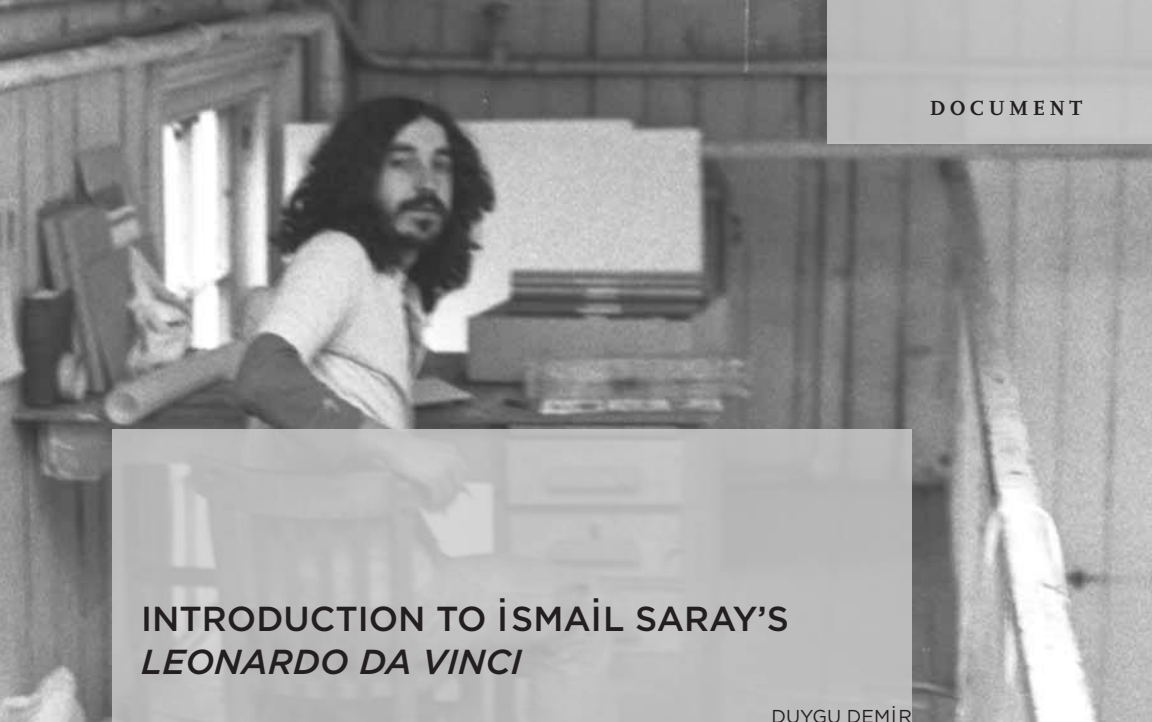


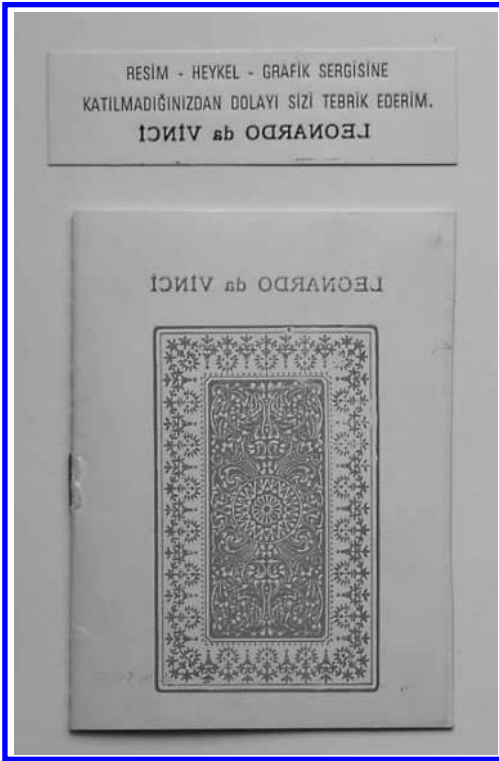


INTRODUCTION TO İSMAIL SARAY'S *LEONARDO DA VINCI*

DUYGU DEMİR

The decision to translate the text of İsmail Saray's enigmatic artist's book of 1976, *Leonardo da Vinci*, is strategic. It uncovers a specific moment in Turkish art history through the figure of Saray (b. Kütahya, Turkey, 1943), whose course of practice was perhaps emblematic of an artist operating on the fringes of the Turkish Republic's state-driven art system as it closed in on itself by the mid-1970s. İsmail Saray had experienced a permissive environment and adequate state support during his formative years as an art student in the late 1960s. However, his artistic practice and career were greatly influenced by the rising conservatism in Turkey's political, as well as artistic and academic, spheres during the mid-to-late 1970s, just before the country's military *coup d'état* in September 1980. *Leonardo da Vinci* stands as a critical work in Saray's playfully dissent-driven oeuvre, an oeuvre that was conditioned by—and simultaneously revolted against—the educational opportunities and challenges of the time, the available models of exhibiting artwork, and the rapidly changing political system that he was part of during his most productive years. Significantly, this period of productivity all started with Saray's gesture of sending his artist's book out into the world.

The text I present here aims to give a glimpse of how Saray's experience—as an artist invested in avant-garde strategies learned abroad, yet functioning within an enclosed system at home that did not accom-



İsmail Saray, *Leonardo da Vinci*, 1975. Artist's book.
Image courtesy of SALT. Photograph by Mustafa Hazneci.

modate these strategies—speaks to the larger, historical phenomena associated with a heavy-handed state presence in the art world and academia. These challenges and obstacles, perhaps ironically, have prompted critically inclined artists like Saray to work even more creatively, conceiving a new and distinct visual language shaped by their living and working conditions. At the same time, such artists have operated with, around, and against existing hierarchies of the art world, hierarchies that often reflect the instant and drastic changes in Turkish politics.

In 1976, Saray anonymously sent a booklet to those who had participated in the 36th State Painting and Sculpture Exhibition that took place in the state museum in Ankara the year before. The front cover of the 8.5 by 11.5 cm booklet features the back of a playing card in orange ink and the

title *Leonardo da Vinci* printed in reverse across the top. Those who opened the book would find a greeting printed on a small piece of card stock, which read, “I congratulate you for not having participated in the Painting-Sculpture-Graphics exhibition,” and was signed “Leonardo da Vinci” (again printed in reverse). The booklet itself comprises a cryptic eight-page text, written by Saray and printed in three different fonts. The back cover includes the name and telephone number of a small-scale typeset printer in Samsun, the industrial Black Sea town where Saray was teaching sculpture at the university.

