

Finding a remedy in Istanbul

The exhibition 'Finding a remedy in Istanbul' is part of an interdisciplinary research project examining the city's non-Muslim hospital foundations dating from the 19th century. It is based on the yet untold stories of five hospitals that were founded by their respective confessional communities: the Surp Pırgiç Hospital (Armenian Orthodox), the Balıklı Rum Hospital (Greek Orthodox), the Surp Agop Hospital (Armenian Catholic), the Balat Or-Ahayim Hospital (Jewish) and the Bulgar Hospital (Bulgarian Orthodox). The exhibition explores the concept of *remedy*, inspired by both the communal healing spaces that the hospitals created and the politics of access to healthcare that they have implied, from the times of the cholera epidemic until today's coronavirus.

Each of the hospitals in question was collectively and autonomously built and managed during the peak of the plague and cholera epidemics. Beyond providing medical treatment, these hospitals were a space for charity, gardening, socializing, education, prayer, care for the poor and vulnerable and property endowment: activities that directly linked the health of the group to the health of the individual. Thus, the quest to find a remedy in Istanbul goes beyond keeping a body alive, and more fundamentally involves the survival and wellbeing of a collective that shares a traumatic past. These nearly two centuries-old institutions and the people that they care for have been atrophied by two simultaneous processes: the commercialization of healthcare and rapid urban transformation. The hospitals have ended up with vastly different destinies, whether they have been confiscated, demolished or adapted to the new economy.

'Finding a remedy in Istanbul' treats each hospital as a character, with their own personalities, contradictions, emotions, memories, architecture and ties with the city. In unraveling the stories of these actors, six themes come to the fore, which deepen their shared narrative: *zoe/bios*, or the spiritual and physical environment in which the hospitals are situated; *endurance*, or the techniques used to ensure the sustainability of the hospitals and their communities; *poverty/wealth*, or the dialectic between the needy and the foundations' philanthropists; *gender*, or the place of women in the hospitals' services; *farmakon*, or the awe and panic aroused by life-giving medics; and *mythology*, or the myths that engrave the collective memory of the hospitals and that keep them afloat. The exhibition will invite participants to discover the microworlds created by the hospitals, past and present, through the dialogue between artists' works and a collection of archival and found objects, documentary material and ephemera. Beyond the walls of the gallery space, they can also continue their reflection by attending a conference, a workshop and tours that will situate the five hospitals in their historic and dynamic neighborhoods.

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