

# Transforming the historical waterfront: An(r/t)repo in Istanbul

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## Abstract

This article focuses on the ongoing transformation of Antrepo buildings (warehouses) built on the piers in Salıpazarı Harbor, its effect on the public domain, and the outcry of the residents against using venues of art used for purely commercial purposes, resulting in gentrification. Planned and designed by Sedat Hakkı Eldem, one of the pioneers of the Modern Movement in Turkey in the late 1950s, Salıpazarı Harbor functions as the main international port of İstanbul. Besides the fact that the warehouses of the pier were housed in Tophane earlier, Salıpazarı has immense historical and cultural importance; it faces the Historical Peninsula, is adjacent to the open museum of Ottoman architecture dating to the seventeenth century, and is a contemporary art venue.

The harbor area consists of seven warehouses that were functional until 1990. Since then, three of the warehouses have been renovated to become, respectively, the İstanbul Modern art gallery, an art exhibition gallery, and the İstanbul art biennial venue. Beginning with the 1990s, this area has come under great threat with the announcement of the “Galataport” project, which aims to transform the harbor into a cruise port with residential and trade facilities, thereby reducing public access to the historical waterfront area and becoming another site of gentrification. This plan for the adaptation and reuse of the warehouses drew a great deal of opposition from the public.

This article, therefore, examines the status of art used as a tool to generate capital and bring about gentrification versus the public, whose lives are going to be affected by these proposed changes. It addresses how art is evaluated from different perspectives in urban

transformation, based on social and political interests, taking the example of the Salıpazari Harbor.

**Palabras clave:** Antrepo, el arte orientado al, transformación urbana, gentrificación

### Resumen

Este artículo se centra en la transformación en curso de los almacenes de Antrepo construidos en los muelles en Salıpazari Harbor, en su efecto sobre el dominio público, y en la protesta de los vecinos contra el uso de intervenciones artísticas utilizadas con fines puramente comerciales, lo que resulta en un proceso de gentrificación. Planeados y diseñados por Sedad Eldem, uno de los pioneros del movimiento moderno en Turquía a finales de 1950, Salıpazari Harbor funciona como el principal puerto internacional de Estambul. Además del hecho de que los almacenes del muelle fueron alojados anteriormente en Tophane, Salıpazari tiene una inmensa importancia histórica y cultural; se sitúa frente a la península histórica, se encuentra próximo al museo abierto de arquitectura otomana que data del siglo XVII, y es un lugar de arte contemporáneo.

La zona del puerto está formada por siete almacenes que funcionaron hasta el año 1990. Desde entonces, tres de los almacenes han sido renovados para convertirse, respectivamente, en la galería de arte moderno de Estambul, en una galería de exposiciones de arte, y el lugar de la Bienal de Arte de Estambul. Desde inicios de la década de 1990, esta zona ha estado bajo la gran amenaza del proyecto "Galataport", que tiene como objetivo transformar el actual puerto, en un puerto de cruceros con instalaciones residenciales y comerciales, reduciendo de este modo el acceso público a la zona del puerto histórico y transformándola en un territorio de gentrificación. Este plan para la adaptación y la reutilización de los almacenes generó una gran oposición por parte del público.

En este artículo, por lo tanto, examina el estatuto del arte utilizado como una herramienta para generar capital y lograr la gentrificación contra los ciudadanos, cuyas vidas van a ser afectados por los cambios propuestos. Se ocupa de cómo se evalúa el arte desde diferentes perspectivas en la transformación urbana, sobre la base de los intereses sociales y políticos, tomando el ejemplo el puerto de Salıpazari.

**Palabras clave:** Antrepo, el arte orientado al capital, transformación urbana, gentrificación

### Resum

Aquest article se centra en la transformació en curs dels magatzems de Antrepo construïts en els molls a Salıpazari Harbor, en el seu efecte sobre el domini públic, i en la protesta dels veïns contra l'ús d'intervencions artístiques utilitzades amb fins purament comercials, la qual cosa resulta en un procés de gentrificació. Planejats i dissenyats per Sedad Eldem, un dels pioners del moviment modern a Turquia a finals de 1950, Salıpazari Harbor funciona com el principal

port internacional d'Istanbul. A més del fet que els magatzems del moll van ser allotjats anteriorment en Tophane, Salipazari té una immensa importància històrica i cultural; se situa enfront de la península històrica, es troba pròxim al museu obert d'arquitectura otomana que data del segle XVII, i és un lloc d'art contemporani.

