

PRESS RELEASE

AICA TURKEY PUBLICATION ON ART CRITICISM AND CURATORIAL PRACTICES

**"Art-criticism and Curatorial Practices East of the EU"
International Workshop and Round-table in conjunction with the 8th Istanbul Biennial**

This book of edited texts and transcripts of the discussions held during the roundtable and workshop sessions entitled **"Art-criticism and Curatorial Practices, East of the EU"** from September 18th to 20th, 2003, in conjunction with the 8th Biennial in Borusan Culture and Art Center and Istanbul Bilgi University is the first effort of AICA Turkey to establish an ongoing commitment to intellectual discourse for curators and art critics and for the visual art-oriented public.

AICA Turkey, in its first activity, initiated a new observation of the cultural transformations, an inventive communication and a promising interactivity in the region.

The workshop and round-table was organised in collaboration with AICA INTERNATIONAL, (Paris) and INTERNATIONAL MANIFESTA FOUNDATION and the newly founded AICA-TURKEY with the patronage of EUROPEAN CULTURAL FOUNDATION in collaboration with Istanbul Bilgi University, Borusan Culture and Art Centre, European Cultural Association and Bir Culture and Art Centre.

This international workshop and roundtable was not only conceived as a critical and theoretical contribution to the 8th Istanbul Biennial, but it also focused on defining current practices in international networking and co-operation, on available models and tools for co-production, on funding opportunities and curatorial independence. In this sense, the book efficiently reflects the opinions, experiences and projects of the participants and the current state of affairs in the art scenes of their countries or regions.

The Istanbul Biennial, as a modular part of the recently emerging international system of biennials and the cultural infrastructure of the region to the "east of the EU", is mostly seen as a space for experience and training for young professionals who are engaged with curatorial practice, art criticism, and cultural journalism. Whether it fulfils this function or not, has been widely discussed during the sessions.

Although the participants came from different cultural scenes, the topics, questions, and problems raised and debated during the sessions were surprisingly similar. Among the common themes were the institutional background of art production and its effects on the public sphere the art production and its relations to the official discourses. It was agreed that, in most of the non-EU countries the official institutional background is conservative and incompetent and needs to be reformed by taking know-how from EU countries, which are offering programmes and funds through their institutions. The geographic and contextual diversity of the positions, visions and ethical orientations of the curators and the art-critics were another topic in which the perfectionism that characterizes the international mainstream art with its strong links to the official institutions, the private sector and the art market was accentuated. Curators coming to non-EU countries from these sophisticated environments are misinterpreting and underestimating the local art scenes and they also fail to contact the intellectual groups and individuals. It has also been concluded that the main obstacles on the way to a multi-lateral collaboration are the differences between the infrastructures (education systems, policies and administrative philosophies of official and private institutions) and the markets of the cultural products as well as the absence of theoretical exchange.

To begin with 8th Istanbul Biennale was reviewed in its controversial title, in the statement and the position of the curator, coming from USA in juxtaposition to the works exhibited. The speakers were united in the fact that the title of the biennial 'poetic justice' is a very precarious concept in terms of the current historical moment in Middle East and the geographical position of Istanbul. The concept opens a debate, but it also reveals the fact that - despite the well wishers and optimists - art fails to change world politics, particularly in these territories. However, the participants agreed that this biennial has gathered young generation of artists - known and unknown- and had a very efficient organisation. According to the participants, the most appreciated works in Istanbul Biennale were of Mike Nelson, Fiona Tan, Kutlug Ataman, Bjorn Melhus, Monica Bonvicini, xurban, Tania Bruguera, Fernando Bryce, Filipa Cesar, Ergin Cavusoglu, Danica Dakic, Emily Jacir, Shahram Karimi, Marlene Mc Carty, Doris Salcedo, Song Dong, Monika Sosnowska, Jennifer Stainkampf, Nalini Malani.

During and between the sessions, the participants from the EU countries were seeking moments and spaces to communicate and to transmit their knowledge and experience, whereas the participants from the non-EU countries were looking for cooperation and collaboration.

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