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Vasıf: What will Ferran Barenblit show in your February 2013 exhibition at CA2M in Madrid?

Halil: I had met Ferran approximately six years ago, right after the Documenta in 2007. "15 Minutes of Freedom", which was a site-specific project I had proposed to D12 for Kassel could not be realized at the time due to what was happening at the time in prisons in Germany. Ferran had really liked this project and we had talked about the possibility of maybe realizing it for the institution that he was the head of in Spain. When Ferran left this institution, we did not have a chance to realize the project there.

Vasıf: Could you remind us of the work? The helicopter project?

Halil: Yes...

Vasıf: But I think there were two things there. The first was Ayşe Erkmen's Münster Sculpture Project, in which she could override the permission issues only by taking a sculpture along by helicopter: the second is Fellini's scene in the Rome film in which a helicopter was carrying a sculpture, which was something Ayşe also knew. Were you going to a prisoner around for 15 minutes by helicopter?

Halil: The point of departure for the helicopter project was that the prison in Kassel showed characteristics of a panoptical architecture. The Documenta team that year, Roger Buerger and Ruth Noack, really cared about public space projects to be realized in the city. This is the primary reason why artists were invited to Kassel early so that they could propose projects that could speak to both the history and the current inhabitants of the city. This is what I aimed as well: I wanted to show the public space projects to those who would not be able to view them, while living in the city. To serve this purpose, I was going to communicate with prisoners in the Kassel prison, maybe do some preliminary work with them, and after some rehearsals, we would depart from the courtyard of the prison during the opening week of Documenta with 6-7 volunteering prisoners, who would be holding on the helicopter's feet—of course with a safety mechanism—giving a tour of Kassel for fifteen minutes, which would enable them to see the open-air projects. In addition to this, the prisoners would taste freedom for those fifteen minutes. The other crucial element in this project was that the prisoners would be saved from the 24/7 supervision and would be the ones watching, rid of that

damned panoptical surveillance. In other words, the process would be reversed.

Vasif: The prisoners would be watching the guardians and the prison from the helicopter...

Halil: Yes... As the coincidence had it, during that month, two prisoners escaped from two different prisons in Germany and my hopes of realizing this project evaporated. The head warden was at first inclined to realize the project, but then openly expressed that he did not want to take a risk under the current circumstances. He was worried that the result would be a political scandal and this is why we could not realize my project, "15 Minutes of Freedom."

We knew that it was impossible for an imprisoned person to legally get out—especially for an artistic project, but we had found a legal loophole. It is illegal for prisoners to walk out of the prison until their sentence is served. But there were no laws forbidding a prisoner from leaving the prison courtyard with a helicopter and safely come back in 15 minutes. I was testing to see if we could liberate the prisoners for 15 minutes with art, using this legal loophole.

Vasif: Then why did Ferran want to show this work in Centre d'Art Santa Monica? Was there a special reason? Why did he want to realize this project in Spain?

Halil: Ferran was very excited about this project when he heard about it. He said that the legal system and the political context of Spain could handle the project and he could easily arrange for the necessary permissions. But then he left his job there. At his new position in a different institution, he came to visit me again last summer to organize a larger-scale exhibition.

Vasif: What is he going to exhibit?

Halil: He intends to exhibit my editorial and curatorial practices as well as my artistic practice to the Spanish audience. Let's say that he wants to share my practices in the post-90s Istanbul, with its changing dynamics, the transformations in contemporary art, and "me" in this adventure of transformation, as a witness, an actor and sometimes as a defendant.

Vasif: This is the right way to do it.

Halil: Yes... My publication practice through art-ist Publications, that started in 1999 and lasted 10 years, has contributed to the formation of a memory of contemporary art. There will be documentations of the exhibitions I organized with the contributions of young artists again from the beginning of the 2000s until 2010. Ferran sees these exhibitions and my standing firmly behind the

young artists as an extension of my artistic practice and he wants to display the documentations as such.

Vasif: What distinguished the exhibitions you curated from others?

Halil: I can say being an editor really added a lot of things to me at this point; I had on-going dialogues with different positions in art production and young artists who lived and produced both inside and outside of Istanbul. This line of thinking also continued in the exhibitions that I curated. I formed a network of artists with different and alternative positions through the exhibitions I did. I employed a language that was not preferred at the time in the art world and I was persistent in using this language and of course, I was intensely criticized. And later on, things were settled...

Vasif: Were they settled?

Halil: Actually, the stones were moved... Just as we formed a collective togetherness –which we discussed extensively during our conversations at the Istanbul Contemporary Art Project—what we could call the process of "individual institutionalizations" started. The group dispersed. We had a collective practice and I tried to continue this and this desire in the publications and exhibitions I did later on. There were some pessimistic perspectives. I'm a bit more optimistic and I never lost my faith; it was easier to say, "We have dispersed, everybody for themselves!"

Vasif: Have you been unsuccessful in this?

Halil: No, the market was unsuccessful. As I said, I was stubborn about continuing this energy for a while longer. If the collectivity that we mentioned is between the years 1998-2001, with the exhibition " Under the beach:the pavement(2002)", another period begins. Following this exhibition, names outside of Istanbul start becoming a part of the contemporary art context...

Vasif: In the period leading up to Proje4L, there is continuity in some sense. And there is a channel that you opened starting in 1995...

Halil: How could we enrich a contemporary art context that has been centered on Istanbul up until then? The question and problem was this. Or rather, how could we add new names to a market that has been revolving around the same names? I was excited not by a set list of artists but rather the possibility of constantly adding new names to this list and chasing new discoveries. Of course, this list kept growing with certain difficulties. There were names that were eliminated, while some of them stayed on. But after the 2000s, both the new names and the young artists who lived in Istanbul became more confident. After the Young Activities (1995-1998), the spaces that young artists could exhibit in, outside of Borusan Art Gallery, were very limited. Something interesting happened after 2000; after many years, young artists were a part of a large-scale group exhibition at a new museum.

