

8th Istanbul Biennial Intersections of Poetry, Art, Justice (2003)
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Part I Poetic Justice

The ironic meaning of the theme of the 8th Istanbul Biennial “Poetic Justice” that of a fitting punishment brought on by an individual’s own actions, seemed singularly inappropriate for an exhibition curated by an American in Turkey. The theme of the exhibition was created between September 11 and the start of the Afghan war in the winter of 2002. By the time of the opening of the 8th Istanbul Biennial, Turkey, which shares a border with Iraq as well as a Kurdish population, had boldly refused the United States military access to Iraq at great economic cost to itself.

Dan Cameron himself seemed to have been informed, to a certain extent, about recent Turkish politics. At the opening he cited the importance of poetry in Turkish politics. This reference, well-known in Turkey, refers to the fact that the current Prime Minister of Turkey Tayyip Erdogan, recited a famous late Ottoman/early nationalist poem by Ziya Gökalp at a political rally of his Islamist Saadet Parti when he was the mayor of Istanbul. He altered the last verse to give it an Islamist meaning, which was seen as a violation of the Constitution of the Turkish Republic. He was sued, taken to court and forced to leave office¹.

In the Middle East in general, and in the Ottoman Empire specifically, poetry has always had profound significance both aesthetically and politically. Poets have historically been more revered and more feared than visual artists. In the 20th century Nazim Hikmet was banned from Turkey and died in exile in 1963, much as Dante did in fourteenth century Florence, for speaking truth to power using the voices and comments of the ordinary person in order to make his message understood by a wide audience. In 1993 thirty one asık (folk poets who sing) and writers attending a conference in Sivas died when their hotel was burned down by fundamentalists during a riot. Although later ruled an accident, the act of silencing them demonstrates the fear of the power of poetry.

Visual artists, by comparison, have historically been minor notes in Ottoman culture, the most prominent served the sultan producing books of miniatures that recorded the events of a reign. Calligraphers had more status than miniature painters. *My Name is Red*, the prizewinning novel by Turkish writer Orhan Pamuk,² pivots around a fantasy that in the late sixteenth century western linear perspective and material realism encountered the eastern miniature traditions, creating a melodrama among the artists, but hardly a national political crises. In fact, Western artistic traditions were of little importance until the late nineteenth century. During the Ottoman

¹ When his party won the election in 2002, he was unable to serve as Prime Minister because he had been banned from politics as an enemy of the secular state. Only after the Supreme Court reversed that ruling and he ran in a by-election for the seat of an elected Senator who conveniently resigned could he become Prime Minister. Tayyip Erdoğan was famous for reading Islamist poetry. He had even cut a CD of his poetry readings.

² Orhan Pamuk, *My Name is Red*, English Translation Erdağ M. Göknar, Knopf, 2001

so called “modernization” efforts, French ideas in art appeared as a result of training the military officers in Paris in the principles of linear perspective. Thus Western perspective came linked with military aspirations. That could be called an early example of Poetic Justice.

As the first American curator of an Istanbul Biennial, Cameron seemed to pay homage to the importance of poetry in historic Ottoman culture, by claiming in his original statement that he sought artists who bridged “carefully articulated viewpoints about the outside world in a philosophical system that regards poetry as the pinnacle of human thought.”³ By the time of his catalog essay in 2003, however, he was shaken by the destruction of libraries and museums in Sarejevo and Baghdad. He decries United States’ actions in the Middle East and queries the place of art in a world that so devalues human life as to not even count civilian casualties.⁴

Juxtaposing Cameron’s individual concerns with the corporate sponsorship necessary to put on a Biennial, in this case mainly Japan Tobacco International, underscores the difficulties of creating a political statement in the Biennial format. On one page of the catalog corporate sponsors of special projects are actually paired with artists. Global capitalism supports these art shows as simple acts of decoration that provide a polite face to a ferocious process of dehumanization. These forces are more powerful than the simple creative act by the “global citizen” which Cameron seeks to laud as a means of the “evolution of human consciousness.” Cameron settles for just a few examples of truly politically effective statements and a blistering excerpt in the catalog from Arundhati Roy’s *Power Politics* on Enron’s disgusting dealing in water and power in India.⁵

