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Contemporary Istanbul with figures after its first virtual fair

Last week, I participated in the last live broadcast of Contemporary Istanbul, which was held for the 15th time this year, as well as a simultaneous online tour. Thus, the fair, which started with the VIP preview on December 19, ended on January 6.

Before conveying my impressions since the Contemporary Istanbul press conference, which I attended on December 17th via zoom, I would first like to congratulate Akbank Sanat and Contemporary Istanbul for managing this process in an extraordinary way. Because in this process, which was difficult for many art galleries and artists, they did not really change their stance in any way despite all the risks and they could afford to continue on their way by reshaping themselves according to the agenda. If you ask me, this was the first and most important thing about this year's fair that should not be missed.

As for the fair, you have definitely had some followers from the press during this period. This year's fair, which featured 37 galleries from 11 countries, 560 artists, 1800 works and 13 initiatives, was a virtual fair that was accessible from all over the world free of charge for 19 days.

According to the latest information I received from the Contemporary Istanbul office last night, the fair received over 100,000 visits and over 1 million views in these 19 days. Given these numbers, I guess it would not be wrong to say that Contemporary Istanbul has experienced a first in its own history. In terms of sales, at Contemporary Istanbul, where Akbank Sanat is the main sponsor this year, as it has been for 15 years, a work went to a foreign buyer for a price of 480 thousand USD, while 36% of the 1800 works exhibited during the fair were sold and found new owners.

