts perspective, the awarded artists with the Presidential Grand Prize may draw us a frame about the supported artists but rather than painters or sculptures, except a few, are not supported as much as the traditional artists. The Presidential Grand Prize is given on a wide spectrum generally on arts but not specialized according to fields. Without keeping apart, both contemporary arts and traditional arts, there are several names and institutions deemed worthy for the prize. For instance, painter Ferruh Başağa (2005), photographer Ara Güler (2005), Sakıp Sabancı Museum (2009), painter Ergin İnan (2010), Istanbul Modern Art Museum (2010), calligrapher Hüseyin Kutlu (2015), water marbling master Feridun Özgören (2016), calligrapher Ali Toy (2017), photographer İzzet Keribar (2018), painter Devrim Erbil (2019) was deemed worthy for the Presidential Grand Prize in arts branch. Rather than this prize, there is currently no artist support package proposed by the government.

At this point, it is noteworthy to mention about the investments of new conservative class on art. Globalization which has changed the internal dynamics of Turkey, has already began before AKP came into power in 2002, and got speed

in 2000s. As the result of this change in whole society, a new middle class came into being during AKP rule. As Murat Katođlu states that Turkey with its different social segments adopting diverse cultural values is dealing with the universal sociological categories of high, middle, and low or primitive culture coming from the preconceived aesthetics, intellectual, moral and universal criteria. For Katođlu, “The products of high culture have never been popular among members of middle and low culture groups.” (Katođlu, 2009: 27) The collectors close to the government invest in the contemporary works of some artists like İsmail Acar, Devrim Erbil, Bedri Rahmi Eyübođlu, Ergin İnan, Nuri İyem, Süleyman Saim Tekcan etc. who are mostly using traditional motifs as reference. The cultural habits of the new bourgeoisie of the AKP period is open to investigation but in a general sense the traditional arts which are heart-work (gönül/meşk işi in Turkish) like calligraphy, illumination, miniature are the most attractive to the conservative class. Ömer Lekesiz from Yenişafak Newspaper has an evaluation by looking at All Arts Istanbul fair attempt in 2013. For Lekesiz, the conservatives did not show interest on All Arts Istanbul which brings modern and traditional arts together based on gaining money upon the exhibited artworks. Their attitude is a reaction for the attempt of off-system market (traditional arts which are considered as gönül işi) inclusion to the intra-system market (modern arts). (Lekesiz, 2013)

Sparking controversy, one of the issues that was discussed a lot is the “freak / ucube” stigmatizing. The Prime Minister of the time Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, who came to Kars in 2011, called the sculpture by the artist Mehmet Aksoy as “Freak” and asked for the demolition of the monument. It was assumed to be created by an artist from the opposite side. Yenişafak Newspaper writer Fatma Barbarosođlu mentions about the dissonance of the forenamed sculpture with the people's aesthetic codes. For Barbarosođlu, “While the people's aesthetic codes are obvious, the elites are trying to impose the classical European taste, which is not even related with them, to the public. In our country, it was very painful that art

came out of the pleasure and control of the aristocrats and entered the field of democratic sharing. The republicans decided to destroy all kinds of art built by the Ottomans which were embedded in the texture of the city and the soul of the citizens in order to erase the traces of the past. Hundreds of mosques were destroyed. Those which was not collapsed were hired for inconvenient services like public house (pavyon in Turkish). (See Sirkeci Vezir Mosque) Despite all the pressure on illumination, calligraphy, miniature arts have entered our lives again as a magnificent answer to the democratization of art. In short, let's look at the "freak" debates in terms of the democratization of the art and try to understand the people of Kars who do not want that statue there and applaud the prime minister's attribution "freak" as the demonstration their feelings." (Barbarosoğlu, 2011) From time to time, we hear the argument about the turning of the mosques into warehouse from Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. He, in a way, faces up to the history and verbalizes the closure of the mosques by the One Party Regime especially by İsmet İnönü. Erdoğan tries to prove this claim by saying that the mosques were turned to warehouses, barns, entertainment venues, and even turned to toilets.

In the III. National Cultural Forum, held in March 3-5, 2017, the state cultural policy is described as such: "Our cultural policy should carry our national cultural codes and should not ignore the national values." (Çıplak, 2017) It was also stated in the report that local and national content should be produced with a universal approach ground on the local. It is noted that the culture policy of Turkey, which was centered on a single ideology, was an imperative cultural policy up until now. So the Ministry of Culture and Tourism should be restructured based on new policies which should not be unilateral. The Head of the Visual Arts Commission Uğur Derman presented his recommendations by saying that: "art education should be focused on localization, national values should not be ignored, art workshops should be strengthened in the neighbourhoods, biennials should be held in every city". (Çıplak, 2017) Intellectually, this idea of "to held biennials in

every city" underlined in the III. National Cultural Forum as a state cultural policy may be the starting point of the Yeditepe Biennial, which is the case study of this thesis. Although we do not know for sure whether this statement has a direct effect, however, just one year later in 2018, the Yeditepe Biennial was organized.

The first serious attempt of the new elites of AKP in arts was Yeditepe Biennial held between the dates April to May, 2018. The general idea of AKP is on the degeneration of the Turkish nation while running after 'Westernization' approaches rooting back to late Ottoman and early Republican Era. So, as the result of this, we are facing to loose our '*essence / öz*' and the solution is to do something before it has gone. With the slogan of the Yeditepe Biennial "You Have An Art", it is a persuasive discourse for the people to own an art, not an elitist one but the one grounded from the very essence of our Islamic-traditional history and most importantly to own a biennial that they can freely enjoy without the fear of not understanding anything as they face with a contemporary art. The Istanbul Biennial does not match the expectations of the AKP government lately came up with the idea of organizing an alternative biennial on its own party followers or sympathizers, so called the Yeditepe Biennial which will be discussed in the following chapter as the case study.

On May 2018, the 250 monuments and the art works which are "reminiscences of our ancestors" (Anadolu Agency, 2018) opened to the visitors on the occasion of the week of Vaqfs. Within the scope of the mass opening ceremony held in Beştepe Millet Culture and Convention Center, 3 historical artefacts in Mardin and 8 in Diyarbakır was opened. Also, Media Arts Institute opened in April, 2018 to raise local and national artists with a screenplay school, digital media school, and documentary school inside.

Recently, Turkey's culture and arts channel TRT 2 reopened several years later with a new content in many fields from cinema to music, from painting to literature, from history to philosophy on February 2019. Alev Alatlı, Hülya Koçyiğit, Doğan Hızlan, Fuat Güner, Anjelika Akbar, Gülveri Kaya, Teoman Duralı and Alin Taşçıyan are just a few names contributing to the programs. İbrahim Eren, TRT General Manager explained their aims as: "We created the flow of the channel as comprehensive and profound with the works from our language, our past, and the works that we transfer to the future generations. Our programs will include İbn Haldun, İbn-i Arabi, İbn Tufeyl, İbn Rüş, Hallac-ı Mansur, İbn-i Sina, Feriduddin Attar, Şihabeddin Sühreverdi, Yunus Emre, Dede Efendi, Mevlana, as well as the names of different cultures such as Descartes, Spinoza, Goethe, Bacon, Kant, Shakespeare." (TRT Haber, 2019) According to Emre Tansu Keten, although it is possible to see the discourse of the ruling power in the programs of TRT2, surprisingly TRT2 does us a favour in terms of being more neutral than expected. For Keten, firstly it is because the government does not have a local and national culture that can offer to today's people. Secondly, due to not reaching the desired level in cultural production, it is the result of a desire to take a strong position in the distribution of cultural products and to earn a symbolic capital from it. Third, it is a way of neutralizing the names who can annoy by opposition through compromise. (Keten, 2019) Since January 2020, the figure at the center of the 'local and national' and 'conservative art' discussions, İskender Pala is presenting the program "Berceste" on divan literature on TRT2. Lately, on 28 February 2020, Kayseri State Theater opened its doors with "Leyla and Mecnun" (Özdemir, 2016) play written by İskender Pala. (Kayseri İl Kültür ve Turizm Müdürlüğü, 2020)

3. LOCAL AND NATIONAL “YEDITEPE BIENNIAL”

3.1. THE STARTING POINT AND THE OBJECTIVES

Biennials have proliferated globally in different parts of the world and resulted with a dense mobility between artists, curators, gallerists, critics, collectors and art visitors on an international level. For a successful biennial organization, it is important to establish a core format, to secure its relevance, to enable expansion, and to ensure its longevity. It is a tool for a nation’s influence and values, now known as “soft power¹⁴,” in other words, the political implication of biennials comes as a cultural form. It is a way of ensuring the spectators to go specific spaces. From this point, it is linked to the globalization and to the arts used for regional or urban development. (Stallabrass, 2016: 32) So, it is clear that the art is connected with tourism in terms of providing opportunities for touring the city while experiencing art. (Stallabrass, 2016: 38) Ideally, it is expected that in every event to create hybrid art forms produced by the artists from a wide variety of origins and connections. So, these art forms will represent both the local and the global by asking new questions and bringing new critical understanding, while entertaining the visitors and creating a competitive arena for the artists.

In Turkey, we have a successful example, the Istanbul Biennial, which has been organized by IKSIV since 1987. As it is stated in their website, “The Istanbul Biennial prefers an exhibition model that enables a dialogue between artists and the audience through the work of the artists instead of a national representation model.” (IKSV, n.d.) In the last 30 years of Turkey, everyone knows that there are private sector initiatives establishing museums and universities, owning

¹⁴ ‘Soft Power’ describes the use of positive attraction and persuasion in the foreign policy rather than the traditional foreign policy tools of carrot and stick. Instead it is a tool for achieving influence by building networks, creating and using narratives, establishing international attractions, and showing the country as naturally attractive to the world.

collections, organizing cultural festivals and sponsoring arts and cultural activities. All these have been resulted with the change and led the country's sense of arts and culture. (Şeni, 2011: 7) However, the Istanbul Biennial does not match the expectations of the AKP government which lately came up with the idea of organizing an alternative biennial seems to be done for its own party followers or sympathizers, so called *the Yeditepe Biennial*.

An important side note, before the Yeditepe Biennial, a fair attempt on bringing together traditional and modern arts organized by the same names directing Contemporary Istanbul Art Fair is noteworthy in terms of deepening our subject. It was an art fair design taken into consideration by those who steer the art market in order to take advantage of revitalizing traditional arts and / or benefiting from it financially. Plus, as we have seen in the end, the idea or trial of combining traditional arts and modern arts was not already attracted attention.

This art fair called All Arts Istanbul organized for the first and last time between 18-21 April 2013 in order to bring traditional arts together with modern arts but it did not repeated once more by the private sector entrepreneurs. A wide range of arts from Turkish and Ottoman traditions, antiques and also modern and contemporary arts were gathered for the first time. (ART TV, n.d.) The fair, which is considered as an important step in gathering the values that have been forgotten, and in bringing traditional arts, modern and contemporary arts together, presents 260 artists and 880 artworks. (Artfulliving, 2013) Taking the support of the leading art historians, auction directors, gallerists and museum directors in the fair, the Chairman of the Board of Directors who is also the director of Contemporary Istanbul (CI) was Ali Güreli and the General Coordinator was Prof. Dr. Hasan Bülent Kahraman who is in close contact with the government.

Gürelî answers to the question of why the fair was cancelled just in one year, as follows: “In CI, there is a seated bond between the triangle consisting of gallery, artist and collector. Auctions and museums are also complementary to this bound. In our first All Arts Istanbul experience, we saw the that these commercial relations and bounds have not been established in the traditional arts community. There is no established commercial platform yet. I couldn't attract the galleries in All Arts because they couldn't estimate how much sales they would sell at the fair because these relationships were not established. Artists don't have much power, too. We have included 90 artists for free in the first one, so that the artists see the excitement we have experienced at CI.” According to Gürelî, the only way for the All Arts to be held again is the support of the municipality or the state. Stating that they paid 150 thousand euros for the fair area and damaged financially around 500 thousand TL at the end of this fair. (Özarlan, 2014)

Contrary to Gürelî's answer to the cancellation of the fair, the combination of modern and traditional arts does not seem accepted among art circles especially from the conservatives side. According to Ömer Lekesiz from Yenişafak Newspaper, the fact that conservatives did not show interest on All Arts Istanbul indicates that they actually understand the expectation on gaining money upon the exhibited artworks. Lekesiz adds that conservatives, who is meant to be the religious bourgeoisie, did not direct their efforts to All Arts Istanbul, even though they know well to own products from the free market of traditional arts. For him, this attitude is a reaction for the attempt of off-system market (traditional arts) inclusion to the intra-system market (modern arts). One interesting inference of Lekesiz is that it was not paid regard to the potential tension between the viewer and the customer because of bringing together modern arts and traditional arts which are heart work (gönül/meşk işi in Turkish). In other words, it was a mistake bringing the two different art field together which cannot be regarded or read as the same thing. (Lekesiz, 2013)

By keeping in mind the mainstream understanding that the art world in Turkey is dominated by the leftwing and socialist mentality, AKP as conservative democrat and rightwing party was in search of an alternative art perception for itself. As it is mentioned previously in the conservative art debates, the aim was to draw Turkey to a better point in humanitarian development rank, to end the top-down approach and to stop the social engineering which have been exposed to us for years. So, from AKP perspective, we are in a new Turkey with increasing conservative fractions that requires the old structure to be changed.

In 2018, an assertive art format specifically for Istanbul was chosen as an alternative: Yeditepe Biennial. The Yeditepe Biennial, organized between 31 March and 15 May 2018, under the auspices of the Presidency, with the cooperation of Fatih Municipality and the Classical Turkish Arts Foundation, and sponsored by so many different companies and institutions was held with an opening in Hagia Sophia. With the slogan "You Have The Art," the Biennial hosted more than 600 artists in nearly 30 venues in the historical peninsula of Istanbul.

The general idea of AKP is on the degeneration of the Turkish nation while running after "Westernization" approaches rooting back to late Ottoman and early Republican Era. So, as the result of this, we are facing to lose our "essence" (öz in Turkish) and the solution is to do something before it has completely gone. The slogan of the Yeditepe Biennial is "You Have The Art" (Senin Bir Sanatın Var in Turkish) as it is translated in the biennial publishings. One of the critiques directed to the logo and the slogan of the Biennial was made by Begüm Özden Fırat in E-Skop Magazine. "The hegemony of this 'privileged group,' the ones that Erdogan claims to have eliminated and the ones that are known for the patron of the field by the curator, on art and cultural production field is based on the subjection of high aesthetic judgments by ignoring the taste of the 'people'. Thus,

the AKP's cultural policy in general and the Yeditepe Biennial in particular promise to remake the public the authentic subject of 'genuine' aesthetic taste. The slogan 'You Have The Art' tries to revive the 'aesthetic codes' that are assumed to be immanent to the people and to reinvent the people as an aesthetic community. So much so that, the Biennial envisages covering this elite group and its elitist followers, and closing the distance between them with traditional arts." (Firat, 2018) To add another point, it is a persuasive discourse for the people to own an art, not an elitist one but the one grounded from the very essence of our Islamic-traditional history and most importantly to own a biennial that they can freely enjoy without the fear of not understanding anything when they face with a contemporary art.

The reason why they are choosing not a festival or fair but a biennial format which requires a strong curatorial management and has certain standards worth an explanation. The curator of the Biennial, Serhat Kula explains the starting point of the Yeditepe Biennial as follows: "The starting point was not a biennial, it was an event. I wasn't involved in the loop at the beginning. An idea was emerging. A more classic version of Contemporary Art Fair was held 5 years ago called All Arts Istanbul. Then, the Foundation did not want an event, they said: "Let's make an invitation for 100-200 people" and a group of people was invited. Some says: "Let's do a biennial." Some says: "Let's think a museum logic which is something consistent." I have the transcripts of this meeting. I can share the text. There is also a debate whether the name should be biennial or not. Uğur Derman says something. When it comes to do a biennial at some point, the Foundation and the Municipality administrators says that there must be a curator. "Let somebody makes it a biennial." Meanwhile, they contacted me. I was in Vienna at that time planning to come to Turkey. I put it forward." (Appendix 1) Started off with the logic of "Let's somebody makes it biennial," the Biennial appears in a rush without a long-term substructure.

In principle, the idea of creating a meeting point in Istanbul in the field of traditional arts addressing to the artists from diverse cultures and the audiences can be very-well received by everyone. It most probably increases the tourists' attraction, the number of visitors to the city nation-wide, and the mobility of artists, curators, gallerists, critics, collectors and art visitors on an international level. Also, it may create an economic dimension as an important cultural activity in the region in which densely contains different cultural elements. Plus, it would be a way of preserving and sustaining traditional arts, and also it can be an alternative arts activity pushing aesthetic of the traditional arts. However, the general situation of the Yeditepe Biennial is fragile more than it seems.

