

**CUI BONO?\***

***MY STATEMENT AFTER THE CANCELLATION OF 5<sup>TH</sup>  
ÇANAKKALE BIENNALE***

As a citizen of Turkey, born in 1942, I regret to say that I have not experienced “democracy” in its possible form. 15<sup>th</sup> July 2016 is the fourth time that I experienced a military coup, one that will determine the future of today’s young generation.

Secularism within the Modernist paradigm established by Atatürk and all the attempts of having an updated constitution throughout 90 years has somehow failed and human rights, freedom of press, and expression are now severely damaged.

Now, we are witnessing a strong polarization between seculars and religious people, racism threatening a convivial coexistence between ethnic identities and minorities. Behind this multi-polarization I can see the frightening inequality of income and opportunities. Simply explained 30M people in Turkey are under or at the level of poverty! On the other hand consumption system is forcing these people to consume, the spectacle system is injecting non-satisfiable false dreams. AKP has promised to fulfill the needs and dreams of the conservative rural and urban middle classes by introducing Islam as the background for their promised and potential welfare.

For the freedom of expression and opposition the most effective cultural production in Turkey is the 200 year old Modernist, Post-Modernist and Relational Aesthetic production due to the excellent socio-political, critical and dissident artists. Their internationally recognized works have accumulated a significant heritage of contemporary art which cannot disappear in one day. This heritage is not only representing the state of affairs of these 50 years of struggle for EU democracy standards, but it was also became a model for South Caucasus, Middle-East and East Mediterranean contemporary art production and networking. I hope that all this energy and effort will be sustainable, no doubt with the solidarity of EU friends and institutions.

However, at present we have to be very alert about the limitations of all kinds of human rights, not only of freedom of artistic expression.

Journalists, academics and state employed theater actors/actresses - obviously without any reasonable cause - are now the target group of the government. One issue should be considered that unless it is not

exhibited in public space, contemporary art works –even if they are dissident- is not considered as a threat to the ruling ideology. That means, contemporary art production in Turkey is supposed to be reaching only the elites, even if the artists intend to reach a larger population. On the other hand there are many cases of censorship which are listed on the website [www.siyahbant.org](http://www.siyahbant.org)

Currently we might have a stagnant and less-active period in front of us. Looking back to these 50 years I can say that artists and curators had strong experience in creating new strategies and methods to by-pass the possible threats coming from the conservative and oppressive circles. Even if the private sector investment in contemporary art (private museums in Istanbul, İstanbul Biennale, Sinopale, Çanakkale and Mardin Biennale) is a must for the neo-capitalist image of Turkey and cannot be ignored by the ruling politicians and economy team, there is no guaranteed ground for a trouble-free production of contemporary art or other creative activities.

**Thus we have experienced a sudden attack to the realization of the 5<sup>th</sup> Çanakkale Biennale.**

Çanakkale Biennial ([www.canakkalebiennial.com](http://www.canakkalebiennial.com)) is the outcome of the creative and positive energy of the city and its inhabitants. The civil NGO CABININ is determined to stay in the global mainstream contemporary art by improving the content and aesthetic of the biennial. The biennale is mainly funded by the Municipality and local NGO's as well as all international culture institutions (countries of invited artists) which are active in Turkey.

**To our regret, on September 4, the ruling party AKP Çanakkale members have released a press-release addressing the Mayor of Çanakkale, who is representing the opposition party CHP. Due to the political competition they asked him the question *how he is allowing Beral Madra to be the curator of the biennale, given the fact that she is through her Twitter messages criticized CHP party's leader (I did), and who is according to Twitter her messages a supporter of the recent military coup (no, I am not) and supporter of the pro-Kurdish HDP (yes, I did)*. They challenged the Mayor to fire me and announce me as a persona non grata in the city.**

**These accusations and defamations are fabricated towards their goal.**

**The intention of this dishonorable attitude is to have the upper-hand in promoting the historical-nationalist cultural image of the city, as this image is planned to serve the conservative ideology of the ruling party and not the secular-democratic image of the opposition party. Apparently Biennale for them is the most fertile ground for freedom of expression and democratic processes.**

The declaration of CABININ, the organizer of the biennale is published in [www.canakkalebienali.com](http://www.canakkalebienali.com)

We will not be able to realize this biennale, but we will continue our quest of establishing a secure ground for contemporary art and culture production. Artists and art experts can find many ways and strategies to come out of this obscurity.

Thanking to all the artists and sponsors who have accepted to participate and I hope that our EU colleagues will strengthen their collaboration and solidarity and our achievements will continue.

BERAL MADRA  
[www.beralmadra.net](http://www.beralmadra.net)

\*TO WHOSE GOOD