Vasif: Let's call this normalization. You say, "The stones were set in place." This can also be called normalization. Not that I see this as something positive. On the contrary. Normalization is the yearning for a mythological past, actually, a past that you don't even have.

Halil: I use normalization to mean what should be normal.

Vasif: What is normalization? To have museums, art institutions, a market, a sort of balance between these elements; somebody should buy, somebody should sell, everybody should have a place, viewers should come, books should be published—this is a typical normalization story. This is at the same an abnormalization. Actually, we are talking about the domination of the market. You have an interesting relationship with the market. It starts with your performance in 1999 at Yahşi Baraz's AKM exhibition, in which you took down Burhan Doğançay's canvases from the wall, without permission, and started waltzing with Serkan Özkaya. Afterwards, appropriating Alexander Brener's action that you realized at Urt gallery. Last year, Burhan Doğançay's canvas that you tore on Yahşi Baraz's head. And finally, the work about the art market that you realized in collaboration with Mustafa Taviloğlu, which you exhibited at Contemporary Istanbul. (Art is always about desire and signature). And there is also your work "The Portrait of a Sheikh", which is separate of course. You move from no permission to collaboration. We talk about the artists positioning themselves in relation to the art market or they move with an awareness of the market behind them, thus moving differently in a way they did not before. Then, could we say that you appear to do what the market does, but you're actually doing something completely different?

Halil: It is possible to talk about two art markets. One of them is the market that we have dubbed as conventional for years and the people whose practices are about this and who have been trying to transform it for years. Let's say that this has lasted until 2005. This is actually a period of 7-8 years. The second is something that developed afterwards; let's say 2008 for that?

Vasif: The commercial explosion in contemporary art.

Halil: The time and place at which my works started to sell after a ten-year production. I'm trying to explain things using examples from myself. You see the existence of two markets. And of course, you position yourself differently towards the two. In the first example that we used, there is a generation, rooted in academia, going back to the Paris Ecole, who were not more open-minded than the academia and who were distinguished only by a different lifestyle. The local market was run by this generation for years. This generation sustained this with artists, institutions, gallerists, exhibitions, collectors, writers, critics, historians, and books. Of course, at the time, very different things are happening in the world. It is as if the world is going through a state of exceptions, it is not allowed to go out, the situation is such that there seem to be a desire to be left out of the developments in the world.

Like North Korea. It is forbidden to read foreign books, the Internet is forbidden, a status of "whatever we say is what it is," dominates. It is a period that was controlled by professors, assistants. The system was in the hands of a few galleries and art brokers.

Vasif: But in your 1999 waltz performance, you did not bring them down from the wall—you brought down a Burhan Doğançay painting.

Halil: That was intuitive... since that day, it was as if I felt that Doğançay was going to break sales records and was going to be the most expensive living artist...

Vasif: Hahaha!

Halil: Yes. By the way, the Doğançay paintings at that exhibition were really very beautiful. During the performance, we took down two Doğançay paintings that seemed particularly nice for the waltz. The paintings were long and thin; they seemed more elegant for dancing. We're of course going to come to the second period. The commercial art market's explosion, its rapid, sudden growth. The period during which galleries grabbed artists. Back in the day, there was only one gallery for many artists, while now; there is almost one gallery for each artist. There are as many galleries as there are artists in Istanbul. The galleries cannot share the artists; they create an atmosphere that makes it appear like there is such a huge circulation that the artists cannot be shared. My practice is more about the change and transformation of the earlier art market.

Vasif: After the 1980 coup d'état, the art market was seriously damaged, its politicization and developed experimentation were interrupted; it gave up its public element. It took a while for the market to get back on its feet, because the global art context also became more conservative at the time.

Halil: Could that be accounted as a reason? After 1980, the free market and the neo-liberal economy preferred that period's large-scale, multi-colored neo-expressionist painting. The years during which the art market returned to the canvas...

Vasif: That's the early Özal period. But that's not the art context that I'm talking about.

Halil: The rich used to do mass acquisitions from the artists and their galleries after the Özal period for their holding buildings. This could also be called the first commercial activation in Turkey. This is also the time when a lot of public galleries and bank galleries opened up. The conceptually oriented artists that we were talking about seemed to be left behind at this time. Some of them locked themselves in their studios, while some others continued and some just gave up. Some stayed in between. The " A cross section of avantgarde Turkish art " from the middle of 1980s as well as the titles, content and the

positions of some of the artists on the list are contentious. Of course it is not possible to look at these exhibitions from an avant-garde perspective, but perhaps what should be urgently discussed today is the differences in these works' languages as well as the side-by-sidedness of these exhibitions. We call these exhibitions in this period exhibitions without curators, but they are also exhibitions of absurd side-by-sidedness. Thankfully, this absurdity was discerned in 1989.

Vasif: From the beginning, there were discrepancies, and differences in styles and approaches. First of all, there is a togetherness in those exhibitions. It then becomes obvious that this togetherness does not have a foundation and the elimination continues from exhibition to exhibition. After the breaking points in 1989 and 1992. Let's come back to you—when you were a student at Çukurova University, who and what were you looking at, what were your channels of knowledge?

Halil: When I entered the Painting Education Department at the Çukurova University, magazines such as Art in America, Kunstforum were regularly coming to our library. As we were connected to the Faculty of Education, I was the only one going through those art magazines in the library. We had a librarian who resembled Sezin Romi at Salt Research now and she would let me know whenever the magazines arrived.

Vasif: This still continues.

Halil: in my first few years as a student, a feeling of curiosity drove me. I was familiarized with examples of contemporary art production in the world first through those magazines.