As a concept that does not belong to us in terms of its origin, structure and method, Kula says that it is imported but they will make a local one. (Appendix 1) However, rather than calling it as biennial, the question comes to the mind if they could not choose another concept instead of it. What is the reason for the insistence on the concept? Aside from whether the works exhibited in the Yeditepe Biennial were the original representations of local and traditional or not, it is thought-provoking that the Yeditepe Biennial is positioned on May contrary to Istanbul Biennial held on September. The curator Serhat Kula explains the reason of the month choice of the Yeditepe Biennial as just to make it before the elections. (Appendix 1)

On the other hand, it is necessary to state that exhibitions and biennials are not only held indoors. Biennials increasingly occur across a number of sites indoor and outdoor in their host city contrary to Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's view mentioned in his opening speech in Hagia Sophia on March 31, 2018. He expresses his critique on the prevalent artistic displays and highlights the importance of Yeditepe Biennial on reaching the large masses. "I am very happy to see that

Yeditepe Biennial corrects a mistake which is frequently made in events like this. Exhibitions and biennials are generally held indoors. This understanding, which restrains artworks to the suffocation of the walls, also prevented the artworks from reaching out to the large masses. A primordial (kadim) city like Istanbul, which is surrounded with the works of a different civilization and a different culture, is itself an art gallery. In this respect, I find it very valuable for the Yeditepe Biennial to benefit from 30 historical places on the peninsula, each is the peak point of art especially Hagia Sophia, where we are now.” (Tüfekyapan, 2018, 02:45–04:18)

The curator of the Yeditepe Biennial Serhat Kula reveals the difference of this biennial from the Istanbul Biennial organized by the Istanbul Foundation for Culture and Arts (IKSV) with these words: “All biennials are open to the public, but they do not touch the public. Like in the Istanbul Biennial. There was almost nothing for us in the last Istanbul Biennial ‘A Good Neighbour.’ Our tradition was never processed in there. The texture of tradition was not processed in any way. The distinctive difference of Yeditepe Biennial is that it uses local textures. We do not want to compete with the biennial organized by İKSV.” (Karaburç, 2018) In his interview, Kula says: “Turkey has an harmony consist of a few civilizations. Imported arts can be insufficient because of this. İKSV (Istanbul Foundation For Culture and Arts) is doing an imported business. To what extend we saw the neighbourhood in “A Good Neighbour”? (pointed 15th Istanbul Biennial) Was there a connection especially with Istanbul, especially with the Turkish neighborhood culture? No, if I could take the Biennial to Berlin, it would not have been found odd there.” (Appendix 1) While İKSV does an imported business, Kula points out that Yeditepe Biennial will offer a solution to the problem of exhibition in classical arts with a local biennial format. Expressing his criticism towards traditional arts, Kula says: “There is an excessive repetition of the existing traditional arts. A certain type of the way of work is adopted and this is repeated for fifteen-twenty years. We have an primordial (kadim) art culture, but

we have handicaps on exhibiting. Classic display now becomes boring. Our first goal is to put forward different exhibition techniques.” (Karaburç, 2018)

The former Fatih Mayor Mustafa Demir made assertive statements about Yeditepe Biennial in Yenişefak Newspaper by saying that: “Hereafter, in the international biennials, we can consider that the Yeditepe Biennial has a value and richness in terms of representing the primordial culture of Turkey. For example, if there will be a Turkish Pavilion in the Venice Biennial, I am sure that the addressee will be the Yeditepe Biennial after 2018 and 2020. This is not a claim made by us.” (Akbulut, 2018) However, the variance between the figures organizing the Biennial stands out. Contrary to the mayor's ambitious rhetoric, the curator of the biennial is more on the level on his explanations. In an interview in the Milat Newspaper, Serhat Kula gives the following answer to the question about whether the contemporary art in Turkey is one step ahead of the traditional arts: “With the demonstrating logic, collectors, galleries, critics, columnists and human resources with the potential to manage a perception, the contemporary art in Turkey has reached a certain quality within years. The traditional arts are not at this level yet, but it is local. While these are the values that belong to the local itself, we tried to localize the imported one in Turkey. Although it is good to have contemporary arts at this point from a global point of view, our culture should also be at this level.” (Doğan, 2018) Serhat Kula behaves cautiously and explains, "We do not want to compete with the biennial organized by İKSV” (Karaburç, 2018) Also, in the interview Kula further explains that Yeditepe Biennial for him is an alternative but absolutely not an opponent of İKSV, it is a boutique and unique work standing on its own side. Referring to Mustafa Demir’s allegations on organizing the upcoming Venice Biennial, Kula says: “It is the result of the situation in which Mustafa Demir has no speech and no words to speak on art. It is the result of the lack of self-confident. By pointing to it helps placing his self. Actually, he has no need for such an explanation. The Presidency is with you. Sometimes he praised,

sometimes he created a rival environment but I do not see the attitude of Mustafa Bey as malicious in general, only because it is far from the subject. There was a perception like the Ministry of Culture and Mustafa Demir came together and made such a decision about Venice Biennial. There is absolutely no such a situation. This is a handicap in which a district municipality collapses into, with the efforts to show itself to the art community.” (Appendix 1) Also in the Istanbul Art News journal, Serhat Kula notes that there is no need for alternative cultures in the Venice Biennial which is embracing global issues and artists. (Istanbul Art News, 2018: 12)

The curator Serhat Kula explains the general context and the aim of the Biennial as such; “Our primordial (kadim) arts that all touches each other in a way, glamourize by reproducing each other, and becomes ‘a classic’ with the perfection found in this beauty, come together in one biennial by going hand in hand with other arts of this age. We aim to transform this meeting into a kind of laboratory, which questions the tradition of future, looking for solutions and reviewing the terminology. Yeditepe Biennial brings together the Classical Turkish Arts and their current interpretations by bridging the art activities of neighboring cultures that our culture has been in contact for various reasons over time. In this platform in which the artworks of the artisans using original techniques and coming from different art disciplines and using different tradition rules comes together under the same title, the cultural, social and artistic values of our country will be shared with people from all over the world.” (Kula, 2018) From these words, we understand that the curator has the idea of bringing the traditional and the contemporary art forms together and also building bridges between neighbouring cultures and us.

The Mayor of Fatih in that period, Mustafa Demir, by showing his gratitude to the President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and to the Classical Turkish Arts Foundation,

says that; “Undoubtedly, Yeditepe Biennial, which will bring people from all segments of society together with art, firstly will appeal to our eyes, later to our minds and finally to our hearts.” (Demir, 2018) Speaking more about Islamic art and giving examples from the golden age of Islam between 600-1600 AD, he highlights again that they bring together the classical artworks and their modern interpretations with the public under the name of Yeditepe Biennial.

The President of the Classical Turkish Arts Foundation Ahmet Özel is quite far from embracing contemporary ways of arts unlike the Curator Kula. Özel is saying that: “Knowing the history means knowing the national capacity and national flaws. We want to remind and show one more time with the biennial that we prepared by putting our classical arts in the center that the accumulation of thought and art that we created had a considerable value and occupied an extensive place within the cultural accumulation of human history. Making the organization like Yeditepe Biennial would be fit to Turkey, which is the pioneer of the Islamic geography in the cultural and art activities, and it did. We would like to present our thanks to our esteemed President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, who took the Yeditepe Biennial under his protection, as the indication and symbol of the national power...” (Özel, 2018) With such statements, Özel seems quite close to the statements of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan in terms of his political discourse “local, national, and Islamic”.

3.2. THE POLITIZATION OF THE BIENNIAL

The most aggressive statements came from the President Erdoğan in the opening speech of the Yeditepe Biennial held in Hagia Sophia Museum on March 31, 2018. By increasing the severity of his speech, Erdoğan begins with expressing of his gladness about the occurrence of this biennial which hosts our ‘gelenekli’ arts.

He particularly uses the word ‘gelenekli’ (-li as adjective) instead of ‘geleneksel / traditional’¹⁵. “I believe that Yeditepe Biennial, which is a first in the world in its field and contains nearly 3,000 works by 600 artists, will play a very important role in the promotion of our gelenekli (traditional) arts.” (Tüfekyapan, 2018, 02:09–02:31) He describes what art and artist means as follows: “Our prophet commands; ‘Allah is beautiful and loves beauty.’ Here, art is the name of the journey reaching and seeking these beauties which are bestowed on people by Allah. ...We see the products of this effort in almost every aspect of our lives, from architecture to wood, from calligraphy to illumination, from miniature to water marbling. ...For centuries, ehl-i hüner (craftspeople) are engraving the divine beauty to our lives with their handicraft works.” (Tüfekyapan, 2018, 05:30–06:54) By giving the examples from Mimar Sinan, Hafız Osman, Ahmet Karahisari, Sheikh Hamdullah, he follows: “The enthusiasm of enlivening beauty is not only raising buildings. It is also building cities with spirit, character and identity such as Bukhara, Jerusalem, Kurtuba, Cairo, Damascus and Istanbul. He quotes from Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar by saying: ‘Our ancestors were not building, they were worshipping.’ ...In our tradition, the artist is the one who sees the beauty of Allah in nature and carries this beauty to stone, wood and iron.” (Tüfekyapan, 2018, 06:54–09:09)

After art and artist are defined within the framework of Islam, as it is observed, the politicization of the issue seems to be chosen to revive the polarization between right and left wing. Following his above mentioned introduction, Recep Tayyip Erdogan turns his speech towards a more political level as: “We have been in a country at the crossroads of civilizations. ...As a nation, we do not appreciate

¹⁵ This -sal / -sel suffix, which is very narrow and limited in use, was brought to the light during the Language Revolution and used everywhere to replace the Arabic -î suffix. For example: bilimsel (scientific) instead of ilmî, kişisel (personal) instead of şahsî, kutsal (sacred) instead of kutsî, ulusal (national) instead of millî, tinsel (spiritual) instead of manevî. (Yüksel, 2012)

the treasure we have, as in many issues. ...We cannot introduce these beauties to ourselves or abroad properly. ...Of course, we are aware that the main problem here is the mentality that governed our country previously. For many years, on art, culture and history, Turkey has been captive of a vicious and a narrow perspective based on a certain period and a certain pattern. Unfortunately, this mentality, which is more Byzantine than a Byzantine, more Western than a Western but in any case, is contradicted with the values of the nation, did not know the value of the legacy left for us by our ancestors. Some of the historical mosques (just like Hagia Sophia) were turned into a warehouse, some to storehouse and unfortunately some have been converted into a stable.” (Tüfekyapan, 2018, 09:27–12:31)

By claiming that more than 300 masjid were destroyed in the one party period, Erdoğan mentions about their effort to rebuild those ruins now. “CHP of the period accepted our centuries-old cultural treasure as a sample of backwardness in its own words. They also stated that the legacy of ancestors should be subject to a strict dissolution. Unfortunately, the Islamic artworks also got their share from this deviant understanding. Islamic arts such as calligraphy, water marbling, decoration and illumination were also ignored in those days when even the Quran education was hidden. Instead of our traditional (gelenekli) arts, art branches that reflect a certain ideology and world view were tried to be substituted. While the concept of art and artist was evaluated in a very shallow way, art was seen as only consisted of contemporary arts. Apart from this, they have ignored many art branches belonging to our nation, which have been in this land for centuries, unfortunately, without giving a value. Even more seriously, our artists who try to do something in their own field, who produce and bring new works to the society have been otherized, excluded, even neglected.” (Tüfekyapan, 2018, 12:30–14:50)

Erdogan continues by increasing the severity of speech further by saying that: “We witness that this top-down (tepeden inmece in Turkish), oppressive, jacobin understanding continues in some so-called art circles today.” It is obvious to see in these statements that Erdoğan explains his animosity towards CHP politics from the very beginning of the Turkish Republic without mincing a word. “The most violent attacks come against ‘our artists’ who do not share their ideology and do not submit to their dictation by them. We know very well how ‘our artists’ who did not support the Gezi events are targeted by these circles. We know very well in which way ‘our artists’ are threatened due to the fact that they did not walk arm-in-arm with the marauders (Çapulcular in Turkish), did not give credit to vandalism and street terrorism. They do not give up their bad habits and do not come to their senses in no way, despite all the slaps they got in their faces from our nation.” (Tüfekyapan, 2018, 14:50–16:00)

In order to defend the artists called as ‘local and national,’ who took part in the activities of the AKP, as it is mentioned in the previous section, Erdoğan says: “As in Gezi events, they did the same to ‘our artists’ who went to the region to support the Zeytindalı operation. They did this to ‘our artists’ who are honored with their own soldiers, Mehmetçik. As they lynched our artists that time, they showed off the same immorality and brigandage today. They could not tolerate the moral support of ‘our artists’ for our soldiers who risk their lives for our country. They spread their hate, hostility, and animosity that they keep in for days, to the newspaper columns, to televisions, and to social media. Just because they maintained a ‘local and national’ stance.” (Tüfekyapan, 2018, 16:00–16:58)

“Believe me, these are no different from lumpen neighborhood bullies. These are modern bedouins in terms of mentality. Unless they side with their own little tribes, they do not attach value neither to an artist nor to an artwork no matter how valuable they are. No matter what crime they commit, no matter how worthless

their works are, the members of the tribe are protected to the end. Even if you betray your country, you are welcome unless you betray the interest group. Indeed, it is the only reason that they are publicly holding in high esteem the artists who support the separatist terrorist organization, who aid and abet the enemies of Turkey, and who discredit our country morning and evening.” (Tüfekyapan, 2018, 17:05–18:11)

“In the last 15 years in our country, as in many other fields, we have broken taboos in the field of culture and art. We changed the paradigm. The most extensive conservation of the physical spaces is held in our period. They destroyed, we built. They are still concerned about demolishing, we are in the effort of building. Remember the demonstrations they did without knowing the insight. When we said that we will build a center more modern and bigger, Muhsin Ertuğrul, the Harbiye Convention Center in Istanbul, they came upon us. After we did it, they became silent. Now, you know that there is a huge congress center for 3 thousand people below ground.” (Tüfekyapan, 2018, 18:15–19:22)

“Now, we are doing the Atatürk Cultural Center as the number one biggest opera house in Turkey. You know that, they, those Gezicis, shouted a lot for that. Shout as much as you want. Eat out your hearth! (‘Çatlayın, patlayın!’ in Turkish) Look, we demolished it. I hope we will build a magnificent opera house in the world for multi-purpose in a short time. The project is already prepared. The previous project designer did this too. And right now, the tender of the project has been finished. We will rapidly complete it for our people. This will be the cultural and art center that we can use for multi-purpose.” (Tüfekyapan, 2018, 19:23–20:39)

“We ended the domination of the group which controlled the field of culture and art for 10 years by seeing this areas as their own backyard. We did the same in Ankara, too. Throughout the history of the Republic, reveal one piece of artwork

or one physical place that you did! They couldn't reveal even one physical place. So that means, they waited for us. We came, we make these works and we will do even more. We will do in our 81 provinces. We will make large and small. Why? Because a nation without art means it lost its lifeblood.” By doing a commentary version of the quote from the founder of Republic of Turkey, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk without mentioning his name, he continues: “You become strong with art and culture. No matter how strong your economy is, if you are not in art and culture, you are not in the world. We changed the old order, in which only certain branches of art were protected and certain artists were supported. Without doing a discrimination between our arts and artists, we are in an effort to support the beautiful, the qualified, and the successful ones. Therefore, we have opened the way for our traditional art branches, too. We have never neglected other branches of art. Although those who lost their privileges criticize us mercilessly, we have never made the mistake of the ones before us. We have endeavored to embrace all kinds of artworks that will add value to the culture and art life of our country and will increase the diversity in these fields. I hope we will continue our way in this way. Like them, we will not distinguish the values of this country according to their ideology, political identity or world view, contrary, we will continue to embrace our art world with all its richness and with all its colors. Anyone who contributes to this country’s culture and arts, who adds value to them, who presents qualified artworks, they are most welcome.” (Tüfekyapan, 2018, 20:40–23:03) Erdogan comes to the end on his speech by extending his thanks to the managers of the project and inviting the people of Istanbul to visit the Yeditepe Biennial. By referring to Hagia Sophia, he ends his speech with the passages from Qur’an: “Especially as the one who left this architectural work of art to us, the conqueror Fatih Sultan Mehmet, for the souls of all, el-Fatiha.” (Tüfekyapan, 2018, 23:44–23:58)

As mentioned earlier on the conservative art debate chapter, we still see that the main axis of the speech is the issue of ‘cultural power,’ which has been on the agenda almost 10 years. The President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan spoke at the Ensar Foundation General Assembly held at the Istanbul Congress Center in 2017 by saying that: "Being in power politically is something. Social and cultural power is another. We have been in power uninterruptedly for 14 years but we still have problems with our social and cultural power." (Hürriyet, 2017) Followingly in 2018, Erdoğan restated the problem of cultural hegemony in the opening of the Yeditepe Biennial. "No matter how strong your economy is, if you are not in art and culture, you are not in the world." (Tüfekyapan, 2018, 21:29–21:40) The concept of cultural hegemony, repeatedly raised by Erdoğan, is a term developed by Antonio Gramsci¹⁶ (Gramsci, 1992), further developed by Stuart Hall, is often referred in the writings of Islamic intellectuals. (Dilipak, 1991) The concept attributed to Gramsci in the political science literature expresses that the power exists not only politically in the state level, but includes all social and cultural relations. Gramsci focuses on “how it is wielded by those in power and how it is won by those who want to change the system.” (Boyd, A., & Mitchell, D., 2012: 222) Rather than the dominant idea that in order to attain power you needed to seize the means of production and administration, Gramsci propounded that in order to create and maintain a new society, you also need to create and maintain a new consciousness. (Boyd, A., & Mitchell, D., 2012: 222) The issue of cultural power, which is placed on the main axis of the Biennial speech, gives the impression that Erdoğan is trying to create an aesthetic community whose roots are hidden in ancient times and that should be reinvented today. In that way, the culture should be taken away from the hands of the people and institutions which has occupied this area for years.

¹⁶ The activist, theorist, and founder of the Italian Communist party

Begüm Özden Fırat, in her article on E-Skop, bases the formulation of the Yeditepe Biennial for Erdoğan on in a way a cultural war between the social classes by quoting from Raymond Williams. Williams understood culture as a field of conflict in which social inequalities between classes were reproduced. Anyone coming from a working class family but having a higher education, would experience is a cultural inequality. Culture in that case turns to an arena for resistance. (as cited in Fırat, 2018) In that sense, for Fırat, as far as AKP mystifies this class conflict issue, AKP's understanding of cultural power evokes a cultural war free from social inequality. In other words, it is a way of eliminating the elitist culture. Fırat points the effort of turning the separated classes into a cultural power. Fırat quotes from Stuart Hall who says that something which called 'populace' is not staying somewhere with its culture untouched and its freedom and motives undistorted, waiting to be discovered. As a counter-hegemony strategy, the nature of political and cultural struggle, according to Hall, is based on the ability to establish classes and individuals as a popular force. (as cited in Fırat, 2018) Fırat claims that Erdoğan is in an effort to turn the divided and separated classes into a cultural force, as Hall suggests. Specifically in the Biennial, it is established as an "aesthetic community" that its roots are hidden in the ancient and it should be invented today. Therefore, the institutions that lead the cultural field should be conquered, the existing actors should be eliminated and replaced by the new. (Fırat, 2018)

It can be said that in Erdoğan's politics, locality and nationality has turned to a retrospective and conservative project on the contrary to the forward-looking plan as in the Republican era. It is kind of a settling of account. For Erdoğan, contemporary arts seems to be a very efficient framework for positioning the Biennial in the context of "us and them". In the opening speech of the Biennial, the words uttered by Recep Tayyip Erdoğan can be interpreted as the way of self-construction. The constantly repeated 'us' and 'them' distinction, in fact

animosity, is scattered throughout the text of the speech. For them, Erdoğan uses the definitions like having a vicious and a narrow perspective, having a mentality which is more Byzantine than a Byzantine, more Western than a Western, being contradicted with the values of the nation, ignoring the art branches belonging to the nation, lynching the artists, having an understanding of top-down, oppressive, deviant, and jacobin, being marauders (Çapulcular), being lumpen neighborhood bullies, and being modern bedouins in terms of mentality. “Them” have not a single definition in the speeches of Erdoğan, in more general sense, they depict the mentality of CHP. On the other hand, “We” that he positioned against “them” is also not clear. This group might consist of followers of AKP, but also admirers of Islam and the Ottoman Sultan, Fatih Sultan Mehmet, the conqueror of Istanbul.

