

# O ZAMANLAR KONUŞUYORDUK

## [IT WAS A TIME OF CONVERSATION]

*O zamanlar konuşuyorduk*  
[It was a time of conversation]  
February 8 – April 22, 2012  
SALT Galata, Open Archive

*It was a time of conversation*, SALT's second Open Archive project, calls for a reevaluation of three exhibitions from the first half of the 1990s in Turkey – *Elli Numara* [Number Fifty] / *Anı/Bellek II* [Memory/Recollection II], *GAR* [Railway Station] and *Küreselleşme – Devlet, Sefalet, Şiddet* [Globalization – State, Misery, Violence] – based on original documents from the period. These exhibitions initiated new curatorial approaches in Turkey, negotiating with unconventional venues as opposed to galleries, cultural centers or historical buildings. Examining these exhibitions, *It was a time of conversation* seeks to provide an overview of collective and non-commercial initiatives by artists who focused on collaboration and the exchange of ideas during the early '90s – a time when institutionalization was still at a minimum and expectations were low.

*It was a time of conversation* is the visualization of SALT Research's ongoing attempt to explore those exhibitions that have reached beyond commercial concerns, contributed to the clarification of new artistic and cultural moments, and produced ruptures – exhibitions that may have historic importance today. The project is realized with the support of the exhibitions' participants, with comprehensive archives developed by SALT Research. This process was initiated by SALT Research's Sezin Romi in 2010, and has since continued in collaboration with the exhibitions' organizers, artists and assistants. The project brings together information, documents and video from a variety of sources.

*Number Fifty / Memory/Recollection II* was curated by Vasıf Kortun in 1993 at building #50 in Akaretler. Kortun and the artists decided to close the exhibition prematurely after a banner for the exhibition was replaced with a Democrat Party poster.

*GAR* was part of the Taboos and Art symposium organized by Sanart (the Association of Support for Visual Arts in Turkey) at the Ankara Railway Station in 1995, and was a collective initiative of Selim Bırsel, Vahap Avşar, Claude Leon and Füsün Okutan. The works in the exhibition were removed by the Station Directorate a day after opening, purportedly because they “demoralized society”.

Curated by Ali Akay in 1995, *Globalization – State, Misery, Violence* was exhibited at Devlet Han in Beyoğlu – at the time, the studio of Müşerref Zeytinoğlu and Emre Zeytinoğlu. The exhibition focused on state violence, violence against the state and violence between individuals, and coincided with the 4th İstanbul Biennial.

*In Number Fifty*, politics displaced art; *GAR* disturbed the authorities, who duly shut it down; while *Globalization – State, Misery, Violence* had better luck in keeping with its oppositional stance in the context of the Biennial.

*It was a time of conversation* brings together the archives of these three exhibitions, all organized during a period when individuals from different disciplines were beginning to see art as a “form of conversation” – when art itself emerged as an object of thought and the concept of the “curator” began to take hold. It takes these exhibitions – all products of collaboration and discussion

– as a launching point, offering a new perspective on art in Turkey during the 1990s.

### **About Open Archive**

Selected projects of SALT Research are exhibited and presented for interpretation in Open Archive, a space at SALT Galata dedicated specifically to this subject. Open Archive projects explore possible relationships between archives, democracy and transparency.

SALT supports the notion that archives can be revolutionized on distributed networks and with the participation of a multitude of users. The archive is never “complete” and is of value only when offered for public use.

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