

Political Censorship and its Effects on Artistic Production and Art Criticism

Roundtable

**MODERATION
RAFAEL CARDOSO**

**HERNÁN D. CARO
VIVIENNE CHOW
DELAINE LE BAS
ERDEN KOSOVA**



Fig. 20: Internet appeal by Osmankavala.org to free the journalist.

ROUNDTABLE – POLITICAL CENSORSHIP AND ITS EFFECTS ON ARTISTIC PRODUCTION AND ART CRITICISM

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Moderator Rafael Cardoso

The following proceedings of the censorship panel are an abridged summary, not an exact transcript. To protect the personal safety of those involved, one of the presentations has been edited out, along with all subsequent references to it. This decision was taken in consultation with the persons whose speech is thereby curtailed. It is doubtless ironic that a panel discussing censorship, as well as the insidious nature of self-censorship, should feel obliged to censor itself. Thus, authoritarianism is not some distant rhetorical threat but a deadly, serious menace in the here and now. The editors regret the need to exercise this power and apologise to other participants for any discontent it may engender.

Rafael Cardoso

Hello and good evening, I am Rafael Cardoso of AICA Germany and I want to thank Danièle Perrier for inviting us here this evening.

I will introduce the speakers one by one as they speak.

However, first, I would like to begin by reading a brief personal provocation, which does not necessarily reflect the views of the participants on this panel; the organisers of this congress; or AICA, but which I hope will heat-up the debate that we are here to have.

In these days of Twitter, 280 characters banged out by a half-wit can count for more, much more, than the twenty-eight volumes of Diderot's *Encyclopaedia*. Bearing this in mind, we must admit to ourselves that times have changed. Criticism isn't what it used to be, nor is censorship. Winston Smith's diligent labour for the 'Ministry of Truth' in George Orwell's *1984* is relevant today. There is little point in rewriting the past when any notion of a future is undermined day by day. Even if the past could be rewritten, who would bother reading it anyway? An average book can easily contain 100,000 words. How many tweets is that? In the time I take to finish this paragraph, I may already have lost your attention. If, that is, I ever had it. And if, that is, such a commodity as attention still exists.

In case you have been paying attention, the new authoritarianism is already here. Brazil, China, Hungary, the Philippines, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Venezuela. A brief list in alphabetical order of some of the most alarming examples. There are more, if you care to indulge me, and more on the way - if you prefer to split hairs over the meaning of terms like fascism, nationalism, populism, and democracy. It is not 1984; 1984 never happened. It is more like 1934, and we are hopelessly distracted while the Japanese invade Manchuria; the French far right fails to topple the Republic; while poet and playwright Erich Mühsam becomes the first political prisoner to die of torture in a German concentration camp, about forty minutes away from where we are now sitting. But however much it feels like it, it is not 1934 either.

The enemy we face today is more insidious because it makes itself so hard to pin down, like words that remain unwritten for fear they might be misread. Are Erdoğan, Orbán, and Putin fascists? Bolsonaro, Salvini, and Trump are elected leaders presiding over democratic states, abiding by the letter of the law. Can they be considered authoritarian? Is it censorship if no one actually bothers to ban the book, close the exhibition, or arrest the artist? Does it matter that we are even discussing the subject?

In the future, if there is one, everybody will be censored for fifteen seconds. Go ahead and tweet that. In the meantime, by all means, let's talk amongst ourselves. At least here we can be sure that our comments will not be deleted for violating terms and

conditions, or community standards. The revolution will not be tweeted, posted, or televised. The revolution will not be moderated. This panel, on the other hand, will; and it is my task to keep it within the allotted time. You have been duly provoked.

I want to introduce Erden Kosova, who is an art critic, currently contributing to the organisation ›Young Curators Academy‹, a side event of the forthcoming 4th Berliner Herbstsalon at the Maxim Gorky Theatre. Kosova is on the organisational board of the Medusa Foundation, Amsterdam, and on the editorial board of the Istanbul-based e-journal *redthread.org*.

Erden Kosova

Before speaking, I want to have your permission to invite a friend of mine, Firat Arapoğlu, the head of AICA Turkey, to give a brief announcement.

Firat Arapoğlu

Hi everybody. Thank you Erden for sharing your minutes with me. I'm president of AICA Turkey.

