

URBANCONNECTIONS

CARAVANSARAI – STATION ISTANBUL

Karsi Sanat, Istanbul

Curators: Shalva Khakhanashvili & Denizhan Ozer

Presentation

Symbols of mobility, hospitality and exchange, *caravansarai* traditionally was the place for meetings of caravans and merchants coming from the East and West across the ancient *Silk Road*. It was a materialisation of the cultural link, bringing together different regions geographically situated far from each other and so close at the same time – because of commercial contacts first of all, but most important – human relationship during the centuries. This link, interrupted by the history several times, is a thread of common national memories in construction from Istanbul to Bishkek and Tashkent, through Tbilisi and Baku.

Caravansarai Program initiated between Paris (Shalva Khakhanashvili) and Tbilisi (Nino Metreveli) since 2003, joined by the partners from Istanbul (Denizhan Ozer), Baku (Leila Akhundzadeh) and Tashkent (Shahnoza Karimbabaeva) intends to offer a larger and widespread visibility to contemporary artists and their artworks from Eurasian continent by widening the traditional fields of cooperation through the contemporary creation. The support for the initiative was provided from different institutions, public cultural centers, Museums, Galleries and artists from France, Germany, Greece, Turkey etc. to maintain the artistic relationship with their colleagues from “The Eastern” countries. The future Stops, entitled “Stations” could be realised in Kazakhstan and Russia hopefully.

The actual international frame in geopolitics, economics and culture leads us to envision newest transversal strategies in cultural politics and diversify the artistic representations abroad. Programme Caravansarai could be useful tool for this objective, helping artists and art curators in implementation of diverse artistic projects in the frame of international (EurAsian) cultural relationships.

The Program Caravansarai intends to support the creation and development of cultural and artistic infrastructures in “newly independent” Eastern European and former Soviet states by proposing multiple possibilities for their representation internationally. The high task of Caravansarai Programme is attracting the potential from France, first of all and other European Community countries, from the neighbouring Turkey, which has the historical, cultural common points and geo-political interest in these regions and invests to create a large platform for artistic exchanges. In the meantime, this ambitious Program intends to support the artistic creations and development of artistic network linking together Baltic Sea (Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia), Eastern European States (Poland, Bielorussia, Ukraine, and Moldova), Black Sea Basin States (Turkey, Bulgaria, Roumania, Ukraine, Russia, and Georgia) with the Caucasus (Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia), Caspian Sea and Central Asia (Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Kirgizstan and Tadjikistan).

During each season, the yearly Caravansarai Program compounds of International Forum of Visual Arts&Art Events moving across the ancient *Silk Road*. In order to restore The Silk Road to his traditional status (mostly known as trading/economical road) as a corridor linking together Europe and Asia by means of cultural and artistic exchanges. Caravansarai Program intends to circulate the International Forum of Visual Arts & Art Events along a “New Silk Route” linking together Kiev, Chisinau, Tbilisi, Baku,

Tashkent and Almaty with Istanbul, Thessaloniki, Paris, Strasbourg and N.Y. The emergence of these "new cultural pipeline" for contemporary art distribution is most likely to propose one more international platform for visibility and allow various artists to get on the International art stage.

Programme Caravansarai stresses on local initiatives, while taking into account national, regional particularities and proposing through diverse partnerships to support artistic creation for its opening into international distribution circuits. The Forum of Tbilisi (Georgia), Aluminium Contemporary Art Festival (Baku), Festival of Actual Photo & Video Arts (Tashkent), Neighbours in Dialogue (Istanbul), Biennale of Thessaloniki are the few examples to name.

Context

The project entitled *Caravansarai - Stations* was initiated and launched in Paris, 2006. Since the presentation in HEARTGALERIE, in the center of Paris, Stations project was carried out to Tashkent (House of Photography), Istanbul (Feshane I Amire), and Thessaloniki Biennale (Museum of Contemporary Art, Moni Lazariston) in 2007. There were presented multidisciplinary works of photography, video art, installation and performances. The selection of about 30 artists coming from different states and regions (Azerbaijan, Korea, Georgia, Germany, Japan, France, Kazakhstan, Moldova, Norway, Spain, Russia, Turkey, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, and Taiwan) were placed side to side, creating the solid unity of exposition.

The continuity of Caravansarai programme and the presentation of artists this year will be realised in Cannakale Troy Art Festival & Karsi Sanat (Turkey), National Art Center (Tbilisi), in the frame of Biennale of Tashkent (House of Photography), Nuit Blanches (Paris) The programme will be composed of diverse manifestations as:

Concept URBANCONNECTIONS

Exposition of art photography, open air installations, video art projections and multidisciplinary art performances are focusing on diverse issues of cultural, social, ecological and urban aspects of modern city.