On panels with titles like “Justice and the The Creative Act” and “Radical Poetics” critics and curators decried the idea that art could be political or that artists could have any effect on change in the real world. One claimed that he was “mystified” by the idea of “social engagement.” “Artists are not journalists”, another declared. Such clichéd, simplistic analysis demonstrates the persistence of formalist traditions. The critical discourse simply served to re-validate the tired and out-dated idea that the artist, in order to succeed, must remain isolated from the world. It completely failed to examine the fact that much art already brings together sophisticated aesthetics and social concern. If these successful negotiations between art and politics were supported and interpreted by critics, they would have a wider impact and more artists would be encouraged to pursue that direction. Instead the panelists sent a clear warning to any artist who might be upset about the state of the world and want to express it in their work. On one panel, two artists proposed alternative views. Shirin Neshat spoke of the idea that it was a luxury available to Americans to exclude politics, that Iranian artists had no such choice. Kutluğ Ataman referred to the artist as a court jester. Biennials are definitely a parallel universe in which considerations of the really anguished issues of the contemporary world are not considered acceptable by the power brokers.

³ *Poetic Justice*, brochure, Istanbul Foundation for Arts and Culture, unpaginated, 2003.

⁴ Dan Cameron, “Poetic Justice, Justice Deferred,” *Poetic Justice, Şiirsel adalet*, 8th International Istanbul Biennial, catalog, Istanbul Foundation for Culture and Arts, 2003, 17-27

⁵ Arundhati Roy, “The Reincarnation of Rumplestiltskin,” 37-39 excerpted from essay “Power Politics: The Reincarnation of Rumplestiltskin,” *Power Politics*, Cambridge, South End Press, 2001.

Perhaps because of Dan Cameron's personal feelings about the destruction of Middle Eastern culture, there were a few works that broke through the flattening effect of the Biennial to combine a powerful artistic and political statement. Shahram Karimi's "Traces" (2003) paid homage to hundreds of Iranian poets, writers, journalists, and other writers who have died, some in prison, some in exile. He painted their portraits on rice bags, and assembled them together in a huge wall of portraits paired with a list of their name, cause of death if known, as well as his own haunting poem about the disappearance of creative effort. Karimi paired this literal and poetic homage with a haunting abstracted video that moved through an abandoned ancient city and cemetery. This work achieved a balance of the political, literal, and the poetic, aesthetic. Two other works, both videos, also achieved this balance, Zarina Bhimji's video "Out of the Blue" (1999-2003), (seen at Documenta 11) showed the suffering and absences inscribed in the landscape and architecture of Uganda many years after the expulsion of Asians in the early 1970s. "Red Rubber Boots," (2000) by Bosnian Jasmila Zbanic, used a raw, journalistic technique to follow a mother seeking her child, by looking in mass graves for the boots she knew he was wearing when she last saw him.

Inevitably, Cameron included a great many artists who are part of the Biennial circuit. These artists are experienced with flying from city to city, installing work, attending an incredible number of parties and moving on to the next Biennial. The 80 artists from 42 countries sometimes lost their audience because many of the works only occupied the large spaces with vast amounts of materials. Their attractive, usually well made, work has something to say, but it rarely engages us deeply. The biennial format is more and more dominated by video and film but the range of technical facility ranges wildly, from utterly amateur to trained professional, from art school to journalism. Video, film and digital imagery are obviously appealing because they are easy to transport across borders. In several cases, artists have established themselves in sculpture or painting and then taken up video for a biennial project.

Part II The Turkish Artists

One of Turkey's great disadvantages as a locale for a foreign curator whose task is to choose a small number of Turkish artists for a Biennial, is that there are few resources for understanding its art history. The Biennial has been implanted in an art scene that does not yet regularly display art other than Classical and Ottoman in an accessible permanent location. The early modern museums in both Istanbul and Ankara are rarely open for budget reasons. There is no modern art museum covering art since World War II, and no contemporary museum that consistently presents a selection of prominent artists. Proje4L endeavored to create a contemporary venue and succeeded briefly, although selectively. It is currently closing its doors. Surveys of 20th century Turkish art exist only in the Turkish language. Without an established museum scene, each curator is led to artists or projects without any sense of the larger picture or history. The young artists who emerge at the Biennial themselves also lack an understanding of their own history. A type of self-Orientalizing leads to scorn of local artists who have been prominent in earlier decades. Consequently, art is produced in response to a curator's theme, rather than from a sense of personal commitment. The results can sometimes be successful (as in an exhibition in which contemporary artists intervened at Ephesus, the well-known Roman archeological site), but often there is a sense of artificiality and superficiality.

