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Wall Newspaper #3

# Statement by the Jury for the Akbank Sanat International **Curator Competition 2015**

ARTLEAKS - MARCH 8, 2016

We were very disappointed to hear that Akbank Sanat took the decision to cancel hosting the prize winning exhibition proposal 'Post-Peace' conceived and curated by Katia Krupennikova. We selected Katia's proposal for its embrace of the complexity of the current global situation and it's identification of the proliferation of war as a dominant characteristic of our times. Akbank Sanat went on to produce the exhibition giving the curator all its financial and technical support only to unilaterally announce the exhibition's cancellation less than a week before its scheduled opening on March 1st 2016. Akbank Sanat's statement pointed toward the sensitive nature of the situation in Turkey as the reason for this very cautious move. Given what we know of the situation, it remains important for us to note that although we understand the complexity of the current political conflicts in Turkey and their possible impact on the art context, we still cannot help but identify this as censorship. We wish Katia and the participating artists in 'Post-Peace' all the best in locating an alternative venue in Istanbul or elsewhere.

Bassam El Baroni, Paul O'Neill, Iris Dressler and Hans D. Christ

#### FOLLOWING THE CANCELLATION OF THE 2015 AKBANK SANAT INTERNATIONAL CURATOR COMPETITION

*I was in Cyprus when I found out about the cancellation of the Post-*Peace proposal exhibition, which was the winner of this year's Akbank Sanat International Curator Competition. I have been working on Kemal Ankaç's Cultural Massacreproject for the past year, and was setting up the exhibition and working on its book. I was far away and working intensely on this project. Therefore, I decided to keep silent for a while as I had difficulty in keeping up with the rapidly accumulating emails and phone calls, and furthermore, I realised that I needed time to perceive, grasp, and digest what was going on.

We are going through a period in time in which we are forced to perceive everything as either black or white, and accordingly, we are rushed into making either black or white decisions. To observe this during my silence was as painful as the cancellation of the show. I am determined to stay in the grey area and derive a positive conclusion from all that has been going on. And while doing so, I will not rush.

First off, I would like to talk about the process of this competition. In 2011, I took a proposal to Akbank Sanat to develop a competition that would provide support for emerging curators, reinforce interest in curatorial practices, and encourage new projects in the field of contemporary art, and this institution has been supporting this competition since then, including the first year's preparations. Since the beginning, the competition's format and structure has been modified every year according to the experience derived from and feedback given by the jury of the previous year. Three people work as application reviewers in leading up to the selection process, where both the reviewers and the International Jury (consisting of three or four people) change every year. Apart from the 1-person staff who

gives technical support, no one from Akbank Sanat is involved in the selection process. I only follow the proceedings of the selection and have no say whatsoever in the results. Afterwards, Akbank Sanat unquestioningly implements all aspects of the exhibition.

This year the reviewers were Annie Belz (Associate, Middle East & Africa, Artforum International), Stephanie Bailey (Managing Editor of Ibraaz, Contributing Editor of ART PAPERS, LEAP and Ocula), and Övül Ö. Durmuşoğlu (Curator and writer, Berlin/Istanbul). The jury consisted of Bassam El Baroni (Independent curator and theory tutor at Dutch Art Institute, Arnhem), Paul O'Neill (Curator, writer and Director of the Graduate Program at the Center for Curatorial Studies, Bard College, New York), and Iris Dressler and Hans D. Christ (Directors of the Württembergisch Kunstverein Stuttgart). Since Katia Krupennikova's proposal was evaluated and selected by proficient names in their fields, it was undoubtedly clear that another great project was to take place in Istanbul. I was acquainted with most of the artists Katia had proposed – I have been following them closely - and the new names would be new added values for me.

The staff in the institution, the artists, and the curator all spent a tremendous amount of time, labour, and energy. Most of the works in the exhibition were commissioned and produced, the catalogue was prepared, and many artists were invited to Istanbul. Most of the budget for the exhibition was spent. A very strong public program was planned. Hence, as we read in both Katia's and the institution's statements, this process was highly appreciated by all the actors involved in the project.