At the time he produced *Leonardo da Vinci*, Saray was working as a civil servant in Samsun—part of his contractual agreement with the Turkish state following a governmental study-abroad sculpture fellowship he had won from the Ministry of Culture in 1968. For this fellowship, he had been sent to England without a designated course of study or a prearranged academic program, but with a considerably gen-

erous stipend.¹ While there, he enrolled in English-language courses and was subsequently admitted to a year-long foundation course for senior students at London's Saint Martin's School of Art;² he followed this with an MA course in sculpture at the Royal College of Art.

Saray was already well trained in traditional methods of manipulating material into form, having studied painting at Ankara's Gazi Eğitim Enstitüsü (Gazi Educational Institute), a boarding teachers' college that was modeled after the Bauhaus and opened in 1932. His introduction to theory and conceptual art, however, came in London. At Saint Martin's, he was a student of Peter Kardia, who was known for his experimental pedagogical approaches. Saray thus belonged to a camp of artists opposed to the more modernist practice and teachings of Anthony Caro, a tutor at the school from 1953–81.³ The root of Saray's political engagement can also be traced back to this time, especially to his participation in the 1968 student movements in England.⁴

These radicalizing experiences in London led Saray to chafe at the conservative cultural and bureaucratic impediments that awaited him upon his return home. In 1973, the Turkish technocratic government, installed by the military coup of 1971, was still in power. By the end of the 1970s, Turkey was in an unstable situation with unresolved economic and social problems, facing large-scale strikes and political paralysis. Before the military coup of 1980, the country had been led by thirteen different coalition governments, and the Grand National Assembly of Turkey had been unable to elect a president during the six months preceding the coup. Political violence between Turkish right-wing ultranationalist groups and left-wing groups inflicted some 5,000 casualties, including a number of assassinations and massacres. While the military's takeover quelled the wave of street violence, it was replaced by another, more organized model of state and military vio-

1 The exact amount is not known. However, according to the artist Mustafa Altıntaş—who went to Paris on a fellowship from the French Cultural Institute during the same period Saray was in London—the stipend from the Turkish state was much more generous than the one he received from France: Interview with Mustafa Altıntaş, March 7, 2014.

