

Those Who Transform Contemporary Arts

They are the ones who strive to create spaces of culture and art. Whether firmly rooted in the center of the public consciousness or lingering on the periphery, they traffic in the creative spirit beyond prescriptive or familiar practices. They produce, reimagine and subvert — not in pursuit of profit but of viability and independence. The engaging, inventive and bold cultural actors that hail from every corner of the country — from Istanbul to Izmir, Ankara to Diyarbakır and beyond — talk about how and why they have established and sustained such an inspiring movement in their cities.

THE MONITOR, Izmir

Nurşaç Sargon

This year finds the ever-unconventional city of Izmir as the center around which a diverse collective of independent art venues, each hosting a variety of exhibitions, performances and talks have been assembled. Nurşaç Sargon, the woman responsible for reaching out to video artists from both Turkey and abroad, details why this non-profit movement focused on this particular artistic medium. “I intensified my efforts around the medium because of the powerful visual language it contains and the direct interaction it creates with the viewer. Also, because video art has the potential to help independent art spaces overcome financial and technical challenges, and to further encourage the cooperation of other spaces, I decided to concentrate my work on video art.” After studying interior architecture, Nurşaç went on to earn a master’s degree from Istanbul Bilgi University in Cultural Management. Before deciding to return to her hometown of İzmir, she worked for Pilot Art Gallery as an artist representative. Once back home, she joined The Izmir Cultural Pla+form’s core staff. It was then that she found herself researching the dynamics and shifts that determine the course the city’s arts and culture scene. “If we look at today, we can see that the migration from Izmir to Istanbul and abroad which started towards the end of 1990s is reversing. As a result of this reverse flight of human

capital, we can observe that the art scene in Izmir is expanding and its substance is getting richer. The power of solidarity here made my job much easier while I was establishing The Monitor.” Even though the number of people in Izmir engaged in production of the arts is not insignificant, the cultural movements of students, viewers and artists are located on the periphery rather than the center, and this makes it more difficult for the arts to be followed. While the nomadic nature of The Monitor presents a solution to these obstacles, the themes it focuses on laterally develop its character at the same time. As such, the first exhibition opened in Basmane and Kültürpark, entitled “Another Cinema Exists,” revolved around circulation and movement. The video works of Halil Altındere and Nikolaj Bendix Skyum Larsen told the stories of refugees and migrants in both the Aegean and the Mediterranean, depicting the lands we normally deem to be safe and the incredible voyages people take to reach them. Luckily, The Monitor has been backed by a variety of public and private institutions in Izmir and upcoming events will be supported by Turkish and European art institutions and funded in cooperation with Spaces of Culture. “Forgive Me, I Can Speak No Louder,” the contemplative exhibition on climate change, will take place in the old Austro-Turkish Tobacco Warehouse September 15-30, where the work of artist Ali Kazma and the Slovenian duo Plateauresidue can be viewed.