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ISTANBUL - VENICE CONVERGENCE FROM GENTILE BELLINI TO BIENALLES*

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Abstract

The history of Venice & Istanbul convergence in visual arts goes back a long way. The portrait (in oil painting) of Fatih The Conquerer who signed the peace treaty in Venice in 1479 by Gentile Bellini which is exhibited at London National Gallery today is one of the predominant examples of the said convergence. The Ottoman Empire which maintained its business connections and cultural relations with Italy throughout the history always left the door open for its visitors composed of musicians, painters, architects and sculptors. For example; Giuseppe Donizetti who was invited as the Conductor of Empire by Mahmut the 2nd in 1827 was awarded the title of "Pasha" by winning the palace's affection. Nevertheless, Adolphe Thalasso who is famous with his researches on the Ottoman art of painting and theatre and is of Venetian origin and born in İstanbul; Fausto Zonaro who is the court painter; Giulio Mongeri who is an architect; Gaspare Fossati; Pietro Canonica who is a sculptor are some of the Italian visitors of the Ottoman.

The said ongoing relations during the Ottoman period change their course by the Turkish artists participating in the modern art activities held in Italy during the Republican period. Turkey who participated in the Venice Bienalle in 1954 for the first time would participate in the activities again in the 1990s. The Venice Bienalle adventure of Turkey who has been represented by the artists such as Kutlug Ataman, Hüseyin Çağlayan, Bülent Sangar and etc. in recent years is not limited with the said activities. The Istanbul Bienalle which became one of the important brands of Turkey in the field of art would take the Venice Bienalle as Her model when She organized the İstanbul Bienalle for the first time in 1987 and would establish Her own style in the next periods. The activity of "An Anthology from Venice & Istanbul : 51st International Venice Bienalle" which is held in 2006 at Istanbul Modern under the curatorship of Rosa Martinez; the "Sultans in Venice" exhibition of Ismail Acar, the painter, which is held synchronously with the Venice Bienalle are the significant artistic events bringing the journey of art between the said two cities into view in different perspectives and such examples may be increased.

In the text; artistic convergences between Venice & Istanbul has been considered in historical aspects and within the scope of current activities of art. The aim is to provide a basis for contributing to the different debates on the subject.

Keywords: Venice, Istanbul, Cultur, Art, Interactions.

1. Introduction

The "sister city" protocol signed between Istanbul and Venice in 2007 has revealed once again the reality that political, financial and cultural intimacy between these two cities was based on a deep-rooted / historical past. As known, the initial real contact between Turks and Italians began during the Anatolian Seljukians. Researchers state that the first treaties with the West so as to include Anatolia into the international commerce network was made in the years of 1200 (Sönmez, 2006: 18). It has been understood that Venetians acquired the liberality of trading in the country of Seljukians during the reign of *Gıyaseddin Keyhüsrev I* after the conquest of Antalya and İzzeddin Keykavus renewed this liberality recognised by his father with a second firman in 1220 as well (Turan, 2000: 168-180 ; Çavuşdere, 2009: 53-75).

Commercial treaties have proceeded during the Ottoman State and the Italian power has become strong in the 15th and 16th centuries (İnalçık, 2009: 1054-1055). In particular, in the period of Mehmed the conqueror (reign 1451 - 1481) who realized the conquest of Istanbul in 1453, cultural relations with Europe have gained momentum. Mehmed the conqueror was keen on ancient history, philosophy, geography and a governor owning innovative ideas according to his time. He decorated the walls of his palace with mural paintings of foreigner painters and established a rich culture medium by inviting prominent scholars and artists (İnalçık, 2009: 1055). So much so that, this situation, according to İnalçık, can be counted as the first step of *Alla Turca* in Italy, *Turquerie* fashion in the West (İnalçık, 2009: 1055). The first one called to the palace among these painters was Italian painter Matteo dei Pasti. The Sultan asked Italian administrators to send an artist, medal master Pasti was commissioned on this request but the artist was not able to arrive in Istanbul. The first Italian artist who was able to reach the palace was Constanzo da Ferrara. The artist who

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lived in Istanbul for some time in the middle of the years 1470 has made various paintings and drawings related to Turks except the famous medal of Fatih (The Conqueror) (Renda, 2009: 1094). Two molds of the medal in question which provides the recognition of El Gran Turco nicknamed sultan with his physical appearance in Europe exists. The bust portrait of Fatih (The Conqueror) on the frontage and an imagery depicting on a horse the tale of which was intertwined with Turkish style moving with a whip in his hand was placed on the work of art (Sönmez, 2006: 83).