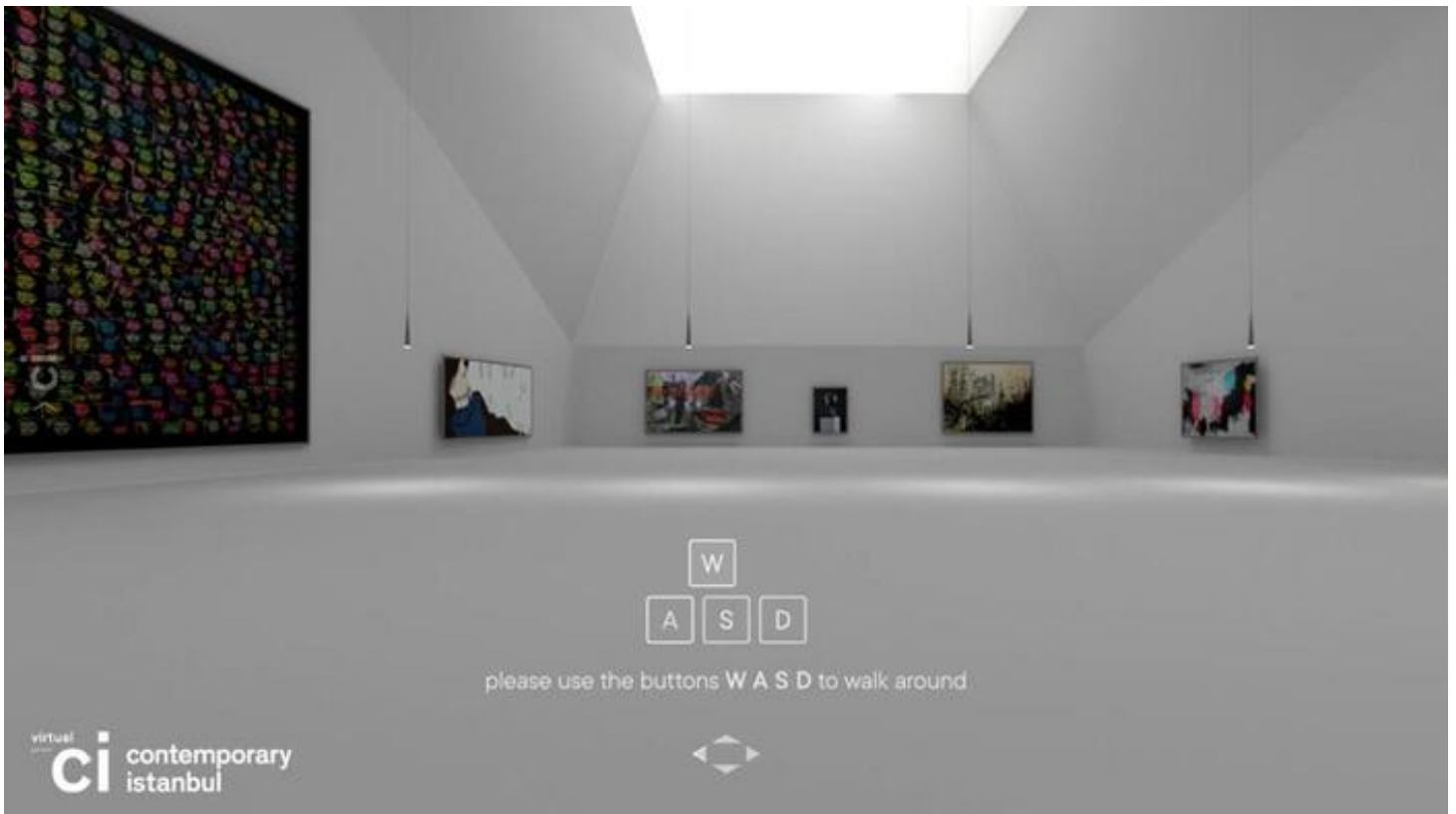


Approximately 1000 people participated in 14 online art tours. On this online tour, I need to share the following information with you. Frankly, I got detailed information about the galleries and artworks in this year's virtual Contemporary Istanbul, thanks to these guided tours organized by CI for the press and carried out on zoom.

Of course, this guided tour was attended by the curator, art writer, art historian and head of the Yeditepe University Arts and Cultural Management Department Prof. Dr. It was another privilege that it was given by Marcus Graf. For this reason, I participated in every online tour that I was invited to by Contemporary Istanbul during these 19 days and where he was a narrator. In short, my opportunity to experience and discover this year's fair over and over again was born here. For this reason, Prof. Dr. I think that having this experience under the leadership of a person who does his job with utmost care like Marcus Graf doubles the power of the fair.

On the other hand, I had very good information about some of the artworks exhibited at the fair, which Graf told about this art tour. In recent months I have seen again how the different course of life is changing our distinction between truth and truth. I reminded again that our lifestyles, which had to change completely in this process, were reconnecting us to nature, which we have been disconnected from for a long time. I realized that we were beginning to get acquainted with different versions of the concepts of simulation and illusion that we are used to seeing in science fiction movies.

I thought that the test of a person who is trying to cope with a world that has come to an end, described in apocalyptic scenarios, with nature is not only in movies. I felt that our multi-disciplinary structure in the new world order, our coexistence with many different cultures and people in the same environment at the same time, and our inability to fit into a single mold anymore, is transforming us into brand new hybrid models. While the artists bring out the testimonies of this period in their own dialects one by one, we pass through this process by cutting our own excesses and trying to complete the deficiencies. These were the feelings I had from some of the works exhibited at this fair ...