Vasif: Who were you looking at in Turkey?

Halil: I used to write letters to almost all the galleries and institutions in Istanbul, requesting catalogues. I followed the art context through newspapers, magazines, and catalogues. The exhibition catalogues that came from Istanbul was a resource for us. The artists I looked up to as role models died over time. When I at last came to Istanbul in 1996 for a master's degree, all my heroes had died.

Vasif: Then, who was with you at Çukurova? Did you have any friends?

Halil: We had a liberal education in our school in contrast to the academies in Istanbul. Although our professors made "neo-expressionist" paintings, they would allow us to experiment conceptually and were quite supportive.

Vasif: You did not receive a typical 'Beaux Arts' education.

Halil: No. Our department was a part of the Faculty of Education, cultivating art teachers for middle schools.

Vasif: I was recently talking to Cengiz Çekil and İsmail Saray, who also said that "Beaux Arts' ruins. Their path is similar to yours.

Halil: We had some good educators. They were reading and would suggest contemporary books to their students all the time—professors who could make available new horizons for their students. Şener Özmen went back to school after the pardon, Cengiz Tekin and Erkan Özgen are also from younger classes, and they were in the first few years of their education.

Vasif: Then you came to Istanbul, to Marmara in 1996 for your master's degree.

Halil: Actually, my arrival in Istanbul is 1994. I came to conduct a few interviews with conceptual artists. The director of AKM Art Gallery, Nilgün Özayten, had given me both the artists' phone numbers, and a copy of her dissertation on conceptual art that she had just finished for me to read. The first Istanbul Biennial that I viewed in Rene Block's 4th International Istanbul Biennial in 1995: The Vision of Art in a Paradoxical World. We arrived at Istanbul, to the venue for the biennial, after a fifteen-hour trip. I was with 45 friends and professors. I have a memory that I cannot forget from back then. When we arrived at the Biennial venue, Antrepo 4, by bus, while they normally gave away free admission to fine arts students, they did not let us in as we were not studying Beaux Arts. I was really upset by this. I later entered that Antrepo as an artist participating at the Biennial.

Vasif: The 5th International Istanbul Biennial. Rosa Martinez's biennial. Rosa created a monster.

Halil: Rosa helped all of us with that biennial; me, Bülent Şangar, Kutluğ Ataman. All of us were doing something in the local context, but all of us became internationally visible thanks to Rosa's biennial. She has really labored for Kutluğ and Bülent. My emergence at the biennial was really unexpected.

Vasif: Are you showing the "Dance with Taboos" from the 97 Biennial at CA2M?

Halil: Yes. Ferran is going to show both the work with money and the identity card. Before coming to the Istanbul Biennial in 1995, my first exhibition participation was at "Young Activity 1" organized by TÜYAP in Istanbul.

Vasif: Did you participate in this exhibition by yourself or with Şener Özmen?

Halil: I had participated in the 1995 exhibition by myself. We participated in the 1996 "Young Activity 2" exhibition with Şener.

Vasif: The work on the evacuated villages...

Halil: Yes. At the time, there were "Habitat" meetings in Istanbul. We proposed this project based on that. While there were ongoing discussions of how to provide a better lifestyle and sheltering rights to people, we exhibited an official folder with the names of 3000 villages that were evacuated/emptied until the mid-90s, in addition to our identity cards. This was a research and exhibition that I think has a common denominator with Banu Cennetoğlu's The List project, shown in Istanbul. As we were realizing this project, we went through many processes, we collaborated with Human Rights Organizations and NGOs. But we did not include the process in the project. At the time, it was not easy to have access to official documents. We were able to collect those lists under the table...

Vasif: Was there a personal relationship between you and the list of villages that were emptied?

Halil: I did not want to form a direct relationship through myself for the project. If somebody researches the file, it is of course possible to find a relationship, and yes, we did directly display our identity cards. This was something that I experienced, and something that my collaborator, Şener, experienced. But this was not the totality of our personal story. My family migrated to Mersin in 1975. Şener's family desperately moved to Diyarbakır in the 90s. He explains this as running away from rain to then be confronted with a blizzard. This is more about the artist placing himself as a victim, as the other.

Vasif: For example, how do you interpret the work that you produced at the time, "Dance with Taboos"? Didn't "Dance with Taboos" say that I do not have a Turkish belonging, I'm leaving that belonging and I'm Kurdish?

Halil: In my opinion, that work says more. It is not only making a reference to one belonging or a single ethnicity. The social, political, and economic background at the time seeps into the work from some place. In power is the coalition government ANASOL-D and the Kurdish problem has been delegated to the army, as always. Just look at the solution policies at the time: skiing in Sarıkamış, tennis in Dersim, water festivities, surfing at Urfa GAP, concerts at İdil etc. Ironic? Of course not... Directly or not, the installation "Dance with Taboos" had to be interpreted and assessed through a Sarkis story and it showed a specific artistic position. Identity, and especially the Mardin warning on the top, was a part of a belonging that was criminalized from the very beginning and the only thing that I could do was to show resistance and fight.

Vasif: Were you aware that you were brave when you were producing these works?

Halil: No... those works were a natural consequence of my production...

Vasif: Or with your works "I love you" and "I didn't die today Mom!"

Halil: Historic works and natural consequences... The documents of those dark years when Çiller was the prime minister, Ağar was the minister of domestic affairs, when villages were burnt and evacuated, when thousands were lost in custody and many were numerous unsolved murders that were committed by the "deep" government. The climate was quite harsh. What we produced was soft in comparison to this harshness and of course was also a bit naïve. What is slowly beginning to be interrogated today emerged in the mid-90s.

Vasif: But you are the only artist who has been summoned for a parliamentary hearing. It is a ridiculous topic, but it is also material.