As for the old painting of Mehmed the conqueror made by Gentile Bellini that exists today at London National Gallery, is one of the most influential samples of Ottoman - Venice intimacy. After a war that lasted for 16 years, peace treaty was signed in 1479 and a dense political and cultural interchange started with Venetians. After the treaty, Mehmed the conqueror asked Venetian administrators for a bronze-founder and a sculptor; the artists being sent were sculptors Bartolomeo Bellano and artist Gentile Bellini. While not much information exists on Bellano, it has been understood that Bellini was quite active in palace. He made mural paintings on the walls of Topkapı Palace, although he was not specialized in it, he tried the medal painting of the Sultan (**Pic. 1**) and performed the famous oil painting (Renda, 1999: 12). In this painting (**Pic.2**), Bellini connected classical renaissance portraiting with the East iconography and brought into the open real emperor image. Fatih's bust portrait three out of four profiles was framed in the form of an arch. It has been thought that three crowns on two sides of the arch symbolized Ottoman rulers before Fatih (The conqueror). On the basis right under the portrait, in the middle of the fabric adorned with precious stones, stands one more crown. This is the seventh crown symbolizing Fatih (The conqueror) (Renda, 1999: 14-15).



P.1.Gentile Bellini, *Medal of Mehmet the Conqueror, Conqueror*, Oxford Ashmolean Museum



P.2.Gentile Bellini, *Portrait of Mehmet the Conqueror*, National Gallery, London

Along with this painting, the image of the Sultan became widespread in Europe; the artists arriving at palace have found the opportunity to convey the experience they acquired to the art environment in their countries as well. Above all, it has been said that Bellini fixed up Turkish clothed figures on some paintings after returning his country and pioneered the beginning of the new interest among Venetian artists (Renda, 2009: 1095). As a sample, Ottoman spectators being set on the background by the artist on the painting 'The Procession in San Marco Square' he made in 1496 is shown (Mack, 2005: 260).

The share of the Venetian artists who arrived in Istanbul on the descriptions of early period Ottoman carpets is great, too. It has been said that Anatolian carpets began to be taken to Italy in 1320's approximately. Venice is in business connection with Seljukians in 1220's and the carpets presumed to have been produced since the beginning of the 13th century in Anatolia are the most valuable ones among exported goods such as ceramics and glass. Anatolian carpets arriving in the West through Venice have become a luxury commodity being asked for by the noble persons in a short time (Ölçer, 2010:169). As for the description of these carpets on European painting has started to be seen from the 15th century. However, it has been encountered early samples as well. For instance, the carpet seen on Simon Martini's painting 'Saint Louis Bishop of Toulouse crowning his brother Robert D'Anjou, King of Naples' dated 1316 and 1319 (**Pic.3**) is stated to be a typical carpet in terms of function and design (Mack, 2005: 127-128). In the following periods, these carpets were remembered through the names of prominent artists such as 'Holbein Carpets' of German artist Hans Holbein and 'Bellini Carpets / Rugs' of Giovanni and Gentile Bellini (Ölçer, 2009: 798). For instance, the carpets seen on the mural paintings made by Pinturicchio (**Pic.4**) for the cathedral library have been classified as *Holbein III* (Renda, 2009: 1097). As for the painting 'Madonna and Child Enthroned' (c. 1496) made by Gentile Bellini, a typical octagonal recessed (key recess cornered) Bellini Rug which is laid down the St. Mary's throne has been seen (Sönmez, 2006: 69-70).



P. 3. Simon Martini, Saint Louis Bishop of Toulouse crowning his brother Robert D' Anjou, King of Naples, Altarpiece of Saint Louis of Toulouse, Library 1316 - 19, Gallerie Nazionale di Capodimonte, Napoli.



P.4. Pinturicchio, Showing Aeneas in the Court of the King Scotland , Fresco in the Piccolomini in the Duomo at Siena, 1502 - 1507.