However, Akbank Sanat cancelled the exhibition 5 days before the opening. There was only a one-sentence statement: "Due to evaluations of the delicate nature of recent events in Turkey, the exhibition has been cancelled". No negative remarks were made concerning the exhibition, curator, or artists.

At this point, rather than throwing trite accusations and coming to rapid conclusions about the incident or those involved, we have to take a step back and think. I believe that it is time to produce some important questions which we should first direct to ourselves instead of coming up with rote answers.

*The first question I ask myself is whether there is a possibility of turn*ing this occasion from an unfortunate incident into a constructive occurrence. This is the only thing I strive for at this point. I'm sorry if I have disappointed those who expected a partial statement from me, but I refuse to think in terms of black and white. I still believe that another world is possible.

Başak Şenova, organizer of the Akbank Sanat International Curator Competition

## "Post-Peace" exhibition cancelled in Istanbul

## **ARTLEAKS - FEBRUARY 29, 2016**

In October 2015 I won the Akbank Sanat Curator Competition with an exhibition project which brings together artists from a variety of origins to question how war and peace appear today. The title of the show is "Post-Peace," a term that is a possible name for our difficult and confusing present. It was planned to open on 1 March 2016 and run until 7 May, 2016 in Akbank Sanat, Istanbul.

The participants are: Anonymous Stateless Immigrants, Ella de Búrca, Anna Dasović, Yazan Khalili, Adrian Melis, Dorian de Rijk, belit sağ, Alexei Taruts, Anika Schwarzlose, Anastasia Yarovenko as well as writers Oxana Timofeeva, Ece Temelkuran and Etel Adnan and participants of the public programme Lyubov Matyunina, Yaşar Adanali, Pınar Öğrenci, Koken Ergun and Jaha Koo.

The project was selected by an international jury consisting of Bassam El Baroni (independent curator and theory tutor at Dutch Art Institute, Arnhem), Paul O'Neill (curator, writer and Director of the Graduate Program at the Center for Curatorial Studies, Bard College, New York), Iris Dressler and Hans D. Christ (directors of the Württembergisch Kunstverein Stuttgart). Developed and coordinated by Başak Şenova, 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.

On the 25th February, 2016, a few days before the opening, the exhibition was cancelled by Akbank Sanat. The official explanation letter to myself and the jury states the following reasons: "...over the course of our preparations, Turkey went through a very troubled time. In particular, the tragic incidents in Ankara are very fresh in people's memories. Turkey is still reeling from their emotional aftershocks and remains in a period of mourning. Therefore, many events, including – but not limited to – exhibitions, concerts, and performances, are being cancelled every day." I, along with the artists in the show, believe this to be a case of political censorship. I fully recognize the tense political atmosphere in Turkey right now, and the reasons why Akbank Sanat may not wish to be associated with the exhibition. But this is also why it is essential to have open discussions and a place for people to engage with different perspectives on issues relevant in the *Turkish context and beyond.* 

This situation is a very complicated one, and that is why I am currently in discussion with several institutions in Istanbul to host conversations about the ethics and responsibilities of art professionals working in tense political and social environments. I am also proposing to these institutions to co-host events and parts of the exhibition. I believe that turning this unfortunate situation into a critical dialogue is the best and most constructive decision.

More information to follow upon confirmations.

Katia Krupennikova

independent curator

More information about the exhibition: Post-Peace, 2 March — 7 May, 2016 Preview: 1 March

Artists: Anonymous Stateless Immigrants, Ella de Búrca, Anna Dasović, Yazan Khalili, Adrian Melis, Dorian de Rijk, belit sağ, Alexei Taruts, Anika Schwarzlose, Anastasia Yarovenko.

Curator: Katia Krupennikova

Post-Peace brings together artists from a variety of origins to question how war and peace appear today. The works by peers from different parts of the world are united by common expressions of danger, fear, and the feeling of disorientation created by mass media's multiple versions of reality. This mood is present in the exhibition as an alarm pointing to how much "war" is present in our contemporary "peace."