Halil: It is interesting, but whenever the government wants to support the arts, we encounter such problems. That hearing was due to a work that I produced for the İskorpit exhibition that was curated by Rene Block and Fulya Erdemci in Berlin in 1998. Besides, that exhibition had been organized when what could be called a "social-democratic" government was in power. Although the minister of culture was from the social-democratic party, their coalition partner from the Fazilet Party expressed that in a government-supported exhibition, they were not portrayed well and this kind of representation could not be of our culture. A local publication in Istanbul dubbed me and Sarkis as traitors and their headlines said we were ungrateful. At the time, this was something small with a vast connotation.

Vasif: These kinds of things emerge in such symbolic moments...

Halil: Governments always want the representation in art to move in the direction of the national state ideology. Thankfully, there is less of dependency on the government for the transformation of contemporary; we are more reliant on the private sector, foundations and NGOs and this is relatively less problematic. If exhibitions only received support from the government, the situation could have been very different.

Vasif: There is an aversion to even hear the government's name in the realm of arts and culture. That is very obvious.

Halil: I think you said this; "The government should not meddle with me, I don't want any support!" You had expressed similar sentiments for your previous projects as well as the institutions that you were involved with.

Vasif: I learned another lesson from ARCO! Then, could we say that since then, you are more programmatic and careful in the matter of bravery as you age? We should say smarter. In other words, would you take those risks and would you do what you did again? Or rather, would you do those works as such?

Halil: I don't consider the works that I did at the time to require bravery. I see them as interconnected rings of my artistic line of production. Let's just say

that at the time, I was not too worried about being in trouble, imprisonment, being shot by conservatives or racists when I was producing a work.

Vasif: This is why I'm asking this question: there are ways of saying the same thing by changing the method of saying. Or what do you lose or win over time?

Halil: Some preserve their line over time, some change their line as time goes by or as they age. I kept my line, but I did not do this directly like I used to do in the first few years, but I sat on the projects further, thinking about them more –I'm talking about thinking about possibilities of realizing the work using more than one medium. In other words, the work matures both conceptually and formally. When you are thinking about designing a work, you push your brain to thinking multi-dimensionally. What kinds of discourses and languages are employed in the world? How could I handle a specific topic in a different way using new media? These questions enrich both the form and the medium.

Vasif: Quick-witted ideas still continue...

Halil: It is hard for me to say that. The German police car that I turned upside down in Berlin, tearing a canvas over Yahşi Baraz's head or the check project that I realized with Mustafa Taviloğlu were not easy to realize. Those works are not "I thought of an idea, let me do it..." kind of works. First of all, they are not acceptable, immediately realizable. I always choose the hard way and I think I'm still doing that. Both Yahşi Baraz and Mustafa Taviloğlu were not easily convinced for these projects, they are both difficult individuals. On the other hand, it is very hard to turn a real police car upside down and to exhibit this work in a public space. You need to do the difficult by pushing your limits. For example, in order to realize the police car work, there were correspondences with the German police for nine months; there was a large folder of correspondences at the end of the nine months. I tried to convince Yahşi Baraz for three years. The same with Mustafa Taviloğlu. Art in Turkey is going under a large transformation recently and people want to be a part of that. And of course, what you have done so far instills trust in people.

Vasif: What do you mean when you say transformation?

Halil: Especially after 2008. Contemporary art flirting with the market. The collectors moving from traditional art forms to contemporary art and the following activation in the market. Many young and new galleries showing contemporary art were founded in this period. It was not as if they opened up galleries to have people buy works of art all of a sudden. There was such an expectation in the market. The collector from Turkey had started going to international art fairs to buy works. They included among themselves a group of young collectors who were collecting contemporary art. Older galleries here started looking at their programming and their artist lists. They renewed these lists. Even the most conservative galleries of the past can now show

contemporary art. There are artists like Irwin Wurm, Damien Hirst, Wim Delvoe and Jan Fabre in places that I could not have even imagined.

Vasif: Do you think the current context corresponds to a genuine interest, curiosity, or manners?

Halil: It includes all.

Vasif: If we say all of these things are present, what's definitive?

Halil: All co-exist, but in this sense; there are different practices. There are those collectors who think that if these people were selling 10 years ago, they can also sell today. We cannot know if these people really believe in what they are doing. The second category is, yes, the world is changing, I should change with it—people who are buying, who have good intentions. And then there are people that I contact for projects. People that I would not normally be associated with and togethernesses that would not be appreciated or togethernesses that people would not think of, collaborative projects that stem from my desire to persuade and the transformation of the process of persuasion into the work itself.

Vasif: I'll come to this from there. You hold all corners.

Halil: Let's say that I divide myself.

Vasif: Halil the artist. Halil the editor. Halil the exhibition organizer. Now you're also working with a gallery. There is nothing left, except for being a viewer. You can't be a viewer.

Halil: I view.

Vasif: If we look at this issue from here, this need in you was obvious from very early on, right?

Halil: This is actually a general curiosity.

Vasif: There is always something missing, you touch on all these areas as there are things amiss...

Halil: Curiosity, lack, reaching the problem, sharing it, and to derive pleasure from this sharing... When I was a student, we had a club. We would share the new information, books, catalogues from Istanbul among friends, we would discuss things. When I came to Istanbul for my graduate studies, we would get together with all young artists and writers on the Kadıköy side at our place and we would constantly be discussing. The idea of bringing together people who had been in Istanbul for years and who did not know each other, who I thought had common interests and to produce something was very

exciting for me. Erden Kosova, Serkan Özkaya, Vahit Tuna, Tunç Ali Çam, Süreyya Evren, Şener Özmen, Başhir Borlakov, Canan and Kamil Şenol. And our meeting. And then there are those who are a generation older than us, Aydan Murtezaoğlu, Bülent Şangar and Hüseyin Alptekin. And in later years, our sharing with members of the younger generation such as Burak Delier and Ahmet Öğüt. This is more of a lifestyle and the faith in doing things together. Art-ist magazine emerged from this togetherness in June 1999.

