

Corner College

Kochstrasse 1 • 8004 Zürich

Sinopale, International Sinop Biennial, Turkey
in collaboration with Corner College, Zürich
present:

“COLLECTING THE FUTURE”

A SINOPALE EXHIBITION

at Corner College, Kochstrasse 1, 8004 Zürich
from 13 February to 14 March 2015

With Amélie Brisson-Darveau, Quynh Dong, Benjamin Egger, Karen Geyer, Esther Kempf, Franziska Koch, Petra Koehle & Nicolas Vermot Petit-Outhenin, Daniel Marti, Garrett Nelson, Cat Tuong Nguyen, RELAX (chiarenza & hauser & co), Romy Rügger, Riikka Tauriainen, and works from the collection of Sinopale by Alpaslan Baloğlu, Nezaket Ekici, Shilpa Gupta, Ashley Hunt, Emre Koyuncuoğlu, Monali Meher, Lerzan Ozer, Adrien Tirtiaux, XsentrikArts, Eşref Yıldırım.

Curated by T. Melih Görgün, artistic director of Sinopale, and co-curated by Dimitrina Sevova

The exhibition collects in a non-linearly organized display at Corner College reflections, documentation, archive and research materials as well as some art works from the five editions of Sinopale – International Sinop Biennial, in-between its past, present and future. Especially for this exhibition, the Swiss participants in the past two editions reflect on their work at Sinopale in contributions between archive, research and art work.

One can say that Sinopale is a peripheric and young biennial for contemporary art on the map of the International Biennials of the art world system, and rather alternative to the so-called “biennial phenomena” and their genre. If it has been in a position of weakness with respect to the center and its political, economic and aesthetic dominance, indeed it mobilizes personal and collective collaborative efforts on the creative edge, where crossing over local and global perspectives, south and north and east and west, it analyzes and re-signifies the biennial discourses dominated by a logic of globalization, traveling art lovers and the shipping of expensive art works.

With its less spectacular exhibition and more humble project, it embraces a rather pragmatic approach to its structures, which in its generosity functions in the mode of new institutionalism rather than institutional critique, and even generates a rupture with the representational models of the big-scale art world projects from the center. It has the advantage to re-invent the relevance of the relation between contemporary art practices and daily life, and re-define the paradoxes of the creation of the value and status of art on the limit. It re-situates and re-articulates the notion of art and its institutionally driven formats and betrays the established network of distribution of art, such as the art markets or the circuit of commercial galleries. Here art, in a real situation, can be seen as an object that acts as ambiguous support or medium or catalyst of existential change and new ways of transference of relations, i.e., art practices serve as transversal tools for social change that can dissolve in the existing context as they externalize and modulate it and can productively cast new bridges to reconnect the land-space-town, with responsibility towards relational and new ecologies and their potentialities that engender the conditions for creation.

This transversality is not given, but a matter of a pragmatics of existence, a kind of openness and progressive deterritorialization from existing modelization. “Transversality still

signifies militant, social, undisciplined creativity" (Félix Guattari), where art practices work as urban guerilla.¹

Sinopale puts a finger on the painful points and dynamics in the post-industrial and neoliberal conditions of living in-between urbanized and rural environments in which the commercialization and permanence of the economic crises threaten the communities and challenge daily-life existence.

Sinopale is a Biennial for all, with its broad and open stage for an aesthetics and politics of art that can empower the quality and quantity of life and bring new experiences in which the present memory and historical past interweave towards the future, with the social and cultural commitment and self-valorization.

Most of the artistic works that were created by the artists during Sinopale have become more of a collective-collaborative process, being produced with the involvement of city-dwellers of all ages, genders, and walks of life. For Sinopale, one of the most urgent questions is that of participation and the dissemination of art and knowledge, which it attempts to turn into a nomadic distribution while bundling local resources, not to consume them, but to encourage their cultural productivity as a long-term investment in the social, relying on the personal and group engagement of volunteers and activists, as well as its international partners and supporters. Sinopale, with its five editions, shows the continuity and consistency to self-sustain in its intercultural exchange, as it insinuates art in particular environments, without assigning to the town an assumed identity, rather seeing it as a collective social protagonist with its ever shifting reality.

Sinopale aims by means of art to reassemble the social as a collection, to re-examine collectivity as different actors and agents that produce a relational network of unexpected and "creative re-modulations", and compose new and multiple views which can oppose homogenization and oppressive marginalization, and encourage a micro-climate and minor forms of difference and affirm the margins as a positive term that can resist hegemonic, essentialist and rigid visions. Based on the phantasmization of the orient based on the past, and its exoticization that Gerardo Mosquera called "The Marco Polo Syndrome,"² the exploitation of the imaginary mechanism has been transformed into new fears after September 11 and their black and white hegemonic inscriptions from which new social subjects appear along with "the dreadful rise of religious fundamentalism." Sinopale makes space for subverting these representations and activates a "counter-hegemonic project" of utopian vision, where the one who represents and the other that can only be represented can crystallize new personal relations embodied in concrete images, objects, situations and experience between art and its audience.