Describing the Kemalist actors and the AKP as the rivals of “secularism versus reactionism” and/or “people versus bureaucratic elite,” it can be seen that the evolution of the cultural policies in Turkey has directed from modern and civil to local and national in time. The aim of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan is to raise a youth bounded to the local and national values. Erdoğan says: “We must be careful about the activities called cultural activities which are unqualified, away from our national culture, and no contribution to our cultural life. One of the biggest problems of our age is cultural shallowness. A culture and civilization cannot be built with the works which has no depth and permanence, produced and consumed daily. We have to concentrate on permanent and long-term works. Especially, we should encourage our youth to learn true art and culture by sitting right beside of a master. My experience in politics proves this.” (Altun, 2017)

This settling of account with the past put forward by Recep Tayyip Erdoğan reminds the center-periphery paradigm by Şerif Mardin (Mardin, 1973) in his work titled “A Key to Explaining Turkish Politics: Center-Periphery Relations” expressing the center-periphery as social groups that define the lines of division

and conflict. In Turkish context, the ruling elite of the Republic (center) carried out a strict modernization project and aimed to influence social phenomena such as the lifestyle, daily habits and behaviors of the rural people (periphery). The Justice and Development Party (AKP), which came to the power in 2002 by receiving the support of the masses or the periphery, now had the power and turned to the center opposedly. The politization of the Yeditepe Biennial is linked with the center-periphery theory in reflecting the contradiction between Kemalist / bureaucratic center versus AKP / democratic representation.

This fight between “the people” and “the elites” reminds us the features of neopopulism movement which is a cultural and political movement emerged in the early 21st century in the politics. As Prof. Asım Karaömerlioğlu states, neopopulism in the world has some common features. Firstly, political life turns to a fight like a cultural war (kulturkampf) between ‘the people’ who are the bearers of good values and ‘the elites’ who are alienated from their country. Secondly, neopopulism is based on the majoritarian understanding of democracy rather than equalitarian understanding. The neopopulist leaders mostly come from the periphery claiming themselves as the victim of the established order. The perception of neopopulists is nourished by a simple dualities like "Us" and "Them". Either one will win or the other will disappear at the end of this fight. The last common feature of neopopulism is using the ‘post-truth’ style which is a culture of politics by appealing to feelings and repeating a message that is not supported by facts.(Karaömerlioğlu, 2019) These specific features of neopopulism especially emerged in Latin American and European countries coincides with the above-mentioned situation of the AKP.

3.3. THE CURATORIAL DIMENSIONS OF THE BIENNIAL

In terms of the curatorial aspects, based on my own experience, there are many curatorial shortcomings, mistakes and deficiencies in practice in the Yeditepe Biennial. Firstly, it is not a competitive and selective one as we might expect from a biennial. More than 600 artists of different fields take part in the biennial with more than 3,000 artworks which is huge in amount for a biennial. The curator of the Yeditepe Biennial Serhat Kula explains candidly the selection process in the interview. (Appendix 1) According to him, the elimination of the projects lasted for 4-5 months but the given time for this was not 2 years or such. They made an open call from their website and ended with total application of 500-600 projects. After an elimination, the curator Serhat Kula started to meet with 120 of them by making appointments one by one. We started to talk about everything about static, form, smoothness and about details. It was the first time for them to make their dreams come true. “Their dreams were very strange. They may turn a book. The artist ultimately has the ability to design, but those have never found an environment to turn their dreams into practice. In this regard, Yeditepe Biennial is a playground or a safe field for the traditional artists. If not, they do not dare to do it because of the fear of criticism” (Appendix 1) After this elimination process, there were still a huge number of artists for a biennial and the curator Serhat Kula clarifies it by saying that: “The name is biennial, we will give its credit in the second one. For the first one, actually you have to invite all the art circles to create an agenda. Otherwise, incredible aggressions and the attacks of the non-participants begin. We called everyone and this was ridiculous. I started to write self-criticisms.” (Appendix 1) Kula says that he had no pressure on his shoulders to include someone but he excepted that he was persuaded not to offend anyone. For that reason, the first biennial included more than 600 artists, artisans, actually even pupils because of the fact that many teachers and their students from traditional art courses attended to the biennial. “Kuş Misali” exhibition would be

an example for gathering of the teachers and the students in the Biennial. (Figure 1.1.)

Figure 1.1. “Kuş Misali” Thematic Exhibition in Archeological Museum



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The Biennial attendee Kat’1 master Ayşe Kiraz summarizes this inclusivist approach as: “I have been invited to the introductory breakfast of the Biennial held in Eresin Hotel sponsored by the Classical Turkish Arts Foundation and Fatih Municipality. There were many people we knew from the field of traditional arts. Since such an organization was held for the first time, their aim and what they want us to do were explained. Questions were answered. All participants were asked to participate in one or more projects, and they gave us a duration. It was a very crowded audience with an interest in traditional arts, not only the artists who are the members of the foundation but many more. When the biennial was held, the scope of the Biennial sifted to another level with the aim of not offending anyone. That’s why I am reproaching. Those who did not apply before attended at the last minute, thus the number increased.” (Appendix 3)

Within its scope, the biennial has to be inclusive as far as possible. While we see the inclusivist approach of AKP for its own audience, it is, on the contrary, an exclusivist attitude towards the contemporary art audiences relatively elitist. None of the artworks of modern and contemporary artists of Turkey who have tried to reconsider traditional arts from the perspective of contemporary arts since 1970s have not been included in the Biennial or even not consulted. However, in Turkish contemporary art circle, there are very well known artists who did not included in the first biennial such as Murat Palta, Murat Morova, Selma Gürbüz, Belkıs Balpınar, or Canan. Although Erdogan mentions in the opening speech that they won't do discrimination between artists, but the artists they have embraced are limited. By accepting this situation, the curator Serhat Kula asserts that the second biennial will be more outstanding by including such artists. Interestingly, as Kat'ı master Ayşe Kiraz observes, there was even a discrimination between the Biennial attendees. Kiraz says that: "This is the case even among the participating artists. Certain names are in everywhere. There is no thought of paving the way for different names. Certain people always try to be privileged. I think that such things are happening because of bestowing the privilege on acquaintances. In the meantime, we have met our own expenses for material supply by our own means. According to what we heard later, astronomical payments were made for some people, and not for others." (Appendix 3)

As a side note, the curatorial team with 13 people was high in number for such an activity. The curator Serhat Kula doughtily affirms that there are supporting curators but the rest were employees from the municipality. (Appendix 1)

Also, there are a limited number of artists from neighbouring countries as it is claimed in the discourses. To the question why there is limited artists from other Islamic neighbouring countries like from Iran, Syria, Azerbaijan, Tunisia, etc., the curator Serhat Kula replies as "Actually, there were 21 foreign artists. There were

the works of 3 artists from Iran in the Archeology Museum. Also, there were artists from Qatar, Dubai, China... Limited in number, but the reason is that I think it would be wrong for us to invite more foreign artists before we see the potential of our own biennial. The Biennial theme was Ehl-i Hiref¹⁷. It was a reminder about the art culture in the Ottoman Empire. It was our intention to see what we did ourselves firstly. My goal for the next biennial is to reach the other countries focusing on producing their own artworks and doing this as state policy, for example, Japan. They have artists involved in global art, but as a state policy, they somehow try to reveal a sense of Japaneseness on those arts.” (Appendix 1) So, Kula draws a ‘local and national’ theme and prefers to invite such countries.

Although the emphasis is placed on our ancient arts, and our primordial civilizations, far from the arts made throughout centuries in Anatolia like rugs, copper, filigree (telkari), pottery, leather, etc., the Biennial which asserted to contain Islamic arts with the content of Ehl-i Hiref, there were also works that did not coincide with neither Islamic arts nor Turkish Arts. For example, the work with the man walking on the stairs in the “Mekandan Taşanlar” thematic exhibition in Küçük Mustafa Paşa Hammam. (Figure 1.2. - Figure 1.3.)

¹⁷ The one of the most important institutions of the Ottoman cultural history, the Ehl-i Hiref is a production organization in the Ottoman Palace, consisting of artists and craftsman, who are “masters of art” as well as various specialists who are trained members of service divisions of the Palace. The artisans generally produced works in line with the orders given by the palace people, such as the sultan and Enderun aghas. This organization, which was established under the auspices of the palace, accommodated many art groups.

Figure 1.2. “Mekandan Taşanlar” Thematic Exhibition in Küçük Mustafa Paşa Hammam



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Figure 1.3. “Mekandan Taşanlar” Thematic Exhibition in Küçük Mustafa Paşa Hammam



© Ayşe Koşak

In visual arts, one might say that the crafts are neglected and many young artists working in the field of art may have the problem of not learning how to work with what material. The traditions are never stayed totally the same, however there are more strict rules, techniques which can cause to repetition problem that pass from

master to apprentice rather unlike contemporary arts. Most of the people performed the traditional arts even do not call themselves as artist but prefer to call craftsman. This may cause a long discussion but this is the main problem of the authenticity issue of the Biennial. We may say that it is important for an artwork to be structured, unique, and self-directed.

The contemporary artist Nadide Akdeniz suggests that the desire to revive classical miniature art, for example, with an ideological attitude by politics will cause more and more replicas, copies and alike of historical miniatures. However, as Akdeniz claims, artists can be influenced by the miniature art with their own free will today. They can re-interpret miniatures within their own understanding of art and produce original and contemporary artworks. By giving the example the "miniature 2.0" exhibition held at the Pera Museum in 2020, Akdeniz emphasizes that there is no need for the guidance of the politics to create new and modern works from the traditional art. (Appendix 5)

Figure 1.4. Group Çini Exhibition in Nuruosmaniye Camii Mahzeni



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The problem of originality of the projects or works prepared for the Biennial is crucial because both the curator Serhat Kula and the attendee Ayşe Kiraz mention about the interventions on presented projects. Kula says there were many projects aesthetically powerful but technically problematic, “We shared how to do or we

gave them another idea that we dreamed of. After giving small tips, they started to produce.” To the question in the interview: “The Kat’ı artist Ayşe Kiraz claims that their three projects were denied and then a project was given by you to them. Shouldn't you be freeing the artist about the project by giving a theme?”, Kula answers “Their projects were not suitable. We wanted the participation of the Foundation, it is because we gave a project to them. Otherwise, they would not join.” (Appendix 1) As it is seen, the curatorial selection is not only made according to the context of the works, but on the contrary, the names that must be included in the Biennial are somehow adapted to the content of the Biennial.

On the other hand, Kat’ı artist Ayşe Kiraz mentions about the expression of Serhat Kula, “Fly!”, in the introductory meeting early on. So, they presented one project about a mosque of Sinan the Architect, another one about the sorcery tradition of Istanbul since the Byzantine times, and one more. As Kiraz says they were original projects but not accepted. At the end, they attended to the Biennial as Caferağa Medrese group and they were given a bench to decorate by the Biennial committee. The bench works were called as “Oturma! Sanata Bak / Don’t Sit! Look at the Art!” decorated with illuminations and located in the Sirkeci Station and in a few other places. Although the title gives the people hint about what they will do, nobody seems to understand fully the meaning, instead they are sitting on those benches. (Figure 1.5.)

Figure 1.5. “Oturma, Sanata Bak / Don’t Sit, Look at the Art” Installation in Sirkeci Train Station



© Ayşe Koşak - *with the permission of the passenger sitting and resting on the bank*

About the ‘flying on traditional arts’, Kiraz remarks that: “We are making traditional arts, not contemporary art. We have certain rules and certain patterns. We shouldn’t ruin our classic. This is the kind of discipline we got. So it is not possible to fly very well.” (Appendix 3) Hence, the craft is repetitive and production oriented. Also, the concepts like art and craft, artist and artisan are often confused with each others. The handicap of the contemporizing the traditional arts which are shaped around certain rules and patterns is one of the core issues of the Yeditepe Biennial. As the Biennial attendee, Ayşe Kiraz’s sayings proves that: “We have certain rules, certain patterns. Okay, add your comment, but don’t break rules of the classic. Even in illumination, there are many styles and genres, but you cannot pass them without learning the classic.” (Appendix 3) It is also questionable to organize a traditional art biennial. General view is that the traditional arts are not open to the hybrid forms quintessentially. They reflect the ancient ideas and thoughts in quite strict rules of its own in order to represent their standard of living to the current generation or

people. In general, biennial formats are based on contemporary arts. Should the traditional arts become contemporary? To that question, Serhat Kula says: ‘No, they shouldn’t’. He accepted that those works whether maximised (Figure 1.6. - Figure 1.7.), giving a light from behind (Figure 1.8.), using plexiglass, putting inside a TV or hanging from the ceiling (Figure 1.8.) are pretend to be contemporary. He says: “Yes, they were as if. There were the big calligraphy letters in Hagia Sophia. I wonder what happens if these letters get bigger.” (Appendix 1)

While İKSV, which is critically said to be doing an imported business, it is a great contradiction that the works in the Biennial evoke the works done in contemporary arts years ago. For example, doing maximalist works like gigantic rosary exhibited in Hagia Sophia (Figure 1.7.), dangling from the ceiling the planets covered with water marbling paper (Figure 1.8.), the CNC cut huge calligraphy letters exhibited in Hagia Sophia (Figure 1.6.), all reveals that in this project, not enough authenticity had been achieved rather the works reminded of criticized imported art forms. As a viewer this time, the Kat’ı artist Ayşe Kiraz evaluates the Biennial “As far as I saw, the contemporary interpretations of traditional handicrafts such as calligraphy, illumination and miniatures have been desired in the Biennial, but the resulting works have not gone beyond adornment. There were some three-dimensional works that attracted me but it was difficult to call them sculptures. Let's say, they were decorative elements that benefited from the appeal of the spaces they were in.” (Appendix 3)

Figure 1.6. Installation by Ömer Faruk Dere, in Hagia Sophia



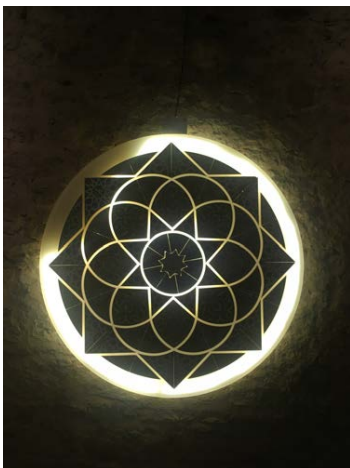
© Ayşe Koşak

Figure 1.7. Installation by Hatice Ünal, in Hagia Sophia



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Figure 1.8. From the Group Çini Exhibition, in Nuruosmaniye Camii Mahzeni



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Figure 1.9. Planets by Hikmet Barutçugil, in Nuruosmaniye Camii Mahzeni



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The problem of to what extent we call traditional arts as ‘arts’ needs to be questioned. The perception of art putting the artist ahead with his signature and uniqueness is different in the traditional arts. In the Yeditepe Biennial, for example, there were the works of teachers and the students altogether looking very similar. Frankly, it was problematic to see the original taste of the artist or artisan in traditional arts contrary to the contemporary arts. Serhat Kula asks a reasonable question “Why does someone repeat the traditional?” and answers “It is because some characters like to repeat the old temperamentally. There are characters who are afraid of change and these arts are constant. This can be also applied to the Western art. There are still a lot of people out there trying to protect the classic.” (Appendix 1)

The contemporary artist, painter Nadide Akdeniz says: “When it comes to pressures, directions, descriptions, and typifications by an authority or politics, unoriginal, cliché, upon description, and formal works will emerge and they will be defeated by time. Rather than being universal, they will belong only to a period.” (Appendix 5) It won’t be wrong to say that the Yeditepe Biennial did not go beyond the cliché by repeating what has been done before by the contemporary

even modern artists years ago. It is actually the problem of the traditional arts that we are used to see on the easels in the nearest shopping centers.

In comparison with the West, Kula claims that institutionalization in traditional arts like the gallery system, museums, collectors, writers, critics, archivists and so on are far behind in Turkey. His current goal is starting a fire that will form the institutionalization of the traditional arts via the Yeditepe Biennial. (Appendix 1) The curator has high expectations, goals to reach, and dreams to accomplish on the institutionalization of the traditional arts and sees this Biennial as the first step to reach these goals.

The texts of the Biennial mostly have religious reading rather than a conceptual text. Additively, the slogan that draws a distinction between you have the art and they have the art, Kula explains why this slogan was chosen as: “It is the only point that I was precluded. I did not want it. The advertising team made it and got the approval. I liked another slogan inspired by Rene Magritte and created by another agency. It was named as ‘This is not a Biennial.’” (Appendix 1) By criticizing the politicised discourse of the President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan in the opening speech of the Yeditepe Biennial in Hagia Sophia, Kula states that: “The expression [You Have The Art] is actually correct, but the language of the discourse is wrong. You can tell anyone to have an art. It means you have a legacy, come and take it, kind of.” (Appendix 1)

To no less a degree, there were the organizational problems which created handicap for the artists/artisans, visitors, and also the curator. The given time schedule to organize a biennial was limited with 9 months for the curator Serhat Kula and maximum 7 months for the artists to complete their works. The project delivery dates were extended several times. (Appendix 1, 3) From the visitors art, the biennial idea was announced a year ago, but there was no clue about the

details of the biennial until 3 months for example. As the kat'ı artist Ayşe Kiraz says: "The organizational problems were in serious level. The general opening date was postponed many times. The exhibition venues of the benches that we decorated changed several times. They did not show any attention when they came to take the benches from us. A bench made by our ceramic teacher fell down and it was broken. She did it again. The opening ceremony was not clear until the last minute and my students could not join because of that. Our bench that I did with my students was just put in the Sirkeci Station without a protecting barrier or something. (Figure 1.5.) However, the work of another participant was put on a platform in the same venue. There was no equal sensitivity. Plus, we do not know the fate of our works which were on display at the Biennial. As far as we know, one of them is in a gallery, one in Topkapı Palace and one in the Islamic Arts Museum." (Appendix 3) The Biennial attendee witnesses the discrimination among artists materially and morally.

Plus, ads, guidance plates, and maps are not enough to find some places and works. There was no artworks exhibited in Hagia Irene which is stated each and every publishings of the Biennial. The reason for it was that those additional places were like "go this place, it is itself a work of art" as the curator states. (Appendix 1) In the most of the historic places in the biennial, the artworks were hanged to the walls with nails, which should not be possible. (Figure 1.10.) The technical details of the works were not written correctly. However, the advantage of the Biennial was the opening of newly restored historical venues to visitors due to the Biennial such as complexes, cisterns and baths.