Vasif: So you acted as a benefactor as well...

Halil: Let's not call it a benefactor, but rather I introduced people whom I thought would benefit from standing side-by-side to each other. I've always pondered which alliances would be productive if people were to do something collectively. Back when I was a student, before I started curating, I used to make lists of the artists that I liked and followed along with their works, and archive these lists. This would be updated constantly. It could also be an exhibition or a book, in fact in present day conditions it could have easily been a collection. At the time I was not aware of even the existence of curatorship. We can evaluate User's Manual or 101 Art Works in this scope. Again in a similar manner, in 1999 during your first exhibit 'A Special Day' at the ICAP (Istanbul Contemporary Art Project), knowing this personal interest of mine you had asked me if there were any new names and who they were, and I had suggested Şener. In 2002 for the "Under the Beach: The Pavement" exhibition at Proje4L, again you had asked me to probe my memory about new names. At that time, I had shared my first curatorial suggestions with you...

Vasif: What has this cost you? There is a controlling aspect to it as well.

Halil: I do not know how appropriate it is to say this here. We experienced the most active period up until 1998. Young artists came together, followed by young writers who joined them in this process, while you too, I think with very opportune timing, returned from New York to Istanbul for good. You should be the one to know best the difference between the art scene of the time you left Turkey and the environment you found when you came back. It was not the same, that's for sure. Our generation knew Vasif Kortun mostly from the Memory-Recollection exhibitions, your writings in UPSD (*UNESCO International Plastic Arts Association*) seminar books with Ali Akay, Hüseyin Bahri Alptekin and Deniz Şengel, and the 3rd International Istanbul Biennial, but we had not met in person at all. I will have a question too. When you were in New York did you have any contact with the young artists in Turkey? Was there any one you corresponded with for instance?

Vasif: Very few, I was in contact with İpek Aksuğür-Duben, Selim Birsnel, Hale Tenger, Vahap Avşar, Aydan Murtezaoğlu, Gülsün Karamustafa, Sefa Sağlam, Hüseyin Alptekin, Serkan Özkaya, we wrote to each other and I met them, but not in the sense of working together.

Halil: A good energy was born after the Young Activities, and in what direction this energy would evolve was not very clear. Apart from the AKM Art Gallery managed by Nilgün Özyayten through 1985-2000, the gallery managers of the time were neither interested in young artists nor exhibited any contemporary art works. Galleries owned by banks weren't that promising either. These would host alternating exhibitions of academicians.

Vasif: And there was Borusan Art Gallery, Beral Madra was its consultant ...

Halil: Yes, the Borusan Art Gallery was the only place to exhibit experimental works by young artists... Borusan Art Gallery started to display the works of the generation after us. I can't remember what year it was opened...

Vasif: It was a gallery that operated for nearly 10 years through 1997-2006. Borusan is an institution that opened a gallery early on; most importantly it was carrying out international projects as well. Both the young artist exhibitions that Borusan hosted in those years and also the exhibitions it later held with Egyptian and Lebanese artists are important.

Halil: Borusan Art Gallery must be noted, that's true... What I was trying to get at is that, the galleries of banks were not much disposed to experimental projects...

Vasif: They were there, but they were not yet transformed...

Halil: Apart from Maçka Art Gallery and BM Contemporary Art Center, I don't much recall any galleries featuring young contemporary art works in their programs. If there were any, it was either very limited, or at the market's command, or not political. In 1996, a gallery wanted to organize an exhibition with me through my 'identity' and 'money' works, then we couldn't do it. If it was not for Rosa Martinez's invitation, perhaps I would not be able to find space to exhibit those works. Coming back to our subject; in late '97 when you started teaching undergraduates at the Marmara University Fine Arts Faculty I was also sitting in as a guest student. When the classes were no longer enough, in order to look through a few new books and catalogues we would come to your Bebek office to help organize the archive. Then there was the ICAP office you opened in Tünel where you held the Saturday Classes, giving lectures etc. We were hungry for new information; to put it more openly we did not know much the international network and wanted to have more comprehensive knowledge. Your return coincides with that time. Your classes in the academy too were very different in terms of method and perspective. You were reading 20th century art backwards as it were, and this was very appealing for me and other followers. Thus, for the first time, we were faced with a perspective that did not feel it belonged anywhere, to any tradition or generation. Take for instance the artist generation who participated in the 'A Cross Section of Avant-Garde Turkish Art' or 'A, B, C, D' exhibitions, we knew their works but we had no association in practice, even though their references were intrinsic to our present day. At least I didn't

have any contact, except for a few interviews (Sanat Tanımı Topluluğu - Art Definition Group, Canan Beykal, Füsün Onur). This relation with the middle and old generation somewhat coincides with the period after your return.

Vasıf: Surely, everyone does not always coincide with every generation, every age...

Halil: Our gatherings at the ICAP every Saturday were great. A vibrant environment was generated with the talks by Gülsün, Aydan and Bülent, Selim, Serkan, Erden, Oda Projesi, Esra Sarıgedik and also Can Altay who came from Ankara. In fact, one Saturday towards the end of 1998, you had set up a people's court in ICAP and put me on trial. After the performance in Urart, I had said "...Turkish courts can't judge me, if someone must, then it should be the artists!", you remember?

Vasıf: I can't find its video in the archive. Someone had recorded the trial that day.

Halil: Cem Gencer and Esra Sarıgedik had recorded the trial...

Vasıf: I was playing the judge I think... Genco Gülan was the prosecutor. Then Erden Kosova and Zeliha Burtek were your lawyers. There were also people from the art scene...