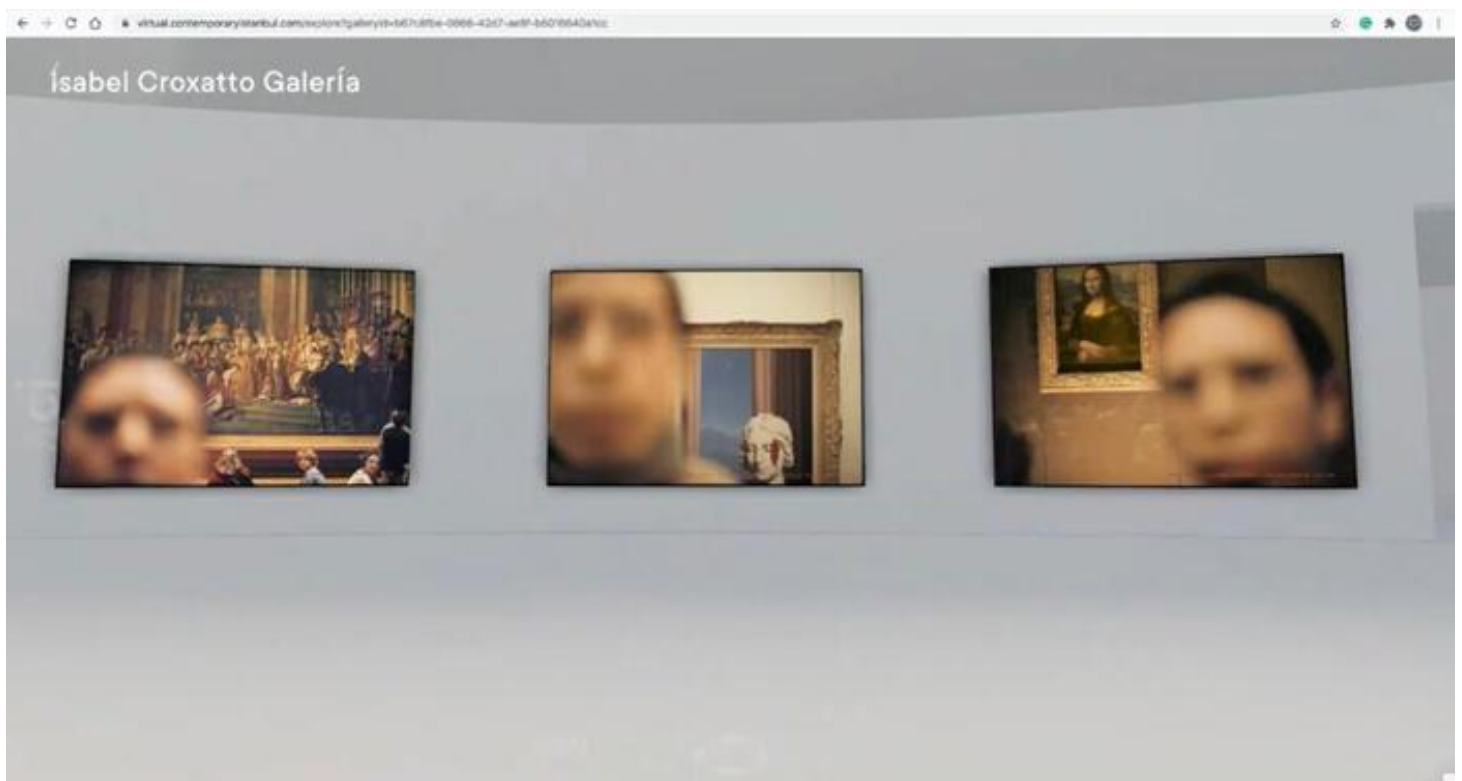
On the other hand, I do not want to pass without mentioning a piece that Graf narrates in this online tour. These photographs taken by Carlos Gallardo in the Isabel Croxatto Gallery by placing himself in the foreground obviously left a strange mark on me. Because in these photos, Gallardo actually took a selfie with himself behind the famous paintings, but his face was in the front of the photo, but he looked blurred. The famous paintings standing behind him were extremely clear. Graf Gallardo wrote the following sentence on these shots that he specially adjusted:

So, through this work, Gallardo says to us: "How can I stand out when I have these famous paintings behind me, these important works, how can I be important ...?"

However, isn't the selfie a selfish point of view that places itself clearly and in the foreground and wants to consider everything other than itself small and blurred? However, here Gallardo brings us a different perspective with his work.

He tells us differently about his respect for the past, his feeling small in the face of the grandeur of a work he knows very well, and how this feeling can affect his present. However, on the other hand, this does not change the fact that Gallardo has positioned himself in front of those magnificent paintings, even if it is blurred. Perhaps what Gallardo wants is to get lost in this paradox and enter the work even more ...

Long story short, if one wants to make some meanings for himself, the platform he is in is not virtual, he does not get stuck. The important thing is to see, or rather want to see what you can collect for yourself in an area offered to you without creating excuses. Therefore, as a last word, I would like to say the following about this year's fair.



As Murat Göllü, Head of Akbank Corporate Communications Department said both in the press conference and online tours, Akbank Sanat is really addressing the problem rather than withdrawing itself in the most difficult conditions, and in this process, the dedication to move their current work to the digital environment is definitely. does not leave. I believe more in this matter as I witnessed the one-hour live jazz concert that my wife Uraz Kivaner gave on her piano in the hall of our house for the Akbank Jazz Festival during the pandemic period and they gave her space to perform her art during this period.

On the other hand, I wholeheartedly support the efforts of Ali Güreli, Chairman of the Executive Board of Contemporary Istanbul, to host pioneering projects in the field of contemporary art. They might never have undertaken such a job during this period, but they chose to continue despite everything, so they deserve applause. Now it remains to wait for the physical edition of Contemporary Istanbul, which is planned to be held between April 27 and May 2, to make Istanbul one of the top three of the world culture and arts metropolises.

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