

PRESS RELEASE

House of Wisdom

25 November 2017 - 7 January 2018

Opening Friday 24 November, 20:00 - 22:00

Opening performance by Istanbul Queer Art Collective - *Psychic Bibliophiles: What the Cards Say*

Curators: Collective Çukurcuma (Naz Cuguoğlu & Mine Kaplangı)

Artists: Mohamed Abdelkarim, Burak Arıkan, Mahmoud Bakhshi, Yael Bartana, Mehtap Baydu, Kürşat Bayhan, Ekin Bernay, Burçak Bingöl, Nicky Broekhuysen, Hera Büyüktaşçıyan, Cansu Çakar, Ramesch Daha, Işıl Eğrikavuk, Didem Erk, Foundland Collective, Deniz Gül, Beril Gür, Lawrence Abu Hamdan, İstanbul Queer Art Collective (Tuna Erdem & Seda Ergül), Ali Kazma, Yazan Khalili, Göksu Kunak, Mona Kriegler, Fehras Publishing Practices, Elham Rokni, Natascha Sadr Haghighian & Ashkan Sepahvand, Sümer Sayın, Erineç Seymen, Bahia Shehab, Walid Siti, Ali Taptık, Erdem Taşdelen, Özge Topçu, Viron Erol Vert, Ali Yass, Eşref Yıldırım, Ala Younis.

'To admit authorities, however heavily furred and gowned, into our libraries and let them tell us how to read, what to read, what value to place upon what we read, is to destroy the spirit of freedom which is the breath of those sanctuaries. Everywhere else we may be bound by laws and conventions - there we have none.'
Virginia Woolf, *How Should One Read a Book*, 1925

Throughout history, libraries have been perceived as places where information on life and space are organised, read, and interpreted. Their political significance, however, has at times been underestimated. As in the example of *House of Wisdom**, libraries are also known as centers of research, learning, and sharing. This concentration and exchange of knowledge makes them important symbols of political power and the formation of cultural identity.

Libraries also play a significant role during times of collective resistance and protests for freedom. Recent examples of this are the library formed during the Gezi Park protests in Istanbul in 2013 — demonstrations contesting the urban development plan for Istanbul's Taksim Gezi Park, to which police responded back with tear gas and water cannons — and the 'Secret Library' founded last year in Syria's Darayya. Libraries and archives, particularly those in public spaces, provide free access to cultural heritage and information, and are essential for bringing people together to share knowledge.

Based on the power of libraries, and Foucault's notion of the archive as 'the general system of the formation and transformation of statements', the curators followed their archival urge and decided to build their own archive-library. To shed light on the increasing levels of censorship on information and the current sociopolitical situation in and around Turkey, they invited artists and researchers to take part in the project. The *House of Wisdom* exhibition aims to underscore the political nature of books, whose mere existence is under threat, ultimately asking the question: 'What could be the outcome of collectively rethinking the notion of the archive, particularly when issues such as censorship and suppression of information are involved?'

House of Wisdom is an open space, a gathering place. Visitors of Framer Framed are invited to enter the library-exhibition to read, discuss, collaborate, scheme, and exchange knowledge and ideas. Collective Çukurcuma will organise a full weekend of reading groups, talks and presentations in the weekend of 16-17 December, and there will several public events curated by 7 Hills Foundation.

**The original House of Wisdom (Bayt-al Hikma) was a library founded in the beginning of the 8th century in Baghdad, where thousands of books in various languages from different regions, on philosophy, art, science, and history were housed. Researchers from different regions came together to make research, and work on techniques of translation, writing, and discussion.*

***House of Wisdom is a mobile and ever-evolving library/exhibition curated by Collective Çukurcuma. It was previously shown at Dzialdov (Berlin, 2017), and IKS Building (Public program of the 15th Istanbul Biennial, Istanbul, 2017).*

On the curators

Collective Çukurcuma is a non-profit art initiative based in Istanbul, Turkey. It was founded by Naz Cuguoğlu and Mine Kaplangı in 2015 and joined by Serhat Cacekli in 2017. The collective mainly focuses on collaborative thinking and creating processes through its reading group meetings (co-organized by Gökcan Demirkazık) and cross-national collaboration projects, and raises questions about the power of books and libraries through its curatorial projects and editorial work.

Naz Cuguoğlu is a curator and art writer, based in Istanbul. She is the co-founder of artistic research project *IdentityLab* (SE & TR); and works as program manager at Zilberman Gallery (Istanbul & Berlin). Her writings have been published in various online and published art magazines, including Art Asia Pacific, Art South Africa, and Istanbul Art News. Recently, she took part in ICI New Orleans Curatorial Intensive funded by SAHA, and TATE Intensive (London) funded by Roberto Cimetta fund. She received her BA in Psychology and MA in Social Psychology focusing on cultural studies. **Mine Kaplangı** currently works as an artist representative and curator at BLOK art space contemporary art space in Istanbul. She received her bachelor degree in Philosophy in Istanbul University and MA (Certificate Program) in Philosophy of Arts & Aesthetics in Bologna University/ DAMS Faculty. She is also working as a freelance editor for contemporary art platforms like Artunlimited and Artfridge. **Serhat Cacekli** is an Istanbul-based curator and art writer. He is one of the curators of international exhibition exchange project 31KiLO. Cacekli contributes regularly to various printed and online art magazines such as Istanbul Art News, Milliyet Sanat and XOXO the Mag. He works at Zilberman Gallery–Istanbul and pursues his Master's Degree on art management at Yeditepe University.



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OPEN
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