2 Established in the mid-19th century, the school became widely known after Frank Martin became head of the sculpture department in 1952 and brought in young sculptors and recent graduates of the department as teachers. The sculpture department was especially experimental when Saray was a student there. For more about the radical pedagogical experiments of the time, see Hester Westley, "The Year of the Locked Room," *Tate Etc.* 9 (Spring 2007), <http://www.tate.org.uk/context-comment/articles/year-locked-room>.

3 İsmail Saray, interview by the author, London, October 9, 2012.

4 Saray's participation included various demonstrations and sit-ins: Saray, interview October 9, 2012.

lence in the form of intimidation, torture, forced disappearance, and assassinations for which the *deep state* was suspect.⁵

In the climate of political instability and social upheaval during the mid-1970s, Saray's appointment to a state school as an art teacher would prove to be a long, torturous undertaking and an economically challenging process. The terms of his bursary required that he would have to serve as a government-employed and -appointed teacher for one and a half times the length of his fellowship (for Saray, this was seven years and six months). When he returned from London with an alternative sensibility—manifest in his long hair, unkempt beard, and hippie fashion—he found that the state bureaucracy was curiously unwilling to accommodate him in the expected manner. After numerous visits to different state offices in Ankara, dubious administrative delays, and months of waiting without monetary compensation, he was appointed to a small university, the Samsun Eğitim Enstitüsü in the remote northern town of Samsun, rather than following the typical course of action, in which he would either return to his *alma mater* to teach or be appointed to another teaching institute.

During his time in Samsun, Saray was nevertheless active in trying to improve arts education. He focused on initiating an art reference library for the university. He convinced the local officials to create a budget for the library and managed to get subscriptions to magazines such as *Studio International*, *Flash Art*, and *Artforum*; he brought back books from his visits to Istanbul and corresponded with publishers such as Thames & Hudson to send their recent publications to Samsun. He made a short 8 mm film of the water's surface called *Black Sea* (1975), which he integrated into a performance event he organized with the participation of his students. Called *A Happening* (1975), the performance featured Saray giving a pseudo-lecture on the history of humankind while drinking colored water from different pitchers; around him were students wearing colored body bags, photographs of a blind man and a young boy selling birdseed, and a slideshow featuring newspaper clippings, among other elements.⁶

5 The *deep state* (*derin devlet*) is a commonly used expression in Turkey to describe the unofficial alliances between ultranationalists, Turkish intelligence services, and organized crime. For more about the postwar political history of Turkey, see Eric J. Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2004).

6 Based on Saray's account, photos from his archive, and his portfolio submission to the Paris Biennale: Bibliothèque Kandinsky, Centre Pompidou, Paris.



İsmail Saray at the studios at the Royal College of Art, London, circa 1973.
Courtesy of the artist and the İsmail Saray Archive at SALT.

Meanwhile, the artistic debates happening in the cultural capital of Istanbul were still centered on issues of figuration and abstract painting, and largely took place at the state-run Fine Arts Academy, which had been founded in the late 19th century and modeled after the French Beaux-Arts *école*. Professors and students alike were divided between Socialist Realism and abstraction, between those who argued for the importance of the role of the artist as a revolutionary figure, engaged with local struggles, and others who defended abstraction as the higher, truer art form. In most cases, this defense of abstraction

meant a superficial, formal engagement with and a passive borrowing of Western trends and visual language—a situation whose roots extended as far back as the late 1940s, when abstract idioms first appeared in Turkey.⁷ The professors and teaching assistants at the academy were civil servants; with the lack of a market for fine art, becoming a civil servant was almost the only way to ensure an artist's existence.⁸ The annual state-administered Painting and Sculpture Exhibitions were among the few exhibition opportunities available, and offered the chance for artists' work to become part of the state art collection: the government reserved the right to buy first from these exhibitions and usually acquired the works that took first place in the juried competition. Being on the jury of these exhibitions not only proved to be an opportunity for self-promotion, but also led to favoritism toward jury members' friends. The well-established status of the Fine Arts Academy at the top of the hierarchical ladder meant that opportunities for participating in these exhibitions were almost exclusive to students and professors from the Istanbul academy, and pandering to juries meant the production of work that befit bureaucratic inclinations. These exhibitions did not favor a certain style, although exhibiting work with a political bent or critical edge was almost impossible in such an atmosphere.⁹