"Even the fierceness of war and all the disquietude of men make towards this one end of peace, which every nature desires." The line, one of the chapter headings of Saint Augustine's The City of God, expresses a truism for many war planners and politicians: if war is not exactly peace, its end most definitely should be. This idea was expressed most famously in the catchphrase used to describe the First World War, "the War to End All Wars"—a line that was often derided at the time. Field-Marshal Earl Wavell memorably described the Paris Peace Conference as the "Peace to End Peace." The First World War paved the war for the Second, whose conclusion gave us the "Postwar Era," defined by the central antagonism of the USA and the USSR, the "Cold War," with its myriad proxy conflicts and regional wars.

The defeat of the Soviet Union and the triumph of capitalist democracy was meant to usher in a new non-conflictual age, and even an "end of history." Taking our cue from Wavell's felicitous phrase, perhaps the best way to describe the contemporary situation, in which the "peace" of global capitalism can only be bought at the price of continuous violence and warfare, is Post-Peace. Post-Peace is thus a concept that is used to define the time after the fall of the Berlin Wall, but may also apply to the whole period following the Second World War, with its decades of conflicts and antagonisms.

The concept of "peace" in the Post-Peace era has turned Eurocentric: the killing grounds have recently occupied Latin America, Africa, Asia, and the Eastern part of the Europe, places where former imperial regimes have been collapsing. International conflicts hide themselves behind local civil conflicts. A whole new vocabulary has sprung up to describe the new nature of warfare: preemptive, hybrid, nonconventional, asymmetric. Moreover, wars tend to be located in places that are nearly impossible to access by reliable eyewitnesses and media. Reality is obfuscated behind contradictory reports and calculated lies.

The exhibition Post-Peace is not directly about war, but rather about peace: it does not wish to add to the many representations of violence already circulating in the media. Gathered together in Akbank Sanat the selected artists will rather expose, through a visual conversation, the screen of peace as it functions today.

The public program, entitled How I learned To Start Worrying. Symptoms of Post-Peace was to include: Lyubov Matyunina, Yaşar Adnan Adanali, Pınar Öğrenci, Ece Temelkuran. Jaha Koo, Köken

# **Anonymous Stateless Immigrants Statement on** "Post-Peace" Exhibition Censorship

ARTLEAKS - MARCH 9, 2016

As artists in "Post-Peace" we express our discontent over the decision by Akbank Sanat to cancel the exhibition over "the delicate situation in Turkey." As members of ASI (Anonymous Stateless Immigrants), we proposed to create a "Refugees Cultural House" envisaged after Alexandra Exter's (1882-1949) "A Stage For Tragedy." This platform was designed to bring together refugees interested in culture in Istanbul together to produce and perform music, theater, and dance for the duration of the exhibition; it began in October 2015, and continued unhindered for five months. We were promised an exhibition budget and participation fee. Talks between curator Katia Kruppenova, Akbank Sanat, and other artists increased during these months. Materials were purchased and performances were confirmed. The musicians Hozan Peyal, Maryana Golovchenko, Hannibal Saad and Moutaz Arian were all invited and confirmed to perform, each promised an artist fee.

Notice of exhibition's cancellation was delivered to us via email by Katia Kruppenova on Thursday, February 25, 2016, four days prior to the opening. Few artists participating were already in Istanbul, flights were paid for, hotels and accommodations booked, then cancelled by Akbank Sanat, leaving several artists stranded and in desperate need of last minute accommodation upon arrival to Istanbul. We strongly condemn Akbank Sanat's malicious and irresponsible behaviour in this regard. By cancelling the exhibition a mere four days prior to the opening, then cancelling accommodations for artists already either in Istanbul or en route, they left many in dire financial straits by forcing them into expensive hotels at their own cost. Akbank Sanat's official reason for the cancellation was pitiful. When pressed by members of the media to elaborate on reasons for the cancellation, Akbank Sanat responded with the following meagre and unexplanatory statement:

"We have been organizing International Curator Competition for 4 years. We have supported and hosted many curators and artists during these exhibitions. As you all know, the last competition was held 5 months ago. In the intervening months, we worked very hard on the project and gave it our full support in anticipation of a wonderful exhibition.

However, over the course of our preparations, Turkey went through a very troubled time. In particular, the tragic incidents in Ankara are very fresh in people's memories. Turkey is still reeling from their emotional aftershocks and remains in a period of mourning.