Figure 1.10. Work by Gülen Kosova in Nuruosmaniye Camii Mahzeni



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From the sponsorship part, there is no aid of Eczacıbaşı, Koç, Sabancı, or other private initiatives sponsoring the contemporary art activities in Turkey. The sponsors, so to speak, seems to be forced. They are either state institutions, or the private companies known with the connection with the government like THY, A101, PTT, Çalık Holding, Anadolu Agency as the global communication partner, Sırma and some universities especially which have Traditional Arts programs, etc. (Figure 2.1.) Serhat Kula claims that: “There are institutions that feel the need to be there because the President is there. Normally, a good sponsorship project for this biennial could not be operated. Because the results of the biennial could not be predicted.” Kula proposes that: “The Yeditepe Biennial should come out of the patronage of the Presidency. It can support again but I think, the logos were irritating. It was like formalizing it.” (Appendix 1) Founding the presidency logos irritating which gives a weak impression to the biennial far from corporateness, this is one of the harsh critics of the curator Kula about the Biennial. Kula concludes that he does not want to continue as the curator but if the Biennial turns into incorporation, he still wants to be the part of it.

Figure 2.1. The Biennial Banner



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The crucial point is there, there is no steady art circle in traditional arts in Turkey as in the contemporary art area. The vaqf, municipality and the presidency created an alternative biennial concept as different from the existing one. As distinct from the contemporary art circle in Istanbul with artists, sponsors, collectors, gallerists, curators and so on, there are small gatherings mostly including the teachers, students, and the late-learners of one of the traditional arts. As a personal observation, a significant part of the people of Istanbul including the party followers of AKP, is not so much interested in visiting contemporary art festivals or biennials held in Istanbul. As it is seen on their website, whether they have a long term plan or not, the second version of the Biennial could not be held in its time. The second biennial was postponed to the March 2021. (“Yeditepe Bienali”, 2020)

CONCLUSION

Art begins with resistance - at the point where resistance is overcome. No human masterpiece has ever been created without great labor.

- Andre Gide

The concept of 'Conservatism' originated in France as a response to the Enlightenment ideas brought by the French Revolution has reflections in Turkey primarily in its political meanings going back to the late Ottoman period and reaching up to the AKP government. According to the results of the historical analysis, the AKP, coming from political Islamist tradition, has positioned its party as the representative of the "conservative democracy" movement. Predominantly translated in Turkish as "reactionism," conservatism has become the topic of art and cultural politics in Turkey since 2010s. By analyzing changing representations of the AKP government which is 18 years alone in power, this thesis has shown how the reproduction of the power of the governing party tends to differ the cultural atmosphere as soon as came to the power.

Beginning with the much-debated "Conservative Art" concept raised and discussed in 2012 in Turkey, and later the Yeditepe Biennial held in 2018, this thesis provided a rich ground to analyze not just the current debate on art but also to perceive the historical roots of the issue within the context of cultural policies of Turkey. Since 2002, AKP has gradually increased its focus on the culture and arts in Turkey, beginning with the unification of the Ministries of Culture and Tourism, privatization policies, democratization of culture in the first years, preparing of cultural policy report for EU membership, building cultural centers, the AKM issue, censorship applications on arts, conservation and preservation claims and so on. So, it is apparent that the underlying issue here is the 'cultural hegemony' expressed repeatedly by the government in public.

In 2017, at the Ensar Foundation General Assembly, the President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan expressed that: "Being in power politically is something. Social and cultural power is another. We have been in power uninterruptedly for 14 years but we still have problems with our social and cultural power." (Hürriyet, 2017) Also, in 2018, Erdoğan restated the problem of cultural hegemony in the opening of the Yeditepe Biennial which is the case study of this thesis, by saying that: "No matter how strong your economy is, if you are not in art and culture, you are not in the world." (Tüfekyapan, 2018, 21:29–21:40) The concept of cultural hegemony, repeatedly raised by Erdoğan, is a term developed by Antonio Gramsci focusing on "how it is wielded by those in power and how it is won by those who want to change the system." (Boyd, A., & Mitchell, D., 2012: 222) The issue of cultural power repeatedly verbalized by the government officials proves that Erdoğan is trying to create a primordial culture whose roots are hidden in the ancient times and to end the domination of the people and institutions that has occupied the cultural arena for years.

As the case study of this thesis, the Yeditepe Biennial provides us interesting insights that the AKP tries to open a public space to its voters and it is a conservative breakthrough against the Republican Era. As a 'political reaction,' the AKP reveals its missions in the political and cultural fields in a more concrete way than the previous right parties. The AKP aims to reproduce our so-called local and national, primordial, and deep-rooted values with a conservative policy, based on a tradition of thought. While the authority of the AKP government increases its dosage day by day, the field of arts is also taking its share among the government's focuses. As the case study, the Yeditepe Biennial held in 2018 is crucial to understand the political reflection behind a biennial attempt. In a way, placed in front of the Istanbul Biennial, İKSV was criticized by the curator Serhat Kula and Recep Tayyip Erdoğan in doing an imported business, but actually there is a contradiction in the works of the Yeditepe Biennial which evoke the works

done in contemporary arts years ago. The works reveals that not enough authenticity had been achieved in the fully supported Biennial which includes the works of 600 artists. The problem of originality of the projects or works prepared for the Biennial is crucial because both the curator Serhat Kula and the attendee Ayşe Kiraz mention about the interventions on presented projects. As it is seen in the interviews, the curatorial selection is not only made according to the context of the works, but on the contrary, the names that must be included in the Biennial are somehow adapted to the content of the Biennial.

It is worth to mention here the in-depth interviews with five different people from different segments including the curator of the Yeditepe Biennial Serhat Kula, a biennial attendee Kat'ı artist Ayşe Kiraz, a contemporary artist mostly followed by the conservative bourgeoisie İsmail Acar, another contemporary artist Prof. Halil Akdeniz worked as the Cultural Consultant of the Turkish Embassy, and a contemporary artist who do not embrace a traditional narration in her paintings Nadide Akdeniz, the interviews with all these names has contributed to be objective on the conservative art issue. They all expressed their critics and experiences clearly and ease-fully and that is one of the main successes of this study. Through the interviews, the background information about the biennial is presented in the last chapter. Since they are very different from each other, every interviewee responded to the questions regarding their political behavior, their artistic background, stories and experiences which is more meaningful in such a qualitative research.

The politization of the Yeditepe Biennial has a prime importance in this study. In the opening speech of the Biennial, the words uttered by Recep Tayyip Erdoğan can be interpreted as the way of self-construction with constantly repeated 'us' and 'them' distinction. Erdoğan uses the definitions like having a vicious and a narrow perspective, having a mentality which is more Byzantine than a Byzantine,

more Western than a Western, being contradicted with the values of the nation, ignoring the art branches belonging to the nation, lynching the artists, having an understanding of top-down, oppressive, deviant, and jacobin, being marauders (Çapulcular), being lumpen neighborhood bullies, and being modern bedouins in terms of mentality. “Them” have not a single definition in the speeches of Erdoğan, in more general sense, they depict the mentality of CHP. On the other hand, “We” that he positioned against “them” is also not clear.

To design a form for the conservative mass, it can be said that the conservative discourse has largely answered the purpose. The question of the AKP's inability to produce an alternative to the existing art activities will remain notable. By putting pressure or limit on arts and lifestyle of people, the domination on the missing aesthetics has been trying to be achieved. Directly or indirectly shaping the society, the AKP government is very intensive on the vocabulary in creating a conservative culture and arts. Highlighting the notions of “our values, our primordial civilization, the values that make us ‘us,’ our own identity, Islamic values, this nation, cultural hegemony, local and national, our sensibilities, our courteous artists,” and so on (Bora, 2018), the AKP government makes a self definition and also represents a conservative image in the eyes of people. Also, as in the Yeditepe Biennial example, the issues of "contemporary interpretations," “renewal,” “turning to the essence” and "contemporizing" are discussed frequently. In the discussions of this thesis, rather than using the words Islamist or Islamic, the choosing of the words “conservative,” “local and national” or “traditional/gelenekli” by the AKP government in defining the arts are conscious.

It should be underlined that the idea of creating conservative art seems to kind of a gesture made for its conservative masses, and a policy tool for gaining support from the populace. Rather than a demand coming from the conservative groups, this thesis claims that the government use such definitions to influence the large

masses of people as part of their neopopulism policies. As a political communication aspect of the government with people, populism policies seem to be the practical push behind these attempts. The AKP government's interest in culture and arts led them to organize the Yeditepe Biennial in which the instrumentalization and the appropriation of art during the AKP period is obvious.

The philosophy of the AKP government which appears in the art scene in different ways since 2002, is reflected in the latest attempts especially in the Yeditepe Biennial (2018) in which the contemporary art scene is defined from the eyes of the government. As it is claimed by the government, culture is the passion of the new bourgeoisie and the norms of the conservative aesthetics needs to be constituted. However, the mentioned culture is quite ambiguous. At some point, it receives its references mostly from the Ottoman Empire, but in a selective way. The attributions are made mostly to Mehmed the Conqueror. Also, they give references from the Islamic tradition like the Ehl-i Hiref theme including Islamic arts like calligraphy, miniature, illustration, water marbling in the Yeditepe Biennial. More surprisingly, there is unusualness in the combination of ostentatious piety and extravagant consumption by the new bourgeoisie. Admiring Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, the artist and the painter Ismail Acar who is famous among the conservative circle says that: "The buildings similar to Dubai, the simple copies of the minarets of Sinan's the Architect, the intellectuals who cannot distinguish art and crafts, and a society like this would not occur if there was an environment that understood the sensitivity of our President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan." (Appendix 2)

Elif Bereketli, in her article on Artfulliving claims that almost all of the traditional arts experts she spoke says that there is an increase in traditional arts by the Turkish-Islamic synthesis cultural policies and the inertia lasting from the Kemalist period has gradually being thrown. (Bereketli, 2016) It can be said that

there is a progress on traditional arts in the AKP period, but there is no surprising difference in result. We have already mentioned about an art fair attempt, All Arts Istanbul Fair held in 2013 which failed due to the lack of interest by the collector on buying traditional arts. So, it is important to determine whether the above mentioned increase in the attention on traditional arts or the demand of conservative art are coming from the people or not.

This thesis is expected to say that the problem of the AKP government is related with directing different identity patterns for different groups. Because of the fact that it claims to represent the repressed identities by accusing the previous governments, however, this creates a tension between groups and polarization in terms of cultural preferences. For the AKP, creating internal and external enemies is a way of protectionism. In the “local and national” debate, the enemy is elitism which ongoing problem for AKP. The people or the folk are being built with an opposite image of the elite. As neo-populism polices required, the core points we see in this study are the fight between “the people” and “the elites”, anti-elitism, alienation, creating a cultural war (kulturkampf), being majoritarian rather than equalitarian, creating dualities like "Us" and “Them”, and using the ‘post-truth’ style.

On the one hand, literature, sports, movies, theatre, plastic arts, and music, all the codes in the depths of our minds, play a vital role in the construction of the code of ‘Local and National’. ‘Local and National’ actually should embrace a tremendous diversity but rather it is a whole that reduces the diversity of things. However, the concept of ‘local and national’ is a frozen phenomena rather than something involving life. As Öğün says: “The conservative mindset does not like the chaotic variety of traditions. The tradition of conservative understanding is capitalized and uniform.” (Öğün, 1997: 120) For the AKP, who created an antagonistic distinction between elite-foreign and local-national culture at the

discursive level, the famous figures became the apparatus of the politics. We can easily see that rather than their artistic production, their political attitude are in the forefront. Their artistic talent and the closeness to the concept of “local and national” are open to question. The artists in Turkey, unfortunately, are divided according to their political views. The ones who close to the government are being supported by the government and the municipalities. It can be said that the current political power is lack of not being able to train its own artists, painters, or sculptor. Those who gather around the AKP government are generally popular and folk singers, actors and actresses. As the contemporary artist Nadide Akdeniz states that: “As an artist, you can remember the past, admire the past, be proud of the past, but the past has been left behind. The rule of nature and life is to change. The artist always looks for change and innovation and looks to the future, even if s/he is influenced by the past. The artist seeks to be unique. That is why s/he constantly conflicts with the status quo all the time. Even conservatism has inevitably changed in shape, meaning, lifestyle and practices over time. This situation cannot be ignored at all.” (Appendix 5)

More than all, artistic creativity depends on freedom of expression and governments should not regulate it. If they regulate, art becomes to be didactic, preachy, demagogic or dishonest. We see the examples of political art or state intervened art in various states in the past like in Germany, Soviet Russia, or Mao's China. However, politically conservative works produced with ideologies do not meet the desired demand. Moreover, art history goes through its own filter and eliminates such works that have no artistic value over time. While appreciating the interest of the governments in traditional arts, the transience of political governments should be kept in mind. It cannot be said that these works are in the monopoly of conservatives, because this is our shared culture above the politics; the culture of both conservatives and non-conservatives. Consequently, it is vital for a country that art and culture can be experienced freely by every citizen

in an atmosphere of embracing cultural diversity and lived with a freedom of expression, encouraged by the State without discrimination or polarization. While supporting the artists, it is important to create policies considering the diversity and the polyphony in the field of culture and art. Hoping to see the productions in arts and culture in Turkey polyphonic and diversified soon.

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APPENDIX

LIST OF IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS

Koşak, A. (2018, May 18), "Interview with Serhat Kula: The Curator of Yeditepe Biennial," İstanbul.

Koşak, A. (2020, May 06), "Interview with İsmail Acar: Contemporary Artist," İstanbul.

Koşak, A. (2020, May 08), "Interview with Ayşe Kiraz: Kat'ı Artist and the Biennial Attendee," İstanbul.

Koşak, A. (2020, May 26), "Interview with Prof. Dr. Halil Akdeniz: Contemporary Artist and Academician at Işık University," İstanbul.

Koşak, A. (2020, May 26), "Interview with Nadide Akdeniz: Contemporary Artist," İstanbul.

APPENDIX 1: INTERVIEW WITH SERHAT KULA: THE CURATOR OF YEDİTEPE BIENNIAL

Ayşe Koşak: Yeditepe Bienali'nin çıkış noktasını anlatabilir misiniz?

Serhat Kula: Türkiye'nin bir kaç medeniyetlik bir harmonisi var. Bunun için ithal sanatlar yetersiz kalabiliyor. İKSV ithal bir iş yapıyor. İyi Bir Komşu'da komşuluğu ne kadar görebildik? Özellikle İstanbul ile, Türk komşuluk kültürüyle bir bağlantı var mıydı? Yoktu. Ben Bienali Berlin'e götürebilseydim orada yadırganmazdı.

Çıkış noktası bir bienal değildi, bir etkinlikti. Ben işin içinde yoktum. Bir fikir oluşuyor. Bir etkinlik yapalım ve bütün sanatçıları bir araya toplayalım. Contemporary'nin daha klasik hali yapılıyor. All Arts yapılıyor 5 yıl evvel. Ancak istenilen tutmadı çünkü çok satış amaçlıydı. Satış amaçlı olmadan bir festivale

çevirirseniz ilgi çekici olur diye bir öneri geliyor. Sonra iş vakıf tarafından öyle olmaz, 100-200 kişilik bir davet yapalım diyorlar ve bir grup çağırılıyor. Sanatçılar, şairler, sanatla ilgili söz söyleme ihtimali olan bir grup. Biri bienal mi olsa diyor. Bana anlatılan bu. Sürekli mi olsa, müze mantığı. Konuşma metinleri bende var. Yazılı verebilirim. Adının bienal mi olması gibi tartışmalar da var. Uğur Derman bir şey söylemiş. Konu bir noktada bienal olsuna gelince, vakıf ve belediyeye yönetim bir küratör olması gerekiyor demiş. Biri bunu bienalleştirsin. O arada bana temas ettiler.

Ayşe Koşak: Sanıyorum bir çağdaş sanat galerisinde çalıştınız ve bir de Yunus Emre Enstitüsü?

Serhat Kula: Şöyle, Viyana’da yüksek lisansımı yaptım sanat tarihinde. Oradayken bir galeri açtım. Yaklaşık 5 yıl kadar. Avrupa’da yaşayıp da Avrupalı olmayanlarla çalıştım. Onu işlettim sonra Yunus Emre Enstitüleri kurulmaya başladığı dönemde Hayati Develi vardı başkanı. O ısrarla Avrupa’da klasik sanatlarımızla ilgili bir tur, turne yapalım dedi. Hasbelkader Viyana’daki şubeye dahil oldum, oranın sanat danışmanlığını yaptım. Sonra Yunus Emre’de aktif olamadığımı görünce de ayrıldım 1,5-2 sene sonra. Türkiye’de 2 yıl kadar Türk Hava Yolları Skylife’ta çalıştım. Sonra tekrar Viyana’ya döndüm. Bu fikir geldi. Tereddüt ettiğim taraf işi yüklenen kişilerdi. Biri kulağıma fısıldasa inanılmaz heyecanlı şekilde giderim. Belediye’nin ismi beni biraz gerdi çünkü Fatih Belediyesi özellikle sanatla ilgili herhangi bir aktivite yapmamış bir belediye. Böyle tecrübesi olmayan kurumlarda ne gerek var, bu kadarına da mı gerek var, bunu da mı yapmamız lazım gibi işin profesyonellik kısmına yönelik tavır olabiliyor. Tahmin edebiliyordum. Sonra bir kaç toplantı neticesinde Vakıf bana tamamen serbest olacaksın, bu senin bienalin, kimse sana karışmayacak gibi açıklamalarda bulununca ve Vakıf’la da daha öncesinden temasım vardı, güvenip

girdim. 4-5 ay kadar sadece bu projelerin eliminasyonu sürdü çünkü onlar bir küratöre verip, 2 yıl boyunca sanatçıyı ara bul gibi bir ortam hazırlamamışlardı.

Ayşe Koşak: Siz meselenin içine dahil olduğunuzda ne kadar mühlet kalmıştı?

Serhat Kula: 9 ay.

Ayşe Koşak: Sanatçılara onlar sizden evvel başvuru için haber mi vermişlerdi?

Serhat Kula: Onlar siteden bir açık duyuru yapmışlar. Oraya 500-600 kadar proje gelmiş. Bir projesine bakıyorum bir yandan sanatçısı normalde neler yapmış ona bakıyorum. Ki örtüşecek mi, yapabilecek mi. Sonra bir noktadan sonra baktım böyle olmayacak. Baştan sağlam bir eleme yapayım diye düşünüp fikirleri çok havada kalanları kenara ayırıp, 120 tanesiyle de tek tek randevular vererek görüşmeye başladım. Bienal ofisindeki odamıza geliyorlardı. Statiği, formu, pürüzsüzlüğü, detaylarına kadar her şeyi konuşmaya başladık. Tabi o konuda onlar çok fazla hakim değillerdi. Çünkü ilk defa denedikleri işler vardı. Daha önce kağıda çalışmışlar, hayaller çok acayıpti. Kitap çıkabilir. Bir de bugüne kadar bastırılmış hayaller var. Hayal ediyor, sanatçı sonuçta, tasarlayabilme kabiliyeti var ama hiç uygulamaya dönüştürecek ortam bulamamış. Bu konuda Yeditepe Bienali güvenli sahada çizilmiş bir oyun alanı aslında geleneksel sanatçılar için.