Saray's *Leonardo da Vinci* was created in reaction to one such event, the 36th State Painting and Sculpture Exhibition in 1975, which Saray visited in Ankara the year before writing the pamphlet. Characterizing his anonymous mail-art intervention as a "satirical greeting,"¹⁰ he explains his choice of the "Leonardo da Vinci" pseudonym as "an entry point, an art historical reference"; he claims that "if [he] had used [his] own name, perhaps no one would have read it."¹¹ For Saray, using the

7 There is no existing scholarship in English on this period. However, Sarah-Neel Smith, from UCLA, is currently undertaking doctoral work on the Turkish art scene of the 1950s.

8 Although most commentators have attributed the beginning of an art market in Turkey to the 1970s and the appearance of several private galleries, the first of these, both in Ankara and Istanbul, opened in the early 1950s.

9 To have a more vivid picture of the selection processes for State Painting and Sculpture exhibitions, including favoritism, adulation, and office politics between civil servant painters and professors, see İsmail Altınok, *Bir ressamın notları: Türk resminin sorunları* [Notes of a Painter: The Issues with Turkish Painting] (Ankara: DMS Doruk Matbaacılık, 1980).

10 İsmail Saray, interview by the author, Istanbul, January 9, 2013.

11 Saray, interview, January 9, 2013.

famous pseudonym was not only an attractive bait but, in his opinion, also underlined a shared system of oppression, given that Leonardo had been forced to send his messages in texts written in reverse. In reference to the back of the playing card that he chose for the cover, Saray explains that “like in a game of poker, the hand of bureaucracy is undisclosed. If someone were to tell me that all my problems arose from my hair and my beard, that then they would sign off on my appointment, I would have gone to a barbershop.”¹²

Saray did not receive any direct reaction or feedback after sending out the booklet. This was most likely because, although the text criticized the nature of these exhibitions and the stance of the artists involved, Saray used, in the recollection of fellow artist Ahmet Öktem, a “meta-language that was hard to comprehend, which confused and somewhat scared most of those at the academy that received the booklet.”¹³ In the text, Saray sets up a convoluted system of numbers and letters to refer to events, as well as futuristic and mechanical terms such as “data storage operation” or “memory tracking.” The first few pages feature an almost robotic language that is difficult to penetrate, with phrases such as “The data that this person possesses start at time A_1 , extend beyond time A_2 , but, never having reached time A_3 , these data cannot surpass time A_3 .” However, the text softens and takes an existential turn when, toward the end of the booklet, he brings up concepts such as *love*, *beauty*, and *aesthetics*, and asks what living must be for. He answers the question himself: “Everything is for independence; everything is for meeting again in equality after we depart from this world. If goodness, completeness, and talent that can achieve results do not exist, neither does law.” It is almost as if he is juxtaposing the cold metallic nature of the “system” he seems to constantly run up against, with the fleshy vulnerability of the individual human being, or rather himself.¹⁴

The key passage in *Leonardo da Vinci*, where Saray addresses how the state-run cultural system is able to silence and marginalize individual dissenting voices, lies buried in the middle of the text. Saray writes:

¹² Saray, interview, October 2, 2012.

¹³ Ahmet Öktem, interview by the author, September 28, 2012. Öktem was one of the participants of the aforementioned exhibition, hence one of the recipients of the booklet.

¹⁴ It would be fitting to say that the change in the book’s typography parallels the changing tone of voice in the text. However, the use of three alternating fonts was circumstantial; when the typeset printer ran out of the letters that he began with, he consulted with the artist and upon his approval, used two other fonts.

In the face of these unlawful situations that cause him to lose all hope and affect his physical-social existence, he chooses silence. This person's resort to silence is to prove that he does not hold any *a priori* opinions, any individual ego, and on some occasions to illustrate that he truly does not possess any sensory proclivity. Our acts should be directed solely toward determining courses for the future and toward analyzing and supporting sides. For this, the individual person should never judge the thoughts and feelings of others through his own, but should gain the support of every social group.

This essential point in the text potentially reveals Saray's purpose in sending out *Leonardo da Vinci*: to express his dissent about the current system, specifically the state-run Painting and Sculpture Exhibition series. As the text suggests, he is simultaneously expressing his vulnerability and looking for allies, albeit anonymously.

