


divergent moments of development in mid-twentieth-century Turkey's art scene. *Metrics of Modernity* will be influential for Turkish modern and contemporary art scholarship, as Smith offers a continuous history of art from the late Ottoman and early Republican to the modern and contemporary period rather than one that is based on ruptures. Smith's use of economic models as guides to reveal local institutional histories and their connection to international politics is particularly useful as the field finds itself increasingly called to globalize its narratives. Further, rendering artists as active agents in navigating this relationship, especially in instances of diminished or destroyed archives, serves as an exemplar for writing non-Western art histories, which can often be superseded by the complex power structures in which they are imbricated. Smith concludes by extending her discussion temporally to 2004, when the politically charged Istanbul Modern Museum opened under state, private, and corporate sponsorship. Istanbul Modern, especially in the absence of an official state museum, set out to expand Istanbul's political and economic significance on a global scale. *Metrics of Modernity* shows that the project of fostering economic modernity and political relevance through artists and art institutions in Turkey will continue to shape the art historical accounts of Turkish modernism until the present.

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The National Frame: Art and State Violence in Turkey and Germany. Banu Karaca (New York: Fordham University Press, 2021). Pp. 288. \$138.00 cloth, \$39.00 paper. ISBN: 9780823290215

Merve Ünsal , Film & Digital Media Studies, University of California Santa Cruz, Santa Cruz, CA, USA (mgenc@ucsc.edu)

The scratch ticket distributed by Kamusal Sanat Laboratuvarı (KSL: Public Art Laboratory) during the opening ceremony of the Eleventh Istanbul Biennial (2011), called the *Untitled Letter (Biennial)*, had been and remained an intervention that, for me as a visual artist working in Istanbul, embodied the tensions inherent in the production, distribution, discussion, institutionalization, and often consequent instrumentalization of contemporary art in Turkey that I have referred to on numerous occasions over the last decade. Only through Banu Karaca's incisive contextualization of this work in Chapter 4 ("The Art of Forgetting") of *The National Frame: Art and State Violence in Turkey and Germany* was I able to comprehend the larger scaffolding for this work. The *Untitled Letter* is addressed by Vehbi Koç, founder of Koç Corporation, the sponsor of not only the Istanbul Biennial but also prominent art institutions including Arter and Meşşer, to the junta leader Kenan Evren in 1980, a few weeks after the violent military coup d'état. Koç's sympathy for Evren's cause seeps into the letter, which ends with the line "I am at your service." Previously, I had interpreted this artistic gesture as a poignant, critical appropriation of a historical document that has previously not been widely distributed, problematizing how art is funded. Through Karaca's transformative scholarship, I now see it as a symptom of a crisis of culture and cultural policy, often fraught with the entanglements of structures that support, promote, construct, and sustain frameworks of art.

Karaca situates her book around two main questions, from which she explores a myriad of cultural practices, historical contexts, and social textures. Firstly, if the imperial forms of Turkey and Germany are considered to be parallel, how are the results of these formations so different from each other? And the second is, how do these environments shape the



cultural practices to emerge from these two contexts?¹ The book begins with a meticulous comparison of the histories of Germany and Turkey, and moves on to draw on case studies of exhibitions, artworks, and support mechanisms in both contexts to weave together dispositions and censorships in relation to state policies around culture. In so doing, Karaca reveals that culture, epistemologically, cannot be separated from the very forces that have bred its existence. She looks at culture through the framework of visual art, which is a significant choice considering that both the market forces and the support structures around contemporary visual art remain opaque for most viewers, while the content potentially holds mass appeal through public exhibitions such as the biennial format, with the Berlin and Istanbul biennials being prominent examples.

Karaca's methodology is precise in coping with the double bind of thinking through artistic works while taking into consideration the contexts in which they are produced and critiquing the very impetus of thinking through context. That is, she uses artworks to illustrate her points and to give a sense of the art ecosystems in discussion, often in dialogue with the artists, while highlighting and problematizing the constructions of concepts such as acquired taste, knowledge, expertise, audience, interaction, and the viewer's gaze. For example, in Chapter 2, she uses Susanne Neumann's work for the sculpture park openArt in Roveredo, Switzerland (2004–6), in which the artist used the local part of the autobahn to produce memorabilia, in tandem with Ahmet Ögüt's *Somebody Else's Car* (2005), in which the artist transforms strangers' cars into taxi cabs and police cars. The gestures of intervention into the quotidian from the two artists from two very different contexts aid Karaca in discussing what kind of prior knowledges audiences bring to their consumption of artworks and, consequently, how the artists tap into shared experiences between themselves and their audience (pp. 57–60).