La zona del port està formada per set magatzems que van funcionar fins a l'any 1990. Des de llavors, tres dels magatzems han estat renovats per a convertir-se, respectivament, en la galeria d'art modern d'Istanbul, en una galeria d'exposicions d'art, i en el lloc de la Biennal d'Art de Istanbul. Des d'inicis de la dècada de 1990, aquesta zona ha estat sota la gran amenaça del projecte "Galataport", que té com a objectiu transformar l'actual port, en un port de creuers amb instal·lacions residencials i comercials, reduint d'aquesta manera l'accés públic a la zona del port històric i transformant-la en un territori de gentrificació. Aquest pla per a l'adaptació i la reutilització dels magatzems va generar una gran oposició per part del públic.

En aquest article, per tant, examina l'estatut de l'art utilitzat com una eina per generar capital i aconseguir la gentrificació contra els ciutadans, les vides van a ser afectats pels canvis proposats. S'ocupa de com s'avalua l'art des de diferents perspectives en la transformació urbana, sobre la base dels interessos socials i polítics, prenent l'exemple el port de Salipazari.

**Paraules clau:** Antrepo, l'art orientat al capital, transformació urbana, gentrificació

### Salıpaazarı: Transformation of Antrepo into an Art Space

One of the oldest trading centers and industrial areas in İstanbul that is under the threat of urban transformation is the Salıpaazarı Pier located in the southern part of Tophane (Öztürk, 2009). The pier has served as a sea gate to the city from the thirteenth century to the twentieth century, and in the seventeenth century, it was the main arrival port for ships coming from Europe. Over the centuries, diverse social groups have lived by this waterfront facing the Historical Peninsula. In the early nineteenth century, with an increase in the density of sea transportation, piers (İstanbul Modern, 2015) and, subsequently, modernist warehouses were constructed in 1910. In the 1950s, after a political upheaval that partially transformed the fabric of the city such as installing building new roads and public service order to provide sufficient space for passenger traffic in spite of the destruction historical fabric of the city. In Tophane, some of the military buildings left over from the Ottoman Empire were demolished. Following this, Sedad Hakkı Eldem, one of the prominent architects of the Modern Movement in Turkey, designed four warehouses in his 1957-58 project (Çimenoğlu, 2011). Figures 1, 2, 3, and 4 present Salıpaazarı Harbor and Tophane view and drawings from the 1960s.



Figure 1. Salıpaazarı Harbor and Tophane View from the 1950s (Source:i). Salıpaazarı possesses very big amount of historical importance and Tophane-i Amir dating from the Ottoman period. Salıpaazarı. Tophane (armory) was the location of Ottoman empires's cannon and cannonball factory. Source: Çimenoğlu, 2011, 86 p.