Sinopale is a platform that consists of a large-scale exhibition and a multitude of events of different formats. It is an event-driven, process, site and context oriented biennial that relies on art production based on artists' creation research, field work, ephemeral performative events, and encourages practices of intervention, workshop formats and modes of sharing with the local communities and crafts. It is important to us to emphasize its experimental character which provokes art practices to bring forth new modes of production, experience and circulation between the field of art and daily life, inspired by locality and its place and specific context.

Sinopale draws its name from the town of Sinop where it takes place, whose geographic location at the Northern-most point of the Black Sea shore in Turkey made it strategically important and militarized during the period of the Cold War. In the local narratives, Sinop has been a space for exile of poets, philosophers and political rebels and prisoners since ancient times. The local people have embraced something of the Cynic philosophy of Diogenes, who was born in the town of Sinop. The women's narrative stream in the spirit of locality resonates with the mythic power of the Amazons who dwelt in the primordial forests nearby.

Sinopale is interested in other forms of resistance and adaptation of local movements and civil society initiatives, ecological activism and nongovernmental politics, which we can

1 Hou Hanru emphasized at the beginning of the 10th International İstanbul Biennial manifesto that "We are living in a time of global wars," and stated that "In such a debate, artistic actions, including the Biennial itself, can certainly find their roles in prompting cultural and social changes through innovative forces of intervention – a form of urban guerilla." 10th International İstanbul Biennial, Hou Hanru, "Not Only Possible, But Also Necessary: Optimism in the Age of Global War" (İstanbul: İstanbul Foundation for Culture and Arts, 2007).

2 Gerardo Mosquera, "The Marco Polo Syndrome: Some Problems around Art and Eurocentrism", in Elena Filipovic, Marieke van Hal and Siveig Ovstebo (eds.), *The Biennial Reader* (Bergen and Ostfildern: Bergen Kunsthall and Hatje Cantz Verlag, 2010).

be re-translated as an environmental engagement of art and culture with ethico-aesthetic ecologies.

Both in the special exhibition as part of Sinopale 5 in 2014, *An Ideal Laboratoire: Village Institutes*, and in its overall approach, Sinopale pays special attention to self-organized educational forms, to grassroots movements of radical pedagogy in Turkey like the Village Institutes movement which in the middle of the last century was the cornerstone of the rural development project, whose students built the school buildings from self-made bricks and farmed their own food, whose teaching method brings together practical and classical disciplines, rhizomatic and horizontal relations between teachers and students. This finds its continuation in the quasi-academic formats of Sinopale's summer academy and Sinopale forum, in which aesthetics, activism and nongovernmental politics are discussed directly and without mediation, giving a voice to the local community to participate and express a multitude of voices on an equal level with the artists, theoreticians, urbanists and other experts.

The experience of global transformations and the perpetual economic crisis underlined the necessity of setting up more independent and almost anonymous structures, and creating sustainable networks. We see that, right at this point, the new independent and self-organized initiatives that rose up from under the grip of globalization and commercialization, develop and enhance their discourse. Accordingly, Sinopale pioneers an anonymous development in which no one and no institution are exalted. All articulated parts of the biennial appear as answers to the call made by the community for its needs.

Text by T. Melih Görgün, Nilüfer Sülüner and Dimitrina Sevova

EDITIONS OF SINOPALE

"Clusters and Crystals: Observing at Point Zero" in 2014, curated by T. Melih Görgün, Dimitrina Sevova, Aslı Çetinkaya, and Işın Önel, was the fifth and most recent edition of Sinopale. As outlined in the text written by T. Melih Görgün and Dimitrina Sevova, the exhibition focused on the quest for new ecologies and minor forms of learning:

"We undertake to *Observe at Point Zero* drawing on the genealogy of a method in which "no universal cartography exists"³ *Clusters and Crystals* both refer to our immaterial and environmental commons and the "immeasurability of the common, which constitutes the very fabric of the making and unmaking of being."⁴ [...] Such presentism creates a new space or a field, in which "subjectivation as a process, and 'Self' as a relation (a relation to oneself) [...] a relation of a force to itself"⁵ occur, and political and aesthetic practices of subjectivity can take place. "Subjectivation isn't even anything to do with a 'person': it's a specific or collective individuation relating to an event (a time of day, a river, a wind, a life...). It's a mode of intensity, not a personal subject."⁶

This edition of Sinopale is entirely dedicated to taking care of minor forms of learning, to supporting alternative community education and providing equal access to art and knowledge produced on site. With this we hope to increase the awareness of the present, in favor of a social development respectful of and inspired by ecologies, which can draw on and re-evaluate that knowledge that has been marginalized, excluded, and forgotten, and recycle wasted materials to give them new life and functions.

We are interested in that knowledge able to resist, because resistance can be understood as a productive practice in common in all its ecological domains, both a poetic paradox of substance and theoretical thought, as an ontological practice and biopower.

3 Félix Guattari, *The Machinic Unconscious: Essays in Schizoanalysis*, trans. Taylor Adkins (Los Angeles/CA: Semiotext(e) / Foreign Agents, 2011).

