

NON-PROFIT SPACES IN ISTANBUL ART SCENE

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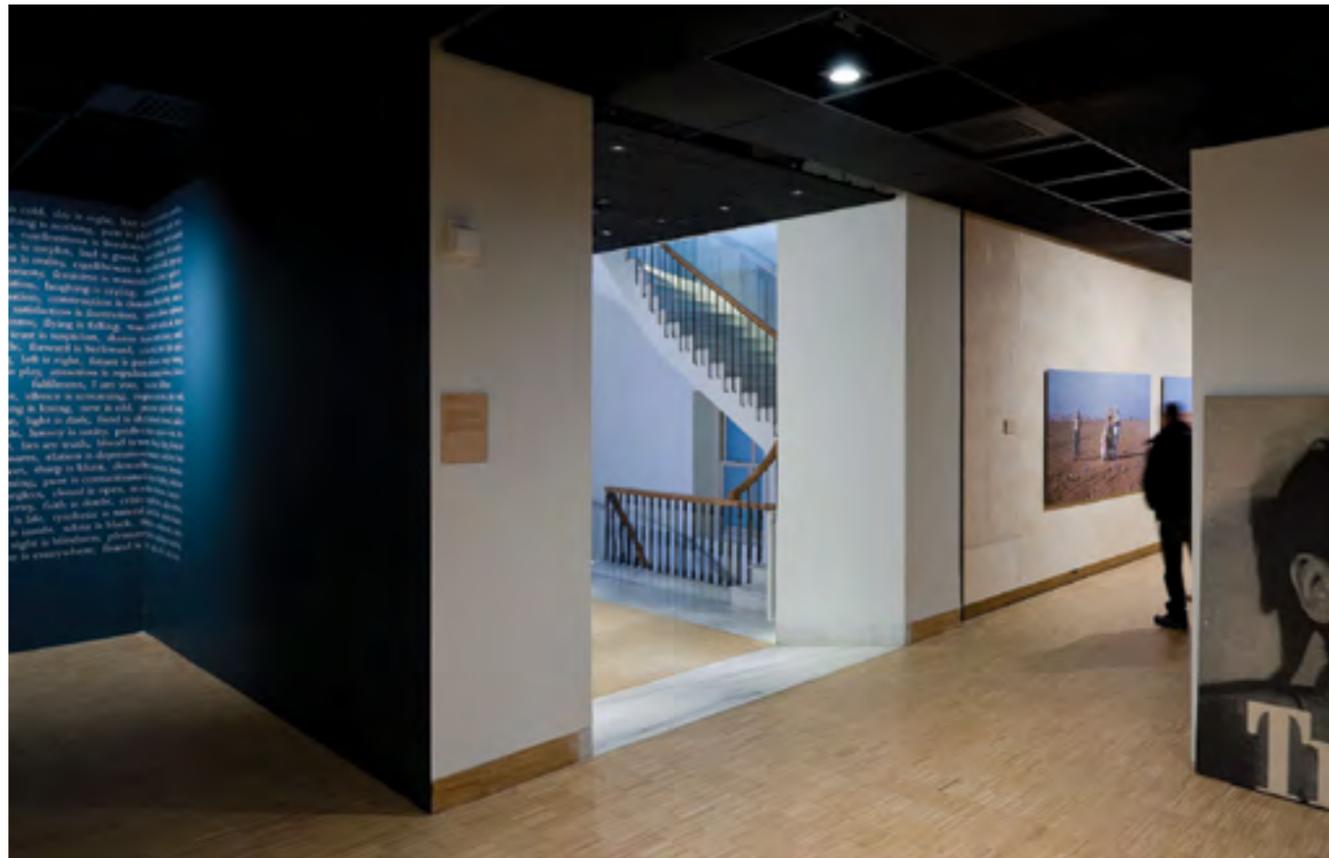
Istanbul presents a rare case not only in the region but also in global scale with its numerous non-profit art spaces located in Beyoğlu district, the cultural and artistic hub of the city. Majority of these institutions are on Istiklal Street and in close proximity to each other. From Istanbul's famous Taksim Square down to the Galata neighborhood which is situated at the bottom of the winding alleys that branch out at the lower end of the Istiklal Street, they silently reveal themselves before the keen eyes inviting for a break from the routine hubbub of the area. The big five among them are positioned in historical buildings, thus converting cultural heritage into shrines that celebrate the art of today.