In the following year, 1976, many artists boycotted the State Painting and Sculpture Exhibition.¹⁵ To suggest there is a causal link between Saray's anonymous gesture and the boycott would be speculation; nevertheless, given the state control of the art world, the scale of the boycott is notable. The Görsel Sanatçılar Derneği (Visual Artists Association, or GSD) in Istanbul¹⁶ sent a letter to the Ministry of Culture, announcing the artists' decision not to participate "due to the continuation of negative conduct which still persists in this year's exhibition."¹⁷ In a survey conducted by the popular art magazine *Milliyet Sanat* [*Milliyet Art*] about the boycott, several artists—some of whom

15 Exhibition boycotts were not frequent (with the exception of the few artists who chose never to participate in these exhibitions). However, there was a previous example of artists boycotting the Devlet Resim Heykel Sergileri [State Painting and Sculpture Exhibitions] en masse in the 1950s.

16 The association was founded in 1975 by 17 artists who were the alumni of Devlet Güzel Sanatlar Akademisi (Fine Arts Academy in Istanbul), Tatbiki Güzel Sanatlar Yüksek Okulu (School of Applied Arts, which would later become Marmara University of Applied Arts in Istanbul), and Gazi Eğitim Enstitüsü (Gazi Educational Institute) in Ankara. It took on the missions of an artists' union, arguing for artists' rights, the improvement of working conditions, the inclusion of artworks in public buildings, the insurance of artworks, and so forth. The association quickly acquired more than 300 members.

17 Anonymous, "Birçok sanatçı Mayıs'ta açılacak Devlet Resim ve Heykel Sergisi'ne neden eser göndermedi?" ["Why Were There Many Artists Who Did Not Send Work to the State Painting and Sculpture Exhibition That Will Open in May?"], *Milliyet Sanat*, no. 182, (1976): 5–6. The use of the word *negative* in this letter was intentionally broad and implicitly referred to a range of problems arising from the way these exhibitions were organized, as reflected in the artists' demands.

had participated in these exhibitions for the past twenty years, as well as others who had chosen never to participate—shared similar frustrations with the current system.¹⁸ They demanded a separate exhibition opportunity and prize for young artists, an increase in prize money, as well as a predetermined price that the state would guarantee to pay for the top-rated artworks. Additional demands included a fair selection system for qualified jury members, the presence of representatives from the artists' union and educators in the jury, guaranteed care and conservation for the exhibited and acquired works, as well as the often expressed wish for the reopening of the State Art and Sculpture Museum, which had opened and closed intermittently following its founding in 1937 (it had most recently closed in 1976). When asked about the exhibition boycott at the time, Neşet Günel, who was then the head of the painting department at the Fine Arts Academy, stated in an interview that these annual shows might have been more beneficial to artists if certain conditions were met, stressing the importance of preventing the exhibition from reflecting the opinions, aesthetic values, or interests of any individual, group, or institution.¹⁹ The boycotters and critics agreed that the Painting and Sculpture Exhibitions needed to be steered away from instruction or oppression by political power, which would institute them as a “state” activity, with all the limitations on free expression and risk of politicization that this entailed.

In 1976, the same year he anonymously distributed *Leonardo da Vinci*,²⁰ Saray submitted a portfolio (which also included the *Leonardo* booklet) to the international selection committee for the Paris Biennale of 1977.²¹ The Paris Biennale had switched in 1973 to having an

18 Ibid.

19 Gülşen Çalık, “Neşet Günel: Devlet Resim Heykel Sergisi önemini yitirmiştir” [“Neşet Günel: The State Painting and Sculpture Exhibition Has Lost Its Significance”], *Politika*, June 25, 1976. Neşet Günel's opinion was a personal one and does not represent the general viewpoint of other professors at the academy, some of whom were actively participating in these exhibitions, as jury members or as artists.

