

Gazi Arts-Crafts Department from 1932 to 1973

IDEALIST SCHOOL, PRODUCTIVE STUDIO

Exploring the Arts-Crafts Department at Gazi Education Institute in terms of its unique approach to art education, the exhibition opens on November 27 at SALT Galata.

November 27, 2018 - February 17, 2019
SALT Galata, Floor -1

The principal teacher training school, established three years after the foundation of the Republic of Turkey in 1923, Gazi Education Institute in Ankara was assigned to bring up teachers who were equipped with all necessary skills to exercise their profession in conditions of hardship, both materially and intellectually. The students were provided with applicable knowledge, which was considered to be the most practical and favorable in the political climate of the period. The Institute's Arts-Crafts Department developed a curriculum around the concept of "work" with a pedagogical approach that emphasized "learning by doing." A highly original variety of art education was made available, whose fundamental principles found expression in the practices of the graduates, trained as artist-teachers. ***Idealist School, Productive Studio*** focuses between the years 1932 and 1973, marking the period when the Department was opened and until when the Institute's boarding school was rescinded. Adding a new layer to SALT's research on the art history of Turkey, the exhibition presents a selection of archive materials and works of art along with oral narratives.

The notion and practice of work education became widespread among industrializing countries from the end of the 19th century onward, especially on the utilization of new means of production. In the 20th century however, late-industrializing countries concentrated on raising generations of skilled workers who could serve as the agents of implementing rapid progress. This transformation involved associating the old with laziness and lethargy and the new with creation, construction, design, and utility. As a result, in many countries, work education came to be seen as the basis of modern pedagogy. In the Ottoman Empire, first debates around the idea emerged in 1908, when Mustafa Satı Bey was appointed director of *Dârulmuallimîn*, an all-male teacher training school in Istanbul. In subsequent years, they were further developed by the reflections of thinkers including İsmail Hakkı Baltacıođlu and İsmail Hakkı Tongu, and eventually formed the conceptual basis for a number of leading institutions, such as the Gazi Education Institute, the Community Centers (*Halkevleri*, est. 1932), and the Village Institutes (*Köy Enstitüleri*, est. 1940).

In Gazi Arts-Crafts Department, art was consciously linked to work and profession as part of the overarching political and social mobilization that was viewed essential to the modern republic. This approach played a significant role in the development of artist-teachers by combining fine art studios like painting, graphics, and modelling together with applied arts studios like wood, metal, and cardboard works. Students were taught to produce with diverse materials that, in the future, they could use in their art classes as well as their own artistic practice.

Idealist School, Productive Studio explores the contributions this comprehensive mastery of knowledge made to future generations through archival visual records, textbooks of pedagogy, the pedagogical debates held in Baltacıoğlu's journal *Yeni Adam* [The New Man], the entire corpus of Adnan Turani's 1960s journal *Sanat ve Sanatçılar* [Art and Artists], and the covers of the Community Centers' journal *Ülkü* [Ideal], which were designed by teachers in the Arts-Crafts Department. These sources are accompanied by works of a number of graduates and teachers, including paintings by artist and writer Malik Aksel—selected by art historian Martina Becker—and digitized photographs of Şinasi Barutçu, an important figure in the spread of photography in Turkey.

Works produced with an array of printing techniques by Nevzat Akoral, Mustafa Ashier, Muammer Bakır, Nevide Gökaydın, Mürşide İcmeli, and Süleyman Saim Tekcan showcase the constructive side of the Department's graphics education. Son of a watch repairman, Cengiz Çekil's 2005 work *1200 Saat*, comprising 1200 old watches purchased at flea markets; and İsmail Saray's installation *Duvara Ders Anlatma* [Lecture to a Wall] (1980/2018), reproduced for this exhibition by the artist, represent fine examples of graduates' varied art practices. Osman Dinç's *Triptik* [Triptych] (1978) in wood, glass, felt, and iron; as well as *İsimsiz* [Untitled] (2006) by Remzi Savaş, a symbolic interpretation of iron scale weights, feature the use of unusual materials. Mustafa Altıntaş's painting *Yapıcılar* [The Builders] (2010) references to the educational system implemented in the Village Institutes, where art and work were supposedly fused together. The exhibition also includes Metin Yurdanur's busts of Gökaydın, İcmeli, and Hidayet Telli, all teachers at the Department; Halil Akdeniz's *Kompozisyon* [Composition] (1964), executed with oil paint that Akdeniz prepared when he was a student; and a drawing by Gülgün Başarır for Refik Epikman's 1965 studio.

Following the initial presentation at SALT Galata in Istanbul, ***Idealist School, Productive Studio*** will take place at Çankaya Municipality Contemporary Arts Center in Ankara between March 4 and April 7, 2019.

IMAGES

1.

Gazi Education Institute building and environs, Ankara, 1930s
Niyazi Altunya Archive

2.

Gazi Arts-Crafts Department student İsmail Saray (left) in a modelling studio, 1967
SALT Research, İsmail Saray Archive

3.

Gazi Arts-Crafts Department student Osman Aziz Yeşil with various cardboard works, c. 1959-1962
SALT Research, Osman Aziz Yeşil Archive

4.

Gazi Arts-Crafts Department students studying at night, c. 1959-1962
SALT Research, Osman Aziz Yeşil Archive

5.

Gazi Education Institute Director İsmail Hakkı Tonguç (front, fifth from left) with a group of teachers and students, 1934-1935 academic year
Niyazi Altunya Archive

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