

20 Minus Minutes 3 Years Later @ Platform Garanti

Platform is located at a privileged space in the city. It is a street level institution on a very crowded de-trafficked avenue. Hardly ever an institution begins with the indulgence of knowing that the audience is always then and there. One could even claim that the contemporary discussions about public space, public sphere and art institutions run into a quagmire of complications here because visitors are neither targeted in a corporate manner, nor predetermined as professionals. Platform is on an avenue frequented by people from all walks of life, class, gender, sexual preference, class and ethnicity; it is a mix beyond mixes. Although a few of the exhibitions inadvertently worked with that fact, the exhibition "20 Minus Minutes" however was of a different order in the sense that the project became an instrument for seeing see the space with all its possibilities.

Platform employs a set of basic rules that places it part from the rest of the pack. We do not use the ubiquitous metal detectors or in the worst-case x-ray machines at the entrance to most exhibition spaces in Istanbul. Such borders in the public space, reserved normally for airports, business towers, consulates, and the like, insure them as smooth spaces, where capital and governance operates without interruption. As such, security gates are not so really for the visitor's security. We do not use closed-circuit surveillance, or cameras in general as we do not believe we should watch people watching. Trust is everything and

breaches happen no matter what. Platform's gallery worker never wears a uniform and does follow people around as if they are potential suspects. Although this *modus operandi* was in place prior to Libia and Olu's "20 Minus Minutes," the exhibition made it real and visible.

The threshold of an exhibition space of an institution does not imply that the audience registers and utilizes it as such. In fact, a litany of expectations and counter-expectations, histories and conditions enter onto the discussion. No matter even if you set off a culture of access, it does not work if someone does not acquire and define it. The best-case scenario is that the institution and its public negotiate a fluid barrier, and thresholds of expectancy and responsibility. Projects never start or end at the door. Even though there is much written about fragmented publics, retooling of institutions as mass-media spaces in the service of city economies, the transformation public institutions along with their audiences, there are other contexts to be taken into account. Art is a kind of exception, and comes with a license to experimentation, and freedom that institutions are too timid to exercise. The best art tells us something we can learn from. It is the core experiment that supersedes the significance of the institution. When we decided to work with Libia and Olu towards the end of their residency at Platform, we took a leap of faith to the unknown. Probably, and most likely more than most institutions around, we like to implement a "hospitality" that is neither theoretical nor literal. It is a way of building trust between the artist and the institution, sharing responsibility, and refusing to tame, regulate format the artist to the institution's hardwood. The elasticity of their project required that the

institution flexed and remained so. The extension of hospitality also meant that they who would turn over that into a multiplicity of hospitalities and to give more than they have.

I remember the day when the chestnut baker from the street brought his stand in to the exhibition. This was clearly a consequence of the turmoil the exhibition deliberated. That the vendor believed good business could be made in the gallery as well. The vendor completed the array of functions institutions pay much attention to; provide food, drinks and things. Much of it was there but all inverted: There was the sale of hand-made shirts inside the gallery at bargain basement prices during the opening day. Not the kind of proper sale next to the catalogs and the logo pens, but right in the gallery, out of cardboard bins in the true bazaar style, yelling and dealing. Or one could always order tea from the teahouse next door. There were always places to sit around but all made by the artists. The organic couch next to the large window overlooked the street, but not your usual cool designed life-style thing; one could become a prototype for mass production. The gallery became a place that reflected on other places in the street, but one imbued with a dreamy, friendly, contentious quality, a place one had the responsibility to make up his/her world as one would go on. This was particularly acute in the placement of a hard-edged mirror object suspended from the ceiling. Recalling Michael Fried's historic essay on minimalism and theatricality, this blind object reflected anything around it as if a relic of a bygone culture. On the facade of the building, made with flimsy post-its, wrote "itnaragon." Like, "redrum" from *Shining*, the "itnaragon" brought back the

suppressed: No Garanti! Platform is an institution of the Garanti Bank, and moreover nothing is for granted. This echoed further on the chest of the mannequin on the floor "your country does not exist" which in Turkey never goes down so well. On the other hand, there was a man size penis on a weebles base that the public could not keep their hands off from. This whole action of sorts came with a simulacrum of a messy artist, painting and defacing the space each and every single day, adding and reducing, watching stuff being added and reduced on the walls, the ceiling and all corners of the space. A huge ball like cagey playground kept rolling through the space as the sound of the ATM in the front of the building piped back into what was once the bank vault. The sweet sound of money kept haunting the space.