

## **This is only the beginning, watch it next year**

**Contemporary Istanbul, the inauguration of which is to take place this year, opens today in ICEC. In the art fair which hosts 10 international galleries, art celebrities like Andy Warhol, Lichtenstein, Polke, and Baselitz can be found. IKON Chairman Ali Güreli says “The goal is to be in the top 10 fairs of the world in 10 years [Suleyman: actually, the quote should read “by 2010”).”**

IMAGE CAPTION:

Adip Dutta's installation featuring mummies in Gallery ArtsIndia NY's booth is one of the most interesting pieces exhibited at Contemporary Istanbul. Photo: MUHSIN AKGÜN

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ISTANBUL – IKON Fairs had been organizing ArtIstanbul in ICEC with the partnership of Association of Art Gallery Owners since 2003. Every year, the fair was organized with the idea of being internationally recognized, but the goal was never realized. This year, IKON parted ways with the Gallery Owners. This was a rewarding separation; because aside from ArtIstanbul, the new art Contemporary Istanbul was born; moreover, the aspiration of international recognition will most likely come true this time as IKON is collaborating with the financial giant Deutsche Bank for organizing Contemporary Istanbul Art Fair. This cooperation is important, because the bank, besides its financial power, owns large sway amongst the art institutions of the world. Deutsche Bank, who has opened Berlin Guggenheim and who publishes the art magazine artmag, is the main sponsor of ArtCologne, Frieze London, and the arts and antiques fair of Holland, TEFAF.

Contemporary Istanbul is opening in ICEC today. The fair, which will stay open until December 24<sup>th</sup>, is housing 10 international galleries despite this being the opening year. For example, it is possible to see masters of contemporary art like Andy Warhol, Stephan Balkenhol, Georg Baselitz, Roy Lichtenstein, Alex Katz, Sigmar Polke, Gerhard Richter, Robert Rauschenberg, and Tom Wesselmann in the booth of Art Estate AG from Hamburg. Likewise, in the booth of Dam, Stuhltrager Gallery from NY, houses very intriguing installations by Mark Esper, Ryan Wolfe, Ruth Marshall and Michael Shall [Suleyman.: actually, the only installation is Ryan's, Mark has the wheel, Ruth has the knit animals]. Again coming from NY, Gallery ArtsIndia's artist Adip Dutta has created one of the most interesting pieces of the fair. Artists of lesser renown are exhibited in galleries coming from centers like Paris, Vienna, and Frankfurt [Suleyman.: despite the fact that those galleries showed names like Guimarães, Rainer, Cunningham and Lartigue].

IKON's Chairman Ali Güreli, who has commented that in the first year the emphasis has been on infrastructural renovation ranging from lighting to carpets, says “This is only the beginning.” Güreli has not raised his expectations too high this year since the fair dates coincide with Christmas. However, the way he talks hints that he means “just watch it next year.” “We picked 2006 as the preparation year to give a feeling of what we mean to do. Our first goal is 2007. Next year, the fair will be held in the first week of the Istanbul Biennial, that is, on September 4-9. We will benefit from the international fame of the biennial. Last year, 6,000 visitors from abroad came for the opening of the biennial. If next year the visitors stop by both the biennial and the fair, this would positively effect the art world. Probably 2010 will be the year Contemporary Istanbul reaches a healthy high. Our goal is to put Contemporary Istanbul in the top 10, even top 5 in the next 10 years.”

To what purpose, though? Is the aim marketing international artists in Turkey, or to open the Turkish artists to the world? “Both,” says Ali Güreli, “the players of the Turkish art market who has acted in a closed economy until now will get the chance to convene and interact with their peers from around the world, with the gallery owners, the collectors, and the artists. Turkey is lacking

collectors of contemporary art. International collectors harbor greater knowledge in the field than art galleries in Turkey. They follow the scene well and know what to buy. Turkish galleries have to open exhibitions with international backing in the next few years. This will also influence the Turkish collectors.”

Güreli, who has emphasized that their partnership with Deutsche Bank should set an example, and said: “We talked to them in the London Frieze, of which they are the main sponsor of. They believed that we are the right people to trust in an endeavor like this. Some just say ‘give me the money and leave me alone’, some others say ‘I give the money and I call the shots’. However, we make decisions together. We were clear from the beginning and said ‘just don’t overwhelm us and we will work in full cooperation”. Like partners. This collaboration will continue and grow in the coming years. By this partnership alone, we have made huge progress in introducing Contemporary Istanbul to the international art world”.

It is possible to see works from more than 150 artists in Contemporary Istanbul, housing 49 galleries, 10 art institutions, and 9 independent art initiatives. Despite the talk on international galleries, the local galleries are showing very successful art waiting to be discovered. The first sculpture Mehmet Gülerüz has made after 20 years greets the visitors. To access the fair which will also be hosting concerts, a day-long DJ performance and roundtable talks, full fare tickets are 15 YTL, and half fare is 5YTL.