

## PRESS EMWAP 21 March 2015

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### **Meet European Middle West Arts Project, a new performance festival in Istanbul**

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*Organized by four international arts institutions, Istanbul's new performance festival European Middle West Arts Project explores 'the hybrid space between east and west'*

Five years ago I traveled to Anvers, Belgium to watch performances at 0090, a festival devoted to promoting contemporary Turkish artists in Europe. On my first day there I saw Mesut Arslan, the artistic director of the festival. Determined to present an alternative vision of Turkish art and question prejudices and presumptions of European audiences, he stood outside the Monty Theatre at the heart of Anvers, watching with pleasure crowds as they entered the theater. Arslan and his vision make an unexpected come back this week with a brand new festival titled "EMWAP" (European Middle West Arts Project). Featuring six productions that focus on "the hybrid space between east and west," EMWAP is a welcome addition to Istanbul's performing arts scene which seems to have become smaller after its peak in 2010 when the city was the European Capital of Culture. Running until April 5, EMWAP's performance venues include Salt Beyoğlu, Moda Sahnesi, Tiyatro D22 and Talimhane Theater. Arslan describes the term "Middle West" in the festival's title as an "artistically defined space" which he hopes the performances at EMWAP will thoroughly explore. "It is a space between stereotypical spaces," Arslan said. "Thanks to orientalism, self-orientalism and auto-orientalism, most contemporary art has lost its quality and weight. The 'Middle West' artistic space we talk about asks for more contact and exchange between artists. We want to facilitate encounters between them." Arslan hopes to see this interaction result in "artistic dialogues and reflections on the concept of the Middle West, a hybrid space between east and west." EMWAP's first performance, which took place at Salt Beyoğlu at the end of the week, was Curating Space by Erki De Vries, Pieter Huybrechts and Kris Delacourt. "The starting point of Curating Space was some pictures of Istanbul," Arslan explained. "This was the result of the first residencies we had in Istanbul. You can find lots of materials from Istanbul in Curating Space." De Vries, Huybrechts and Delacourt "connect the boundaries of three different generated worlds to merge in an engaging journey," according to the festival program. "Through their own individual artistic language, a scenographer, a photographer and a musician manipulate the space surrounding the audience. The spectator meets with a myriad of images, changing and changeable spaces, and an altered reality. While moving through a constructed city, it appears to disintegrate

and become abstract - an inward movement through a mental space, pushing to the present time on stage." This week's performances at Moda Sahnesi include Schwalbe Cheats by Schalbe (March 23 and 24, at 8:30 p.m.) and Autonomous Sceneography by Meryem Bayram (March 25, at 8:30 p.m.) The latter is based on Bayram's fascination with pop-up books. "She developed a series of forms made of sheet cardboard which can be unfolded from an apparently empty flat surface to a whole repertory of evocative scenic elements. Different artists were invited to use their imagination on the material. In this way, the project demonstrates what happens when the scenography does not rely on a story or choreography, but the other way around. How can the performance artists, sound and light designers contaminate these various scenic elements? In a sensitive yet evocative game of forms, spaces, objects and worlds are set up, revealing to what extent our perception of reality is determined by personal associations." Arslan and the festival team discovered that "the artist" could be the starting point of EMWAP. "We found that we are interested in producing sustainable dialogues between performance arts, artists, environments, managers, critics and the public," he said. "Our project focuses on the contemporary European art scene. It explores migrations and movements active within that scene. Our main focus is the nomadic status of the artist. We want to initiate artistic processes, with a special focus on research, residencies and performances." Funded by the European Cultural Program EMWAP features works by artists who work in different countries and tackle issues that exist within different countries. "How does this influence their work?" Arslan asked. "Does bringing together artists with different backgrounds result in a hybrid production? Is there a difference in the way the public receives the work according to the context of the location of the performance?" Arslan's Platform 0090 is based in Belgium and has a decade-long experience in working with partners, including Productiehuis Rotterdam in Netherlands, Arcola Theater in the U.K. and Talimhane Tiyatrosu in Istanbul. "I didn't select the EMWAP performances by myself," Arslan said. "I suggested the idea and we worked with our partners right from the beginning. We chose the artists and struggled to transform our synergies into artistic processes." One of the partners of the festival is the Arcola Theatre. Founded in 2000 by Mehmet Ergen and Leyla Nazlı in London, Arcola is famous for its sold out performances and is acknowledged as one of the most prestigious arts venues in the U.K. The Arcola is producing Anders Lustgarten's "Sharapnel: 34 Fragments of a Massacre" performance. Taking place in December 2011, the month when Turkish Armed Forces dropped bombs on a group of unarmed smugglers with mules, killing 34 civilians, the performance explores one of the most controversial episodes in the war on terror. Another highlight of the festival is "We need to move urgently," a performance by Taldans. Offering a way to "test new artistic, social, scientific models of acting together in an open spirit" the performance was created by Filiz Sızanlı, Mustafa Kaplan and Vania Rovisco and will be presented on March 31 and April 1 at Moda Sahnesi. An Istanbul graffiti that has inspired Taldans seems to encapsulate the spirit of EMWAP festival. "There is a beautiful mess outside," it reads, "how can you stay in?"