Ayşe Koşak: Normal zamanda bulamayacağı bir imkan.

Serhat Kula: Bulamayacağı değil yapmaya cesaretleri yok. Taş atacaklar, eleştirecekler. Sen klasiği bozuyorsun diyecekler. Afaroz edileceksin. Ya da param yok, yapsam kime satacağım ya da yapamam gibi böyle farklı farklı handikaplar var. Onlara ilk defa diyorsun ki, hayatında bir kere olsun bir şeyler yap, hayal et. Ben sana onun yerini tahsis edeceğim, parasını vereceğim, yapacak teknik alt

yapıyı kurgulayacağım sen sadece yap ya da hayal et. Böyle bir imkan sunuldu. İşin içinde Vakf'ın olması klasik sanatçıların güvenle bir şeyleri denemelerine, cesaret etmelerine ortam hazırladı. Huzurlu bir ortam verdik onlara. Sizle biz bir tane dernek kursaydık, ismi Yeni Sanat Derneği olsaydı. Kimse buna dahil olmayacaktı çünkü çekineceklerdi. Markalarına bir zarar geleceğini düşüneceklerdi. Sonra görüşmeler devam etti. Fikir iyi ama üretimi zor olan ya da estetik olarak güçlü bir iş çıkmayacağını düşündüklerimizi biz onlarla paylaştık. Şöyle mi yapsan, hayal ettiğimiz şeyleri paylaştık. Küçük tüyolar vermen gerekiyor ki oradan devam etsin. Sonra başladılar. Duyuru oldu. Şu kişilerle devam edeceğiz dedik. Diğerlerine teşekkür ettik. Sonrasında ben biraz daha sanatçı buldum. Kendim teklif ettim.

Ayşe Koşak: Sizce sayıca çok fazla sanatçı yok muydu? Hem sanatçı hem de okulları da vardı.

Serhat Kula: İnanılmaz fazla. Bazıları normalde kenarda oturan biriydi ama bir anda 'ben Bienal sanatçısı oldum' oldular.

Ayşe Koşak: 50 kişi olsaydı da en iyileri olsaydı. Örneğin Hikmet Barutçugil, ben üniversiteden beri tanıyorum en bilindik ebru sanatçısı veya Murat Palta gibi yeni genç nesil. Şu anda da İKSV'nin afişlerinde kullanılıyor. Belkıs Balpınar, Murat Morova, Selma Gürbüz var. Biraz daha kapsam doğru çizilse onlar bence zevkle yer alırlardı.

Serhat Kula: Ben de aynı fikirdeyim. Murat Morova var. Ataman var. Bu anlattığımız ikinci bienal çünkü birinci bienal ne biliyor musunuz aslında, adı bienal de, şuna bakmanız lazım bir gündem oluşturmanız için bütün çevreleri çekmeniz gerekiyor.

Ayşe Koşak: Bu herkesi kucaklayan, kimseyi kırmayan bir tablo çiziyor.

Serhat Kula: Yoksa inanılmaz bir saldırganlık başlıyor, girmeyen çağırılmayan saldırmaya başlıyor ama ben bunu şuna çevirmeye çalıştım. Tamam saçmalıyoruz, herkesi çağırıyoruz. Bu arada öz eleştiriler çok fazla var. Ben yazmaya başladım.

Ayşe Koşak: Bu arada bienal ile ilgili en çok iyiye iyi, kötüye kötü diyen sizsiniz.

Serhat Kula: Şöyle söyleyeyim, bir katma değer oluşturmadıktan sonra konuştuğumuzun yaptığımızın hiç bir anlamı yok. İlim kelimesi çok dikkatimi çekmişti, birisi anlatmıştı. İlmek ilmek diyoruz ya biz, o kökten geliyor ve işaret demek. Bir bedevi diğer bedeviye işaret için çölde bir tane çaput yerleştiriyor. Buna ilm diyorlar. Sizin işaretlere göre gitmeniz gerekiyor. Biz de sürekli bir önceki işinin üstüne gidiyoruz. Ben eleştiriye ihtiyacı olduğunu gördüğüm için dilimi tutmadan konuşuyorum. Karşı tarafın da yani -karşı taraf kelimesi çok açık adres gösterdiği için kullanıyorum yoksa mantık olarak ironi olarak yapmıyorum, karşı taraftan kastım çağdaş sanatlar.

Ayşe Koşak: Bu ayrım çok ciddi yapıldı bu bienalde, niye öyle oldu sizce? Hatta ötekiler, onların sanatı, bizim sanatımız, onların bienali... Bu aslında okları üzerine çekiyor.

Serhat Kula: Mesela o kelimeyi ben hiç istemiyordum. Ben İKSV ile yaptığım görüşmelerde, Görgün Bey'le aramız iyidir, telefonlaşırız. Ben ona da çok fazla söyledim. Bakın, benim üzerimden konuşursak, benim burada bienale koyduğum konu şu: karşıda bir komşu. Alternatif ve kesinlikle rakip olmayan bir çalışma. Yani butik, kendine has, kenarda duran bir şey. Bu Mustafa Demir'in konuşma bulamadığı, sanatla ilgili bir şey söyleyemediği noktalarda bir başka bienal var

fikrinin özgüvensizliği var ya, ikinci bienali araya sıkıştırmak için. Böyle bir gündem.

Ayşe Koşak: Onun üzerinden varlık kazanmak gibi.

Serhat Kula: Evet, onu işaret ederek kendine yer etmek. Halbuki hiç gerek yok. Senin zaten aslında büyük bir uygunluğa ihtiyacın yok. Cumhurbaşkanlığı yazıyor. Zaten sen onun havasını at yürü eğer mesele o ise ama yapmadı. Ben ikaz ettim bir kaç kere. Buna gerek yok dedim. Kestiremediği şeyler oldu. Bazen övüyor gibi davrandı, bazen rakip ortam oluşturdu. Biraz onu kestiremedi. Mustafa Bey'in tavrını genel olarak kötü niyetli görmüyorum sadece konuya uzak olmasından kaynaklanıyor. Öyle olsa kayıt dışı konuşmalarda bana biraz açardı şöyle yapalım, böyle yapalım diye. Şöyle bir algı oluştu, sanki Kültür Bakanlığı, Mustafa Demir toplanmışlar ve bir karar almışlar. Demişler ki bir bienal yapıyoruz ve bu bienal bundan sonra Türkiye'nin çehresini değiştirecek, Venedik'e kadar gidecek. Bununla alakalı hiç bir şey yok. Zerre kadar böyle bir durum yok. Bu bir ilçe belediyesinin kendini sanat camiasına gösterebilme çabaları içerisinde düştüğü bir handikap. Hiç bir arka yüzü yok.

Ayşe Koşak: Cumhurbaşkanlığı nasıl dahil oldu? Sponsorluk alabilmek adına mı dahil edildi?

Serhat Kula: Yok aslında Vakıf tarafı burada devredeydi. Vakıf Başkanı olmasını istediler çünkü adına bienal deniyordu ve biraz gergindiler. Cumhurbaşkanlığı gelince işin içine daha ağırlık oluşturacak diye düşünüldü. Cumhurbaşkanlığının dahil olması diye bir şey sadece size himaye veriyor.

Ayşe Koşak: Peki sponsorlar, Cumhurbaşkanı'nın adının geçtiği yerde mecburi bulunan kurumlar mı?

Serhat Kula: Cumhurbaşkanı orada var diye orada olmak durumunda hisseden kurumlar var. Normalde bu bienale iyi bir sponsorluk sürece işletilemedi. Çünkü neden bienalin çıktılarının ne olacağı kestirilemiyordu.

Ayşe Koşak: Galiba önce etkinlik diye yola çıkıldığından dolayı bunları yaşamışsınız.

Serhat Kula: Aynen öyle. Ben şöyle bir tabir kullanıyorum, onlar için onlara rağmen bir şey yapıyoruz. Onların farkında olmadığı bir işe kolları sıvamıştık. İçeriden bunun yankılarının ne olacağı ile ilgili benim tahminlerim vardı ama onların yoktu. O yüzden onlar farkında olmadan ve destek vermeden gitti bu iş. Eğer filmin sonunu göstermiş olsaydım başında belki de çok daha ihtiyatlı davranacaklardı sponsorlar bulunması konusunda. Medya ile ilgili.

Ayşe Koşak: Aslında İstanbul Art News yer vermiş bir şekilde ama eğer böyle söylemler olmasaydı, daha çok yer verirdi. Bu gerginlik onu geri çekti.

Serhat Kula: Doğru, inceleme konusuna dönüşecek bir şey olabilirdi. Bir de Samet Karagöz yazdı.

Ayşe Koşak: Belki gerçekten çağdaş sanat toplayan bir koleksiyonerin eline böyle bir dergide geçse idi Artam gibi ilgi çekebilirdi.

Serhat Kula: Ama birincide bunun oluşmaması da güzel bir taraftan çünkü benim de emin olmadığım tarafları var. Birinci bienalde benim derdim fotoğraf çekmekti. Herkesi topluyorum ve bir fotoğraf çekiyorum. Bu fotoğrafın bana bir şey göstermesi gerekiyor ki ikinci bienale hazırlık yapalım.

Ayşe Koşak: Peki, bir bienalin en önemli aşaması sürdürülebilirliği. Bir sonraki, 3., 5., 100. adım. Hatta şu anda 2.yi konuşmanız gerekiyordur.

Serhat Kula: Şu anda aslında onu yapıyoruz. Birinci Bienal'in kalıntılarından koştuk şu anda ve ikinci bienal ile ilgili fikir yürütüyoruz. Benim ne olacağım belli olmasa da, ben küratör olarak devam etmek istemiyorum. Yani iki bienalin de küratörü olmak, birincisi denemeydi belki sorun olmaz ama ben şahsen istemiyorum. Belki bir tüzel kişiliğe kavuşması gerektiğini düşünüyorum bienalin. Bir kuruma, bir şirkete dönüşün, bunun bir sabit yapısı gerekiyor ve bunun paydaşları ondan sonra kendisi karar vereceği duruma dönüşmeli. Bu bienalde bakanlıkla çalışacağım, öbür bienalde bir özel sektörle. Ben bu tüzel kişiliğin bir yerinde durmayı tercih ediyorum.

Ayşe Koşak: Peki bu her zaman yapılacak diye bir plan var mı?

Serhat Kula: Evet, niyet kesinlikle bu.

Ayşe Koşak: Bir kere yaptık, beğenmedik gibi bir şey yok demek ki.

Serhat Kula: Zaten beğendiler, genel olarak iyi bir bienal oldu. İyi olmasa da bu devam edecekti. Beklentiler düşüktü. Şu anda karşılaştıklarını tahmin etmiyorlardı. İnsanların ilgi gösterdiği, konuşulduğu, iş adamlarının gelip gittiği, yeni mekanlar açıldı. Bu işin dört tane paydaşı var. Herkes kendi payını aldı. Fatih Belediyesi alacağını aldı. Dedi ki, ben bir bienal yapmış ilçe belediyesiyim. Hatta milletvekili oldu sonuçta son zamanlarda gündeme gelerek bir çıkış yapmış oldu. Cumhurbaşkanlığı bundan memnun çünkü sanata bir yerinden dahil oldu. Sürekli şikayet ediyordu Cumhurbaşkanı, kültür sanatta zayıfız diye. Ve bu dahiliyeti istediği sınırların içinde, rahat, çok siyasi veya ideolojik yüklemeleri olmayan

sadece estetik tarafı ağır basan bir sanat alanında sergilemiş oldu. O da onun istediğiydi. Normal bir bienale olamıyor değil, destek de olmaya eli varmıyor.

Ayşe Koşak: Biraz eleştirel bir şey çıkacağı besbelli.

Serhat Kula: Besbelli.

Ayşe Koşak: Şimdi bu bienal geleneksel sanatları içeren bir bienal ya, ben eksiklikler gördüm. Yine geleneksel sanatlar diyoruz. Hatta yakın dostlarımızı, komşularımızı da davet edeceğimiz gibi güzel bir söylem var. İran'dan minyatüristler gelebilirdi. Tabiki zaman kısıtlamasının farkındayım.

Serhat Kula: Toplam 21 tane yabancı sanatçı vardı aslında. Arkeoloji Müzesi'nde İran'lı 3 kişiden oluşan bir ekip var. Katar, Dubai, Çin... Sayıca az ama bunun sebebi şu yani daha biz kendi bienalimizin potansiyelini görmeden buna yönelmemiz bence biraz yanlış olurdu. Ehl-i Hiref ile çıktı. Osmanlı'daki sanat kültürü üzerine bir hatırlayıştı. Biraz daha burada kendi kendimize yaptıklarımızı görelim ondan sonra bakalım diye niyetimiz oldu. Bir sonraki bienal için hedefim şu, ulaşmak istediğim nokta: bütün dünyada kendi sanat eserlerini üretmek isteyen devletler var. Bunu devlet politikası olarak güdenler var. Mesela Japonya. Global sanata dahil olan sanatçıları var ama devlet olarak bir şekilde bir yerinden Japonluluk hissini ortaya koymaya çabalıyorlar.

Ayşe Koşak: Yerli ve Milli.

Serhat Kula: Evet. Bunu her seferinde bunu öne sürüyor Japonya. Buna benzer ülkeler var. Bunları önce bir tespit etmek gerekiyor.

Ayşe Koşak: Bu devletlerle ilişkiye girmek, davet etmek gibi mi?

Serhat Kula: Aynen.

Ayşe Koşak: Söylencede geleneksel, kadim sanatlarımız çok fazla yerel bir içerik ifadesi oluşturdu. Bu söylediğiniz ilkiyle ilgisi olmayan bir şey. Bu sergide de hat, minyatür var. Sınırları zorlayan bir kaç iş de oldu ama yine belli bir çerçevede kaldı. Çömlek, kilim, deri, mozaik gibi bu toprakların pek çok sanatı var.

Serhat Kula: Aya Sofya'da bir mozaik halı vardı ve yukarıdaki mozaiklerle konuşması adına özel olarak oraya konulmuştu.

Ayşe Koşak: Bu toprakların sanatları anlamında kısıtlıydı.

Serhat Kula: Aynı fikirdeyim sadece konu Ehl-i Hiref. Sarayın ihtişamını ortaya koymak adına uyguladığı sanat dallarını içeren bir sendika, bir okul. Bana verdiklerinde Ehl-i Hiref oluşturulmuştu. Benim bu sınırların içinde kalmam gerekiyordu. Bütün bu sanat akımlarının içerisinde şu anda üretilebilirliği, satılabilirliği olan alan bu kitap sanatları; hat, tezhip, ebru vs.

Ayşe Koşak: Geleneksel sanatların belli bir çerçevesi ve kuralları var, bu sanatlara ne derece sanat diyebiliriz? Sanat deyince batılı bir kavram ve bireyin öne çıktığı, bireyin imzasının olduğu. Zanaat sanat arasındaki ilişkiyi de sorgulamak lazım. Bu bienalde de örneğin hocaninkiyle öğrencisinin aynı veya çok benzer. Ben o kişinin yorumunu ne şekilde kattı açıkçası göremiyorum.

Serhat Kula: Bu aslında çok uzun bir konu, sanat felsefesine kadar götürülebilecek bir şey. İnsan neden gelenekseli tekrar eder? Bazı karakterler eskiyi tekrar etmekten hoşlanır, yaradılışla ilgili bir şey. Değişimden korkan karakterler var.

Çünkü bu sanatlarda sabitlik vardır. Bu batı sanatında da geçerli. Orada da hala klasiği korumaya çalışan çok fazla insan var.

Ayşe Koşak: Ama Batı'da örneğin gravür festivali yapmıyorlar. Onu zaten bir yerde müzede, galeride sergiliyor.

Serhat Kula: Gravürü başka yerde kullanmaya devam ediyorlar. Bizim şu anda güncel sanat, çağdaş dediğimiz şey aslında Avrupa'nın gelenekseli. Gelenekselinin bugün değişime uğradığı hali aslında. Biz sanatı, şu andaki akımları Pop artı dahil sürekli Avrupa'nın geçmişinden okuyarak ilerliyoruz. Bir de işin içine kurumsallık dahil olmuş. Galeri sistemi oturmuş, koleksiyonerler, yazarlar, eleştirmen, kayıt altına alanlar var. Türkiye'de şu anda bunun kurumsalı yok. Yokken biz şu anda sizin eleştirinizi haklı görmekle beraber o terazide yanlış yerde duruyoruz. Bu teraziye koyduğunuz zaman biz kaybeden tarafta dururuz. Benim şu andaki amacım Yeditepe Bienali ile aslında bunun kurumsalını oluşturacak bir ateş. Henüz emeklemek bile yok çünkü bir sanat eleştirmeni var mı geleneksel sanatları üretenleri kritize edebilecek. O da yok. Bir tane galeri yok.

Ayşe Koşak: AVM'lerde şövale üzerinde sergilenen sanatlara dönmüş durumda.

Serhat Kula: Çerçeveviden bozma, evet. Bakın bu, bizim klasiğimizin ve ayrıca Türkiye'deki siyasi meseleler var. 1910 sonrasındaki klasik sanatların üretilmesinin engellenmesi. Böyle bir gerçek var.

Ayşe Koşak: Konuşmalar hep bu noktaya atıflar üzerinden gidiyor.

Serhat Kula: O ara olmasa, 1910'larda belli sanatçılar var, onlar dünyadaki değişimlere göre muhtemelen bu değişimleri devam ettireceklerdi. Bugün biz bunları yapıyor olmayacaktık. Şu anda protestan bir sanat var. Engellendi şimdi

biz onların gözüne sokacağız. Bu engelleme klasik sanatlarda protestanlığa dönüştü. Bu engelleme olmasaydı o süreç devam edecekti ve bugün çok daha farklı formatlarda işler görecektik. 1800'lerin başı Türkiye Barok ile tanışıyor. Eğer gelenekseli bu kadar korusaydık biz bir iki sene içinde İstanbul'daki bütün camileri, koltuk desenlerini, levhaları, çerçeveleri, saatleri, elbiseleri Barok'a niye çevirdik? Bize ait olmayan Avrupa'da farklı mitolojik ifadeleri içeren ürünler. Osmanlı uyum sağlıyor aslında dünya trendine, Osmanlı uyum sağlıyor da biz ne haddimize hala 16. yy tezhibini tekrar ediyoruz. O günün görme biçimine göre bir inovasyona girmiş Osmanlı. Biraz geriden bu inovasyonu yakalamış bir Osmanlı varken, biz bugün bunu niye yapıyoruz. Bienalde gördüğünüz tekrarların bir alt metni var. Boğmak. Gına getirmek. İnsanlarda 100 tane hat görüyorum sonra 1 enstelasyon görüyorum, kafalar oraya gidiyor. Sonra bakıyor ve "bunlar iyi işler" diyor. Bunlara ihtiyaç var ama bunu didaktik yaparsanız herkes saldırır.