First of all, I would like to thank all the members of AICA Germany for inviting us to this perfect program. I requested permission to give a one-minute talk. I want to call your attention to an important case, the unjust imprisonment of Mr. Osman Kavala, who is a businessman and philanthropist and who has been behind bars for 700 days now. He has been accused by state prosecutors of trying to oppose the Turkish government by organising and financing the Gezi park protest in 2013. Two days ago, ahead of his birthday on 2 October, a social media campaign was launched under the hashtag DearOsmanKavala. The purpose was to remind people that the third hearing of the Gezi trial will be held on the 8th and 9th of October. Osman Kavala has remained in custody for almost two years under an indictment that is not based on any concrete evidence. Osman Kavala has touched the lives of countless people through his contributions to civil society and his personal kindness (please check the website for solidarity: osmankavala.org). He has always supported civic engagement, democratic forms of expression, and equality of access to arts and culture. So, I would like to call on all of you to show solidarity with him. Free Osman Kavala. Thank you.

Erden Kosova

I guess I have ten or fifteen minutes. I'm used to speaking about the context of Turkey for a really long time, let's say hours. I don't know how to fit so much into this short period. So yesterday I was going through a previous text I wrote one year ago, which was a very bleak account of what has been going on in the country. It was so pessimistic that I wanted to come up with something with a more optimistic tone. But now, in general, Turkey is shifting quite rapidly. I would say that, within this one-year period, there is a kind of light at the end of the tunnel. You may know that there was a recent municipal election, and it was the first bitter defeat of the AKP regime. AKP stands for the Justice and Development Party. Justice is long gone, and development is also going away now, so they are really in trouble. What can art criticism do, in practice?

A lot of things have been done in Turkey, over a really long period, to keep up resilience. You see, fifty per cent of people voted for the guy; yes, he won again and again and again. But the other fifty per cent said no, no, no. A moment must come, I guess, when the majority will break down. I don't know what will come up to take its place, but this story, this nightmare, will move on to another episode, a kind of ending I hope.

I want to give a brief history of the AKP. They were a splinter group from the traditional Islamist Party, and they promulgated a softer social conservatism, a liberal economic program, and a promise to deliver structural reforms to dissolve the political tutelage of the Turkish army. Until recently, this allowed for a pluralistic democracy. Benefitting from the collapse of the political centre and widespread disillusionment after the Marmara earthquake in 1999; the economic crisis in 2001; and the austerity program that followed, they came to power with thirty-five per cent of the vote in 2002. The Western world bought into the idea of a softened Islamism compatible with neoliberalism, which could be made a model for Muslim societies, or Muslim-majority societies. And they poured liquidity into the Turkish economy, which created an illusion of economic success. Now, of course, it has been paid back. Just on that momentum, the contemporary art scene in Turkey started to thrive. Money from prominent bourgeois families and financial cooperatives accelerated institutionalisation, and the boom of galleries created an atmosphere of commercialisation. I have to emphasise the difference from the preceding situation, which followed from the experience of state socialism. I come from a completely different context, in which there wasn't a penny for art, let alone contemporary art. So, responsibility was handed over to the rich families. This expansion of the field was also utilised by the government, the AKP government, as a showcase for the EU candidature of Turkey, at that time – 2002 to 2003.

After a decade of structural changes, which pacified the military and juridical systems, the AKP decided to drop their soft-spoken tone. After their third electoral victory, they shifted into a new period of mastery. They cultivated a mythological hero, to give a single person control, and on the moral religious pursuit of social policies and foreign policy based on selective reconstruction of the 'glorious' Ottoman past. The leader of the party started to act like he knew everything, and he also engaged, in a less elaborate way, in art criticism. For example, he stated the newly built opera should be baroque; I don't know if he really understood the term. This kind of narcissistic self-obsession gave way to the suspension of the party system. I mean, he himself became the party. In the meantime, the peace process with the Kurdish movement was suspended.

The Arab Spring provided the AKP with an opportunity to expand its influence in the Middle East by making alliances with the Muslim Brotherhood in Qatar and oppositional groups in some other countries. But after a while the leader became convinced that he was the next target of this Western plot after the Gezi uprising in 2013. This was a fracture within the party, led by a more intellectual religious sect, which led to infighting within the party and a military coup in 2016. The AKP became even more convinced that the West was against them, so they made a pact with the ultra-nationalists and anti-Western groups within the army. They kept casting themselves as the underdogs, so they had a pretext for pushing forward this kind of conservative and nationalist coalition.