All of them have one thing in common. They exhibit contemporary art. Four of them are funded by giant industrial or financial corporations, the rest are either individual enterprises or supported by foundations. According to

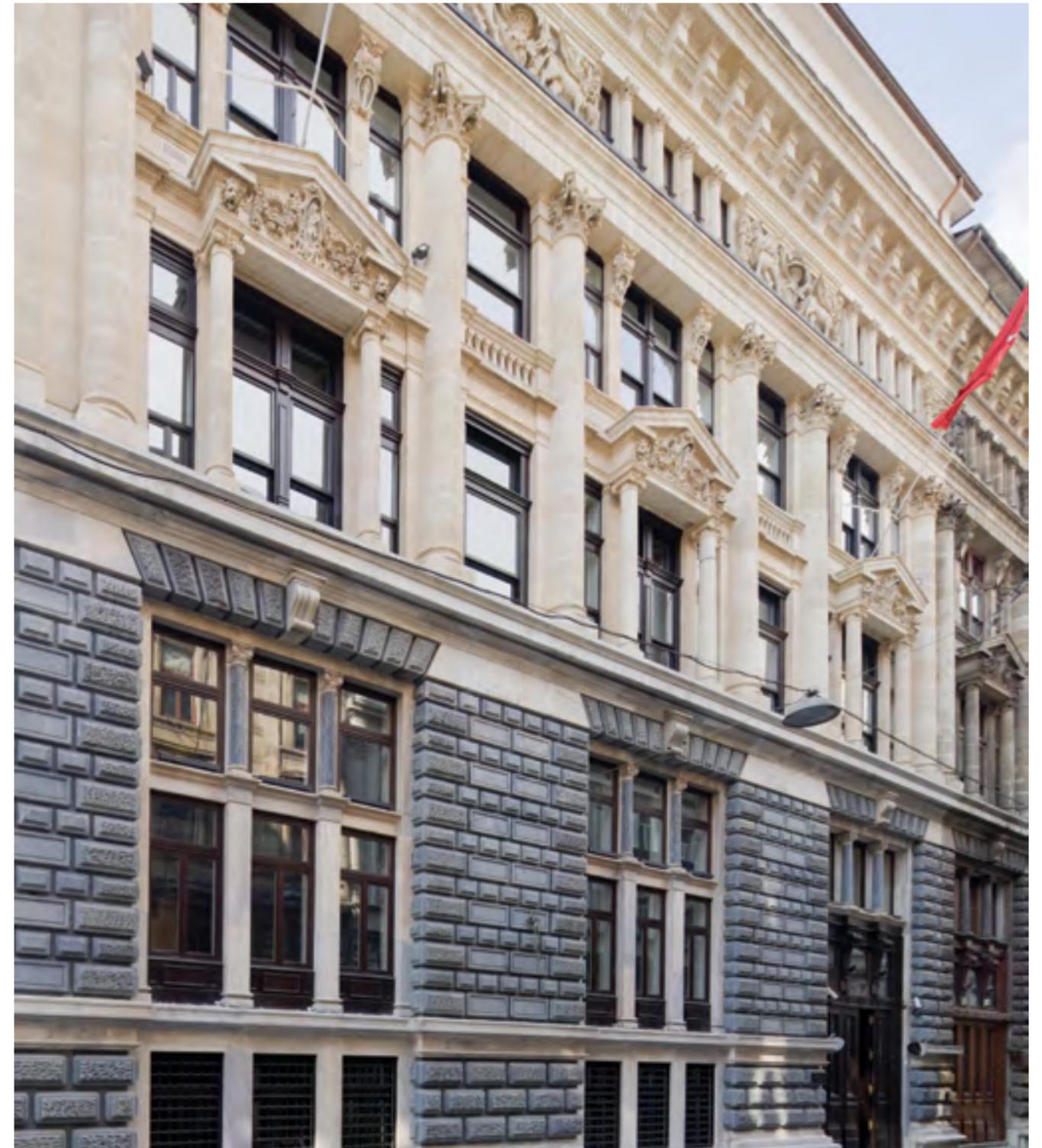
Akbank Art Director Derya Biçali, it is all about social responsibility. Istanbul's non-profit art spaces are diverse in their main operations. Some of them prioritize academic research, some education of children, while others set supporting emerging artists as a priority. On the whole, the local art scene and art lovers owes much to these institutions that have carried on vigorously over decades. This article is an attempt to summarize their activities in their diversities, as well as an act of gratitude.