In the period of Suleyman the magnificent (reign 1521 - 1566), Ottoman - Venice Trading progressed further and commercial and diplomatic traffic that underwent between two cities, increase in the number of merchants and mobility created by envoys began to influence the figure of city life. *Beyoğlu*, out of famous districts of Istanbul, has become residential area for Venetian merchants and envoys / bailos who became permanent since 15th century. Such that, it is reported that the name of the district stems from the mansion where Venetian ambassador Andrea Gritti's son Alvise Gritti inhabited in the vicinity of Taksim (Sönmez, 2006: 18-19). On the other hand, it is known that Suleyman the magnificent has been the mostly illustrated sultan in Europe after Mehmed the conqueror. The source of paintings most of which are second hand copies are the drawings of occidental artists who arrived in Istanbul beforehand. For example, Venetian artist Tiziano made a portrait of Suleyman the magnificent and used similar images to him in some religious themed paintings.

Throughout history, Ottoman State that maintains commercial and cultural relations with Italy hosted many musicians, artists, architects and sculptors in its lands in the 19th century particularly (Eyice, 1996: 9-46). These are the periods where intense effects of 'Westernization Movement' has been experienced in Turkey and a good number of foreign artists who live in Istanbul, in particular around Beyoğlu- Pera, are composed of Italians. Out of these artists, Giuseppe Donizetti, who was invited as the maestro of the empire by Mahmut II (reign 1808 - 1839) in 1827 has been rewarded as 'Pasha' title by winning the affection of the palace. Of Venice origin, Istanbul born Adolphe Thalasso, known through researches he made on Ottoman Art of Painting and theatre, prepared a book called 'Ottoman Art'. In this book which is accepted as the first art publications of the period, Thalasso tells about Istanbul Salons which began to be arranged in 1900 and could be done three times as well as artists such as Osman Hamdi, Fausto Zonaro, Halil Paşa and Salvatore Valeri (Thalasso, 2008). 'Palace Artist' Fausto Zonaro of Abdulhamit II, Leonardo de Mango, Gaspare Fossati, Raimondo D'Aronco and Philippe / Pietro Belló (Venice), Salvatore Valeri (Rome) who were the tutors of Sanayi-i Nefise Mektebi (The first Fine Arts Academy) in Turkey are just other Italian guests of the Ottoman. The most significant feature of these artists is that, during their stay in Istanbul, they had actions and productions that are going to support the formation of contemporary Turkish Painting and leave monuments, architectural works of art behind that are going to be part of the city. However, some of them educated students of art and became the initial masters of Ottoman artists.

1. Istanbul - Venice Art Traffic From Republic to Present Day

In 1923, alongwith the proclamation of the Republic, Turkey entered a new period and a revolutionary process targeting reconstruction and development in every field for the building of Modern Turkey. In this process which meant certain disengagement from the Ottoman, while relations with Italy were perpetuated on diplomatic level, it is seen that culture - art mobility was in

limited measures. These ongoing relations during the Ottoman could only be established again in the years 1950 with the participation of Turkish artists into contemporary art activities realized in Italy in the republic period. Turkey, which took part in Venice Biennial three times in the middle of 1950's and the beginning of 1960's, will take its place in the event again in 1990 after a long break. Turkey's participation into Venice Biennial that took part in many international activities such as Sao Paolo, Lyon, Manifesta has a different importance as it was one of the oldest and rooted activities in the world, its pluralist structure providing representation opportunity to different cultures in far geographies, civic / architectural structure and has been followed closely.

Turkey that had no self - pavilion in the beginning could attend exhibitions in a small chamber reserved for itself in Italian pavilion for a long time. In 45th Venice Biennial (1993), Erdağ Aksel and Serhat Kiraz represented Turkey and Aksel exhibited his work titled 'Here and Now and Then' and as for Serhat Kiraz his arrangement called 'Time for Space'. Aksel's installation (**Pic.5**), which is remarkable in terms of its historical references, is composed of six panels and three thin plates confined with thick aluminium frame. Subparts of the panels were fixed with 'Saatli Maarif Takvimi', in small size; upper sections were with photos of Mehmed the conqueror's portraits made by Bellini. The performance has been completed with Aksel's undressing images and with a mast in which a screwdriver enlightened with fluorescence (Anons, 1993: 11 ; Madra, 1993: 135). The performance in which many images have been used together aims to present a broad connotation for the spectators extending from the East and West difference to the dilemma of production - consumption.



P.5. Erdağ Aksel, Here and Now and Then, Giardini Di Castello, 45th Venice Biennial, 1993.



P.6. İnci Eviner, Skinless, 47th Venice Biennial, 1997.