Halil: There were art students from the Marmara and Mimar Sinan universities. Those who did not like the performance or those who supported it participated in the trial process with their questions...

Vasıf: It was a good trial...

Halil: It was like the Inquisitions...

Vasıf: You were found not guilty.

Halil: Yes, I seemed innocent.

Vasıf: Oh sure, innocent... joking aside, that trial was something legendary, historical.

Halil: The "Karma Sergi/Mixed Show" you held during the ICAP period was an interesting experience. Intergenerational blood incompatibility and compulsory togetherness was experienced simultaneously in that exhibition.

Vasıf: The series that was an extension of that photograph of you lying on a floor-bed in your mother's home, which you exhibited on the floor of the "Mixed Show", later became world famous. Your 'My mother likes Pop Art because Pop Art is colorful' and 'My mother likes Fluxus because Fluxus is

anti-art' photographs you displayed as postcards in a family album at A Special Day exhibition.

Halil: Those photographs were actually souvenir photos for our family album that I took in my family's home in Mersin. I had proposed them for the first time for your exhibition. In fact, we had talked about it saying, "Why aren't these displayed as works of art?" I had really enjoyed the tension between generations and artists at the Mixed Show...

Vasif: I myself was not in a much different state anyway. We are an in-between generation. In this generation we can also include Selim Birsal, who gets along better with everyone and also because Sarkis was his teacher. Hale Tenger is of course extrinsic, she is from Mimar Sinan but from the Ceramics Department, that is sub-department. Gülsün Karamustafa returns to art in nearly 1988. The ban on her leaving the country being lifted, getting permit to go abroad for the first time. After all those stories, when I invited Gülsün to the exhibition for the first time in 1991 during the Memory Recollection time, she said something like, I was not going to return, you made me come back...

Halil: The years when she was interested in cinema...

Vasif: Yes, the years when she was interested in cinema. Then Bülent Şangar and Aydan Murtezaoğlu's positions. But their very troubled positions...

Halil: The years when they started to make radical changes in their art. Times when they moved from serigraphy to photography...

Vasif: Bülent moves on to photography from serigraphy somewhat later. His move coincides with the Rosa Martinez Biennial. Aydan's is earlier. For me there wasn't anything major between Memory/Recollection 2 and the transition to 1998. Surely the world was different, everything was different. Your generation was not at all distant from the generation in 1993, I mean that orphaned generation. That too was a very legendary generation or it turned into one.

Halil: When we entered the art scene, we did not have a dialogue with the Memory/Recollection generation. Our only common dialogue was you. In later processes our dialogues started to follow one after another.

Vasif: When teaching at Marmara... you knew the artists of nine of out ten works I showed in class. At the time you didn't speak any English, you had never been abroad. I was telling myself, he's come all the way from Mersin and before that Mardin, but knows it all, how does that happen, I used to ask myself.

Halil: Bülten had introduced us during your first break in class, that's how I remember it...

Vasif: You were coming to listen, Erden was also sitting in, so was Esra Sarigedik... All three mothers who would later come together in Oda Projesi were also there. Canan Şenol would also come now and then. But you were the engine of that place. Or it was your problems we were dealing with. They detained Halil, pressed charges against him. Things we were engaged with, Halil's trial...

Halil: But it was fun... We had a lot of fun during the Satanist detention case...

Vasif: Yes and the Satanism incident. They detain the right person for the wrong reasons! And later, the breaking point. I opened the Platform and half the community was vexed. And the other half distanced themselves. And I wanted to move from an artist based thing to an institution based state...

Halil: In early 2001, when you started two institution projects at once everything changed. You had a good experimental curatorial exhibition experience you had undertaken at the time. I am curious. If you had not founded institutions like Proje4L and Platform in 2001, would you open exhibitions? And what sort of exhibitions would they be?

Vasif: We are not talking about me here. What I did in those first two exhibitions were small things. They were exhibitions that we did to entertain ourselves...

Halil: Yes but, at the same time they were also exhibitions where people met each other and started working together, where they experienced standing side-by-side, the disparities and extremisms.

Vasif: Now we have a common point you and I, we are both missionaries... Now this might be expected of me... We are striving to do things that will make the world a better, truer or a more livable place with more deliberation. A world where people can remember the past more accurately, access their past, better institute their future...And spaces that bring people together etc. This would be expected of me, I am an institution founder, I am not an artist, my job is different. There is no such thing in your case. Apart from being an artist you manage a variety of other things as well...

Halil: I am often asked this: How do you differentiate between being an artist, publisher and curator in practice? I actually do not differentiate between producing art, publishing or organizing exhibitions. Each one is a different part of a single standpoint... we stopped publishing the art-ist magazine in 2008, I say we 'paused' it. Right on the tenth anniversary of the magazine. We published seven issues each in two different periods with our friends, 14 issues in total. I don't want to say it's closed down because the art-ist process is still continuing with book projects. As for our reason of ending the magazine, the conditions of the time necessitated it. We made a calculation

with Azra the other day, I have created as many works in the 3 years after closing the magazine as I did during the 10 years of the magazine. When I look back I see that during the time I was concentrated on the magazine, there were periods of gaps in my line of artistic production. Similarly, the five big group exhibitions I held every two years since 2002 also took as much of my time. Later on I realized that in processes of producing the magazine, the book and the exhibition I had waived quite a lot of my personal time, or time to produce art. Because one does not realize it in a constant state of production. Yes, you make a lot of sacrifices as well. But I do not consider this a sacrifice. This is part of an overall production process. I might have produced few works in early 2000s due to the magazine and exhibitions. But now I have more time and can produce more works.

Vasif: No, but the things that were going on then, are still continuing today. Books are coming out, you are organizing exhibitions...