SALT RESEARCH | WWW.SALTONLINE.ORG

In the back ground of Salt Research lies Platform Garanti Contemporary Art Center, which was founded in 2001 by Vasif Kortun with support of Garanti Bank and soon with inclusion of the Ottoman Bank in its funders, once the latter was acquired by the former.



SALT Beyoğlu Exhibition hall. Photo by Iwan Baan



Front view of SALT Galata. Photo by Iwan Baan

In 2008 Platform Garanti's original İstiklal Street venue and the former Ottoman Bank Headquarters in Beyoğlu's Galata neighborhood, both went under major renovations in order to combine elements of Platform's previous activities with two other cultural entities: Garanti Gallery and the Ottoman Bank Archives and Research Centre under the common name: SALT. SALT is a public company operating under Garanti Kültür Inc. SALT differentiates itself from its fellow non-profit art spaces by its research and archive studies into contemporary art, architecture, design, urbanism, and social and economic histories to make them available for researchers' and public use. The exhibitions, talks and similar art events it has hosted throughout are a byproduct of its diversified research program. Salt's archive includes the Ottoman Bank archives it has inherited after the merger, and design and architecture archives the institution has collected in the last three years. Salt recently kicked off its new project on artist archives, within the scope of which it gathered collect works of Turkish

multimedia artist Kutlug Ataman in its online database. The project will continue with other artists and it is being shared via our website.

SALT's activities are distributed between these two landmark buildings. SALT Beyoğlu on the İstiklal Street, and SALT Galata in the former 19th century Imperial Ottoman Bank headquarters designed by Alexandre Vallaur. While SALT Beyoğlu is allocated for talks, screenings and large scale exhibitions; SALT Galata houses the public library and archive with spaces dedicated to research, workshops, also with an exhibition and conference hall.

AKBANK ART | WWW.AKBANKSANAT.COM

Akbank Art has supported contemporary art activities in Turkey since its foundation in 1993 and has hosted many highly acclaimed events in visual arts, music, theater and dance. Powered by one of Turkey's strongest banks, Akbank Art has established a permanent role in the cultural and artistic life



Borusan Music House exhibition hall.



Front view of Borusan Music House.

in Istanbul as its first non-profit art space.

Located on the Istiklal Street, Akbank Art hosts exhibitions, concerts, theatre and workshop activities, dance shows, panels, and film screenings.

"Our difference from our peers is our diversity," Director Derja Biqali says. "We are active in almost all fields of art and in all these fields our primary aim is to support young artists by providing them visibility and introducing the local audiences with select examples from the international arena at affordable ticket prices and mostly with no price at all. We can say that ours is a social responsibility project."

Akbank has also been the main sponsor of Istanbul Film Festival and Contemporary Istanbul, Turkey's ultimate contemporary art fair.

Akbank Art hosts six exhibitions every year. These shows are exhibited on the 1st Floor. The Multi-purpose Hall is located on the 2nd Floor. This hall has a capacity of 125 persons where theater, live concerts, panels, colloquium, slide shows, conferences and DVD shows are performed. On the 3rd floor, there is a lithography and serigraphy hall which is offered to artists on certain days of the week for free to support them in their artistic creation processes. The 4th floor is allocated for the music listening room, the library and a café. The Music Listening Room has an archive of 1892 CD's including the best examples of the classical, jazz and film musics. The library is open to public and focuses on contemporary art publications. "We cannot say that we have many books but we have chief sources of reference in our collection," Biqali says.

Akbank Art's Library and Music Listening Room are open everyday between 2 pm and 7 pm, except for Sundays and Mondays. On the 6th floor there is the dance studio which provides setting for various activities such as workshops, open rehearsals, colloquium, video shows and dance performances. "Our greatest pride is our art workshops for children. We own the copyright of Sarkis Watercolour Workop together with a few foreign museums, which teaches the children the special watercolour painting style of the famous Turkish painter, but also to be patient and to have an eye on details. We are attaching utmost importance to take an active role in development of a non-biased approach to art in children. Other institutions are welcome to host this workshop after requesting our permission," she says. Akbank Art's recent novelty in its contribution to contemporary art scene is the Akbank Sanat International Curator Competition, which announced its first selection in January. Developed and coordinated by Basak Senova, the competition is intended to provide support for emerging curators, reinforce interest in curatorial practices, and encourage new projects in the field of contemporary art.