In accordance with Akbank Sanat's sense of responsibility in the Turkish contemporary art world and following various considerations regarding the delicate situation in Turkey, the exhibition has

In response, curator Katia Krupennikova stated:

"In October 2015 I won the Akbank Sanat Curator Competition with an exhibition project which brings together artists from a variety of origins to question how war and peace appear today. The title of the show is "Post-Peace," a term that is a possible name for our difficult and confusing present. It was planned to open on 1 March 2016 and run until 7 May, 2016 in Akbank Sanat, Istanbul.

The project was selected by an international jury consisting of Bassam El Baroni (independent curator and theory tutor at Dutch Art Institute, Arnhem), Paul O'Neill (curator, writer and Director of the Graduate Program at the Center for Curatorial Studies, Bard College, New York), Iris Dressler and Hans D. Christ (directors of the Württembergisch Kunstverein Stuttgart). Developed and coordinated by Başak Şenova, 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.

On the 25th February, 2016, a few days before the opening, the exhibition was cancelled by Akbank Sanat.

The official explanation letter to myself and the jury states the follow-

"...over the course of our preparations, Turkey went through a very troubled time. In particular, the tragic incidents in Ankara are very fresh in people's memories. Turkey is still reeling from their emotional aftershocks and remains in a period of mourning. Therefore, many events, including - but not limited to - exhibitions, concerts, and performances, are being cancelled every day."

*I*, along with the artists in the show, believe this to be a case of political censorship. I fully recognize the tense political atmosphere in Turkey right now, and the reasons why Akbank Sanat may not wish to be associated with the exhibition. But this is also why it is essential to have open discussions and a place for people to engage with different perspectives on issues relevant in the Turkish context and beyond.

This situation is a very complicated one, and that is why I am currently in discussion with several institutions in Istanbul to host conversations about the ethics and responsibilities of art professionals working in tense political and social environments. I am also proposing to these institutions to co-host events and parts of the exhibition. I believe that turning this unfortunate situation into a critical dialogue is the best and most constructive decision."

We stand in solidarity with Kruppenova and all the other artists who have been censored. Since our voices have become silenced, we would like to use this occasion to state that such a contemporary system of organizing contemporary art has no integrity to art, artists nor creation of content and context for discussion and formation of alternative communities. Accordingly, censorship can be seen as a byproduct of biopolitical control undermining even the possibility of alternative initiatives through the reproduction of fear and spatial polarization.

All told, censorship reminds us of the power of art and culture to act outside dominant hegemonic structures and interests. This might be the only advantage of a broken arm when censorship becomes a form of readymade political art.

Anonymous Stateless Immigrants collective

6/02/2016

Istanbul

# Artists' Response to the Cancellation of the Post-Peace Exhibition (Istanbul, Turkey)

#### **ARTLEAKS - MAY 5, 2016**

In the weeks since the initial writing of this statement, the context which necessitated it has been evolving rapidly. The cycle of violence that is taking place, the recent attacks in Ankara and Istanbul, deeply sadden us. While the censorship of an art event may seem like a relatively minor matter in light of this, we believe we have an obligation to speak about our experience, especially now. By publishing this statement we want to counter the self-censorship and state censorship which occur all too frequently in times of crisis and emergencies. This is the current situation in Turkey, but it is not limited to Turkey alone. The use of public emergencies to legitimize the suppression of cultural expression, journalism, and academia is a more general current in which many are swept up. It is the responsibility of cultural workers to speak out against this silencing, and to advocate for spaces of discussion and reflection, cultural tolerance, and universalism. For these reasons, we are publishing our collective statement on the censorship of Post-Peace.

# ARTISTS' RESPONSE TO THE CANCELLATION OF THE POST-PEACE EXHIBITION

As artists and contributors of 'Post-Peace', the exhibition curated by Katia Krupennikova and selected in October 2015 as the winning proposal of Akbank Sanat's International Curator Competition 2015, we strongly state our indignation towards Akbank Sanat's last minute cancellation of the exhibition.