On the 100th anniversary of Venice Biennial in 1995, Turkey could not take part in the event owing to various reasons. The Venice Biennial in 1997 has a different importance for us. In this biennial, with the intent of establishing an intercultural communication in Islamic world and emphasizing cultural pluralism via contemporary works of art, 'Modernities and Memories - New Works of Art Exhibition in Islamic Countries' was arranged (Antmen, 1997: 13 ; Madra, 1997a: 58-60 ; 1997b: 134-139). Thirteen artists from Morocco, Mali, Algeria, Sudan, Indonesia, Egypt, Malaysia and Turkey took part in the exhibition. The key issue of the exhibition is to render changes visible by way of art experienced in moslem societies. İnci Eviner and Serhat Kiraz from Turkey joined the exhibition. As suitable to the 'memory' theme of the exhibition, İnci Eviner made an arrangement titled 'skinless' (**Pic.6**) which is made up of three copper tables the upper part of which is illustrated and four leathers and figure with copper material. In this work, the artist formed a family / house metaphor related to the socio - economic situation in Turkey such as rural exodus, leaving identities aside etc. As for Serhat Kiraz, he surveyed mathematics and culture relations while searching for the meanings loaded by various cultures to numbers (Madra, 1997b: 137).

In 1999, according to internationally famous, doyen curator Harald Szeemann who was put in charge of 46th Venice Biennial; Biennial model is a successful model for the countries that not get

involved in East – West power structure, culture, economy and axis of policy in particular. Szemann introduced the concept ‘new’ to Venice Biennial in which only Kutluğ Ataman from Turkey took part made arrangement in Arsenale in the meaning of making room for it, granted freedom to artists with the title Apertuto (open to anything) (Madra, 1999: 109-115).

In 2001, the theme of 49th Venice Biennial realized under the curatorship of Harald Szemann again was ‘Humanity Plateau’ and Turkey was represented in the event with an exhibition titled ‘İtrli Bahçe’ (The Perfumed Garden) at Nuovo Icono Gallery. The exhibition got its name from the book *The Perfumed Garden* which belonged to an Arabian author Sheikh Ömer İbn-i Muhammed El Nefzavi who lived at the end of the 14th and beginning of the 15th century. Out of Biennial artists Murat Morova’s 19th century product typifies authentic, 30 hand made woman figures set in velvet red ‘Turkish Delight’ box in half – open way on which imitation flowers were placed and harem women inspired from orientalist artists’ paintings. To the artist, the name Istanbul rose refers to poetic description of vulva where Nefzavi mentioned in his book. While Şermin Sherif’s red veil – faced figures which take place in the same room with Morova symbolize violence and blood, they mostly indicate the meaning loaded on woman figure (Akay, 2001: 175). Ahmet Öktem and xurban.net were the other artists from Turkey.

Turkey joined the 50th Venice Biennial (2003) with two artists and an initiative the chief curatorship of which was performed by Francesco Bonami. At Biennial the main theme of which was ‘Dreams and Conflicts: Dictatorship of the Audience’, different exhibition areas were constructed and Turkey took place in its own room with five artists for the first time. The exhibition in Arsenale was realized with the participation of Gül Ilgaz, Nazif Topçuoğlu, Nuri Bilge Ceylan, Neriman Polat, Ergin Çavuşoğlu under the title of ‘In Limbo’ (Threshold / Being in a fix) (Madra, 2003: 42-45). In addition, the artist initiative Room Project took to the exhibition titled structure of Survival arranged by Carlos Basualdo a prefabricated form made after earthquake brought from the city of Adapazarı. As for Hakan Gürsoytrak, he became a participant at Francesco Bonami’s Clandestine exhibition. The artist exhibited his paintings which he prepared on the basis of second page news (Açikkol, 2003: 102-103).

In 2005, the participants of 51st Venice Biennial on behalf of Turkey realized by Rosa Martinez and Maria de Corral were Semiha Berksoy, Bülent Şangar and Hüseyin Çağlayan. Martinez, who is acquainted with the names Bülent Şangar and Semiha Berksoy from the 5th Istanbul Biennial the curatorship of which she did in 1997, stated that she attached much importance to the performing style of Semiha Berksoy’s art in particular and that she had a distinctive place in contemporary Turkish art with her individual mythology. Bülent Şangar attended the event with his city – migration related photograph series (Anonim, 2005a: 31). Additionally, under the commissariat of Beral Madra the curator, a project prepared by fashion designer Hüseyin Çağlayan ranked as well as for the place where the project was presented is the Levi Foundation by the shore of Academy Bridge on Canale Grande which is one of the central locations in Venice. The project named ‘Genometrics’ accomplished by using identity, location, genetics, biology and anthropology has been one of the striking works of the biennial (Anonim, 2005b: 31). Çağlayan worked with English actress Tilda Swinton (Pic.7) in his video performance titled ‘Non – existing Appearance’ (Acar, 2005: 52-54).



