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Telefax Message from Istanbul Foundation for Culture and Arts  
Third International Istanbul Biennial

Attention: Guy Tosatto  
From: Vasif Kortun

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Address: Yıldız Kültür ve Sanat Merkezi- Beşiktaş 80700- Istanbul- TURKEY  
Tel: (90 1) 260 45 33 - 260 90 72 - 261 32 94 - 258 74 98 - 258 74 99  
Tlx: 26687 iksv-tr Fax: (90 1) 261 88 23 - 258 43 07

Dear Guy:

I have a few points that I want to bring into your attention.

Although at the sake of repeating, I would once again like to say that, I am on a long road as some other people are, to put my own home town back on the geography again. The museum project was exactly the first step of that, and no matter what anybody says, the necessity of demonstrating that an exhibition, a good exhibition nevertheless, can be organized and done here too.

Using the historical town has several problems. The first of those is that it is first and foremost touristic. The old city is wonderful and beautiful, but it is precisely the area of display and marketing. It has become as a site nothing more than a commodity, a 'vitrine' for exchange. It is an institution of history. Tourists come there, look at history, get into a time lapse and leave.

The town itself is not solely the old city, and it is not merely Constantinople. The town is the present it is the today, which in itself both carries the past and indicates the future. I am, as an Istanbulite, tired of the marketable history. I live in 1992. The town also lives in 1992. It is not merely a historical passage.

Furthermore, I see little difference between a museum and a historical site if the building in question is not recovered, rediscovered and thought over by the artists. The cistern already had a bad exhibition there, it has already become an institutional site as any. As you well know such spaces have been used so many times, it is not like it is a sudden, brand new concept.

There is on the other hand, many secret, hidden, scary and beautiful buildings and sites around the town. They are more remote in terms of daily circulation, but the search in itself is a process and a part of also the exhibition. This I think is the more interesting thing to do. What otherwise is the significance of producing the work?

I do not want to regard Christian as one of those 'Flying Artists' hopping from one airport to another doing one work here and another there in a historical site or a museum. That approach is too facile. To do a more significant work here in a real space (different) would take a hell of a long time, so I do think it is much better to stick with the original ideas of exhibiting in the museum only.



Should Christian like to do another work in another site, he should do so after the Biennial, as it should be done, and I would be willing to help with the organization of the process. But if he wants to use the cistern at the same time, that exhibition could be organized outside the frame of the Biennial. This is for two reasons, the first is that I can not possibly extend the crew and the time regarding the bureaucratic procedures, follow-ups and etc. to oversee the production of this exhibition. ✎

If Christian thinks he is going to produce a bad work he should just not do it, it would be better for all of us. But, to claim that this work is going to be bad is also to say that his shadow installation, for example, in Museum of Modern Art-Frankfurt is bad. Although, you should also understand that this project has been in the works for a long time and we have both committed ourselves to it.

If he thinks the show is going to bad, I suggest he waits until he sees it. As for myself, it is going to be the best exhibition in Istanbul to this date.

Look Guy, I am not at all inclined to define the exhibition in terms of hierarchies. In working with our concept, the Feshane is the site under which difference is housed and contained. So other spaces are not conceptually applicable. That could not anymore at this time be a matter of discussion. So it is your responsibility to kindly persuade Christian to work with his first idea and not take a revenge on all three of us by making what he would think of as a not-so-good quality work.

My very best wishes.

V.K.

Vasif Kortun