So curators coming into Turkey, because of language and logistical difficulties, are subject to their own perspectives, as well as heavy reliance on a local advisory committee (and ex-officio power brokers).⁶ Ostensibly, the choice of Turkish artists was based on a request for entries, and a selection from those entries, but what is the dynamic behind that process. Who submitted and why? Which ones were chosen and why? How do they fit into the larger picture of Turkish contemporary art?

Compared to the demographic of outstanding contemporary Turkish artists in which there is a preponderance of women who engage powerful social issues in a poetic way, the choice of Turkish artists for the Biennial with a couple of exceptions, is youthful (in some cases extremely so) dominantly male and distinctly unpoetic. Several of these youthful Turkish biennial artists form a sub group with a thematic focus entirely unrelated to “Poetic Justice”. The theme is their exploration of the margins of high culture, their efforts to create an intersection between their positions as artists or architects and the urban and rural culture produced outside the city or by migrants to the city from Anatolian and Black Sea villages. (Not) surprisingly, this was the theme of an exhibition held in Turkey in 2000 in which several of the artists chosen for the Biennial were included.⁷

The theme was first explored in Turkish art by Gülsün Karamustafa, who, more than ten years ago. She explored migrant urban culture through various perspectives in works such as “Mystic Transport” created for the 1992 Biennial (and currently on view in *How Latitudes become Forms: Art in A Global Age* ⁸ “Mystic Transport” consists of wire mesh containers on wheels holding brightly colored traditional Turkish quilts. The piece invokes the idea of home and shelter in the quilt and the practice of new migrants to the city finding work pushing around carts in factories. “Mystic Transport” is part of Karamustafa’s ongoing exploration of migration, partly based on her own family’s migration from Bulgaria to Turkey in the early 20th century. But for many years she has also specifically looked at the culture that represents a blend of urban and village as well as popular culture (her father was editor of *Radio Weekly*, one of the most widely read magazines about popular movie stars of the fifties and sixties).

Karamustafa’s art gives a Turkish art historical context to the work of some of the young artists in the Biennial. Can Altay, for example, observed “Paper men,” in various cities as they recycled paper from garbage. He documented the process with a journal, videos and photographs. Karamustafa’s “Mystic Transport” is more firmly in the art world, with the inherent beauty of the many colored hand stitched satin quilts, and repeated minimalist form of the carts. Altay works with the impromptu aesthetics of contemporary video and the accidents of whom he happened to see on the street. He has a semi-academic approach, mentioning in passing the work of Walter

⁶ An unnamed power broker was dubbed “Mr. Curatorhero” by well known Turkish artist, Bedri Baykam “Mr. Curatorhero made the whole art world believe that contemporary art in Istanbul meant Mr. Curatorhero and nothing else.” *Behind and Beyond Paint*, Pyramid, 2003.

⁷ *Yerleşmek (Becoming a Place)*, curator Vasif Kortun, Proje4L, Istanbul Museum of Contemporary Art, 2001. The artists in both shows are Can Altay, Oda Projesi, Esra Ersen. Also included were Gülsün Karamustafa and Huseyin Alptekin, another pioneer on this subject. At the time of the Biennial, another show featured this theme, Gelecek Demokrasi, “Future Democracy”, AkBank, Sept 10 – October 18, curated by Ali Akay. It included the artists Altan Bl, Cem Gencer, Claude Leon, Susan Kleinberg, and others.

⁸ Walker Art Museum, Milwaukee, 2003. In addition to Gülsün, there is also Can Altay - the same piece that he showed at Proje4L- and Esra Ersen. Vasif Kortun is part of the advisory committee.

Benjamin and an (unpublished?) article by Neşe Ösgen from the sociology department at EgeUniversity on “New Poverty in the City and the Garbage People.” His real interest is in documenting in between urban spaces, not people, or process.⁹ The journal documents his one failed attempt to communicate with one of the men. Language, class and anxiety on both sides seemed to create difficulties. One friend who spoke Kurdish finally told him that many of the recyclers are Kurdish from Van, that warehouses buy the paper at 60,000 turkish lira for one kilo (100,000 equals one dollar) Near the end of the project, it is reported in the newspaper *Radikal*, that a red-haired man, who may be the same as one Atay has seen, has been killed. This dramatic information seems to take him away from his initial intention. The point of the work initially was not to uncover invisible power networks or working conditions (the piece is not politically informed), but simply to document in between spaces. From his detached position as a privileged young artist, he suddenly has come face to face with the reality of life in the street.