Karaca combines fieldwork and interviews with numerous cultural actors, ranging from artists, curators, institutional administrators, and state representatives in both Turkey and Germany, tracing the genealogies of the terminology that is used in cultural production. She thus points to the crisis of how cultural production came to be by shifting the critique from individual actors, situations, and contexts to the very paradigms that cultural productions have emerged from and, in turn, inspire. This insightful method serves two functions. Firstly, it ensures that *The National Frame* does not suffer from the art historiographic flaw of trying to align the ruptures and traumatic historical events with cultural works. Secondly, it allows for a truly structural and deeply embedded comparative study of the Turkish and German contexts that are often discussed within a fatigued dichotomy of the East and the West and narratives of cultural migrations. As Karaca points out in her introduction, this "comparative ethnography of the art world in Istanbul and Berlin" makes possible reclamation of the emancipatory potential of art by "recognizing that our perception of art is always also mediated" (p. 7). Thus, Karaca also analyzes art as a tool for bringing together and interconnecting the structural flaws of cultural production and mediation, positioning art not as a merely aesthetic pursuit but rather as an inherently and necessarily embedded artifact that can only emancipate if recognized as such.

The comparative ethnography of Turkey and Germany also presents a proposal for considering cultural work in general. Karaca's focus on the ideas and concepts that were sites of conflict rather than on specific political or social factions helps readers comprehend the often-contradictory actions and utterances of cultural actors. As such, Karaca shifts the focus from intentions to consequences. Her interpretation of cultural policy and, consequently, cultural funding in Berlin, is a critique of culture's "deproblematization as the basis of the nation-state" (p. 105). Karaca considers Germany's self-proclaimed status as a state of culture as being parallel to the interpretation of culture as property and citizenship in Turkey in the early years of the Republic of Turkey (p. 107). By situating culture as a

¹ "Banu Karaca, *The National Frame: Art and State Violence in Turkey and Germany* (New Texts Out Now)," *Jadaliyya*, August 16, 2021, www.jadaliyya.com/Details/43221.

basis of nation and nation-state building, Karaca subverts the notion that culture is a byproduct of the times. Rather, culture produces and furthers the problems of national frameworks. As such, the book places culture on equal footing with the frameworks that produce it and, in turn, it reproduces. This is perhaps best exemplified in the book's final chapter, "Instead of a Conclusion," that treats the 2005 Berlin exhibition at the Martin-Gropius-Bau organized by Christopher Tannert of Künstlerhaus Bethanien, and his cocurator Peter Lang, *Urban Realities—Focus Istanbul*, which presented disparities of support for the artists included in the exhibition, as artists from Turkey were not financially or technically supported while artists from outside of Turkey were. Equally problematic, the exhibition's clichés about the East and the West offered culturalist sentiments, which viewed cultural production from Turkey as an opportunity to confirm perceived notions of Turkish culture, rather than as aesthetic and cultural works of specific and layered merit. Tannert and Lang tried to confront the issue by including the letter of complaint that the artist wrote alongside his response to them in the exhibition catalog, as well as a panel discussion. However, these discussions did not yield a resolution and this exhibition became a cautionary tale for both sides, exposing the perils of such frameworks in the absence of an established shared language.

The title of Karaca's book points to links that are often shied away from between art and state violence, as well as a non-dichotomous reading of Turkey and Germany, highlighting concept- and method-driven connections that transcend borders, national and otherwise. The "asymmetry of perception" that she refers to in relation to the "slippage between culture as aesthetics of production and culture as demarcating communal difference" (p. 211) can indeed be considered a proposal for a method with which we can begin to step out of (national) frames. Cultural production produces and reproduces asymmetries of perception that cannot be made symmetric as these perceptions are deeply rooted in histories of violence. Karaca proposes a method of considering artworks alongside the very concepts and ideas they serve, thus unraveling their relationship to reveal reciprocity rather than causality. This replicable method can be utilized to consider other contexts and modes of cultural production that afford a specific and rigorous interpretation.

Karaca's book is a must-read for cultural practitioners from Turkey and Germany as well as anyone who is seeking to comprehend the dynamics in and through which art is produced. Her precise analysis of the language used around looking at and exhibiting art illuminates the shortcomings of what we considered to be shared languages, while her incisive examination of specific works anchors the study in the production of culture.

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Reading Marie al-Khazen's Photographs: Gender, Photography, Mandate Lebanon. Yasmine Nachabe Taan (London: Bloomsbury Visual Arts, 2021). Pp. 185, 53 illustrations. \$28.00 cloth. ISBN: 9781788314800

Ali Behdad , Department of English, University of California, Los Angeles, CA, USA (behdad@humnet.ucla.edu)

Since the 1986 publication in English translation of Malek Alloula's seminal book *The Colonial Harem*, a growing cadre of visual studies scholars have critically examined images of Middle Eastern women in photography and painting, and have elaborated the ways European and, occasionally, local artists eroticized, exoticized, and objectified them, in ways both sexist