We were invited within the framework of the exhibition "to question how war and peace appear today". The opening was scheduled for March 1; it was cancelled on February 25. In an email to Krupennikova and the jury members, Akbank Sanat director Derya Bigali stated that "over the course of our preparations, Turkey went through a very troubled time. In particular the tragic incidents in Ankara which are very fresh in people's memories."

We are very aware that the social and political situation in Turkey has intensified during the period leading up to the exhibition. Human rights in Turkey are rapidly declining on a daily basis; the freedom of expression of independent media, cultural organisations, and citizens in Turkey is facing unprecedented pressure and (self) censorship. In our view it is urgent and essential that art and culture engage with and address this distressing situation.

The premise of Post-Peace was to offer a platform for a plurality of voices to explore how much "war" is present in contemporary "peace", as stated in the curator's initial proposal. The silencing of Post-Peace by Akbank Sanat points to an alarming symptom, currently all too visible throughout Turkey, a climate of fear and paranoia. We deplore the situation in which an art institute actively interferes with what they think should be the boundaries of public discussion and knowledge.

Because of Akbank Sanat's irresponsible action, our labour for this exhibition is now invisible. This forces us to create a collective statement in order to give voice to the experience of censorship. We

belit sağ // Open Letter

are very aware that, in a way, we are lucky ones: we are fortunate enough to be able to share our experience, in comparison to those suffering from more brutal forms of censorship and silencing, whose voices threaten to be totally erased.

We strongly object to the short notice cancellation of the exhibition, and are united in the following viewpoints:

- 1. We want to underline that the explanation given by Akbank Sanat, emailed only to Katia Krupennikova and the jury members, is far from transparent and hardly credible, since the supposed reasons for the cancellation apparently did not affect the rest of Akbank Sanat's program, like its film festival and music concerts. Hence, we claim that the cancellation of Post-Peace was an act of political censorship.
- 2. The censorship of Post-Peace unveils a situation in which corporations fund the production of exhibitions to enhance their image, and then brutally dismiss artworks and artists when they deviate from the corporation's political agenda. In this way, the 'taste' of the institution becomes an instrument of repression and control. As artists that are involuntarily caught up in this situation, it is our responsibility to oppose this predicament, which has become symptomatic of a certain sector of the art world. If unchallenged, this kind of control over artistic production threatens to become the prevailing norm.
- 3. We would like to use this moment to publicly announce our solidarity with all those who suffer from any form of censorship inflicted on people and communities in Turkey.
- 4. We therefore strongly condemn and are deeply concerned about the ongoing trial against artist and writer Pınar Öğrenci and artist Atalay Yeni. Along with 23 other people, they are being accused by the Turkish government of conspiracy to terrorism, and might face up to 18 years in jail for attending the peace march "Barış İçin Yürüyorum/I Am Walking for Peace". Pınar Öğrenci was scheduled to deliver a lecture performance during the public program of Post-Peace. We stand in solidarity with the declaration of "Barış İçin Yürüyorum/I Am Walking for Peace" that "The only way to cope with the ordeal we are facing today and to make an end to this war, death and destruction, goes through voicing our demand for peace louder, together and courageously, and to stand in solidarity with the people in the region."
- 5. We remain committed to the open and reflective discourse that Post-Peace aimed to create. The situation that we are currently experiencing strengthens our resolve to make sure that this exhibition takes place, and to continue working on this urgent topic and to develop an international discursive platform about it.

Yaşar Adanali, Anonymous Stateless Immigrants collective, Ella de Búrca, Anna Dasović, Ehsan Fardjadniya, Yazan Khalili, Lyubov Matyunina, Adrian Melis, Dorian de Rijk, belit sağ, Anika Schwarzlose, Alexei Taruts, Oxana Timofeeva, Anastasiya Yarovenko. I don't know and will never get definite confirmation whether the cancellation of Post-Peace was related to the content of my work or not. However this does not change what happened. Together with Siyah Bant we prepared a press release explaining the censorship prior to the cancellation of the exhibition. Even if the exhibition had not been cancelled, I was planning to publicize my experience of Akbank Sanat's censorship.