Another group, Oda Projesi (Room Project) is an on-going endeavor which has its main base in a rented street level room in an older district of central Istanbul. Their purpose again appears to be creating intersections with the “margins”. Historically, this district was the European sector of the city, where Jews, Armenians, Greeks, and other non-Muslims lived during the Ottoman Empire. In the twentieth century as these groups gradually disappeared, migrants from Anatolia and the Black Sea moved into the old apartment buildings in the 1960s and 1970s. Thirty years later these residents are lower middle class urbanites who work in small stores and factories. They represent an early wave of urban migration, that has been followed by many, many more groups, who live on the outskirts of Istanbul in what are known as gecekondü “built overnight” apartments.¹⁰ The three young women, Guneş Savaş, Özge Acıkkol and Seçil Yersel, of the Oda Projesi, occasionally have communal dinners with their neighbors, and a few art related activities. The artists are viewed as pleasant, but fairly peculiar by the residents of the neighborhood, according to another local artist who is friends with them. They would rather see some real material help like repairs to their buildings or money to send their children to school, rather than art activities.¹¹ The Oda Projesi showed a “model” of a gecekondü at the Biennial. Using a lot of valuable and expensive materials, a small house was built by a man who has built gecekondü on the outskirts of Istanbul. Accompanying the model was a newspaper with articles on gecekondü by an architect, sociologist, critic, historian. The Biennial gecekondü is a gratuitous structure, in contrast to the real thing, which is built overnight illegally in an act of desperate self-preservation on the part of newly arrived migrants. The question is what is the purpose of Oda Projesi? Are they educating themselves, are they educating urban migrants, are they educating art audiences, are they creating a new culture that brings urban migrant forms together with the art world or are they riding a trend?

⁹Erden Kosova and Can Altay “Minibar” *Yerleşmek*, 282-283, reprinted in *Poetic Justice*, 8th Biennial Catalog, 62 and *How Latitudes Become Forms*.161

¹⁰ Latife Tekin, *Berji Kristin (Tales from the Garbage Hills)*, English translation by Ruth Christie and Saliha Paker. Marion Boyars, London, 1996, is an indispensable book for a view of migrant life. Tekin’s earlier book *Sevgili Arsız Ölüm, (Dear Shameless Death)*, 1983, tells of her own childhood move from a small Anatolian Village to a central district of Istanbul.

¹¹ Telephone conversation May 5, 2004 with Consuelo Echevarria, an American artist working in this district of Istanbul, who knows many of the residents.

Esra Ersen's video "Brothers and Sisters" certainly follows a trend of exploring the subject matter of marginal populations. In her work though there is little connection or ongoing relationship between the artist and her subjects. She presents what purports to be incidents in the lives of recent African immigrants to Istanbul. In the video, the story is constructed by the artist and imposed on footage that actually distorts the original character of the event which she has filmed. Not only does Ersen's video suggest a lack of respect for her subjects, but it actually puts them in danger with the authorities, since many of them are undocumented.¹²

Far more authentic, although technically rough, is the work of Fikret Altay, a young Kurd from Batman, in Southeastern Turkey. Altay intersected with his own community when he filmed young boys dancing at night in the booth of an ATM machine. The ATM machine location is a public space for middle class credit card holders, these young boys co-opted it for their own dance (although somewhat self-consciously, they were filmed on another occasion, after the artist happened to see them dancing there). Altay uses hand-held video, a technique that inserts itself constantly into the public space, and he is filming his own city, and people that are more similar to him than different. This same work has been shown in such far away cities as New York and Berlin.¹³ The reviewer of the 3rd Berlin Biennial found his hand held video of young Kurds in what he described as the "militarized Kurd area near Turkey's border with Iraq" more exciting than anything he saw in the official exhibition¹⁴. One has to ask why? Is it the ordinariness of the subject, the shakiness of the film, the "exoticism" and "danger" of a "militarized" city? Batman is actually a boring industrial center, not a hotbed of danger.

Xurban_collective is a website described as dedicated to art and politics. It is actually a collaboration between architect Güven Incirlioğul living in Turkey and web designer Hakan Topal, living in New York. Both are theorists of contemporary space. All the way from Eastern Turkey into the gallery, they brought a container formerly used for smuggling diesel fuel from Iraq. The industrial form had a powerful presence and easily fit in the continuum of minimalist art.. What did it really say? That smuggling is now defunct and irrelevant or that they had enough funds to transport this now useless container into an art exhibition? Does the container itself resonant with the activities that it was used for, like an archeological relic uncovered beneath a contemporary city? Certainly, the artists would argue in favor of the last. They describe themselves as "flaneur-in-reverse", looking for the ruins of the city, rather than its elegance, they see themselves as identifying with the victims of global capitalism, but of course, they are so removed from truly engaging the lives or the spaces of the margins, that their stance becomes as dandified as that of any late nineteenth century flaneur.