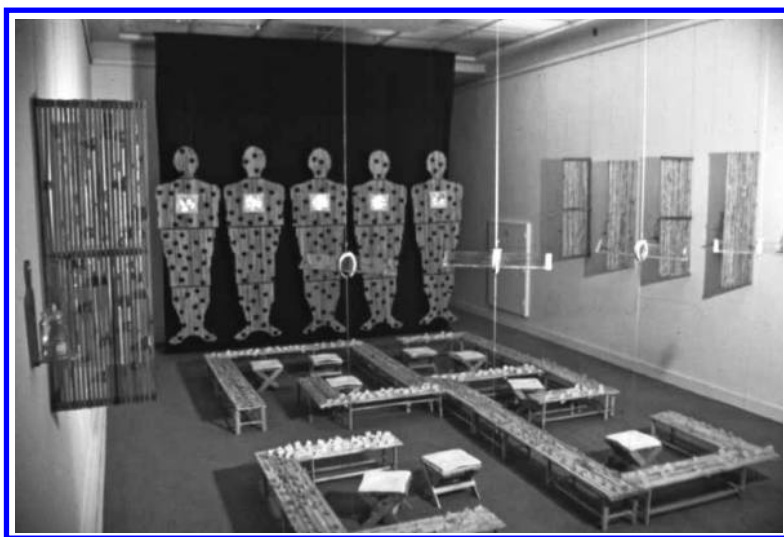
20 It can be said with some certainty that Saray's *Leonardo da Vinci* is the first artist's book to be made in Turkey.

21 The portfolio was accompanied by the following text, written by the artist in language similar to that employed in the booklet:

Revolt under silent oppression versus revolt in thinking out loud and acting the thoughts of experience in public. This exertion ends with remembering the present. If we are unable to combine the happenings surrounding us (if we are aware of them!) the statements we make could be taken either in silent depression or acting publicly. Both ways we should be producing works, each could be perceived in or on time by the minority or the majority.

international selection committee that would evaluate individual submissions, rather than the previously employed approach of having each country preselect the participants. In Turkey's case, this older approach had resulted in conservative choices that continued to promote Academy students and professors who had participated in the Biennale's inaugural year in 1959. Saray would be the first Turkish artist invited to the Paris Biennale since the change in the selection process. Even though he was able to bypass the biases of local selectors, Saray's correspondence regarding financial support from the Turkish authorities would prove to be another acrimonious encounter with the state. There was much back-and-forth negotiation between Saray and Ministry of Culture bureaucrats, as well with Nurullah Berk, who was the head of the Fine Arts Academy in Istanbul at the time, about the production of Saray's work and its transportation to France. Eventually, the work was not financed by the Turkish state and all expenses were paid by the artist himself. Moreover, Saray's requests to the Ministry of Culture to pay the cost of the work's return to Turkey were rejected as well, and the installation was therefore not preserved after it was shown.

Saray's project for the Paris Biennale overtly displays an antimilitaristic sentiment. The installation was called *ER-DAMU-UTU-SU* (1977), a nonsensical title that may contain cryptic personal references



Ismail Saray. *ER-DAMU-UTU-SU*, 1977. Mixed-media installation, 10th Paris Biennale, Musée d'Art Moderne de Paris. Image courtesy of Ismail Saray and SALT Research.

or abbreviations.²² It featured shooting targets with *tawiz* casings attached to them,²³ triangular prisms hanging from the ceiling through which the visitor could look at the targets, low tables and chairs, a stack of black leather-bound books that were shot with bullets, and glass jars that contained sweat and tears. All that remains from *ER-DAMU-UTU-SU* is another artist's book that Saray made for the occasion. Even smaller than *Leonardo da Vinci*, the Paris booklet featured photographs Saray had taken during his compulsory military service in 1975, together with photographs of primary school students in Samsun, alongside excerpts from found court proceedings that he juxtaposed with dirty jokes associated with Turkish military culture and the army. The booklet featured black bands over the eyes of people, reminiscent of newspaper censorship, where photos of criminals are similarly blocked. Cutouts from the Paris booklet were inserted between the slats of wooden benches, located in the center of the exhibition, mimicking a common sight on Turkish streets, where fortune-tellers would place notes in the cracks of their makeshift tables and get their rabbits to pick one of the notes for you (the notes contained messages similar to those found in fortune cookies).

Saray's distribution of the *Leonardo da Vinci* artist's book to the participants of the 1975 Painting and Sculpture Exhibition (which was made with the help of his students, who cut and pasted the names and addresses of the participants from the back of the exhibition catalog), as well as his participation in the 1977 Paris Biennale, became—somewhat paradoxically—his foray into Istanbul's art scene. Only after these acts of criticism from afar was he invited in 1979 to participate in the second *Yeni Eğilimler* (New Trends in Art) exhibition, for which he produced another installation and artist's book. *Yeni Eğilimler* was a biennial exhibition series organized between 1977 and 1987, as part of the *Sanat Bayramı* (Arts Festival), by the Fine Arts Academy in Istanbul “with the intention of presenting new work without distinctions between painting, sculpture, object-art, or conceptual art, but

22 In conversation, Saray did not remember the title of the work. It was only discovered in the files from the Paris Biennale, held at the archive of the Centre Pompidou, Paris. Hence, the meaning or hidden references of the title remain unknown.

