



August - 2022

Mission

The Title, Mahalla, as a word is used in many languages as a term for neighborhood or location.

Mahalla is a space of diversity and inclusion in the field of arts and culture.

Real and remote events are performed around periodical Festival activities involving initiatives and actors globally

Palimpsest

Istanbul - Sep 1 - Sep 10, 2022

Parallel to the 17th Istanbul Art Biennial, the Istanbul-based association **Diyalog** is organizing a festival program in the categories of fine arts, performance, film, and music.

With the **Mahalla Festival**, the association has been building up an international network of artists, institutions, communities, and initiatives for five years in order to regularly offer a platform for interdisciplinary artistic exchange. The Mahalla Festival invites to development of new narratives in an innovative, interdisciplinary, and dialogical way.

The focus is to increase mobility, overcome geographical and content-related borders, develop new formats, and understand crises as global and common challenges. This year, Mahalla brings together over 30 local and international artists from 16 countries to work together in Istanbul. Thomas Büsch, Sabine Küper-Büscher (Diyalog Derneği), Volkan Kızıltunç (Noks Art Space) and İlşayda Tunca (Sub) are the Co-Curators of the Festival.

Exhibitions, film screenings, concerts, and interventions in public space are interwoven with workshop series, interactive actions and accompanied by remote events so that every festival event mobilizes locally and at the same time becomes poly-locally visible and connects different places with each other. A sustainable network is created for the artists, while the locations of the exhibitions and events are part of an artistic debate and reflection.

Conceptual Theme: Palimpsest

The title, **Palimpsest**, originally denotes a piece of writing material on which the original writing has been erased to make room for later writing. However, traces of the overwritten texts remain.

This paleographic phenomenon will inspire the artists of the **Mahalla Festival** 2022. They will be concerned with the use of resources in a comprehensive way: in terms of ecological, economic, political, social and communal memory culture.

History

2017 *Mahalla Istanbul - Parallel program of the 15. Istanbul Art Biennial*

2018 *Mahalla Malta - Valletta European Capital of Culture*

2019 *Mahalla Erbil - cancelled due to armed conflicts*

2020 *Mahalla Cyprus - Cancelled due to the pandemic crisis*

2020 *Mahalla real-remote. The Wandering Tower*

2021 *Mahalla Istanbul Murmuration*

In the age of hyper-realities, we experience great confusion about truth, its production and representation. What is fact and what is fiction are perfectly blended. Our era has been interrupted by armed and political conflicts, ongoing epidemics, waves of migration and large-scale social movements.

Narratives are shaped by constant changes in reality. The Palimpsest metaphor is used in the context of Mahalla 2022 to denote written and unwritten information, polyphonic political, social and cultural discourses and patterns.

In this sense, palimpsests appear real and abstract in all domains: in urban life, housing and health strategies, biological transformations, power distributions in states and families, personal or virtual relationships, language, metaphors, and emotions.

The **Mahalla Festival** invites artists to interactively and interdisciplinary palimpsest, to redefine and re-describe, to recycle, upcycle and to develop something new out of the old, forgotten, leftover and suppressed.

Palimpsest will take place from September 1st to 10th, 2022 in the Kurtuluş district on the European side of Istanbul.

The Location

The festival kicks-off at the former **Kurtuluş Greek Elementary School** with lively interactive activities. The exhibition in the historic building in Kurtuluş accompanies a series of events. The focus of the activities is the cooperation of the artists and their communication and togetherness with the residents of the quarter.

The name of the **Kurtuluş** Neighborhood was **Kirazlıköy** long ago. After the trade concessions granted by the Byzantines in the 1200s, after the Genoese settled in Galata, the name of the district became **Tatavla** (stables) established for the horses of the Genoese merchants.

With the settlement of Levantines around Pangaltı and Sinemköy in the 19th century, apartments began to be built on the tramway in Tatavla, which developed socio-economically. Armenian Merchants, Jews and Levantines are settling. Thus, the name Tatavla extends to the north.

The district, which survived fires and desertions and changed its name many times, has survived to this day. Located in the heart of Istanbul today, Kurtuluş is still one of the city's attraction points, both as a central point and with the culture it keeps hidden inside.