Outside of this group of young and not so young, but recently heavily promoted, Turkish artists, the work of Kutlug Ataman is a welcome relief on several levels. As a trained filmmaker in narrative film, his work *1+1=1* is well crafted. It also has a powerful and specific content. Nese Yaşin, a well-known Cypriot poet and journalist is shown on two screens split by a corner at two

¹² Based on conversation with people who are working daily with these immigrants in Istanbul, September 2004.

¹³ Altay was first seen internationally in "Undesire" April 18 – May 17, 2003, Apex Art, New York City, curated by Vasif Kortun. The artist told me that he had sent several videos to Kortun over a period of months and that is the one he selected to display. In conversation, Istanbul, September 2003.

¹⁴ Adrian Searle, "Lost in Translation," *The Guardian*, March 16, 2004.

ends of a table, doubled with a reflection in a mirror, talking about her two different experiences on Cyprus as a child, with the Greeks and with the Turks. On the one hand, her father disappeared and they had to flee the Greeks, on the other hand, the Turkish army claiming peace brought destruction and she had to flee the Turks. In the film she narrates these dramatic events without ever leaving the table. The work is about talking, not about movement. Within the talk is the division of the island and her divided experience. The piece is formally tight, and conceptually compact, even as it carries a specific political content, the lack of clarity between good and evil in any conflict.

Part III. The Turkish Context

The challenge of the myth and reality of the city of Istanbul is ever present at the Istanbul Biennial. The city on the Bosphorus, has one foot in Europe (the most ancient, conservative part of the city) and the other in Asia (where modern apartment buildings house the middle class). This year, the main venue, Antrepo-4, a former warehouse transformed into a traditional white walled space, was located on what was once an active commercial waterfront and now plays host to enormous cruise ships. The juxtaposition to vacation mega commerce seemed appropriate somehow, as the Biennials are a type of vacation mega commerce themselves.

There was nothing Turkish about this setting, it was typical industrial waterfront, similar although smaller in scale to the spaces of the rope factory in Venice or the beer factory in Kassel. It isolates the art in a maze like labyrinth, giving it more presence because of the absence of cultural markers in the space itself. Nothing distracts from the art world's solipsism. The fashion for this type of space again underscores the difficulty of artists contributing to a social discourse. They are sequestered away from society. They speak not to one another, but to themselves, and the privately meditating viewer. There is no collective conversation. Any political commentary competes in this vast sequence of individual works each with its own topic.

The lower floor of Antrepo was almost entirely devoted to separate spaces for viewing videos. Numerous cylindrical and rectangular rooms created a series of mysterious dark encounters with work that demanded hours of our time, time which we were not in all cases willing or able to give. They ranged from slow motion examination of blood dripping down a face (Fiona Tan), to massive uproarious soccer audiences (Stephen Dean) Upstairs, in a brighter setting there was an accumulation of paintings, drawings, sculpture, installation, photography, and mixed media works combined with a web based work on "Distributive Justice" by Andreja Kulancic as well as a boxing match on opening night, and a curtain by Ann Hamilton that periodically swept rapidly across part of the room. The miscellenousness of the work contradicted thematic unity. One of the most impressive works was Tania Bruguera's narrow corridor of used teabags with teabag sized videos inserted. She spoke of the fragility of empire, the circularity of tea within the imperialist system, at the same time that she created an intensely sensuous space. Bruguera, a Cuban artist, passed through Chicago on her way to the Biennial and was detained for weeks by customs officials. The injustice of this event went completely unnoted at the Biennial.

Across the road, almost uncrossable because of construction, was a second venue, Tophane -i Amire, a stone-walled Ottoman cannon factory, that is now used as a museum for temporary exhibitions. It is a large high ceiling space and the work there was lost by its scale or seemed unnecessarily inflated in order to accommodate the scale. Emily Jacir's work in which she invited

young Palestinians of the diaspora to tell her what they would do if they could return to their homeland filled one large wall. The pairing of their desires written in English and Arabic and her enactment of them in Palestine seemed appropriately small scaled in the vast space. These small acts in the face of the vast death and destruction ongoing in Palestine correctly situated the artist and the limited means at her disposal. But, the poetic simplicity of throwing a soccer ball or drinking a cup of coffee as a desired fantasy worked perfectly to remind us of the larger tragedy of Palestine.