23 A *tawiz* is a written charm or amulet to keep bad luck and evil eye away, which it was common practice for mothers, sisters, or lovers (always female) to prepare and give to their loved ones, especially those who were sent away from home, such as for military service.

authentic work that challenged tradition, which spoke the same universal language of contemporary art.”²⁴

Slightly larger in format than his *Leonardo da Vinci* text, Saray’s booklet for Yeni Eğilimler featured on its cover a silkscreen print of the famous news image from the Taksim Square Massacre on May Day, 1977, which resulted in around forty deaths and many more injuries during an exchange of gunfire between still-unknown perpetrators. The back of the booklet displayed a found image of parked warplanes. The silkscreened text inside the booklet juxtaposed descriptions of imagined methods of torture and quotations taken from politicians caught swearing in the Turkish parliament.

The book was integrated into his installation, the title of which is not known, and copies of it could be taken by the visitors. The installation itself comprised a simple wooden structure with a chain and a long strip of paper draped over it. Attached to the chain were black-and-white images of world leaders shaking hands and close-up photographs of the hands of Turkish politicians as they signed agreements, along with images of warplanes and tanks, all of which were taken from newspapers. A strip of paper wound around the structure, which featured swear words spoken by the politicians (the same text that appears in the artist’s booklet). On the floor around the wooden structure were stacks of glass in wooden containers with the same silkscreened image as on the front cover of the booklet, several rocks painted gold placed on a black fabric rolled around the edges, and canvas cushions with the descriptive text of imagined torture tactics printed on them.²⁵

Saray’s overtly political work indubitably received attention. Since he was still living in Samsun, he was the last to arrive at the exhibition space to install his work. Members of the jury, who had already made their rounds and picked the award winners, reportedly said that if they had seen Saray’s installation earlier, they would have selected him as one of the winners.²⁶ As can be inferred from the series’ premise, the

24 Nilgün Özyayten, *Batı’da obje sanatı/kavramsal sanat/post-kavramsal sanat ve Türkiye’de 1965–92 yılları arasındaki benzer eğilimleri* [Object Art in the West/Conceptual Art/Post-Conceptual Art and Similar Tendencies in Turkey 1965–92] (Istanbul, SALT, 2013), e-book, <http://saltonline.org/media/files/mtevaz-bir-miras-batda-obje-sanat.pdf>.

25 According to Saray, “The chaotic nature of the installation was intended to mimic the chaotic state Turkish politics was in, the slovenliness of democracy in Turkey.” Saray, interview, January 9, 2012.

26 Güven Özgür, “2. Yeni Eğilimler Sergisi Üzerine” [“On the Second Exhibition of New Trends in Art”], *Sanat Çevresi*, no. 13 (November 1979).

New Tendencies Exhibitions wanted to break away from the amateurism of the State Painting and Sculpture Exhibitions. Organized and juried by those who were looking for “new” approaches, this series continued until the late 1980s and was one of the catalysts and antecedents of the International Istanbul Biennial, the first of which took place in 1987.

Saray’s work and interest in the medium of the artist’s book aligned perfectly with those of an art group that formed in 1977. Sanat Tanım Topluluğu (Art Definition Society, or STT) was founded by artists inclined toward conceptualism—Şükrü Aysan, Serhat Kiraz (who was the second Turkish participant in the Paris Biennale after Saray), and Ahmet Öktem (together with Avni Yamaner, who left the group a year later)—as a countergesture to the championing of visual arts, especially painting, both commercially and at the Fine Arts Academy. The group’s most significant and novel contribution to the Turkish art scene was the concept of *sanat olarak betik* (*written document or book as art*), with which they invited the viewer to experience exhibitions not by walking around and looking at the walls, but by sitting down and examining the pages of the *betik* (book). STT translated the writings of Marcel Duchamp as well as texts by Joseph Kosuth and Jan Dibbets into Turkish. These translations, published in the *betik*, meant the direct participation of the texts’ international authors as artists in STT exhibitions. Along with Alpaslan Baloğlu, Saray was invited to participate in an STT exhibition, in 1980, which involved the collaborative creation of a *betik*. In addition to introductory texts and translations by the group’s leading figure, Şükrü Aysan, each artist invited to participate in the exhibition had his or her own slot in the book. Saray’s three black pages, with silhouettes of figures going about their business and short texts describing their role in society, functioned as a simulation of his wall installation, with the texts nearly identical to those later realized for the exhibition.