P.7. Hüseyin Çağlayan, Non – existing Appearance, in the Pavilion of Turkey at the 51st Venice Biennial, 2005.

Another feature of this biennial is that Rosa Martinez's exhibiting an anthology she prepared from the 51st Venice Biennial under the title of 'Venice - Istanbul' in Istanbul in 2006 who was the curator of both 5th Istanbul Biennial and İstanbul Modern which is one of the significant contemporary art centres in Turkey. In the exhibition realized for the sake of showing that art can travel from biennials to museums and gain new meanings, the works of the artists such as Guerilla Girls, Mona Hatoum, Juan Munoz, Antoni Tapies, William Kentridge have taken place. The works of Semiha Berksoy and Bülent Şangar exhibited in Biennial have been included in the anthology as well. Rosa Martinez did such a determination related to the event:

Istanbul and Venice are undoubtedly two "ladies of fortune" with a dense past and a brilliant history. Both had and have a cosmopolitan character and both were and are open to welcome international influences. Both are living, from different perspectives and with different strategies, the new global geopolitics that has made culture an essential tool for diplomatic exchanges, a qualified instrument for tourism industries, but also and mainly an unavoidable element for high aesthetic and social education (Martinez, 2006: 21-22).

The participation of Turkey in Venice Biennial proceeded from 2007 to present day. Hüseyin Alptekin with his work called 'Don't Complain' in 2007, within the scope of the project 'In Laples' by Ahmet Ögüt and Banu Cennetoğlu in 2009 and Ayşe Erkmen with her arrangement she called as 'Plan B' in 2011 took part in it (Pic.8). The system which Erkmen established through tubing is remarkable in terms of the relation of Venice with water. The artist establishing a direct connection between the channel passing through the city and drinking water takes the water out inside, transforms it via piping system, purifies it and brings it ready for drinking in her fitting. After the water has been purified, it is sent back to Venice again with a pipe outside.



P.8. Ayşe Erkmen, Plan B, 54th Venice Biennial, 2011.

While Ömer Ali Kazma took place in the biennial the 55th of which was arranged in 2013 with his video performances called 'Resistance', this year Sarkis represents Turkey at Biennial. Artist's fitting called 'Respiro' is made up of neon rainbows on two edges of the exhibition area and both - sided two mirrors in the middle. The mirrors with planet figures on which children color with their finger prints reflect the rainbows. As for thirty - six photos enclosed on the walls of the exhibition include the images transferred from both the past and today's current issues.

2. Istanbul - Venice - driven Art Exhibitions out of Venice Biennial

Istanbul - Venice Intimacy in art is not only limited with biennials. From time to time, various events presenting historical or up-to-date perspectives by different institutions have been arranged. For instance, 2010 is the year of 'Istanbul Capital of Culture' and one of the first events made within this scope is 'Venice and Istanbul in Ottoman Period: Also Known As Love' exhibition arranged between the dates 19th November 2009 - 28th February 2010 at Sakıp Sabancı Museum in Istanbul. Via the supports of Sabancı Holding, in the exhibition realized within the context of official visit made by Italian President Giorgio Napolitano to Turkey, it has been aimed to explain the interaction and historical togetherness between two cities. In the exhibiton, as well as Venice city museums; Topkapı Palace Museum, Turkish and Islamic Arts Museum, Pera Museum and manuscripts, paintings, caftans, carpets, coins and ceramics chosen from Yapı Kredi Vedat Nedim Tör Museum were shown (Basım Bülteni, 2010).

A similar event in the same year was realized under the collaboration of *Mimar Sinan Research Center* and *International Andrea Palladio Architecture Researches Center*. To the exhibition 'Architect Sinan

hosts Palladio in Istanbul' (Pic.9) opened at *Tophane-i Amire Culture and Art Centre* accompanied a panel discussion joined by Turkish and Italian experts, too. In the exhibition where the works of Palladio have been introduced, it is stated that Architect Sinan and Palladio might have been cognizant of each other through Marcantonio Barbaro who functioned as an ambassador from 1568 to 1574. Such that, the dome of Redentore Church and belfries in the form of double minarets are presented as a sample showing that Palladio might have been influenced by Ottoman Architecture and Architect Sinan (Binan, 2011).