In the 90s, Akbank Sanat hosted a painting exhibition by Kenan Evren. Kenan Evren is the leader of the 1980 coup d'état in Turkey. Akbank Sanat has had several censorship cases in its history. Akbank Sanat gave Kenan Evren the possibility to exhibit his work as an 'artist', without questioning his leading role in the 1980 coup, from which the country still suffers. Akbank Sanat has never taken responsibility for this exhibition nor the role they took in it and what it means for Turkey. I do not believe that Akbank Sanat has or aims to acquire the ethical and conceptual capacity to host any exhibitions. The Akbank Sanat International Curator Competition that they have sponsored for the past four years is an important award in the international art world, which gives them a prestige they do not deserve.

At this point I have a number of questions to ask:

- Why does Akbank Sanat have the right to bypass the jury of Akbank Sanat International Curator Competition 2015 and the originally accepted plan of the exhibition? As mentioned in Başak Şenova's statement following the cancellation: "Afterwards, Akbank Sanat unquestioningly implements all aspects of the exhibition" (http://bit.ly/24ycFhr)
- How does Akbank Sanat position itself in relation to the jury of the Competition, the founding curator, the curator, and the artists of the exhibition?
- Why didn't Akbank Sanat discuss the possibility of canceling the exhibition together with the curator, the artists and the jury prior to the cancellation? Why does Akbank Sanat take decisions from the top, thereby marginalizing the contributors and blocking their participation in decision-making mechanisms concerning the very exhibition they have been commissioned to make?

Institutions like Akbank Sanat will not admit that they censored the content of any exhibition, and will not take responsibility for the situation. These institutions interfere with cultural content due to their connections to corporations and banks, allied with oppressive government policies. This paves the way for normalizing censorship and abusing the political situation of the country as an excuse, as in the text explaining the cancellation by the director of Akbank Sanat ("Turkey is still reeling from their emotional aftershocks and remains in a period of mourning."). I believe we need to expose these government-allied mentalities and structures over and over again. Institu-

tions like Akbank Sanat can continue their activities, because every time they censor the cultural arena they get away with it; their acts are not revealed, they are not held accountable, and they continue to receive support. Letting this happen deserts the fields of culture and art, and distances them from the struggles going on in the country. At the same time, this acceptance and silence obstructs those people and institutions that bravely resist, and further restricts already shrinking zones of freedom. We, as cultural and art workers, can counter this by refusing to accept the silencing of artistic expression.

Any cultural and art worker who is ignorant of the ongoing oppression in Turkey, who does not call censorship by its name, who does not see or fails to recognize the ongoing massacres in Kurdish lands becomes part of this oppressive structure. I have channels to speak out, I do not want to intimidate people who don't have access to such channels, or who have to stay silent in order to avoid risking their lives. It is exactly for this reason, that we have to speak out en masse. I also think that 'speaking out' can happen in a variety of ways, just as acts of resistance do.

Although I have a hard time believing it myself, almost everyone I met in Cizre (a Kurdish town inside Turkey bordering Syria) in 2015, has either been killed or else left Cizre in order to stay alive. I owe this statement to the people I met in Cizre. Many other Kurdish towns and cities have suffered from or are currently undergoing similar attacks by Turkish State security forces. Every struggle in this region is connected, even though some might want to separate them. The one sharp difference is that some people get censored and others get killed in this country. Exactly because of this, we, the ones who get censorred, need to keep ourselves connected to other resistances and realize of our privilege. With this letter I wish to show solidarity with those working in the fields of culture and art who have already experienced or might experience similar censorships. My statement aims to express that we do not have to bear those abuses alone, with the hope that more of us will be able to speak up, and the hope that we can act collectively.

belit sağ

# ARTLEAKS - MAY 11, 2016

Open Letter – 11 May 2016

It was my intention for a long time to publish a statement about the censorship of my video Ayhan and me (2016), part of the group exhibition Post-Peace that was censored by Akbank Sanat. When the exhibition was censored, I wanted to prioritize the group statement of the collaborators and artists of the exhibition. The group statement is out, and it's now my turn. I would like this statement to be seen as a contribution to the statements made by Katia Krupennikova, the curator of the show (http://bit.ly/21CBqUy); the jury of the Akbank Sanat International Curator Competition 2015 (http://bit.ly/23t-KRVu); Anonymous Stateless Immigrants Movement (http://bit.ly/24B03Tp); and the artist and contributors of the exhibition Post-Peace (http://bit.ly/1Ygs1zS). With this statement, I aim to share my own experience.