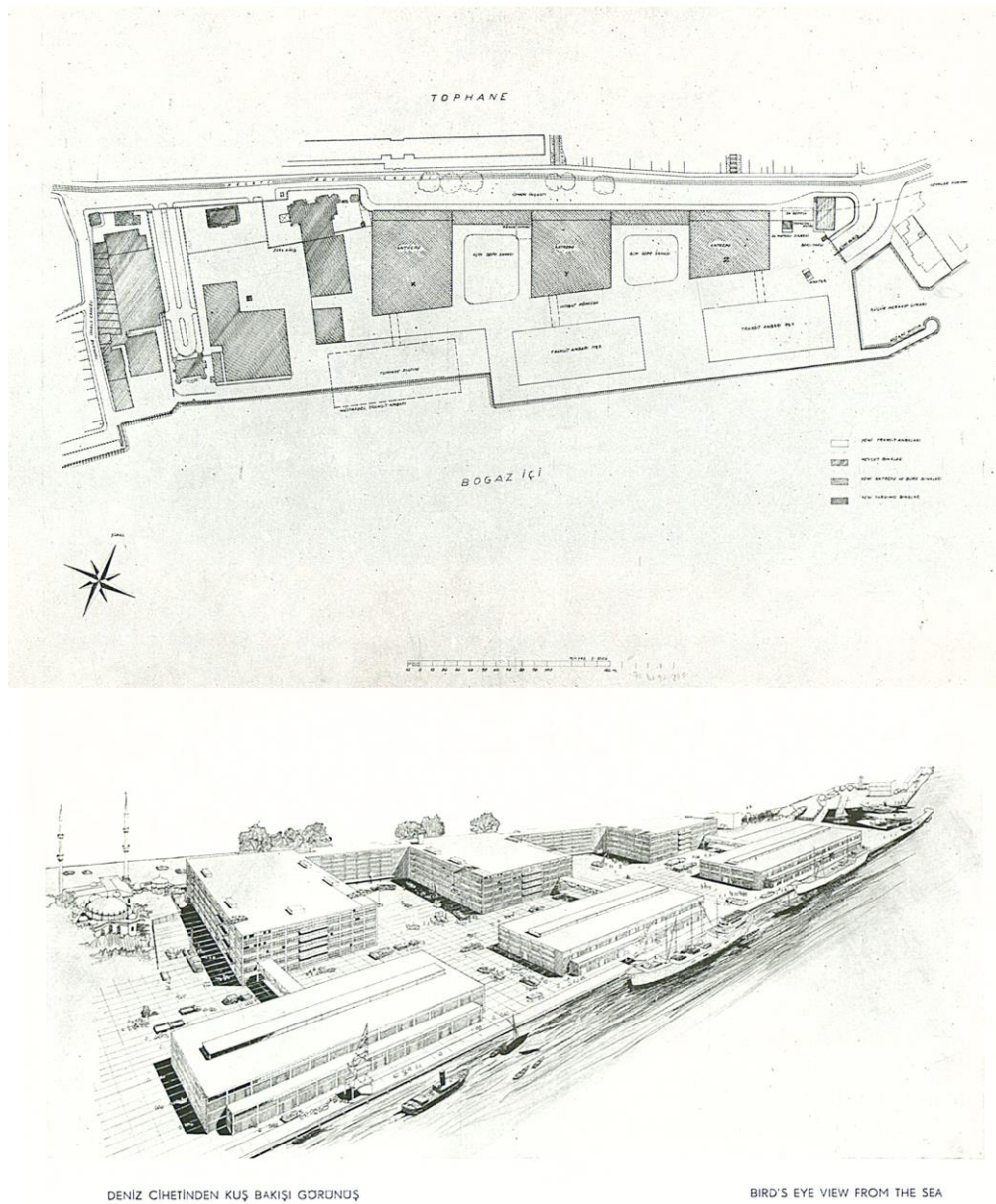


Figure 2. Plan and perspective of the area and a façade, 1953-1960. Courtesy of Rahmi M. Koç Archive. Source: [Online] Date of consult: 10 July 2015, Available at: <[https://www.archives.saltresearch.org/R/-?func=dbin-jump-full&object\\_id=351541&silolibrary=GEN01](https://www.archives.saltresearch.org/R/-?func=dbin-jump-full&object_id=351541&silolibrary=GEN01)>.