## EAST AND WEST



### NEW PERFORMANCE FESTIVAL IN ISTANBUL

THE BRAINCHILD of Belgium-based artist Mesut Arslan, the European Middle West Arts Project aims to amplify contact and exchange between artists by exploring the hybrid space between east and west and will run until April 5 PAGE 12

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# Culture & Arts

**MEET EUROPEAN MIDDLE WEST ARTS PROJECT, A NEW PERFORMANCE FESTIVAL IN ISTANBUL**

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**MOVIES**

### Five films debut this week in theaters

**THE DREAMER**  
A tapestry on a surrealist animation scene, which works for an animation about modernism and the government mission of Congo. After the scene, he is used to eat in the children, having his life, girlfriend and entrepreneur for seven of their years. The animation also captures about in Congo. The story returns to Congo and finds himself on the verge of a killing spree before he can kill him, as he knows he needs about the death of the minister. *Screening: Cine Pointe, Institut Français, Markoff, Blanca Film, Onuma, Long Film, Marmaris, Chubbuck, Rains, Angelo Barone and Eva Dies, "The Cinema"*, which returns to the experimental aspect is directed by Peter Müller. *Screening: Cine Pointe with "Love"* and *Laundromat*

**A SECOND CHANGE**  
Directed by Achenbach and co-writer because they are Danish production, stars Nils-Göran Swahn of the "Carnet of Thomas" series, Ulrich Thomsen, Maria Ronnevi and Mia Adolph. The film focuses on the experimental guitar officer. Adolph is beautiful with short and her newborn baby. While an alien abduction approach to a dramatic and with his partner and best friend, Simon, at the home of an eccentric Thomas and his girlfriend, Susan, who have a baby named Louis. Adolph does everything he can to protect the baby, which has been brought up in an industrial environment, however, he grows up to work within the boundaries of his job. This incident allows Adolph, who has a complex decision, as well as his job and his perspective on the concept of life.

**PAKISTANI**  
Screening: Wildcat, Dutch, Rijdschool, Karamchand, Cine Pointe and Vivia via Marmaris, the biographic film centers on the last day of Pina Bausch's Paradise before being murdered. The drama sheds light on the murder of Paradise who was a poet, dancer, journalist and intellectual.

**FOCUS**  
An extremely accomplished cartoonist, Nicky takes structure and personal life in his apartment, however, he is attracted by his new neighbor. While Nicky is teaching the details of being a cartoonist, they give close to Nicky and, as he is used to being creative on his job, he needs the relationship. Their next lives, they are lovers and in Istanbul. They are, from being Nicky's biggest and most dangerous, one upside down and makes a man of Nicky. Directed by Clara Ewurua and John Brega, the movie is an Academy Award nominee. *Screening: Cine Pointe, Institut Français, Markoff, Blanca Film, Onuma, Long Film, Marmaris, Chubbuck, Rains, Angelo Barone and Eva Dies, "The Cinema"*, which returns to the experimental aspect is directed by Peter Müller. *Screening: Cine Pointe with "Love"* and *Laundromat*

**MIKE AND MORTON**  
Adapted from Virginia Roth's best selling novel, "The Nightingale" is the second film of the "The Nightingale" series. Directed by Robert Schwentke, the film stars Michael Fassbender, Carey Mulligan and Joaquin Phoenix. Their love and life journey in the leading roles, they are committed to their love and their right against the world.

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