

apexart

2015-16 Franchise Proposal by
Atif Akin and Dilek Winchester

Franchise location: **Istanbul, Turkey**

There was a zine in Istanbul, between March 2010 to December 2011. Each issue was edited and designed by a prominent, politically engaged artist or group each month, then reproduced and distributed by pushcarts which provide mobile services such as photocopy, lamination, plastic souvenir etc. PVC pushcart is a common and popular portable business in Istanbul. These car battery operated pushcarts usually stroll around downtown and historical peninsula during the day time. Usually their operators are immigrants from Eastern Anatolia, the city of Malatya in particular, which is famous with apricots. Copies were printed and stapled on demand on these sleazy portable pushcarts and sold for a few liras.

This is a joint proposal by the founders of this zine. Since the escalation of the Syrian Civil War, more than 3 million people left the country. Majority of these people fled Syria to two neighboring countries Turkey and Lebanon. Turkey hosts 53% of the Syrian refugees. Istanbul is believed to host around a million refugees in metropolitan area.

Tragic stories about them became everyday news in Istanbul over the past years. Most of them suffer from poverty, racial oppression and social exclusion. This project intends to focus on a particular group of refugees who have better chances to start a new life -whether temporary or not- with their creative and intellectual labor such as artists, writers, musicians.

The exhibition consists of commissioning four artists to prepare survival guides for Syrian refugees in Istanbul in the format of a zine. It will be published weekly for a month and distributed print on demand by these pushcarts as well as mobile cell shops which are another usual hangouts for this community and they all utilize a simple photocopy machine. Issues will be trilingual, Arabic, Turkish and English. Then all the material produced for the zine and the documentation of the circulation will be exhibited for a month in a downtown gallery space in Istanbul.

The title of the Zine is "Apricots from Damascus". It translates to Turkish as "Samda Kayisi". This is an idiomatic expression which translates to English as "It doesn't get any better than this". Apricot was known in Armenia during ancient times, and has been cultivated there. Its scientific name *Prunus armeniaca* (Armenian plum) derives from that assumption. In most Romance languages, word for "apricot" is damasco, which could indicate that, the fruit was associated with Damascus in Syria. Eventually, apricot becomes a strong symbol for multilayered issues that the project deals with.