In its first year, The Akbank Sanat International Curator Competition received a large number of applications from over 100 curators of various nationalities. Mexican Alejandra Labastida named as the winner by the jury consisting of Jack Persekian (Director and Head Curator of The Palestinian Museum), Francis McKee (Director of CCA, Glasgow, tutor and research fellow at Glasgow School of Art), and Basak Senova (independent curator). Alejandra Labastida's proposal also realized as an exhibition that will run to April 30 at Akbank Art.

BORUSAN ARTCENTER | WWW.ARTCENTERISTANBUL.ORG

ArtCenter/Istanbul is a contemporary arts venture by Borusan Culture and Arts that initiated in 2008. Powered by Borusan Holding, Borusan Center for Culture and Arts (BKS) has collaborated to the development of local music scene for a long time through Borusan Istanbul Philharmonic Orchestra, the Borusan Chamber Orchestra, the Borusan String Quartet, the Borusan Children's Choir and the Music Library.

Since 2008 it has been active in development of the local art scene via ArtCenter which is a non-profit programme that provides young and promising artists with studio spaces under favorable conditions during the early stages of their careers. Located in a side alley of the Istiklal Street, the programme offers its participants to hold a working space at the heart of Istanbul's art scene. "We are providing studios to ten artists at one go. Our criteria for application is not to be over age 35 and to have education in fine arts at least in undergraduate degree. The programme lasts for two years. In this span of time the participants are expected to spend 20 hours in a week working in the studio. We are opening a group show for them each year in February, totaling two group shows," Director Ipek Yeqinsu says. The participating artists are invited by open call and selected by an international jury consisting curators and the directors of similar institutions from Turkey or abroad and art critics. ArtCenter is open to visitors from 4 pm to 8 pm every day except for Mondays, which contributes to the transformation of the contemporary artistic production stage into a component of the community's every day life, as well as to the creation of the awareness in individuals that everyone can establish a connection with the creative energy within. The program is also open to foreign participants but as the center only provides studio not housing it is mostly preferred by the locals.

"Among the artists we have hosted since 2008 some made a leap in their career and signed with prominent galleries, such as Bengu Karaduman, Ilgin Seymen, Merve Sendil, Nejat Sati, Engin Beyaz, Burak Bedenlier and Irem Tok. The acquaintances and networking they made here has been very useful for them," she says.

ArtCenter has no interference whatsoever in the artists' rights to sell their works during their participation to the program. "They are showcasing their works in the exhibitions we make for them and get noticed by the galleries or collectors. We are continuing to host them even when they sign a contract with a gallery," she says.

ArtCenter also aims at developing interdisciplinary dialogue between artists, galleries, curators, viewers and scholars through panel discussions, project meetings and workshops. "We are inviting art professionals or established artists for talks in the ArtCenter. We are hosting portfolio days during which they show their portfolios to prominent curators we invite and get their work reviewed by them. This both helps them to show themselves and their work, as well as it helps them to get their work evaluated by a professional view," Yeqinsu says. The group show of the ArtCenter artists takes place at Borusan Music House located on the Istiklal Street.



Depo, ARTER - space for art, Istanbul, outside view from the exhibition "You Are Still Here" by Mona Hatoum, 2012. Photo by Murat Germen

ARTER - SPACE FOR ART | WWW.ARTER.ORG.TR

An initiative of the Vehbi Koç Foundation (VKF), "ARTER - space for art," opened in May 2010. ARTER's programmes have a particular focus on encouraging production of art both nationally and internationally, as well as providing a platform of visibility for artistic practices especially in Turkey. ARTER offers artists a sustainable infrastructure for artistic production in terms of funding, exhibiting, promotion and publications, as well as support for educational activities. It is also providing an experimental and testing ground in preparation for the museum complex the Vehbi Koç Foundation envisions.