I am the only artist from Turkey that was supposed to take part in the group exhibition Post-Peace. My initial proposal was specifically about Turkey. This proposal went through a censorship process starting months before the originally planned opening date. I'd like to share my experience with the hope that it will shed a little bit of light on the censorship that of the exhibition itself and the problem of censorship in the art field more generally.

*The group exhibition Post-Peace was initially planned to take place* in Amsterdam. I was invited by the curator at this early stage. Later on, with this exhibition concept Katia Krupennikova applied for and won the Akbank Sanat International Curator Competition 2015. The exhibition moved from Amsterdam to Istanbul. In one of the talks Katia had with Akbank Sanat managers in November 2015, she mentioned to them my proposal. They told Katia that the political situation in Turkey is tense, and that they can not commission the proposed work. Katia asked for an official statement from the director of Akbank Sanat, Derya Bigalı. She didn't receive a reply. I met Katia when she came back to Amsterdam. We wrote together to Zeynep Arınç from Akbank Sanat, with whom Katia has been in contact throughout the process. We asked for a formal rejection letter from the director, explaining the reasons for their decision. Zeynep Arınç replied to our email informally telling Katia that Akbank Sanat can not commission this work.

My initial work proposal, censored by Akbank Sanat, was about Ayhan Çarkın. Ayhan Çarkın was part of JITEM, an unofficial paramilitary wing of the Turkish Security Forces active in mass executions of the Kurdish population in the 1990s. As a part of the deep state and JITEM, Ayhan Çarkın confessed in 2011 that he led operations that killed over 1000 Kurdish people during the 1990s. These confessions were made on television, and videos from those confessions are accessible on Youtube. The work I was planning to make was about

Ayhan Çarkın's personal transformation, how historical reality is constructed, and how to think about the term 'evil'. This work, which was only a written proposal at that point, was censored by Akbank Sanat, even though it was part of the curator's exhibition concept from the very beginning, and was chosen by an international jury as part of the exhibition for Akbank Sanat International Curator Competition 2015.

This was the first time something like this had happened to me. In-

stead of leaving the exhibition, Katia and I came up with a proposal for a new work. The new work was going to talk about the censorship of my previous proposal, as well as the politics of images of war in Turkey. Akbank Sanat requested to see the script of this new work. Katia didn't respond to this request, and I told her that I'm not in favor of showing the script, due to Akbank Sanat's attitude up till that point. Consequently we asked the founder of the Akbank Sanat International Curator Competition, curator Başak Şenova, for her opinion on this issue. At first she supported us, but after she consulted with Akbank Sanat she told us that the refusal by Akbank Sanat is understandable. To be honest these reactions made me feel alone. Turkey is really going through a tough period, and I started questioning why, as an artist, I was putting the whole institution at risk...?

In December before I started producing my second proposal I realized that I did not feel comfortable with accepting the situation as it was. I decided to make the censorship public, by writing a letter and sending it to the press. I met with Katia and we started writing an email explaining the situation to the jury. In mid January, before we finalized the letter, Katia told me that she talked to Akbank Sanat and they agreed to the new proposal and no longer demanded to see the script in advance. I started making the video. I got in contact with Siyah Bant, a group that deals with censorship in the field of art in Turkey. I got a lot of support from them, which helped against the feeling of isolation such censorship cases cause. Also, we started thinking about ways to deal with this specific case. The final video took shape as a result of this process. I believe watching the video complements this statement.

## Ayhan and me: vimeo.com/belit/ayhanveben

The video was finalized on the 23rd of February, and Katia Krupennikova presented all the works to Akbank Sanat for technical check
on the same day. The exhibition was supposed to open on the 1st of
March, and it was cancelled/censored on the 25thof February. There
was no exhibition announcement on Akbank Sanat's website or social
media accounts, or there was any exhibition poster at Akbank Sanat's
space at any point. This makes me think that Akbank Sanat has been
considering this decision for a long time, but didn't communicate it to
the curator or any other contributor of the show.