Ayşe Koşak: Bu ikisi arasında ayırım niye var? Çağdaş sanatla kol kola gidebilir.

Serhat Kula: Üretenlere bakmak gerekiyor. Enstelasyonu üretecek olan gelenekselcinin hamurunda bu yok. Ona bakıp ben neden yapmayayım desin diye. Konservasyon çok önemli. Avrupa klasiği konserve edemedi. Çünkü özellikle yaşadığı savaş dönemlerinde, sanatçılar para kazanmak için değil sadece kendilerini tatmin için bile resim yaptılar psikolojik travmalardan dolayı. 18-19. yy'daki yapılan resimlerin çoğu para kazanma amaçlıydı. O günkü terapi maksatlı yapılan şeye bugün birileri iyi dedi diye beynimizi zorlamaya çalışıyoruz. Tamamen algılar üzerine bir şey var. Bugün bizim beğendiğimiz Avrupa mimarisini için örneğin Avrupalılar hiç yeni bir üretim yapmıyor. Doymuşluk artık farklılaşmak istiyor. Bizim hat, tezhibe gösterdiğimiz 'yeter'i onlar yapıyor. Eskiye sadece müzede bırakıyor. Bizim çok kaliteli müzelerimiz olsa hat müzemiz mesela, hattı orada kapatalım. O zaman dersin ki, bu burada en iyi haliyle burada. O zaman klasik sanatçı diye bir şey de kalmayacak ortada. Klasik sanatçı diye bir

kavram kullanma ihtiyacımız maalesef o community'nin bir kenarda durmasından kaynaklanan, kendini ifade etme aracı. Buna gerek yok aslında. Burası Türkiye, bir geçit alanı. Her zaman değişime uğramış. Biz de uğrarız. Nasıl gözümüze gönlümüze geliyorsa öyle yapabiliriz. Bir problemimiz de şu: Sanat üzerine konuşulan bir malzeme değil Osmanlı'da. Sanat tamamen pragmatik. Objeyi güzelleştirmek. Çok dekoratiftir, simetriktir, renk uyumu, edep, din yüklemesi vardır. Biz onu ortaya çıkarırken, örneğin motifi, altı boş oluyor çünkü onunla ilgili konuşulmamış. Sanatçı anlatmamış yaparken ne hissetti vs. Dolayısıyla elimizde çok kurak bir toprak var ve biz onun içinde bir şeyler yetiştirmeye çalışıyoruz. Çağdaş sanat tarafı ben hakimim diyor ve rahatça hareket ediyor ama halbuki kendine ait bir şey yapmıyor. Dolayısıyla Yeditepe Bienali'nin ben şöyle bir avantajı olacağını düşünüyorum. Global sanat bugünün sanatı beni tereddüte düşürüyor. Bugün sanat kurumları, sektörleri sanatçıları daha çok sipariş usulüne yönlendiriyor sanatçıları. O yüzden klasik daha keyif alıcı, daha sabit, daha yüklemi az.

Ayşe Koşak: Orada da sanatçının yorumunu, bireyi göremiyoruz işte. Orada da görsek keşke.

Serhat Kula: İşte o geliştiği zaman ideal olur. Şu anda bienalden genç-yaşlı 50 isim çıkarttım ben, iletişimi kuvvetli, yeni iş üretmeye açık, anlamaya çalışıyor. Bunlar çok önemli. Hem bir sonraki bienaller için hem de başka projeler için.

Ayşe Koşak: Küratörlük tarafında da problemler vardı. Örneğin çok eski bir mahzene nasıl oluyor da çivi ile çakılıyor, Anıtlar Kurulu nasıl izin veriyor?

Serhat Kula: Üzerine harç kaplanmış 8 yıl önce, basit bir harç. Aslında o harçlar yeni restorasyonda sökülecek.

Ayşe Koşak: Size şu kişiyi alın gibi bir baskı oldu mu?

Serhat Kula: Ben ikna oldum sadece. Dediler ki, herkes katılsın, kimseyi küstürmeyelim.

Ayşe Koşak: Bir sonrakine daha seçkinci olacak mı?

Serhat Kula: Kesinlikle, çok daha az, çok daha seçkin.

Ayşe Koşak: Bu arada tema Ehl-i Hiref'ti ama örneğin Arkeoloji Müzesi'nde kuşlar sergisi vardı. Hem hocaların hem öğrencilerin onlarca işi sergilenmişti.

Serhat Kula: Çok daha az tutulsa çok daha etkileyici olurdu, haklısınız.

Ayşe Koşak: Bir de banklar vardı, "Oturma Sanata Bak", aslında kıyamıyoruz oraya otursunlar ama herkes oturuyordu üzerine o çalışmanın. Halka indiğimiz zaman, ya halkında istediği gibi dokunabileceği bir versiyona sokmak ya da onu banka çevirmek fikrinden vazgeçmek gerek.

Serhat Kula: Çok doğru tespit. Yeni iş üretmedik, elde var olan işleri oraya entegre etmeye çalıştık.

Ayşe Koşak: Bir de Ayşe Kiraz diye bir Kat'ı sanatçısı var. Onunla görüşmüştüm ve projelerinin beğenilmediğini sonra tarafınızdan bir proje verildiğini söylemişti. Sizin bir tema vererek proje konusunda sanatçıyı özgür bırakmanız gerekmez miydi?

Serhat Kula: Türk Kültürü'ne Hizmet Vakfı'nın olmasını istediğimiz için biz bir proje verdik. Yoksa onların yolladığı projeler olmazdı.

Ayşe Koşak: Peki artık şehirler önemli. Yalnızca Fatih Bölgesi'nde olması neden?

Serhat Kula: Hem elbette Fatih Belediyesi organize ettiği için hem de İstanbul'da yaşayan pek çok insan aslında Suriçi'nin çoğunu görmemiştir. Bu da gezmek adına bir bahane olacaktı. Hava güzel, yer güzeli sanatla küçük dokunuşlar yapalım.

Ayşe Koşak: Bir belediyecilik projesi gibi olmuş.

Serhat Kula: Evet, öyle diyebiliriz. Kamusal hizmet ama içinde de bir kaç bienal mantığında iş olursa ben buna bienal derim gibi bir şey oldu.

Ayşe Koşak: Bir de pek çok yerin adı vardı ama kapısı kapalıydı. Aya İrini örneğin.

Serhat Kula: Orası 'gidin bu mekan bir sanat eseri' mantığındaydı.

Ayşe Koşak: "Senin Bir Sanatın Var" neden bu kadar sert söylendi?

Serhat Kula: Ben kabul etmedim ve benim tek engellendiğim alan buydu. Reklam politikasını yürüten ekip yaptı ve onay aldı. Ben bir başka ajansın yaptığını beğenmiştim. Rene Magrit'ten yola çıkarak "Bu Bir Bienal Değil" demişlerdi. Bayıldım ona ama olmadı. Belki bir sonraki bienalde kullanılır.

Ayşe Koşak: Değişebilir değil mi? Bu slogan yalnızca bu bienal içindi.

Serhat Kula: Tabi deęişebilir. Artık Fatih Belediyesi bu işin içinde deęil. Ortaklıkla ilgili devam edilmeyecek. Vakıf řu anda yapıyor olacak. Daha rahat hareket edilecek.

Ayře Kořak: Bir de 'muhafazakar sanat' diye bir tabir var. Burada bunu mu yapmak amaç?

Serhat Kula: Açık konuşayım ben apolitik bir insanım. Çok uzun süre Avrupa'da yaşadım ve 10 yıl içerisinde burayla temasımı kesmiştim. Tamamen orali olarak kendimi hissediyorum. Bu süre içinde Türkiye'de oluşan şeylerden uzaktım ve tekrar da bunu yakalamıyorum. Türkiye'deki bu durumla ilgili yorum yapmayacağım. O taraftan baktığımız zaman, hayatının içerisinde dini yayabilen insanlar üzerinden konuşalım, onlara sanatın yanlış anlatıldığı bir ortam var. 50-60 yıldır devam ediyor. 'Sanat bizim işimiz deęil'. Sanat deyince resim, heykel... O camianın içinde yetişen bir genç, evde sanatla ilgili şeylerin uygunsuz olduğuyla büyüyor, okulda bir ders bile olsa onu idareten yapıp bitiriyor. Bu uzun zamandır böyleydi. Bugün biraz daha deęişiyor. Fakat bugün böyle bir ortamda yetişen 30-40 yaşlarında birinin idarenin de ona karşılık vereceęi şeylerin bugüne kadar inandığı şeylerle çelişmemesi gerekiyor. İslami bakış diyorum ben buna. Bir çok dindar Tayyip Erdoğan'ı bir politik lider olarak görmüyor, İslami hayatın yaşamasına hak veren adam. Daha evvel yaşadığı travmalar, handikaplar var. Çocuęunu okula gönderemiyor, üniversiteye giremiyor kızı, eři doktor işini yapamıyor gibi. Bu problemlere nefes aldırılmış oluyor. Onun sunacağı şeylerin de sanatta da geçerli ve güvenli olduğuna inanıyor. Problem řu: devletin iki çıktısı var. Bir güvenli bir ortamda sanatı yapsınlar, fazla müstehcene ve ideolojik bir yaklaşıma kaymasınlar. Hem de Osmanlı gibi bir medeniyetin tekrardan hatırlanmasına vesile olsun. Devlet řunu düşünüyor. Osmanlı tam tanınmadı, onu tanıtmamız gerekiyor. Halbuki gerçek Osmanlı'yla ya da gerçek Selçuklu'yla da tanışmak istemiyoruz.

Ayşe Koşak: Bu arada Kültür Çalıştayı'nda devletin yön verdiği şey olmaktan çıkmalı sanat diye bir konuşma vardı.

Serhat Kula: Kesinlikle, bence Yeditepe Bienali'nin de Cumhurbaşkanlığı himayelerinden çıkması gerekiyor bence. Gelsin yine destek olsun ama bence logolar irite ediciydi. Orayı resmileştirme gibi. Mesela devlet sanatçısı gibi bir saçmalık var Türkiye'de. O zaman öbürü ne? Burada önemli olan Türkiyelilik olmalı. Bu Türkiye'de yapılmış diyebilmeli görenler. Yeditepe Bienali bari bunu yapsın, bunu İKSV yapmak zorunda değil zaten İKSV global dili konuşabiliyor.

Ayşe Koşak: Peki geleneksel bu kadar çağdaşlaşmalı mı? Bilerek ışıklı çağdaş sanat gibi yapmak.

Serhat Kula: Çağdaşlaşmamalı. Evet -miş gibi olmuş. Aya Sofya'daki büyük hat harfleri vardı. Acaba bu harfler büyük olsa ne olur gibi.

Ayşe Koşak: Ancak bir şeyi büyütme çağdaş sanatta yapılagelmiş bir şey. Bir de aydınlatmalar eksikti ve künyelerde hatalar vardı.

Serhat Kula: Maalesef. Böyle olmaz. Çok daha profesyonel ekiplere devretmek gerekiyor.

Ayşe Koşak: Bir de büyük bir küratör ekibiniz vardı sanırım. Yardımları oldu mu?

Serhat Kula: Onların bir çoğu var da yok. Gerisi belediye çalışanlarından idi.

Ayşe Koşak: Ayasofya'da yapılan açılış konuşmasında çok ayrıştırmacı bir dil kullanılıyor. Senin sanatın, onların sanatı, biz, onlar...

Serhat Kula: İfade aslında doğru ama söylem dili yanlış. Senin bir sanatın var diye herkese dersin. Bir mirasa sahipsın, gel al bunu gibi.

Ayşe Koşak: Mayıs ayında olması özel bir seçim miydi İKSV'ye karşı?

Serhat Kula: Yok sadece seçim geliyordu seçimden önce olsun diye yapıldı.

Ayşe Koşak: Geleneksel sanatlar ölü sanatlar mı?

Serhat Kula: Olabilir. Bunu sadece iyi konserve etmek önemli yoksa 10 yıl sonra ölebilir bu sanatlar. Yeni nesil anlamayabilir bunları.

Ayşe Koşak: Kendi sanatımız deyince nedir? Bizim sanatımız demek nedir?

Serhat Kula: İslami sanatlar desek, onun bir silsilesi var ama yalnızca bu da tanımlamaz. O zaman eli belinde motifini nereye koyacağız.

APPENDIX 2: INTERVIEW WITH İSMAİL ACAR: CONTEMPORARY ARTIST

1. 2012 yılında Cumhurbaşkanı Genel Sekreteri Mustafa İsen “Muhafazakar kesimin nasıl bir demokrasi anlayışı varsa, muhafazakar demokrasi diye bir şeyden bahsedebiliyorsak, o zaman 'muhafazakar estetik' ve 'muhafazakar sanat' diye bir şeyden de bahsetmek, bunun normlarını ve yapısını oluşturmak gibi bir yükümlülük içindeyiz.” diye bir açıklamada bulundu. Sizce “muhafazakar sanat” diye bir şey var mı veya bir başka deyişle sanatın muhafazakarı olur mu?

İsmail Acar: Bugün sanatta muhafazakar eğilimler olabilir ama muhafazakar sanat olmaz artık. Bu coğrafyada bu söylemi sanatta ilk söyleyen kişiydim 1991 senesinde. 1997 Hürriyet Gazetesi'nde yer alan bir röportaj başlığı bile mevcut tam sayfa olarak. Türkiye'de hattat hat yazmazken, çini sanatçısı çini yapmazken geleneksel sanat unsurlarını resmimde ilk ben kullandım sanırım. Kendi sanat üslubumu günümüz modernitesiyle bu temeller üzerine kurdum. O gün bir padişah portresi çizmek sanatsal çevreler tarafından aforoz edilmek anlamına gelirdi. Bugünse aynı çevreler artık ticari olarak bu unsurları kullanmaktan çekinmiyorlar. Her toplumun sanata, estetiğe bakış açısı farklıdır. Muhafazakarlık, geleneksel, sosyal etmenlerin muhafaza edilmesini destekleyen politik ve sosyal felsefedir. Daha belirgin bir anlamda ilgili toplumun içinde bulunduğu çağın gereklerini göz ardı etmeksizin, geçmişten gelen tarihi, kültürel ve medeni birikimlerini kaybetmeden, kısaca öz dinamiklerinin değişmesine karşı direnç gösteren, toplumsal-kültürel değerlerin korunmasını savunan siyasi bir görüştür. 1890lı yıllarda Sanayi Devrimi'nin etkisine karşın oluşmuş, gelenekselci korumacı bir anlayış.

2. Muhafazakar sanat tartışmalarının akabinde hükümet nezdinde “yerli ve milli” sanat ve sanatçılardan, “yerli ve milli” değerlerden bahsedilmeye başlandı. Destek olunan, ödül verilen kişilerden bazıları: Orhan Gencebay (şarkıcı), Hülya Koçyiğit (oyuncu), Bülent Ersoy (şarkıcı), Semih Kaplanoğlu (yönetmen), Diriliş Ertuğrul (dizi), Payitaht Abdulhamid (dizi), İskender Pala (edebiyat), Ethnospor Konfederasyonunun kurulması (spor), Plastik sanatlarda da özel olarak Cumhurbaşkanlığı Özel Ödülü verilen isimler; Devrim Erbil (resim), Ergin İnan (resim), Ali Toy (hat), Hüseyin Kutlu (hat), İzzet Keribar (fotoğraf) gibi. Sizce “yerli ve milli” sanat / sanatçı nedir veya "yerli ve milli" sanatçı olur mu?

İsmail Acar: Yerli ve milli sanatçılar olur. Tüm sanatçılar önce yerli ve millidir sonra evrensele ulaşabilen ulaşır. Da Vinci'nin ‘Son Akşam Yemeği’ yerli, lokal,

hristiyan bir patronajın siparişidir ama tüm islam sanat okullarında okutulur, baş yapıttır. İspanya iç savaşını konu alan 'Guernica' Picasso'nun eseri, lokal bir sipariştir. Mevlana'nın Mesnevi'si o günkü Selçuklu coğrafyasını, İslam düşüncesini anlatır ama tüm dünya dillerine çevrilmiştir. Önemli olan bu sanatçıların estetik ve felsefi kaygıyla farklı veya yeni bir şeyler üretmeleridir.

3. Soru: "Senin Bir Sanatın var" sloganıyla, 31 Mart 2018'de Ayasofya'da düzenlenen açılışla Yeditepe Bienali gerçekleştirildi. Cumhurbaşkanlığı himâyesinde, Fatih Belediyesi ve Klasik Türk Sanatları Vakfı işbirliğinde ve pek çok farklı şirket ve kurumun sponsorluğunda 31 Mart - 15 Mayıs 2018 tarihleri arasında gerçekleşen Yeditepe Bienali kapsamında tarihi yarımada da yer alan 30'a yakın mekânda 600'ün üzerinde sanatçının 3000'e yakın eseri bir araya getirildi. (<http://www.yeditepebienali.com/tr/2018>) Öncelikle bu bienalden haberdar oldunuz mu? Hükümetin halka seslendiği "Senin Bir Sanatın Var" sloganı sizin için ne ifade ediyor? Geleneksel sanatların bienali olur mu? Geleneksel sanatlar çağdaşla birleşebilir mi? 3.000 eserin yer aldığı söylenen bu bienali nasıl değerlendirirsiniz?

İsmail Acar: Yeditepe Bienali maalesef bir belediye etkinliğinin ötesine geçemedi. Ayrıca İstanbul Bizans Dönemi'nde de yedi tepeydi. Bugün sadece geleneksel sanatların, sadece belirli bir kesimde moda, popüler diye bir tavrı var. Sizin sanatınız diye bir şey yok. Hangi yeni yapılan camiye bir gerçek sanat eseri girdi ve hangi yeni yapılan cami yeni ya da özgün bir mimari üsluba sahip? Her yapılan eser, geçmişi kopyalama çabasının ötesine geçememiş. Bugün bazı istisnalar dışında sanat ve estetik adına sadece geleneksel yansımalar var.

4. Soru: Recep Tayyip Erdoğan'ın Yeditepe Bienali'nin açılış konuşmasında söylediği "Millet olarak elimizdeki kıymetini bilmiyoruz. Ne kendimize ne de yurtdışına bu güzellikleri layıkıyla tanıtabiliyoruz. Tabi buradaki temel sıkıntının

ülkemize bir dönem hakim olan zihniyet olduğunun farkındayız. Türkiye uzun yıllar sanat, kültür ve tarih deyince sadece belli bir dönemi ve belli bir kalıbı esas alan kısır ve dar bir bakış açısının esiri olmuştur. Bizanstan çok bizansçı, batıdan ziyade batıcı ama her halükarda milletin değerleriyle kavgalı bu zihniyet ecdadın bize bıraktığı mirasın kıymetini de ne yazık ki bilememiştir. Tarihi camilerin bir kısmı müzeye - aynen burası gibi- bir kısmı depoya, maalesef bir kısmı da ahıra çevrilmiştir.” sözleriyle ilgili ne söylemek isterdiniz? Kültürde iktidar olamadıklarını açıkça belirten AKP’nin bu söylemlerini nasıl değerlendiriyorsunuz?