The ARTER building is situated on Istiklal Street. It was built in the 1910s by Petraki Meymaridis Efendi and its conversion into an exhibition space has been completed in September 2009. The renewed building has an exhibition area of 864 m² spread over four floors. The members of ARTER's executive board are Omer Koç (Chairman), Erdal Yıldırım (President of the VKF), Melih Fereli (Culture and Arts Advisor of the VKF), Bahattin Öztuncay (General Coordinator and Curator) and Emre Baykal (Exhibitions Director and Curator). Founded in 1969, the VKF began its activities in the arts with the Sadberk Hanım Museum, Turkey's first private museum. Since 2007, VKF has extended its activities to contemporary art. Among these are TANAS, a project space for contemporary art from Turkey, which was opened in Berlin in 2008; the "Adventure Istiklal" exhibition series held at Yapi Kredi Kazım Ta Kent Art Gallery, Istanbul, and the support provided to the publication of the artist monographs that accompany this series. The institutional contemporary art collection, funded and managed by the Vehbi Koç Foundation, has been instigated in 2007 by Omer Koç, an avid collector of contemporary art himself, with the objective of forming the backbone of a future contemporary art museum in Istanbul, currently in the process of planning. The foundation has long been the main sponsor of Istanbul Biennial.

ARTER has contributed greatly to the local art scene by exhibiting emerging local artists but also by bringing prominent foreign artists before the Istanbul audience. Last year, ARTER hosted Mona Hatoum, Berinde De Bruyckere, and a group show of Adel Abidin, Rosa Barba and Runa Islam curated by Basak Senova under the title "The Move." ARTER is currently hosting "Envy, Enmity, Embarrassment," a group exhibition curated by its artistic director Emre Baykal, which is comprised entirely of new productions by local artists.

DEPO | WWW.DEPOISTANBUL.NET

Depo is a space for critical debate and cultural exchange in the city center of Istanbul and the first initiative in Turkey to focus on regional collaborations among Turkey and countries in the Caucasus, the Middle East and the Balkans. Besides its artistic program composed of exhibitions and screenings, Depo addresses the socio-political implications of socially engaged art practices in the region and organizes conferences, workshops, lectures and panel discussions, and publishes an e-journal titled Red Thread. Depo aims to become a hub for the initiation and realization of regional projects and its activities are planned to provide artists, curators, cultural operators, academicians and intellectuals from the region the opportunity to engage with each other, to exchange ideas and experiences, and to develop collaborative works. Depo is located in a former tobacco warehouse (Tütün

Deposu) in Tophane, Istanbul - an old four-storey building with high ceilings and wooden floors. Until the 1950s the building was used as a tobacco warehouse and beginning with the 9th International Istanbul Biennial in 2005 it was occasionally used as an exhibition and project space. Between January and May 2008, renovation works had been carried out preserving the original features of the building. Since June 2008, the Depo team has been working in Tütün Deposu and the first exhibition of Depo was held in January 2009. The annex building was renovated in 2009 and was used for screenings and workshops with participation of the children from the neighborhood, as well as solo and group exhibitions. Since February 2012 the annex building is hosting Açık Radyo, an independent radio station. Film screenings and workshops with children continue in the main building. Depo is an initiative of Anadolu Kültür, a not-profit organization working in the field of culture. Since its establishment Anadolu Kültür has been a driving force in facilitating cross-cultural collaborations and circulating art through Anatolia. Depo functions as an alternative exhibition space to make artworks with little commercial value visible. It also hosts talks and seminars as well as performance shows. Very recently Depo made an open call for art projects to be exhibited at the nomadic The Visual Arts' Festival Damascus which Depo brings to Istanbul this year. The artworks are expected to be directed and/or produced by an artist or film maker originating from or living in the Arab world and Turkey, regardless of their current country of residence.

SMALLER SCALE ART INITIATIVES

Protocinema www.protocinema.org: Protocinema is an independent, non-profit art space operating in Istanbul and New York. Founded by Mari Spirito, the institution organizes exhibitions and educational programs and aims to create funds for production of large scale artworks.

Spot www.spotprojects.com: Spot is an art initiative founded by Zeynep Oz and Tansa Mermerci Eksioğlu offering art-oriented education programs and seminars. The initiative channels the proceeds of the seminars to funding artist projects.

PI ST. pist-org.blogspot.com: PI ST was established in 2006 by Didem Özbek and Osman Bozkurt, and it is a non-profit independent art space that focuses on talks and seminars on various aspects of art business with participation of sector professionals, carried out as part of its research and production residency program PIRPIR.

About the writer

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Depo exhibition hall.