Culture circulates on the continent, taking the ancient ways made by the nomades and merchants. The territories crossed from East to West, through Central Asia and Caucasus, Anatoly and Balkans. The very task and intention of the programme is to reestablish these multiple connections existing since the millenaires, giving the possibilities to the contemporary artists undertake the roads traced by their ancestors.

The circulation on these roads, know as "Silk Road" were often interrupted by the bouleversements politics of XX century. Some new cities developed in the valleys and peoples settled in the urbanised zones of the cities - changing their traditional activities and new national roads have developed linking formerly inaccessible regions. But, if there is an active circulation of transport and goods, still artistic exchanges is waiting to be given the necessary attention by international community as an important tool for re-establishing the interrupted dialogue between different communities and promote international cooperation between different cultures.

Thematic chosen for this year is "the city", under the title *Urbanconnections* - which should permit the wider public to react on different visions how to live together in the urban space, show the differences not

between the countries, but the places and looks. Multiple approaches by various artists coming from different parts of the world, some of them from smaller or bigger cities, to the similar aspects as ecological, urban, political, social and cultural life in every modern city would display the large panorama under the attentive eye of artists.

Corridors

The Black Sea could progressively become European Sea, in the middle with Turkey and its historical interest in Caucasus and Central Asia, growing economical and intellectual capacity.

The Caravansarai initiative of *URBANCONNECTIONS* project, already realised in Tashkent during the Festival & Biennale of Thessaloniki is to come to *Karsi Sanat gallery* in the historical centre of Istanbul this summer. The organisers & supporters of exhibition are planning to take the project "on the road" linking it with another initiative and artistic project entitled "Corridors". The joint projects would circulate around Turkey (Cannakale, International Troy Festival of Art), later on passing the neighbouring Georgia, Azerbaijan and Uzbekistan, on the other side of Caspian Sea.

The Turkey and most particularly Istanbul historically is a meeting point and a "real linking bridge" for those eastern and western European, but as well for South Caucasian and Central Asian countries. The various artistic projects realised in Turkey (Neighbours in Dialogue & Biennale of Istanbul 2007), with the participation of artists coming from those countries could re-establish active civil/cultural dialogue interrupted during the period of "cold war". The further political approachment and hopefully even the admission of Turkey into the EU could end the isolation of Caucasus and bring the stability in the region. It would guarantee as well the diversification and energetical supplying with natural resources (petrol & gaz) of Europe through the Bakou-Tbilissi-Ceyhan Oil Pipeline, which was inaugurated in Baku, May 2005 and is functioning already.

Caravansarai program, with various art projects *simply* intends to follow this economical/political reconstruction and building the cultural bridges.

Caravansarai Station Istanbul – *the space in the space.*

Like the very first *Station* project, created during the "On the Other Side of History" (produced by Apollonia and curated by Anne Tronch) and realised in 2002 at the Ferme de Buisson, Paris – the Caravansarai – Station Istanbul, *Urbanconnections* will create a space within the space. Station 0 was the project (Niko Tsetsakhladze & Shalva Khakhanashvili) of photos, videos and sound installation. The very object of the installation was to "confront us with what we see daily and do not quite know how to overcome". "The Loneliness of the individual in the public space, the noise which drowns out words, the indifference which builds a monotonous, vaguely wooly universe, where the freedom to shout has probably disappeared", Anne Tronch, the curator of exhibition was writing in the catalogue.

The Caravansarai – Station Istanbul is a "stop" in the line, but connected with the other places, or an "exhibition in the exhibition" as it shows the movement process which is also something that has to do with different places.

Karsi Sanat, Artists participants:

Photo artists: Eduard de Pazzi, Alexandre Yterce, Florence Gonot, Colombe Marcasiano, Bruno Fournier & Jacques Crenn (France), Babi Badalov (Azerbaijan), Gul Ilgaz, Nadir Ede, Denizhan Ozer, Murat Germen, Sitki Kosemen (Turkey), Danae Stratou, Venia Bechrakis (Greece), Iliko Zautashvili (Georgia), Oksana Shatalova (Kazakhstan), Anton Solomukha (Ukraine), Anzor Selidjanov, Anastasia Shadieva, Alexandre Shishov, Shahnoza Karimbabaeva, Pavel Kim, Ernest Kurtveliev (Uzbekistan);

Video artists: Danae Stratou (Greece), François Daireaux (France), Yun Aiyoungh (Korea), Midori Sakurai (Japan), Natalya Lyakh (Russia), Ernest Kurtveliev (Uzbekistan) & Oksana Shatalova (Kazakhstan);

Forum & Round Table: Streetconnections, materials from the archives of Tashkent House of Photography (director Shahnoza Karimbabaeva) & documentation of the 1st Actual Photo & Video Festival: **East – West. Tashkent Crossroad.** *Max Penson, Hamdam Shorahmedov, Murat Germen, Shalva Khakhanashvili, Anton Solomukha, Sergei Abaturov etc.*

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