İsmail Acar: Sayın Cumhurbaşkanımızın duyarlılığını anlayan bir çevre oluşsaydı eğer, bugün yeni bir kültür devrimi yapılabilirdi. Dubai’ye benzeyen binalar, Sinan’ın mimarisinin basit kopyası minareler, zanaati sanat zanneden aydınlar ve böyle bir toplum olmazdı. Maalesef AKP’nin sağladığı tüm imkanlar heba edildi ve ediliyor. Çok büyük bir fırsat kaçırılmak üzere...

5. Soru: Aynı konuşmada Recep Tayyip Erdoğan: “Ülkemizde son 15 yılda, diğer bir çok alanda olduğu gibi kültür ve sanat alanında da tabuları yıktık. Paradigmayı değiştirdik. En büyük fiziki mekana sahip çıkma dönemi iktidarımız döneminde olmuştur. Onlar yıktılar, biz yaptık. Hala da onlar yıkmanın gayretinde biz yapmanın derdindeyiz. Şimdi Atatürk Kültür Merkezini Türkiye’nin bir numaralı büyük opera binası olarak yapıyoruz. Bunu da biliyorsunuz çok bağırdı çağırdı o geziciler. İstedığınız kadar bağırın. Çatlayın patlayın. Bak yıktık ve inşallah kısa zamanda da orada dünyada sayılı muhteşem bir opera binasını çok amaçlı olarak yapıyoruz.” Bu “ihya (yeniden diriltme) ve inşa” temelli söylemle ilgili ne söylemek isterdiniz?

İsmail Acar: Sayın Cumhurbaşkanımız bir siyaset dili kullanıyor sonuçta, işi de bu. Üstelik de çok idealist, ancak mimariye, resme, heykele, seramiğe, şehir

Not: “Yeni Muhafazakarlık Geleneksel Form 1” diye bir seriydi. Sergi, Topkapı Sarayı Alay Köşkü’nde Çiğdem Simavi’nin kurucusu olduğu KÜSAV Vakfı sponsorluğunda yapıldı.

APPENDIX 3: INTERVIEW WITH AYŞE KİRAZ, KAT’I ARTIST AND THE BIENNIAL ATTENDEE

1. 2018 yılında Yeditepe Bienali’ne katıldınız. Bana bu Bienal’den nasıl haberdar oldunuz, süreç nasıl ilerledi bahsedebilir misiniz?

Ayşe Kiraz: Bienal ile ilgili olarak, Klasik Türk Sanatları Vakfı ve Fatih Belediyesi’nin Cumhurbaşkanlığı sponsorluğunda Eresin Hotel’de düzenledikleri tanıtım kahvaltısına Klasik Sanatlar Vakfı tarafından davet edildim. Geleneksel sanatlar alanında sanatçı tanıdığımız pek çok kişi vardı. İlk defa böyle bir organizasyon yapıldığı için çıkış amaçları, ne yapmak istedikleri anlatıldı. Herkesin kafasına takılan sorular soruldu, onların cevapları alındı, alınmadı. Bütün katılımcılardan bir veya birden fazla projeye iştirak etmeleri istendi ve proje süresi verdiler.

2. Bu vakfın sanatçılarını mı o gün oradaydı?

Ayşe Kiraz: Hayır Geleneksel sanatlarla uğraşan, ilgisi olan oldukça kalabalık bir kitleydi. İlk defa böyle bir şey yapılacağı için herkes algılamaya ne yapabilirizi düşünmeye başladı. Ondan sonraki süreçte herkes bir proje hazırladı. Ben de öğrencilerimle olan bir projem vardı onu sundum. Tezhip, Ebru, Hat çalışan arkadaşlarımla birleşerek öyle bir proje verdik. Biz iki - üç projeye müracaat ettik ancak onlar kabul edilmedi.

3. Bu projelerinizi ne sürede hazırlamalısınız?

Ayşe Kiraz: Hatırladığım kadarıyla Mayıs sonu idi bu toplantı ve Haziran sonu gibi proje teslim tarihi söylenmişti yanlış hatırlamıyorsam. O süre sonra uzatıldı, Temmuz sonuna kadar oldu. Proje tanıtımının yapıldığı o toplantıda Medrese'de (Caferağa Medresesi) beraber çalıştığımız bir çini hocamızla, beraber düşündük ki bienal tarihi yarımada yapılacak, çıkış noktaları tarihi yarımada. Medresemiz bu tarihi yarımada önemli bir kurum, bu kurum niçin davet edilmedi biz kurum olarak bu bienalde olmalıyız diye medrese yetkilileri ile görüştük. Türk Kültürüne Hizmet Vakfı Caferağa Medresesi olarak bienale katılma kararı idarecilerimizin de onayıyla alındı. Sonrasında idaremiz müracaat etti.

4. Geriye döner isek, ilk başvurduğunuz projenizin reddi neden oldu? Projeniz neydi? Nasıldı o süreç?

Ayşe Kiraz: Biz Sinan Camii'lerini çalışmıştık öğrencilerimizle, biri oydu. Bir tanesi bir grup arkadaşlarımızla İstanbul'un sihirleri. Geçmiş Bizans'a kadar dayanan bir konuyu ele alalım dedik hepimiz kendi sanat dallarımızla ilgili. Orijinal projelerdi ama kabul edilmedi. Bienalin ilk etaptaki çıkış noktalarından sonra yönetimler değişti anladığımız kadarıyla. Bienal seçici kurulu değişti. O değişimlerde seçimlerde farklılık göstermesine neden oldu. Sonrasında Türk Kültürüne Hizmet Vakfı Caferağa Medresesi olarak yaptığımız başvurumuz kabul edildi. Baktığınızda hep aynı belli isimler, belli isimler her yerde. Başkalarının önünü açmak, farklı isimler de olsun düşüncesi yok. Belli kişiler hep ben olayım, hep biz olalım. Eş dost çevresiyle böyle şeyler oluyor diye düşünüyorum.

5. Bu arada maddi olarak malzeme temini konusunda bir destek oldu mu? Siz mi hazırladınız projenizi maddi olarak da?

Ayşe Kiraz: Biz kendi şahsi projelerimizle ilgili yaptığımız başvurularda herhangi bir talebimiz olmadı. Projelerimizi ana hatlarıyla sunduk, kabul görseydi detaylandırmasını o zaman yapacaktık. O aşamada fiyat konusunda hiç bir şey konuşmadık. Kurum olarak yaptığımız projeden bienal tarafından çok az bir ödeme yapıldı. Ama bir çok masrafımızı da kendi imkanlarımızla karşıladık. Sonradan duyduğumuza göre bazı kişilere çok astronomik rakamlar ödenmiş, bazılarına hiç ödenmemiş. Ne kadar gerçek ne kadar değil bilemiyorum.

6. Eleştirdiğiniz ve takdir ettiğiniz noktalar nedir?

Ayşe Kiraz: Bienal çok büyük bir organizasyondur. Ülkemizde ilk olarak yapılması gurur vericiydi. Düşünce güzel, çıkış güzel. Bir çok sanatçıyı bir araya getirmeleri, bütün sergilerin tarihi yarımada yapılmaması turizm açısından... Güzel tarafları bunlardı ama bir çok işi ehline sormadan yapmak olayı var ya Türkiye’de. Yine de güzel farklı çalışmalar sergilendi. Medrese idari ve eğitim kadrosu olarak Serhat Bey’le yapılan toplantıya gittiğimizde bize yapacağımız tasarımlarda “Uçun” gibi bir ifade kullandı. Şimdi geleneksel sanatları yapıyorsunuz, bir çağdaş sanat değil. Burada belli kurallarımız var, belli kalıplarımız var, klasiğimizi bozmamız lazım. Bizim aldığımız terbiye bu yönde. Yani pek uçmamız mümkün değil. Tamam yorumumuzu katalım ama klasiği bozmadan. Tezhipte ve diğer sanat dallarında bir sürü üslup var, tarz var ama klasiği öğrenmeden onlara geçemezsiniz. Bienal düşünce olarak, büyük bir organizasyon yapılması güzeldi. Bu kapsamda yapılan güzel orijinal çalışmalar da sergilendi.

7. Ben de gezdim, bazı yerlerde de çok fazlaydı çalışmalar. Elemek, seçkin olmak, Bienal kapsamı budur. Sizin yorumunuz nedir?

Ayşe Kiraz: İşte, onun hatırı kalmasın, bunun hatırı kalmasın olayıyla iş farklı bir boyuta döndü. Benim serzenişim biraz da o yüzden. Önce hiç müracaat etmeyip son dakika katılanlar, son dakika şu da olsun bu da olsun diye eklemeler oldu ve dolayısıyla sayı kabardı.

8. Bienalin bir sloganı vardı “Senin Bir Sanatın Var”. Manalı bir slogan. Siz ne hissettiniz, ne anlıyorsunuz bundan?

Ayşe Kiraz: Yani şu anda ben tabi kendi ilgilendiğim sanat dalı olarak, herkes yaptığı işte yapabildiğinin eniyisini bienale uygulayarak yapabilmeli diye düşündüm. Ama ilk çıkış konuları Ehl-i Hiref’ti. Sonra biraz bunun da değişime uğradığını düşünüyorum. Ana sanat dalım tezhip olmasına rağmen Katı’ ağırlıklı olarak uğraştığım sanat dalı şu anda. Bienal için yapabildiğim en iyisini tasarlamayı düşünmüştüm.

9. Size göre geleneksel sanatların temsili Türkiye’de problemlili mi?

Ayşe Kiraz: Yani bir kısım temsil edebiliyor, bir kısım edemiyor. Bu işi gerçekten layıkıyla yapan kişiler de var ancak bu usta çırak ilişkisi içinde yıllar alabiliyor. Bir edep, terbiye bu sanatın olmazsa olmazı. Ben oldum deme hakkımız yok. Ama şu anda pek çok kişi iki çizgi öğrenerek, ben oldum diyebiliyor.

10. Size göre geleneksel sanatlar çağdaş sanatla buluşabilir mi? “Uçun” denmişti size. Uçulabilir mi?

Ayşe Kiraz: Çok uçulamaz açıkçası ama klasiği bozmadan, özünü koruyarak farklı tasarımlar tabiki yapılabilir. Bahsettiğim gibi, biz daha sonra Bienal’e medrese olarak katıldık ve bir çok sanat dalının birleştiği bir sürü proje sunduk. Hepsi kabul edilmedi. Çok daha farklı iki-üç proje oluşturmuştuk. Kendi

bünyemizde hocalar olarak toplantılar yaptık. Hepimizin bir arada çalışabileceği projeler sunduk, onlar da kabul edilmedi. Medrese olarak bize bu görev verildiğinde bize Ekim ayıydı. Şubat ayında teslim edilecekti. En sonunda artık onlar bize dediler size bank vereceğiz, bankları yapacaksınız. Ben medresedeki en iyi öğrencilerimle katılmak istedim. Ekip olarak çalıştık, 3 öğrencimle beraber. Desen tasarımı bana aitti ancak işlemeyi hepimiz birlikte yaptık. Önce bütün bankların aynı yerde sergileneceği söylendi. Sonrasında farklı mekanlarda sergileme yapılacağı belirtildi. Mekan ve sergi tarihi verdiler. Bankları alırken hassasiyet göstermediler. Seramik hocamızın yaptığı bank düştü, kırıldı. Yeniden yapıldı. Sonra dediler ki Nisan'ın 8'inde sergi açılışı var. Nerede açılacağı belli değil. Medreseyi arıyorum, açılış var mı diye. Kurum bile bilgilendirilmiyor. Sonra ertelendi, yine zaman ve mekan veremiyorlar. Sonrasında bankların Nuruosmaniye Camii'nin altında restore edilip açılan sarnıçta, İslam Eserleri Müzesi'nde, Topkapı Sarayı'nda, Balat' ta restore edilen bir hamamda, Gülhane parkında ve Sirkeci Garı'nda sergileneceği bildirildi. Benim öğrencilerimle yaptığımız bank sirkeci garında sergilendi. Mesela gara getirdiler, oraya öylesine koydular. Bir başka katılımcının çalışmasını bir platform üstüne koydular. Yani herkese eşit hassasiyet gösterilmedi. İnsanlar geliyor oturuyor üzerine. Açılış yapılacak, oturmayın diyoruz. İnsanlar niye oturmamalım diyor. Orada ciddi bir emek var. Benim için olumsuz tarafları bunlar. Herkese eşit hassasiyet gösterilmedi. Bize bir sergi açılış günümüz bile net olarak bildirilmedi. Devamlı değişen mekan ve tarihler yüzünden emeği geçen öğrencilerim açılışta bulunamadı.

11. Bir organizasyon problemi olmuş.

Ayşe Kiraz: O ciddi boyuttaydı. Genel açılış tarihi de devamlı ertelendi. En son Mart ayında oldu Cumhurbaşkanı'nın katılımıyla açılış yapıldı.

12. İkincisi gerçekleşecek mi? Duyumunuz var mı?

Ayşe Kiraz: Pandemiden dolayı biraz çevreyle irtibatım kesilmiş durumda. Medreseyle görüştüğümde ben tekrar kurum olarak müracaat edilirse sonuna kadar yanlarında olduğumu belirttim. Ama şahsi olarak müracaatta bulunmadım. Bienal organizasyonundan mail geldi. Gelen mailde son başvuru tarihi 20 Nisan idi sanırım başvuru tarihi sonra tekrar uzatmışlar. Bu sene konu “Çerçeve” İçten ve dıştan bakış. Çerçeve içinden veya dışından bakış olarak belirlenmiş.

13. Bu arada bir önceki Bienal’de sergilenen işleriniz nerede?

Ayşe Kiraz: Akıbetini bilmiyoruz. Bir tanesi bir galeride galiba bildiğimiz kadarıyla. Biri Topkapı Sarayı’nda diye duydum. Ebru yapan arkadaşımızinki İslam Eserleri’nde kalmıştı.

14. Peki sözleşme imzalamış mıydınız bu konuda?

Ayşe Kiraz: O aşamalarını bizim kurum idaremiz gerçekleştirdiği için o konularda bilgimiz yok. Bir de bu tip şeyleri çok öne çıkaran bir insan değilim. Hatta benim öğrencilerim de soruyor, hocam nerede bunlar diye.

APPENDIX 4: INTERVIEW WITH PROF. DR. HALİL AKDENİZ, IŞIK UNIVERSITY

Ayşe Koşak: “Muhafazakar Sanat” ile ilgili düşüncelerinizi alabilir miyim? Sanatın muhafazakarı olur mu? Ayrıca Almanya’da Kültür Müşavirliği göreviniz olmuştu. Bu konuya kültür politikaları bağlamında nasıl yaklaşıyorsunuz?

Prof. Dr. Halil Akdeniz: Toplumlar kendilerini tarihleri, kültür ve sanatlarıyla var ederler ve bu değerleri kültür politikaları, eğitim kurumları, müzeler ve değerli sanat koleksiyonları gibi kurumları ile yaşatırlar. Maalesef bizim gibi ülkelerde bu kültür politikalarının yönü ve odağı zaman zaman iktidarlara ve yönetimlere göre değişebilmektedir. İşte içinde bulunduğumuz dönemin kültür politikalarında biraz bunun sıkıntısını yaşar gibiyiz. Halbuki günümüzün globalleşen dünyasında kültür ve sanatın ülkelerin ve toplumların hem kendi sosyal ve kültürel yaşamlarında hem de uluslararası ilişkilerde çok önemli yeri var. Artık günümüzde kültür ve sanat, ülkelerarası ilişkilerde hem ülkelerin prestiji hem de siyasetin, ekonominin ve politikaların lokomotifine haline gelmiştir. Ülkeler bugün geçmişlerinin kültür ve sanat hazineleri ile birlikte uluslararası arenada çağdaş yaratı düzeyleri ve çağdaş sanatlarıyla yer alabilmektedirler. Geçmişteki sanat hazinelerimizin ve zenginliğimizin hepimizin başı üstünde yeri vardır, ancak bunun, bu zenginliği ileriye taşıyabilecek, üstüne çağdaş eserlerle çağdaş yaratı düzeyi ortaya koyabildiğimiz sürece bir anlamı vardır. Röportajımız konusu olan muhafazakarlık kavramı; geleneksel sosyal etmenlerin muhafaza edilmesini destekleyen politik ve sosyal felsefe olarak görülmektedir. Yani bir anlamda var olan kazanımları ve değerleri koruma gibi olumlu bir yanı da vardır. Ancak bugünkü uygulamalarda karşımıza çıkan birçok etkinliklerde gördüğümüz gibi, geçmişin kültürel zenginliklerine sahip çıkmama, perspektifi geçmişe yönelik bir gericilik ve tutuculuk anlayışında olmamalıdır. Geçmişle gelecek hiçbir zaman bir yarışa sokulmamalı ve sokulamaz da. Dolayısıyla yapılan etkinlikler şu an ülkemizde yaşanan durum gibi zihniyetler arası bir *'ön kapma'* yarışına dönüşmemelidir. Gelecek ve toplumların geleceği her zaman çağdaş dünyanın düşünce ve yaratı düzeyinde yer alması ya da yerlabilmesi ile mümkün olacaktır. Bu da devletlerin ve toplumların geleceğe yönelik kültür politikaları, öngörülleri ve önceliklerinin olmasını gerekli kılmaktadır.

Günümüzde artık hem düşünce özgürlüğü bağlamında, zihniyet farklılıkları hem de sanat alanında değişik bakış açıları, çok geniş ifade biçimleri ve açılımlarıyla sanatsal üretim, zenginliği ile birlikte aynı zamanda bir değer karmaşası ve kaosa da neden olabilmektedir.

Çağımızın en büyük sanat eleştirmenlerinden Amerikalı sanat tarihi ve felsefe profesörü Donald Kuspit, Türkçeye de çevrilen *Sanatın Sonu* kitabında 20.yy'ın sonu itibariyle sanat ortamında yaşanan karmaşalara ilişkin çok net bazı eleştiri ve uyarılarda bulunmuştur. Söyledikleri bugün fazlasıyla aynen ülkemiz için de geçerlidir. Kuspit'in saptaması; ben kendi kelimelerimle söylersem mealen şöyle; içinde bulunduğumuz dönemde artık her şey sanat olarak kabul görmekte ve sanat olabilmektedir *ancak haddini bilmek kaydıyla...* diye bir ifadesi vardır.