P.9. The Exhibition of 'Architect Sinan hosts Palladio in Istanbul', 2010.



P.10. İsmail Acar, Sultans in Venice, Fondaco dei Turchi, Venice, 2005.

Exhibitions opened by Turkish artists individually in Venice exist as well. For instance, Turkish artist İsmail Acar realized an exhibition called 'Sultans in Venice' (Pic.10) independently from the biennial during the dates 51st Venice Biennial was held. Acar fixed the effigies of Ottoman Sultans on the facade of *Fondaco dei Turchi* building allocated for Ottoman merchants in the 17th century and used as *Natural History Museum* today. *Fondaco dei Turchi* is a building constructed in the 13th century as outstanding samples of 'Fondaco-inns' in Byzantine style. Ottoman merchants beginning to settle in Venice from 1575 onwards stayed in old *Anzolo* inn in *San Mattio di Rialto* for a long time and moved to *Fondaco dei Turchi* with the board resolution of *Chamber of Commerce* in 1621 (Turan, 1968: 247-283 ; Latini, 2010: 249). While Acar was using this building for his exhibition, he wanted to make an affinity of channel - bosphorus and revive the historical connection between Istanbul - Venice cities again (Acar, 2005: 52-54).

The exhibition 'Glorious Figures of Heart Enthusiasm' prepared by compiling the paintings at Elgiz Collection of Abdurrahman Öztoprak who is one of the distinguished artists in Turkey was realized in the halls of *Venice's Ca'Pesaro International Modern Art Museum* in 2008. The name of the exhibition was given by an inspiration from a verse of the 5th Requiem in the book called 'Duino Requiems' by Rainer Maria Rilke who spent the most fruitful period of her life in Duino in the vicinity of Venice¹. Another artist Ahmet Güneştekin's exhibition titled 'Million Stone' (Pic.11) which he realized in the same dates with 56th Venice Biennial was carried out in a building that took place in the center of art geography that reflects the historical identity of the city in *La Pieta*. At the centre of the exhibition takes place a four - meter sculpture that Güneştekin made by an inspiration from *Million Stone* dating from Roman period which is situated at *Sultanahmet Square*. *Million Stone*; dated as 4th century, accepted as starting point in the measurement of all ways reaching the cities of Byzantine Empire and accepted to have pointed at the centre of the world has been interpreted by Güneştekin as the symbol of phallus and masculine power. Another three dimensional work of the artist who exhibited eight performances (Pic.12) in total bears the name *Constantiniyye*². So, the connection of both Venice and Istanbul with Byzantine culture has been emphasized and it has been drawn attention to the partnership of historical heritage.

¹ Öztoprak Eserleri Venedik'te, çevrimiçi (<http://www.Boyutmedia.com/2668/70847/oztoprak-eserleri-venedikte>), Erişim tarihi: 25.08.2015.

² Ahmet Güneştekin Million Taşı ile Venedik'te, çevrimiçi (http://www.radikal.com.tr/kultur/ahmet_gunestekin_milion_tasi_ile_venedikte-1353113), Erişim tarihi: 25.08.2015.



P.12. Ahmet Güneştekin, Million Stone and Constantiniyye, La Pieta, 2015.

2. Conclusion;

According to Edhem Eldem; 'The mostly resembling Ottoman city to a locality which spread over two sides of a river is Istanbul'. A lot of European travelers who visited the capital city in Ottoman period characterized the Bosphorus as a river or channel. Eldem says that this stems from an analogy rather than a word mistake. Indeed, some persons compared hundreds of small boats commuting in the waters of Istanbul with gondolas in Venice (Eldem, 2011: 9-17). As for Nedim Gürsel the author of the book *Pictorial World* in which a series of art-historical events were mentioned developing in the axis of Venice - Istanbul, he says that both cities are narcissists. He discusses about charming cities adorning the imaginary world of the artists (Günsür, 2000 ; 2006: 8-12). Aside from these poetic narrations, the most important feature of Venice- Istanbul intimacy is that rather than not much resembling physical appearances of two cities in fact, transformation of bilateral relations established in the sense of trading into a rich culture - art heritage and intense interaction. Bellini moved from the West to the East and returned his home by picking plenty of images. Today's Turkish artists are looking for their own histories and identities in Venice by moving from the East to the West and pursuing new meanings presented by the city for themselves. In a sense, since 13th century, the art continues to make familiar these two cities by embracing history as well.

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