Halil: The magazine was taking a lot of time because we published it in Turkey... because it is a tiring process of not only being an editor, but also discovering new writers, solving the financial problems since it's an independent magazine, dealing with its advertisement, printing house...

Vasif: Why did you end the magazine?

Halil: We began to publish the magazine in an arid climate. You know it came out in 1999, at the same time with your *Resmi Görüş*. At the end of the 90s there was a young, new generation; we wanted to do something and needed a platform to discuss this. When nobody set out to do it, we said let's not expect this from others, no one will do it anyway, let's do it ourselves...

Vasif: Who was paying for it?

Halil: None of us had any money in our pockets. We asked friends we could call wealthy. I don't want to say this, but of course most of the time it came out of my pocket. For a while Vahit and I were making money from design. I used to transfer the money coming from there to the magazine.

Vasif: What about now? Are the book costs coming out your pocket again?

Halil: No. We have friends who believe in us and our projects, thanks to them, they supported the last two major books individually. Because I didn't want institution logos on the book covers. We are trying to publish with individual support for the most part. As you know, because in Turkey art is realized mostly with private sector support, the last book projects were realized as such as well.

When you publish a new publication or make an exhibition you feel better about yourself. I mean I don't say, I will publish a magazine when I have money, or I will organize an exhibition when I have money. You'd have to wait

forever for that. I remember this; in 2009 when I decided to organize a new group exhibition I had nothing except the exhibition space. I was going to invite nearly 40 artists. I was going to pay for many of the work production costs as the exhibitor. Because I wanted to show the artists' new works. And there was going to be a catalogue even though there were no sponsors yet. Such efforts are partly about faith. So is publishing a magazine. Deciding to do something itself constitutes 50% of the project. And the remaining 50% you come up with somehow.

Vasif: Would you consider doing another exhibition?

Halil: After the most recent "When Ideas Become Crime" exhibition I organized at Tobacco Factory in 2010, there is no new curatorial project on my agenda as of now. Two insignificant incidents I encountered with one or two artists during that exhibition would force me to think twice before any possible future exhibitions. Because some artists completely lost their initial credibility after they began to work with galleries. Artists with whom we embarked on this road together and who participated in my exhibitions for years changed their attitude with the gallery process. I understood that day how this would eventually turn out.

Vasif: Are you so well-intentioned about artists?

Halil: I always believe in doing things collectively. In this last exhibition, when an artist asked for museum showcase for a photograph we were going to display, I got the picture.

Vasif: Times have changed, haven't they? How did they change?

Halil: Because I guess whenever art meets money such problems emerge. I guess this is the case whenever money enters a field. This has been the case throughout history. It drives a wedge between states, a wedge between brothers. It changes science, it causes wars. Art is not all that different...

Vasif: The "Under the Beach: The Pavement" exhibition we held in 2002 at Proje 4L, then "I am Too Sad to Kill You!" you organized in 2003, these are critical. Later, in 2005, the "Free Kick" exhibition you organized at Antrepo, "Be a Realist Demand the Impossible" you organized at Karşı Sanat in 2007. You encounter a problem in all of them anyway. There are also court cases now and then. In your last exhibition "When Ideas Become Crime" you did something different as well. For instance you brought Altan Gürman, you brought Gülsün Karamsutafa, you exhibited them side by side with young artists. There was a shift in your exhibition making style.

Halil: In recent years we'd also started to publish books with historical references...

Vasif: Did we ignore history before then?

Halil: No. For example why did you teach the courses at Marmara starting from the present and moving backwards? That means sometimes one wants to make a different construct. Sometimes it might be necessary to pound certain subjects to people's heads swiftly, using short cuts...

Vasif: And doesn't that mean today, the reign of the present? Actually later, it also somehow has to do with money. You know it is founded on a disregard for history. In order for today to be powerful, before all else you have to be devoid of history...

Halil: The last exhibition I organized at Tütün Deposu made reference to the exhibition Harald Szeeman did in 1969. In Altan Gürman's case, I wanted to show what kind of an art there was here in the 60s when that exhibition was organized. Thinking about it in retrospect, I should have included Sarkis as well. Sarkis really loved the exhibition when he saw it and he was very sad. In previous exhibitions I also invited other artists from the middle generation to have them alongside young artists. Unfortunately I didn't have the chance to work with Aydan, Bülent and Hale. I worked with İnci and Selim each only once. Gülsün participated in my last two exhibitions with two works, both with very strong political and historical references. In the last exhibit, Gülsün showed a small but very striking painting on the 1980 military coup. It was one of the most meaningful works in the exhibition and the fact that it was becoming visible again and perhaps for the first time after 30 years was very significant. She had participated in the previous exhibition, "Free Kick" with an installation called "Stage" on the 1971 coup. Or I had wanted to exhibit Altan Gürman's 1977 work "Pantone" because it was still so fresh and powerful. Gürman and Karamustafa were the main bearers of the exhibition in terms of political and historical references...

Vasif: When you bring Altan Gürman or when you bring Gülsün you also historicize yourself. And there is a passage to something else; to an age of maturity. Therefore it is not necessarily odd that the other teenage kid asks for a museum showcase in that exhibit... There is also a difference between the Halil who organized an exhibition in 2002 and the Halil who organized an exhibition in 2010. Even the opening was different.

Halil: Yes, there is quite a lot of difference between the first and last exhibition. Even though there are some common artists in both. Here what makes me angry is the spinelessness of the artist, rather than the fact that the art scene is changing over the years...

Vasif: Now as we come to 2010 our relationship with material has changed. I mean it's not like 1998, 2003, there used to be bad prints, bad print outs, a bad forex, crooked sloppy works back then.

Halil: And there was the Forex Generation. But we are the “Photoblock Generation”, forex was a bit more of luxury for us.