Bilmem herhalde bu eleştiriye doğru ve iyi okumak gerekiyor. Daha açık söylersek; etkinliklerin arkasındaki zihniyet ve 'ön kapma' yarışı/yarışları doğru okunduğunda bugün ülkemizin kültür ve sanat ortamında yaşananlara denk düşüyor görünüyor.

APPENDIX 5: INTERVIEW WITH NADİDE AKDENİZ, CONTEMPORARY ARTIST

Ayşe Koşak: 2012 yılında Cumhurbaşkanı Genel Sekreteri Mustafa İsen "Muhafazakar kesimin nasıl bir demokrasi anlayışı varsa, muhafazakar demokrasi diye bir şeyden bahsedebiliyorsak, o zaman 'muhafazakar estetik' ve 'muhafazakar sanat' diye bir şeyden de bahsetmek, bunun normlarını ve yapısını oluşturmak gibi bir yükümlülük içindeyiz." diye bir açıklamada bulundu. Sizce "muhafazakar sanat" diye bir şey var mı veya bir başka deyişle sanatın muhafazakarı olur mu?

Nadide Akdeniz: Muhafaza sözcüğü dilimize Farsça'dan geçmiştir. Muhafazakar da hiçbir şeyi değiştirmek istemeyen, geçmişe bağlı, tutucu anlamındadır. Sorudaki söyleme gelince; toplumu muhafazakar olan ve muhafazakar olmayan şeklinde ikiye ayırmayı doğru bulmuyorum. Kişiler özel yaşamlarında kendi seçimleri ile muhafazakar bir anlayışa sahip olup, muhafazakar bir yaşam sürebilirler hatta bu anlayışla eserler ortaya koyabilirler. Ancak geçmişte de görüldüğü gibi dışarıdan bir otorite tarafından ya da siyaset tarafından baskılar, yönlendirmeler, tarifler, örnek göstermeler söz konusu olduğunda, özgün olmayan, klişe, tarif üzerine zorlanmış, formal işler ortaya çıkmış ve zamana yenik düşmüş, ancak döneme ait, dönemsel olarak kalmış, evrensel çizginin uzağına düşmüşlerdir. Sanatçı her dönemde ve her zaman ait olduğu toplumun baskısı ve etkisi altında olduğu kadar tarihsel geçmişinin de etkisi altındadır ve bütün çabası bunları aşmak, kendinden önceye benzememek, yeni ve zamanına ait evrensel ve özgün olana ulaşmaktır. Sanat yapmak son derece kişisel ve psikolojik bir yaratma süreci olup, oldukça sancılı bir iştir. Bu nedenlerle gerçek sanat eseri özgür, baskısız bir ortamda serpilip kişilik bulabilir.

2. Muhafazakar sanat tartışmalarının akabinde hükümet nezdinde “yerli ve milli” sanat ve sanatçılardan, “yerli ve milli” değerlerden bahsedilmeye başlandı. Destek olunan, ödül verilen kişilerden bazıları: Orhan Gencebay (şarkıcı), Hülya Koçyiğit (oyuncu), Bülent Ersoy (şarkıcı), Semih Kaplanoğlu (yönetmen), Diriliş Ertuğrul (dizi), Payitaht Abdulhamid (dizi), İskender Pala (edebiyat), Ethnospor Konfederasyonunun kurulması (spor), Plastik sanatlarda da özel olarak Cumhurbaşkanlığı Özel Ödülü verilen isimler; Devrim Erbil (resim), Ergin İnan (resim), Ali Toy (hat), Hüseyin Kutlu (hat), İzzet Keribar (fotoğraf) gibi. Sizce “yerli ve milli” sanat / sanatçı nedir veya "yerli ve milli" sanatçı olur mu?

Nadide Akdeniz: Sanatçı içinde yaşadığı toplumun bir ürünüdür ve topluma ait değerler kaçınılmaz olarak eserlerine yansır. Sanatçı kişisel geçmişinden, tarihinden, gelenek ve göreneklerden kaçamadığı gibi yoğun bir şekilde etkileri altındadır ama sanatçı dünyaya da aittir. Sanat evrensel bir dildir. Bu nedenle de yabancı bir sanatçının işlerine baktığımızda ait olduğu kültüre dair izleri, hemen ayırt edebiliriz. “Yöresellik ve millilik” sanatçıyı dar alana sıkıştırır. Yerli ve milli söylemi bir formül ve bir kalıp olarak oldukça zorlayıcı görünüyor.

3. Soru: “Senin Bir Sanatın var” sloganıyla, 31 Mart 2018’de Ayasofya’da düzenlenen açılışla Yeditepe Bienali gerçekleştirildi. Cumhurbaşkanlığı himâyesinde, Fatih Belediyesi ve Klasik Türk Sanatları Vakfı işbirliğinde ve pek çok farklı şirket ve kurumun sponsorluğunda 31 Mart - 15 Mayıs 2018 tarihleri arasında gerçekleşen Yeditepe Bienali kapsamında tarihi yarımada da yer alan 30’a yakın mekânda 600’ün üzerinde sanatçının 3000’e yakın eseri bir araya getirildi. (<http://www.yeditepebienali.com/tr/2018>) Öncelikle bu bienalden haberdar oldunuz mu? Hükümetin halka seslendiği “Senin Bir Sanatın Var” sloganı sizin için ne ifade ediyor? Geleneksel sanatların bienali olur mu? Geleneksel sanatlar çağdaşla birleşebilir mi? 3.000 eserin yer aldığı söylenen bu bienali nasıl değerlendirirsiniz?

Nadide Akdeniz: Yeditepe Bienali siyasetin baskın rol aldığı bir organizasyon olarak görünüyor. Adı geçen 3000 eseri görmediğim için yorum yapmak zorlaşsa da 'geleneksel sanattan' kasıt klasik minyatür sanatı, hat sanatı, hatta ebru sanatı ise üzerinde konuşulabilir. Klasik minyatür sanatı sadece Osmanlı toplumuna ve İslam dünyasına ait olmayıp, Avrupa’dan Uzak doğuya geniş bir coğrafyada üretilmiş yüksek estetik değerlere sahip, yoğun içerikli, hayranlık uyandırıcı zamanını yaşamış, işlevini yitirmiş ve müzelerde, kitaplarda, arşivlerde ulaşabileceğimiz geçmişe ait sıra dışı bir sanat türüdür. Bugün hala bazı ülkelerde minyatür sanatı eğitimi veren okullar olduğunu biliyoruz. Klasik minyatür

sanatının siyaset eliyle ideolojik bir tavırla yeniden canlandırılmak istenmesi, halen yapılmakta olan tarihi minyatürlerin replikalarının, kopyalarının, benzerlerinin yapılıp daha da çoğalmasına neden olacaktır. Oysa sanatçılar bu gün kendi özgür iradeleriyle minyatür sanatından etkilenip kendi sanat anlayışları içinde minyatürleri yeniden yorumlayıp özgün ve çağdaş işler üretebilirler. Hatta tam da bu sırada 2020’de Pera Müzesi’nde açılan ‘minyatür 2.0’ sergisi bu duruma iyi bir örnek olabilir. Bu sergide çok farklı ülkelerden, çok farklı kültürlerden sanatçıların çok farklı yorumlarını gördüğümüzde bu gün içinde yaşadığımız modern zamanlarda, minyatürlerden etkilenerek yeni ve modern eserler çıkarmak için siyasetin yönlendirmesine hiç de gerek kalmadığını görebiliriz.

4. Soru: Recep Tayyip Erdoğan’ın Yeditepe Bienali’nin açılış konuşmasında söylediği “Millet olarak elimizdeki kıymetini bilmiyoruz. Ne kendimize ne de yurtdışına bu güzellikleri layıkıyla tanıtabiliyoruz. Tabi buradaki temel sıkıntının ülkemize bir dönem hakim olan zihniyet olduğunun farkındayız. Türkiye uzun yıllar sanat, kültür ve tarih deyince sadece belli bir dönemi ve belli bir kalıbı esas alan kısır ve dar bir bakış açısının esiri olmuştur. Bizanstan çok bizansçı, batıdan ziyade batıcı ama her halükarda milletin değerleriyle kavgalı bu zihniyet ecdadın bize bıraktığı mirasın kıymetini de ne yazık ki bilememiştir. Tarihi camilerin bir kısmı müzeye - aynen burası gibi- bir kısmı depoya, maalesef bir kısmı da ahıra çevrilmiştir.” sözleriyle ilgili ne söylemek isterdiniz? Kültürde iktidar olmadıklarını açıkça belirten AKP’nin bu söylemlerini nasıl değerlendiriyorsunuz?

Nadide Akdeniz: Bu çok ağır, çok suçlayıcı ve çok bölücü bir söylem. Bahsedilen yer Ayasofya. Ayasofya iki büyük inanca hizmet etmiş hem mimari açıdan hem içindeki eserler bakımından ve çok kıymetli "dünyaya ait" eşsiz bir yapıt. Müze olmayı hak ediyor.

5. Soru: Aynı konuşmada Recep Tayyip Erdoğan: “Ülkemizde son 15 yılda, diğer bir çok alanda olduğu gibi kültür ve sanat alanında da tabuları yıktık. Paradigmayı değiştirdik. En büyük fiziki mekana sahip çıkma dönemi iktidarımız döneminde olmuştur. Onlar yıktılar, biz yaptık. Hala da onlar yıkmanın gayretinde biz yapmanın derdindeyiz. Şimdi Atatürk Kültür Merkezini Türkiye’nin bir numaralı büyük opera binası olarak yapıyoruz. Bunu da biliyorsunuz çok bağırdı çağırdı o geziciler. İstedığınız kadar bağırın. Çatlayın patlayın. Bak yıktık ve inşallah kısa zamanda da orada dünyada sayılı muhteşem bir opera binasını çok amaçlı olarak yapıyoruz.” Bu “ihya (yeniden diriltme) ve inşa” temelli söylemle ilgili ne söylemek isterdiniz?

Nadide Akdeniz: Geçmişini anabilirsiniz, geçmişe hayranlık duyabilirsiniz, geçmişle gurur duyabilirsiniz ama geçmiş tarihte, arkada kalmıştır. Doğanın, yaşamın kuralı değişmektedir. Sanatçı hep değişiklik ve yenilik arar ve geçmişten etkilense de geleceğe bakar. Benzersiz olmak arayışındadır ve tam da bu yüzden her dönem statüko ile sürekli çatışır ve yadırganır. Muhafazakarlık bile zaman içinde şekil olarak, anlam olarak, yaşam biçimi ve pratikler olarak, kaçınılmaz bir şekilde değişiklik geçirmiştir. Bu durum hiç de gözardı edilemez.

APPENDIX 6: VISUAL RECORDS FROM YEDITEPE BIENNIAL



Photo 1. The Yeditepe Biennial, Hagia Sophia, © Ayşe Koşak



Photo 2. The Yeditepe Biennial, Hagia Sophia, © Ayşe Koşak



Photo 3. The Yeditepe Biennial, The Planets Covered with Water Marbling Paper,
Nuruosmaniye Mosque Cellar, © Ayşe Koşak



Photo 4. The Yeditepe Biennial, “Don’t Sit! Look at the Art” Sirkeci Station,
© Ayşe Koşak



Photo 5. The Yeditepe Biennial, “Don’t Sit! Look at the Art”, © Ayşe Koşak

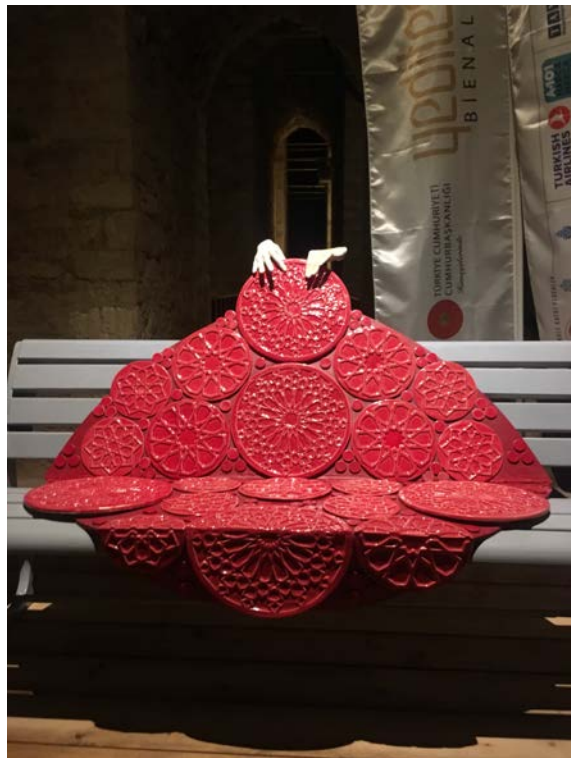


Photo 6. The Yeditepe Biennial, “Don’t Sit! Look at the Art”, © Ayşe Koşak



Photo 7. The Yeditepe Biennial, Küçük Mustafa Paşa Hammam,
© Ayşe Koşak



Photo 8. The Yeditepe Biennial, Küçük Mustafa Paşa Hamam, © Ayşe Koşak



Photo 9. The Yeditepe Biennial, Küçük Mustafa Paşa Hammam,
© Ayşe Koşak



Photo 10. The Yeditepe Biennial, The Grand Bazar, Water marbling Kites,
© Ayşe Koşak



Photo 11. The Yeditepe Biennial, Nuruosmaniye Mosque Cellar,
© Ayşe Koşak



Photo 12. The Yeditepe Biennial, © Ayşe Koşak



Photo 13. The Yeditepe Biennial, © Ayşe Koşak



Photo 14. The Yeditepe Biennial, © Ayşe Koşak

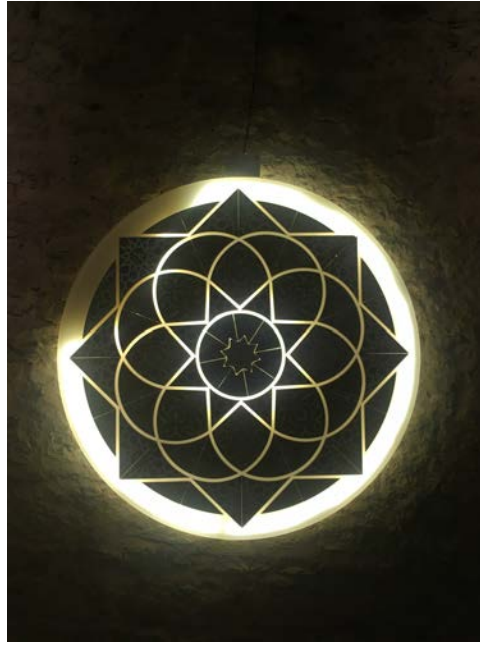


Photo 15. The Yeditepe Biennial, © Ayşe Koşak



Photo 16. The Yeditepe Biennial, Nuruosmaniye Mosque Cellar,
© Ayşe Koşak



Photo 17. The Yeditepe Biennial, (It can be the original version of the visual used in the Biennial logo) © Ayşe Koşak



Photo 18. The Yeditepe Biennial, Hagia Sophia, © Ayşe Koşak



Photo 19. The Yeditepe Biennial, Archeological Museum, © Ayşe Koşak



Photo 20. The Yeditepe Biennial, © Ayşe Koşak



Photo 21. The Yeditepe Biennial, © Ayşe Koşak



Photo 22. The Yeditepe Biennial, “Don’t Sit! Look at the Art”, © Ayşe Koşak



Photo 23. The Yeditepe Biennial, © Ayşe Koşak



Photo 24. The Yeditepe Biennial, Sirkeci Train Station, © Ayşe Koşak



Photo 25. The Yeditepe Biennial, Gülhane, © Ayşe Koşak



Photo 26. The Yeditepe Biennial, Gülhane, © Ayşe Koşak



Photo 27. The Yeditepe Biennial, Gülhane, © Ayşe Koşak



Photo 28. The Yeditepe Biennial, Gülhane, © Ayşe Koşak

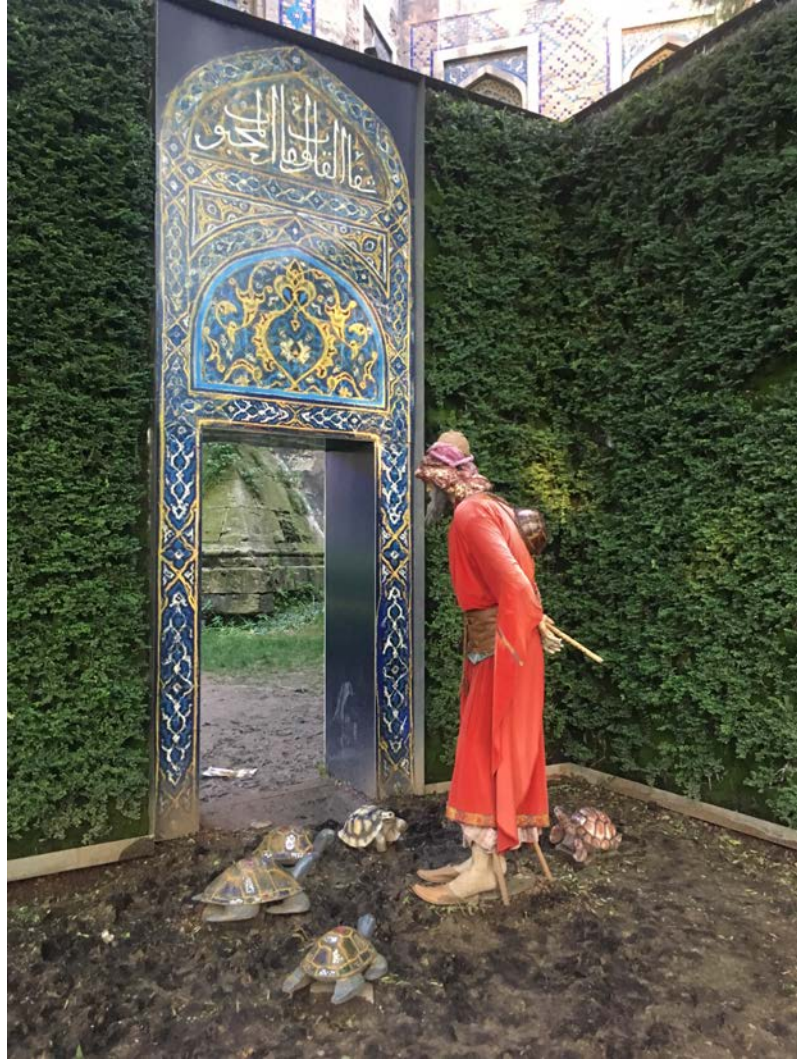


Photo 29. The Yeditepe Biennial, Gülhane, © Ayşe Koşak