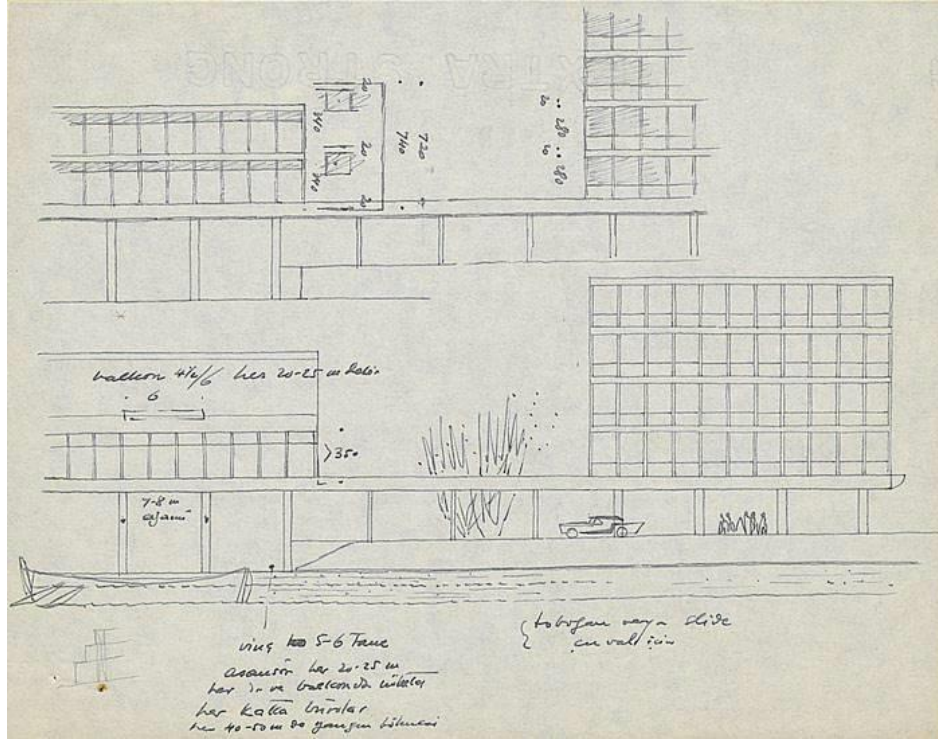


Figure 3. Drawings, 1953-1960. Courtesy of Rahmi M. Koç Archive. Source: [Online] Date of consult: 10 July 2015, Available at: <[https://www.archives.saltresearch.org/R/-?func=dbin-jump-full&object\\_id=351581&silolibrary=GEN01](https://www.archives.saltresearch.org/R/-?func=dbin-jump-full&object_id=351581&silolibrary=GEN01)>.

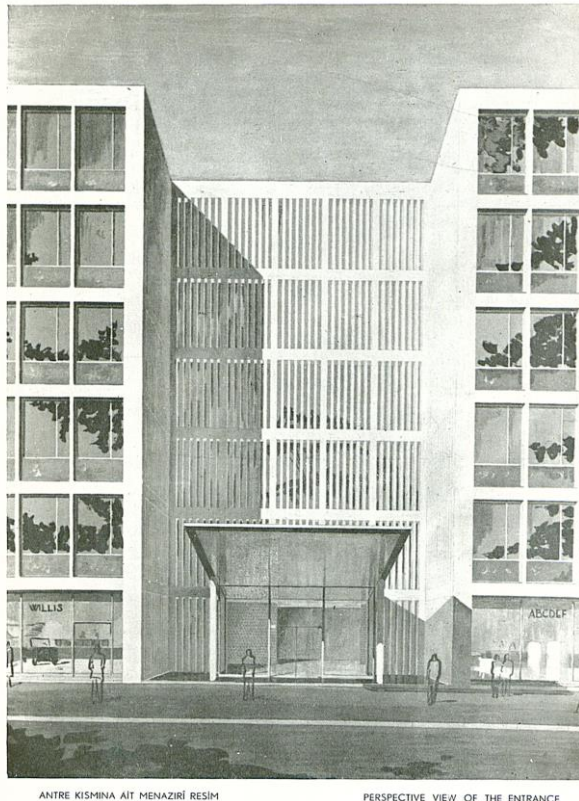


Figure 4. Drawings of Tophane Project (Tophane Gümrük ve Ambar Tesisleri ve Tophane Meydanı Düzenleme Projesi), architect Sedat Hakkı Eldem from the 1953-1960 Tophane Square, Salıpazarı, , Courtesy of Rahmi M. Koç Archive. Source: [Online] Date of consult: 10 July 2015, Available at: <[https://www.archives.saltresearch.org/R/-?func=dbin-jump-full&object\\_id=351525&silolibrary=GEN01](https://www.archives.saltresearch.org/R/-?func=dbin-jump-full&object_id=351525&silolibrary=GEN01)>.

Modern-day Salıpazarı Pier is a complex consisting of seven antrepo<sup>1</sup> buildings previously used as warehouses in Tophane. In the 1970s, trading ceased and the port has since then been used as an entrance point for cruise ships (Taheri, 2013). In the 1990s, with the rising population and a decrease in the number of passengers, the buildings became partially dysfunctional. Some of these were transformed to function as spaces for exhibiting art. Eldem's antrepo was renovated and transformed into the Istanbul Modern Art Gallery by Tabanlıoğlu architects, the first contemporary art gallery in Turkey. Following this, antrepo no. 5 was transformed into a temporary exhibition gallery and as a meeting place for artists during the year 2010 (Madra, 2010) as shown in Figures 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9.



Figure 5. Istanbul Museum of Modern Art Renovation by Tabanlıoğlu Arcitects, 2004 (Source: Photograph by Murat Germen, Courtesy of Murat Germen).