4 Antonio Negri, *Time for Revolution*, trans. Matteo Mandarini (London / New York: Bloomsbury, 2013/2003).

5 Gilles Deleuze, "Breaking Things Open, Breaking Words Open," in *id.*, *Negotiations*, trans. Martin Joughin (New York/NY: Columbia University Press, 1995, p. 92).

6 Gilles Deleuze, "Life as a Work of Art," in *Negotiations*, *op. cit.* (pp. 98-99).

In order to produce new statements we do not start from 'the great politics' but from a process that was marginal at first, from the minor forms, with the argument that the minor implies the concrete. Hence there is no panoramic view of human conditions. Nonetheless, paradoxically, minor forms can never be outside history, because they are concrete resistance, and as such produce history. Minor learning processes provide the major movement of thoughts, its vital forces. Learning concerns all living matter and systems of interaction of human and non-human networks."

The edition of Sinopale before that in 2012, "Wisdom of Shadow: Art in the Era of Corrupted Information," curated by Aslı Çetinkaya, Elke Falat, Işın Önel, Dimitrina Sevova, Janet Kaplan, Beral Madra, Sean Kelly, Mürteza Fidan, Associazione E (Francesco Urbano & Francesco Ragazzi), and Ana Riaboshenko, represents our pursuit to realize a global politics in the micro scale of our urban adventure.

"The era which we live in besides its many other attributions, is often cited as the Information Age. Probably this name is meant to announce the probability of faster and easier access to information. Ironically enough, as the quantity and the speed of information increase we seem to lose our confidence in it. This is an era that each arriving data immediately destructs the previous one; following to the new data, their controversial rhetoric, conspiracy theories, contradictory oppositions are as well spread rapidly. As a distinctive characteristic of the age, attention is continuously being called upon the next informative update, before one relates to the newly received information. The thought that, any piece of information is prone to all sorts of manipulation and hence corruption during its trajectory from the source to the individual seems to be highly internalised that the concept of 'true' is almost always accompanied by a huge question mark. [...]

Sinop, known as the home of Diogenes, the philosopher who defended and practiced the principles of living in simplicity and in accord with nature, is now subject to the 'philosophy' of demanding and consuming more and is one of many places for implementation of corresponding global politics in the micro scale. *Wisdom of Shadow: Art in the Era of Corrupted Information* tries to remind the need to question the sustainability of resources which we exhaust irresponsibly in the name of progress, enlightenment and access to information. It plans to open up a field of interaction by giving a space for the dark image rather than 'casting light' on darkness. This is an invitation to experience the shadow and through the metaphorical possibilities it suggests reconsider the ways and means of our existence in the world."
(from the curatorial text by Işın Önel)

"Hidden Memories, Lost Traces" in 2010, curated by T. Melih Görgün, Beral Madra, Dr. Vittorio Urbani, Dr. Nike Baetzner, Dr. Vaari Claffey, Rana Öztürk, Branko Franceschi, and Dr. Hande Sağlam, was one of the titles picked for Sinopale that has not only manifested the significance of urban consciousness in an era of global depression but also emphasized the importance of a re-look at the values of a city.

When Sinopale 2 launched in 2008 with the title "The New Order of Things," curated by Dr. Stephan Schmidt-Wulffen, Beral Madra, Monali Meher, Nezaket Ekici, Murteza Fidan, Heiner Holtappels, Emre Koyuncuoglu, Umut Südüak based on Beral Madra's conceptual note, it undertook an alternative task and brought to the agenda a proposal about re-opening the town to debate. Within the context of the totality of the town, the title that we have grounded when we were thinking around the theme of Sinopale 2, was also chosen in order to represent a summary of the circumstances such as the latest state of the transformed knowledge, the inhabitants of the town, the state of staying unwittingly in a global play, the relation between the local and the international, the struggles of the citizens and ideological interventions.

For the first Sinopale in 2006 we selected the "-thing" as a concept for undefinable situations to be considered. With this frame we emphasize the start of a long-term learning and experiencing process as it is outlined in Hou Hanru's statements. Without denying "the urban and the culture", we worked on the conceptual framework of Sinopale as a reflection of a thinking process of being silent in the region up North.

Sinopale – International Sinop Biennial is the title of an international organization that embraces micropolitics and self-organized principles and rather alternative structures.

Building on its long-term, sustainable micro-political and emancipatory efforts as organizer of Sinopale, the European Cultural Association, with the collaboration of international,

national and local art and cultural actors, civil initiators, aims at working at local, national and international levels to make citizens of all ages perceive anew their own living spaces with a vision for the future, reflect on urban problems, share the historical collective memory and organize it by means of artistic production, and to create a better social living space.

The exhibition titled "Collecting the Future," which will be hosted at Corner College, is the result of the collaboration between Sinopale, its director T. Melih Görgün and its organizing team, and the Corner College Collective and Dimitrina Sevova who was personally involved by her curatorship in the last two Sinopale editions (Sinopale 4 and 5), through which sixteen Swiss artists traveled, worked on the spot and took part in Sinopale.