Vasif: At that time there were works that did not pay any heed to the nature of the material. The same goes for video. The videos that were shot with bad cameras and shaky hands are now shot with professional equipment. For example the reason why Fikret Atay’s videos were so popular back then also had to do with the shooting style, recently as his shooting got more professional, his videos got worse. That beautiful hideousness, the simplicity of Şener and Erkan’s video “Road To Tate Modern”...

Halil: The 80% loss in image is what makes it beautiful...

Vasif: This is a situation that reflects on the making of exhibitions in exactly the same way.

Halil: Do you find it normal for an artist to demand a museum showcase at an alternative exhibition?

Vasif: No, I don’t care about the museum showcase, that’s something else; a fetish. I am talking about material getting gradually more refined...

Halil: I find it normal, material becoming refined. What concerns me more is the changes in artists’ attitudes after they start working with galleries.

Vasif: Okay, do you think you got into a lot of people’s blood?

Halil: We’ve had very close and tight relationships with many artists over the last decade. We fought with some of them, with some of them we quarreled, made up, we still go on with some of them. Each has its own merits...

Vasif: But there is also a ‘Halil Altindere School’.

Halil: I believe in persistence and its magic Vasif... Otherwise there is no ensuing thought like, I did this, I got a lot of criticism, so I shouldn’t do it anymore. I think one shouldn’t operate with the manner of, I should immediately change. The artist should not act according to the expectations of the market etc. The important thing is to pursue what you believe in, to keep insisting.

Vasif: What I mean is the likes of the Halil Altindere practice. But there haven’t been examples of the real Halil Altindere practice. To publish a new magazine, form a new artists’ group, open exhibitions.

Halil: Şener Özmen had made a chart for the catalogue of the exhibition I organized at Karşı Sanat in 2007. A chart on which artists participated in the exhibitions I organized through 2002 - 2007; which were sifted, who stopped and who got invited to other mega exhibitions etc. You said school, honestly I

don't want to depict it as such, but we can talk about a group of artists who opened exhibitions together for many years. I think it's normal that there are similarities. Of course it is great that all these names are still practicing their art and are in significant positions in the art world. It is hard for me to say anything else...

Vasif: And now you are making a book of the 70s.

Halil: Yes, we have been working on this book with Süreyya Evren and İz Öztat for the past few months. And the reason why we are publishing this book is the following: It will be the third volume of the trilogy which included "User's Manual" we published in 2007, and "101 Artworks" we published in 2011. As we made the trilogy, we moved chronologically backwards. Through this volume we will mostly address the years that have been swept under the rug. We will scrutinize 5 major exhibition series from the 70s and 80s together with their participants. The scope of the book will be a type of history of the exhibitions. It will also be complementing the two previous volumes we published...

Vasif: And right at the time when today, the contemporary is the most valid currency. What is the reason behind you taking a step back and making this book precisely at a time when artists and gallerists are most fervently pursuing the contemporary? Your reason for making a 70s book? Don't you see the threat of marketization?

Halil: The previous two books we published focused more on post-90s, shed light on a period we experienced and witnessed firsthand, of course its entire burden was on our shoulders. The new volume will focus on the art scene of the 70s and 80s. What sort of alliances were there in exhibitions of that period, who participated in which exhibition and exhibited what? It includes these.

Vasif: There is a desire to go beyond the contemporary. The herald of this is the "When Ideas Become Crime" exhibit in 2010 and your more ardent inclusion of historical positions in that exhibition. Even if as an example, your inclusion of Altan Gürman and Gülsün as historical references. If we rewind from there, there is the tough school, I mean the Kurds and those from İzmir, and a few Istanbulites among them.

Halil: Burak Delier from İstanbul was poisoned the most.

Vasif: Yes Burak was poisoned.

Halil: Even though Burak is younger than us, he feels he belongs to the 90s. Even though he is from the 2000s generation, attitude wise he feels closer to the 90s.

Vasif: I mean your approach is also like that, from reverse. I am also dabbling with the past now, I am trying to learn about the 70s.

Halil: And you can't go much further back. Yahşi, for example, published a very beautiful book, on the history of galleries. He dates back the roots of present day galleries 70-80 years. It is a good research on his own field...

Vasif: Academically all these exist. There are good theses. Güler Bek's thesis is important in this context.

Halil: I've not yet seen a new thesis that surpasses Nilgün Özyayten's discourse in her thesis on conceptual art in 1994. Whatever Ms. Nilgün said in 1994, that is it. Later everyone makes reference to her and repeats her...

Vasif: There are smaller specific theses. That is a historical transformation. At the same time, it is your historical transformation. You can almost mark your own period as such. I mean, we moved from here to there, from magazine to book, from exhibition to research. We will have to describe that transformation as a lonely transformation, you drive that energy, you push it. It exists with you, and when you're not there it doesn't.

Halil: Perhaps if someone from the younger generation had taken over the magazine it could have continued somehow. After 10 years it is a magazine that has almost become anonymous. Plus it never made money. Perhaps it would have been able to sustain itself better under today's conditions. People say the magazine was so great, that's it... they don't say anything positive regarding its continuance.

Vasif: That is the cultural situation of Turkey. That's it, nothing else.

Halil: The worrisome part of it all is the lack of foresight in a younger generation who goes and studies art management or curatorial studies abroad and returns to İstanbul. They do tiny projects in small spaces. Cowardly and mindful of sensitivities. Look it's almost been 10 years. There are dozens of people who have been studying curatorial studies abroad since 2002. It's the same thing here, 4-5 private universities have students graduating from art management departments. People are beginning to return to Turkey from New York, London. But when it comes to opening exhibitions, not a peep... No one is encumbering anyone; I wish some people would do it so we wouldn't have to. The same goes for books. How nice it would be if I could just make art!

Vasif: That's not in your constitution. That's another matter of course...

Halil: Well actually I do enjoy doing all of these...