Figure 6. View towards the port: The cruise antrepo together as a symbol of socio-cultural transformation in the historical landscape. On the left is Antrepo no. 5 by Sedat Hakkı Eldem, transformed to Sanat Limanı in 2010 and currently renovated by Emre Arolat architects into Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University Museum of Painting and Sculpture (Photo by the author)

<sup>1</sup> Antrepo means warehouse in English. In this article, the author prefers to use the word antrepo to interfer with its context of art.

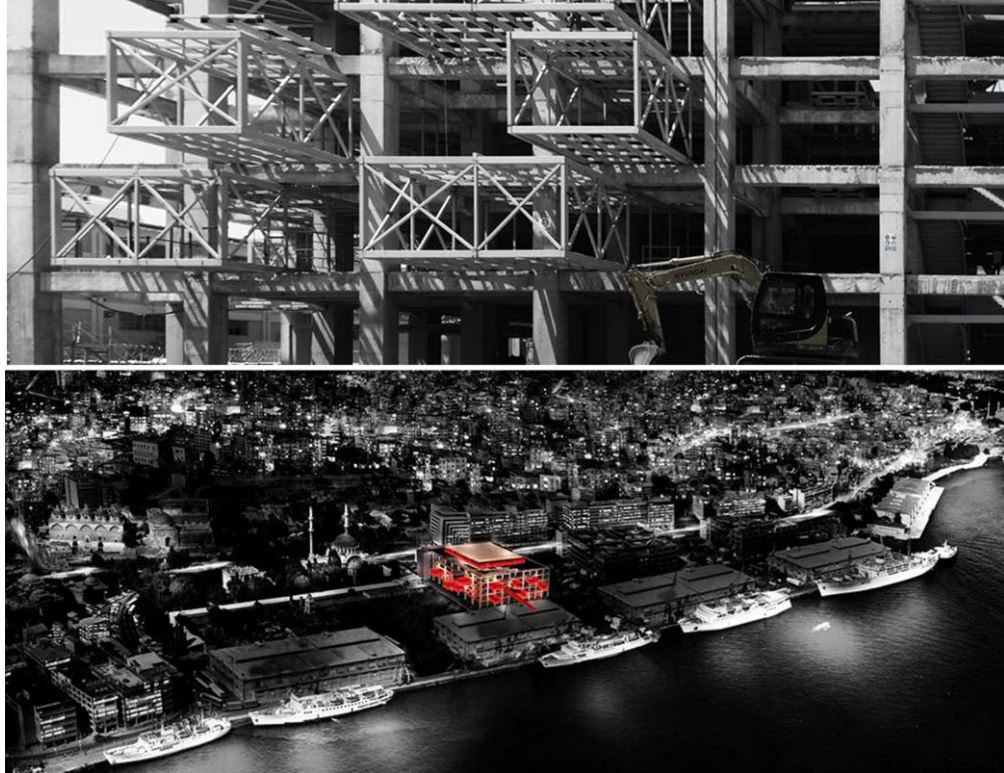


Figure 7. Transformation of one of the warehouses into Painting and Sculpture Museum of a University by Emre Arolat Architects, Currently under construction. Source: Renderings by Emre Arolat Architects, [Online] Date of consult: 10 July 2015, Available at: <<http://www.archello.com/en/project/istanbul-antrepo-5-museum-ctemporary-art>>. Previously, Sanat Limanı was allocated by the Ministry of Transportation and designed as a “Kunsthalle model”, a model derived from Germany with public funding; it is autonomous, an expert management art center model that has a permanent location in the public domain (Madra, 2010). Previously it was Sanat Limanı, allocated by the Ministry of Transportation was designed as a “Kunsthalle model”, a model derived from Germany-with public funding, and autonomous, and expertise management art center model which has a permanent location in public domain (Çimenoğlu, 2011, p. 86)

During this renewal, the Salıpazarı pier and its neighborhood were subjected to three different forms of art management: the purely commercial aspect of art in the Istanbul Modern Art Gallery; the independent artists’ galleries and collectives; and an antrepo transformed into a temporary art exhibition venue in 2010. The area was declared Urban Conservation Area No.1 in 1993, and subsequently a tourism center in 1994. Now, the Galataport project (Salı Pazarı Cruise Port Project) (İlhan, 2012) aims to renew, demolish, and upgrade the waterfront area into a space of consumption (Anon, 2015). The design of the project is such that some of the antrepös will be demolished, including the Istanbul Modern Art Gallery, and rebuilt as a hotel and a shopping center to promote tourism and retail development. However, as represented in Figures 10 and 11, the scale of the project is likely to create an overly dense harbor function in the area.