A third venue, not far away (if you knew where you were going) on a major pedestrian shopping street, was a bank converted into a contemporary art space, in which Shazia Sikander had a one person exhibition. Oddly, she was one artist who would have worked well in an historical setting. Her placement in the most predictable contemporary art space was problematic for her usually layered and subtle art. When she translated her traditional miniature technique into large oils in order to fill the walls, they lost their intensity and subtlety. On the other hand, her unique palette and eccentric compositions demonstrated that Sikander never settles for the predictable. As she boldly confronted Western painting traditions, she made her own unique statement. Other work daringly explored eccentric combinations of media, such as wall painting and video, based on an animated miniature painting of a composite elephant composed of many small creatures who gradually disappear.

In many ways these three venues would have been sufficient to comprise a contemporary exhibition. Why Cameron and the Biennial organizers once again deployed historic sites is baffling. It seems to be an Orientalist trap that the Istanbul Biennial holds out to its curators, waiting for the time when the visiting curator will finally accept Istanbul as a contemporary city on its own terms. Perhaps curators simply love to see what art can survive in the midst of real history. The answer is very little. Contemporary art set in monumental historic buildings usually tells us that we are in the midst of an international rococo age of shallow, self indulgent materialism. Perhaps that is Poetic Justice.

In the touristic district of Istanbul, there were works in Hagia Sophia (originally an enormous Byzantine church, then a mosque, now a museum) and the Byzantine cistern. The Spanish artist, Lucia Koch, had a delightful reception at the historical Cağaloğul Hamam near Hagia Sophia. We were invited to have a Turkish bath and then enjoy Spanish fortified wine and grapes. She simply inserted colored cellophane over some of the domed windows of the hamam in order to enhance our enjoyment of lighting. She intervened in a traditional tourist space with an understated alteration. The reception took place in a traditional shared open courtyard between the male and female parts of the hamam. While there were definite Orientalist and touristic overtones, it also had an unpretentiousness that worked.

While the historic venues overwhelmed almost any art with their sheer presence, Nalini Malani's work in the Yerbatan Cistern was magical. Her rotating circular acetate discs projected overlapping sequences of the shadows and reflections of fantastic beasts interspersed with guns and skulls on the wet floor, wall, ceiling. Projected against this was footage of the bombing of Hiroshima during World War II. Malani's work took time to penetrate. The first impression was

soft colors, light, and music. But as the bombing interrupted it, the fantasy world was psychically invaded by death and destruction.

One artist in the Biennial managed to achieve a perfect balance with the city and the theme of the exhibition. Mike Nelson chose to take up residency for three weeks in the Buyuk Valide Han, a crumbling market building.. He set up a dark room, took photographs of the han, made friends with the elderly craftsmen living there, hung up his negatives and photographs and left town. The Buyuk Valide Han is named after the influential wife of a sultan who built this structure in the seventeenth century. Today it is a crumbling center, with textile traditions that go back for centuries, set in the midst of one of the busiest traditional shopping areas of Istanbul. Not far from the more famous and touristic Grand Bazaar and the Spice Bazaar, it nevertheless requires some alert navigation to find it in the midst of the surrounding commotion. Once inside the building is quiet, it seems like a dying historical space, but entering the shop of a weaver with an enormous antique loom, the loud slam of his loom fills the air. He takes pride in his work as his father and grandfathers have done. The tea man, a Turkish institution, serves tea and tells us they he has worked there all his life since he was seven years old. We enter Nelson's workshop, and climb about in the semi darkness looking at his pictures of the building through which we have just passed.

But Nelson's work was not about him, it was not about the photographs of the building as objects, it was about respect, perhaps even some sadness, for the experience and the poetry of the building, and its workers, soon to be swept away by age and globalization. It was about the hospitality of the workers. One of the workers led us to the roof to admire a spectacular view of the city in all directions as we climb over the domes covering each workshop with grass growing up in the cracks. When art critics who came for the weekend found the space, they usually found Nelson's area shut and believed they had missed seeing the artwork. In fact, they had missed seeing the point of the artwork which was the experience of this ancient building. The fact that they thought they had missed something was perfect Poetic Justice.

Most successful, outside the Biennial venue, Hamam, Tony Feher, Han piece, Doris Salcedo, Videos, ?? Art ?? Self indulgent ?? Boxing? Vegetable piece, Araya R American isolation.