The Sanat Olarak Betik (Book as Art) in 1980 was both STT’s first major exhibition and the last exhibition for the next twelve years in which Saray could personally install his own work in Turkey. The country’s frictions, especially between leftist and rightist groups, and high levels of violence among students, made it impossible for Saray and his British wife Jenni Boswell-Jones to continue living and working in the socially divided, small-town politics of Samsun. Saray broke his commitment of seven and a half years of teaching service

after only five years, and left the country shortly before the 1980 military coup.

During this self-imposed (and still-ongoing) exile, Saray continued to participate in exhibitions in Turkey from afar. Among them was the *Betiksanat* exhibition by STT, which took place at the Istanbul State Fine Arts Gallery in 1983 and which only included artists' books, magazines, and translations of texts by artists.²⁷ Saray participated by sending STT copies of *Leonardo da Vinci* and the booklet made for Yeni Eğilimler in 1979, along with two new single-copy books, *Eye for an Eye* and *Still Life*, that he made for the occasion of the 1983 exhibition. It was with Saray's help that issues of the publication *Art & Language* were also included in the STT exhibition.²⁸ In subsequent years, Saray slowly paid his debt to the state for his education, and he could have safely returned to Turkey. Instead, he chose to participate from London in exhibitions organized by his artist friends; he would send detailed descriptions and sketches for installations that would be physically realized by Serhat Kiraz, a fellow STT artist, or Cengiz Çekil, a fellow student from Gazi Eğitim Enstitüsü.²⁹ His artistic activity had transformed into producing only documents.

An important component of this production was Saray's publication of *AND Journal* in London with Boswell-Jones from 1984 until 1993. They produced and distributed twenty-two issues of *AND Journal* during this time, featuring images and articles by artists and thinkers from Saray's life in London and Turkey. His dependence on printed matter was not only a choice determined by the physical conditions of distance, but also a method that befitted his artistic style and conceptualist doctrine. For him, text and object were intertwined in installa-

27 The fact that this exhibition took place at the State Fine Arts Gallery does not necessarily indicate a kind of loosening of the tensions between the state and these conceptual artists; at the time, artists could independently apply with a proposal to use the State Gallery for an exhibition they wanted to organize. A board comprising professors from the Fine Arts Academy evaluated the applications.

28 Saray's affinity and identification with the Art & Language group, which he followed closely, and the mathematical/scientific approach borrowed from Conceptualism leave traces in the *Leonardo da Vinci* text, where he names times, locations, occasions, and people with letters and numbers.

29 Serhat Kiraz installed Saray's work for all four of the now legendary A,B,C,D exhibitions that took place in Istanbul between 1989 and 1993, and Cengiz Çekil made the works through which Saray participated in the two Toplu Sergi editions at the Izmir Turkish-American Association in 1987 and 1988. Moreover, artist Yusuf Taktak installed his work for the 4. Öncü Türk Sanatından Bir Kesit (4th A Cross-Section of Avant-Garde Turkish Art) exhibition at Atatürk Kültür Merkezi, Istanbul, in 1984.

tions, and he chose to strengthen the effect of his works with accompanying booklets, which, after the exhibitions, would then go beyond serving as documents and become stand-alone works.

Though he is no longer a practicing artist today, Saray laid the beginnings of the dematerialization of his practice with *Leonardo da Vinci*, his first foray into the Turkish art scene. Throughout his career, his artworks would be directly influenced or even shaped by his relationship with the Turkish state—as in this initial example of *Leonardo da Vinci*, a manifesto that he wrote after being cast away from the art scene with his appointment in Samsun. His use of the written document in his work is ultimately twofold: at times, the books or printed texts are used to communicate the artist's own dissent, while at other times, such as the leather-bound books shot through with bullets, they are objects that themselves evoke the presence of the Turkish state and its actions during these repressive times.