# The End – Akbank Sanat International Curator Competition (Istanbul, Turkey)

## ARTLEAKS - JUNE 4, 2016

For the past five years I have had a great pleasure to witness the Akbank Sanat International Curator Competition evolve into a strong international curatorial platform. Over the years I have developed the structure of the competition and coordinate the jury and the reviewers of the applications during the lengthy review process. During my tenure as a coordinator I have been appointed on a project-based and have not been employed as a staff member of Akbank Sanat (I need to state this due to some speculation as to my position within the organizational structure of the hosting institution).

Following the cancellation of the Akbank Sanat International Curator Competition 2015, I invested a great deal of my time to help in assisting the situation. I offered my time to discuss the situation with representatives from the institution and with the 2015 laureate Katia Krupennikova, curator of the exhibition Post-Peace and the jury. I tried my best to find constructive solutions by (1) discussing the cancelation and what lead to it with the curator and the institution; (2) following the failure to reinstate the exhibition, and subsequent consultations with the curator, to help find other alternative solutions to showing the exhibition in its entirety or separate presentations of individual works in various other venues and contacting some of them; and (3) proposing to discuss issues and responsibilities of exhibition making, curatorship, and art production with other media.

Unfortunately and despite my best efforts, I did not succeed. The destructive tone in the reactions of all involved along with the accusations and the lack of clarity persistent throughout. Under the present circumstances, both my efforts and the goal of the competition have become pointless. Therefore, I decided to relinquish my involvement with the Akbank Sanat International Curator Competition and I have informed the organization of my decision. With this statement, I would also like to inform the public as well that I am deeply sorry to witness the loss of all the accumulative effort that was built collectively over the years.

I am very grateful to Jack Persekian, Francis McKee, Anne Barlow, Christine Tohme, Branko Franceschi, Susanne Pfeffer, Anna-Kaisa Rastenberger, Sam Bardaouil, Till Fellrath, Bassam El Baroni, Paul O'Neill, Iris Dressler and Hans D. Christ for having served as jury members and given their incredible input and knowledge in making

this award a respected international opportunity for emerging curators. I also would like to thank Duygu Demir, H.G. Masters, Leonardo Bigazzi, Yane Calovski, Tina Sherwell, Ece Pazarbasi, Annie Belz, Stephanie Bailey and Övül Ö. Durmuşoğlu for their invaluable involvement and participation in the early stages as reviewers of the applications. Last but not least, I am very honored to have had the opportunity to experience the exciting proposals of the selected winners Alejandra Labastida (2012), Franz Thalmair (2013), Niekolaas Johannes Lekkerkerk (2014), and Katia Krupennikova (2015) and the large number of artists involved in their remarkable projects. I am also thankful to Akbank Sanat for supporting and hosting this project all through these years.

Başak Şenova, organizer of the Akbank Sanat International Curator Competition

As former jury members and reviewers of the International Curators Competition at the Akbank Sanat in Istanbul, we would like to acknowledge and state our support of Başak Şenova and her decision to effectively end her tenure as its coordinator. As a colleague of great integrity and an acute sense of fairness, Başak Şenova has tried to come up with a productive solution to save the competition she initiated in 2012. We want to underline that solidarity between curators and cultural workers is very important and, in context of this unfortunate outcome of such worthy international project, it becomes even crucial.

Jury and Reviewers of Akbank Sanat International Curator Competition (worked between 2011-2015): Jack Persekian, Francis Mckee, Branko Franceschi, Anne Barlow, Christine Tohme, Susanne Pfeffer, Sam Bardaouil, Till Fellrath, Anna-Kaisa Rastenberger, Paul O'neill, Bassam El Baroni, Hans D. Christ, Iris Dressler, Duygu Demir, HG Masters, Leonardo Bigazzi, Tina Sherwell, Övül Ö. Durmuşoğlu, Ece Pazarbaşı, Annie Belz, Stephanie Bailey, and Yane Calovski.