According to Dimitri Zotos, President of the **Hagia Dimitri Church Foundation**, the district has changed a lot these days. After the destruction of Tarlabası, immigrants from countries affected by war and global poverty settled and artists began to establish workshops. The Greek Primary School, located at the last stop, was closed in 2003 due to the low number of students, but has always opened its doors to activities. The neighborhood and the venue are a suitable venue for the Mahalla Palimpsest Festival. Artists are ready to mingle with the neighborhood.

Supported by

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Provisional Events

The **Mahalla Festival 2022** and the **Diyalog** association are hosting three artists in residence in Istanbul from the **Magic Carpets** platform. The **Magic Carpets** platform unites 16 cultural organizations from Europe and is co-funded by the **Creative Europe** desk of the **European Union**, with the aim to engage emerging artists to research and implement new productions together with local artists and communities. The artists can develop their art works in the frame of an artist residency. The Bucharest based **Meta Foundation** is partner of the network and nominated **Elena Urucatu** to participate in the **Mahalla Festival**. **Latitudo Art Projects** in Rome nominated **Filippo Riniolo** and the **Kaunas Biennial** nominated **Ona Juciute**. Artist and curator **İlayda Tunca** (TR) supports the three artists of the **Magic Carpets** platform.

Current artist in residence **Anna Schwarz** from Austria in Istanbul realizes a tandem project in cooperation with Turkish artist **Dilruba Balak** under the title *In Between Things - Unpredictable Emotions* with a support by the **Austrian Cultural Forum Istanbul**. Both artists will create '*a place to put everything*'.

Roua Jafar (NL, SYR) demonstrated ten years ago as part of the performance "Brides for Peace" in Damascus. Three art students wore wedding dresses and urged security forces not to open fire on the demonstrators. Imprisonment, abuse and escape followed. In 2014, Roua Jafar attended a short film workshop organized by the association **Diyalog** and then traveled to Europe by boat across the Mediterranean. The **Mahalla Festival** is showing a video artwork by **Roua Jafar**, who is coming to Istanbul for the first time after seven years. The Video "*Absolute Norm*" describes the strong presence of death in everyday life.

Three artists from Austria - **Barbara Eichhorn**, **Anna Khodorkovskaya** and **Joanna Zabielska** - will create a mobile sculpture out of leftovers that they find in the streets in an interactive performance with the community in **Kurtuluş**. Title: "*So far until now, so far on the way*". This interactive community performance is as well implemented with a support by the **Austrian Cultural Forum Istanbul**.

Artist Alper Şen (TR) will produce a series of videos that will compile stories that shed light on the future hidden behind today's ruins, by imagining the Istanbul that will transform 50 years later. Title: "*Kent Kırıkları - İstanbul*". **Alper Şen** will collaborate with the Vienna based artist collective "*So far until now, so far on the way*".

Leman Sevda Darıcıoğlu (TR) lives in Berlin but is still a member of the **PerformIstanbul** collective. A video of a 24-hour performance she produced during the Pandemic in Berlin will premiere during the **Mahalla Festival**. **Darıcıoğlu** will also conduct a workshop with young artists.

Istanbul-based American artist **Nora Byrne** (USA/TR) will design a new face of the city on a wall every day with the papers she collects. The production of the artist's work is open to participants.

The artists will produce site specific works in the historical building. Blackboards in classrooms are part of the installations.

Photographs by **Sema Kahraman Vurucu** about **Tatavla** are corresponding with objects in the Archive Room.

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Concerts, Shows and Workshops will be organized. All of them are interactive and open to participation. The festival will maintain a busy online presence. Activities are local, but our dialogue is global.

Detailed Festival schedule to be announced soon.

Depending on the development of the COVID-19 pandemic, all events will be carried out in compliance with the hygiene rules. If, contrary to expectations, the situation of the pandemic in Turkey worsens and there are again greater restrictions in Turkey, all events can also be held online with a comparable response.

Please check out the Mahalla Festival for updates and dates:
<http://mahalla.inenart.eu/>

Concept: Sabine Küper-Büscher, Thomas Büscher Co-Curators of the Mahalla Festival, Istanbul