Figure 8. View from the area (Photo by the author)



Figure 9. View from the 2000s. Source: [Online] Date of consult: 10 July 2015, Available at: <<http://www.milliyet.com.tr/galataport-ihalesiyle-fiyatlar-tavan-yapacak/ekonomi/ekonomidetay/14.02.2013/1668626/default.htm>>

According to Jean-Francois Polo,

*In the current situation, contemporary art is limited to large scale, sterilized institutions and galleries. Medium and small-scale alternative organizations are disappearing and initiatives or independent collectives are struggling to survive. Art production and artists are trapped in a web of relationships (Polo, 2015).*



Figure 10. Galataport by Tabanlıoğlu architects (Source: T-Projects : Tabanlıoğlu Architects, 2008).



Figure 11. Galataport project: The tourism complex is aimed at creating an international contemporary identity to the waterfront, to renew the image of İstanbul. According to Tabanlığlu architects, the project provides new business and employment. Source: [Online] Date of consult: 10 July 2015, Available at: <<http://www.tabanlioglu.com/GALATAPORT.html>>.

Most art events, such as biennales, are financed by corporate firms that promote urban transformation, mass housing, as well as bring about growth in the retail and tourism sector, as can be seen in the management of the İstanbul Modern Art Gallery. Salıpazarı has been witnessing a socio-cultural shift in its residential location patterns as well as a transformation in its local urban economy. The plans to implement this project brought forth gentrification that began in the area with urban transformation. Culturally and socially, *“Tophane is a poor inner-city district, the living space of conservative and religious migrants from Anatolia.”* (Aksoy and Robbins, 2011). Moreover, it has *“corridor status between cultural spaces.”* (Aksoy and Robbins, 2011, 17 p). According to Aksoy and Robbins, the emerging lifestyles in the area have caused *“anxiety”* among the local residents and threatened their long-term existence in the neighborhood (Aksoy and Robbins, 2011, p 17). Artistic initiatives and galleries have effected an art-based gentrification in the area.

The region had been subjected to an earlier second wave of gentrification in the late 1980s (İslam, 2006). This happened in Galata, where the gentrification process proceeded at a slow pace affecting a portion of the neighborhood. The area housed *“industrial workshops”* *“on the ground floors of the apartment buildings,”*

which create disturbance, according to some residents and gentrifiers (İslam, 2006). However, this may have been an excuse used by gentrifiers to create a homogeneous space-time and diminish the diversity of the place by disregarding social differences. Artist-led gentrification, therefore, has become a circumstantial issue when compared to the corporate-driven transformation through art.

The opening of art galleries after the 1990s in the neighborhood caused social tension. Small independent art galleries faced vandalism as a reaction to the side effects of gentrification because there has been a continuous rise in the real estate market. This caused anxiety among the local residents in the neighborhood (Öğret, 2010). Due to its strategic location, urban revitalization attracts artists, visitors, and entrepreneurs and triggers the growth of the art industry. The area, having a high potential for attracting capital accumulation, real-estate and property developers, and corporate firms, saw a huge increase in rents for the local residents, thereby drawing public reaction. Gentrification brought in signs of diminishing social aspects and the livelihood patterns of the residents of the neighborhood. Moreover, with the implementation of this project, it is likely that strong social barriers would be erected toward the existing urban fabric, despite the strong public outcry, and bring about privatization of the existing social and cultural identity.

However, in conclusion, it is well known that architecture is derived in direct response to dwellers' needs. Self-organized events define architecture rather than a direct physical intervention in the existing space. With regard to the city's close relationship with the waterfront and its small-scale traditional waterfront, its houses in alignment with the green landscape since historical times, the emerging large-scale privatization and the art of the "big" in Salıpazarı Pier can destroy the area by virtue of becoming an open market city. Therefore, using art as a capital-generating tool in the Galataport project is not only creating an isolated waterfront space, but also rendering a new social landscape in İstanbul.

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