

Lessons from 'Standing Man'

Performance art takes its next steps with a festival this month.
Alexandra Ivanoff looks at what's in store

Performance artist Erdem Gündüz's silent, motionless "Standing Man" protest in Taksim Square in June – and the thousands of other standing people he inspired – has newly exposed many in Turkey to the power of performance art.

This little-understood form of artistic expression is actually "sculpture-based," according to Burçak Konukman, the director of the 2013 edition of the International Performance Association (IPA) Festival, which will be held in Istanbul this month. "Performance art is live art, and it treats the body like sculpture, by using the body in a space in a certain way," Konukman told *Time Out Istanbul* in an interview.

Performance-art training helps a person contact and strengthen his or her inner sensors by means of particular physical and emotional exercises. Konukman offers an example: "One student was doing a performance in a stairwell. She was shouting 'What's the next step?' while she was cleaning the stairs, one by one. Watching that was so strange, and I can still hear it in my head!"

Konukman cautions, however, against confusing performance art with such populist actions as flash-mobs, or putting large signage (no matter how revolutionary the language) or costumes on one's body and marching down a boulevard. "Those things are usually promotional and could be perceived as advertising," he explains. "İstiklal Caddesi is one long shopping mall, and companies are always doing promotions there. Real performance art is wide-open; we use it in a way that encourages responsibility."

The IPA Festival

Konukman and an international group of young participants will meet August 12 for a series of IPA Summer Camp workshops, to be followed by a workshop performance on August 17 and a festival from August 22-24,



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capped by a conference and panel. Fittingly, given the uncertain political and social climate in Turkey right now, this year's theme for the IPA Platform for Young Performance Artists will be "What's the Next Step?"

IPA co-founder Jürgen Fritz, from Germany, will be one of the IPA Summer Camp's international team of teachers, alongside Agnes Nedregard (Norway) and VestANDPage, the name used by the duo Verena Stenke (Germany) and Andrea Pagnes (Italy). The venues for the festival will be the Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University, Siemens Sanat, Maumau, Quit, Tophane-i Amire, MIXER, Sanatorium, Istanbul Modern, SALT Galata and SALT Beyoğlu.

Konukman's affinity for the techniques of performance art stems from training directly with Fritz in Berlin for an IPA Summer Camp in 2011. Fritz's curriculum included such exercises as "riding the mad horse," explains Konukman. "For two hours, we had to imagine riding a wild young horse to figure out how you would do it, and how the horse rides you. It creates an awareness of how the space around you changes." For this year's camp and festival, Konukman will take Fritz's list of questions attached to the theme "What's the Next Step?" to examine what's next for 1) You; 2) Istanbul; 3) Turkey; and 4) Life. "We actually chose this formula at the beginning of the year, long before the Gezi [Park] protests happened," he says. "It's a response to all the infrastructure changes [we've been seeing] in the city."

But after what we've witnessed over the past few months, is there a risk of police intervention in work performed in public spaces? "Our outdoor performances will only be in spaces that are connected to a venue. And these venues have their own security. We don't need to get permits [for public assembly]," Konukman says. "We are also not doing anything violent or