Two long years of state of emergency, between July 2016 and July 2018, generated a stifling political atmosphere. Tens of thousands of public servants, including academics, were expelled from their jobs. A witch hunt was started against hundreds of academics who signed a petition that urged the state to resume the peace process. Probably the Berliners here are aware of the presence of these academics in exile in this very city. Prominent Kurdish politicians and proponents of peace were imprisoned. Journalists in the few remaining oppositional newspapers were jailed. A lot of people have left the country, as I mentioned. The critical voices who retreated to Twitter were targeted by newly established laws and pressured through legal trials for »Defamation of the President of the Republic«. As well as imprisonment, very extravagant fines had to be paid to this already rich guy. Some artists who were involved in peace demonstrations were also imprisoned – demonstrations that were somehow related to the Kurdish situation in the country. As I mentioned, Osman Kavala, who is kind of the director of Depo Istanbul exhibition space, and also the Truth Justice Memory Center, which keeps the record of past crimes against Anatolian cultures in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, is still imprisoned. We hope that he gets out this time.

The reliance of the contemporary art scene on institutions belonging to bourgeois families limited the oppositional positions. There was a wave of bombings during the state of emergency, coming from different or dubious sources. We never are sure who is really behind these bombings. These kinds of traumatic events cancelled all possibility of using the public space for art activism. The bourgeois families and the art institutions they run, like the Istanbul Biennial and Istanbul Modern, somehow managed to avoid direct conflict with the regime by softening or displacing the critical potential of the selection of curators and collectors, while at the same time avoiding acute cases of censorship. There are a lot of examples that can't be named here, but there was this one case of Aksanat, the art space, linked to another, more pragmatic and opportunistic family, the Sabancis. An international exhibition there was closed one week before the opening with the pretext that one of the works dealing with the guerrilla counter-terrorist crimes of the Turkish state could disturb national sensitivities.

During the break, we were chatting with my colleagues from Turkey, and there is a wave of cases in which there is a very open practice of self-censorship or – how should I put it – self-cancellation. Again, in 2016, a kind of biennial, organised by a provincial city, decided just a couple of weeks before the opening that it would be too risky to open the exhibition. So they decided to skip this edition, although a lot of the works had already been produced. The founding director of AICA Turkey protested this decision by making an analogy with the Weimar period, and the people from the AKP ranks attacked her. Another provincial biennial decided not to show a film that mentioned the experience of Greek ethnicity in Anatolia, based on the artist's own family story – she comes from the city of Malatya in the east of Turkey.

Theatre plays have been prohibited, LGBTQ festivals cancelled by the state, film directors put on trial. In the field of contemporary art, there have been interventions at exhibitions and physical attacks on galleries. There has been direct intervention in international activities too. In one case, an exhibition catalogue had to be republished

because of a complaint by the Turkish consulate that the initial version included the phrase »Armenian Genocide«. An arts group lost its financial support because one of the Turkish artists in the last *documenta* based her work on the life of a Kurdish guerrilla woman.

The leader of the AKP expressed disappointment recently about the fact that they failed to establish hegemony in the field of culture. They run fifty-nine per cent of the media, press, and television broadcasters; they pay a huge amount of money to journalists; they have all the state propaganda on the streets; and they say they lack cultural hegemony. I think that this is the point at which we can be resilient, by staying and not forcing things. In this atmosphere, political differences between the art establishment and critics of cultural capital – mostly Marxist positions – have been temporarily postponed in order to defend the mutual space of freedom of speech and expression. Recently, a similar coalition between totally different positions – Kemalists, socialists, Kurds, moderate nationalists and even critical Islamists – managed to push back the pressure of the conservative plus ultra-nationalist block in the last election. This momentum created a psychological turning point in speaking out more bravely, and pushed the process into a more normalised path. So, there's reason to be optimistic.

Rafael Cardoso

Thank you Erden. I want to hand over now to Hernán D. Caro, who studied Philosophy and History in Bogotá and Berlin and has a PhD from the Humboldt University in Berlin. He works from Berlin as a freelance journalist for the cultural section of the *FAZ* and *Der Freitag*, and as a freelance correspondent for *Revista Arcadia* in Columbia.

Hernán D. Caro

Today, I want to talk about the relationship between censorship and cultural journalism in Colombia – not specifically about censorship and *art* criticism. The most interesting things that happen in art criticism happen in larger or more general cultural media, and you can hardly separate the debate of art criticism regarding censorship from the debate of cultural journalism with regard to censorship. My case study is the *Revista Arcadia*, which Cardoso mentioned, and which we have just seen here. This is a large cultural magazine, one could say the one with the largest features section in Colombia, and one of the most prominent in Latin America. I work for this magazine as a freelance correspondent from Berlin, and it forms the background for my case study.

My thesis today is that, in the face of forms of censorship in Colombia specifically – and I think this is perhaps also true for other Latin American countries – cultural journalism has taken on a role that is perhaps not so typical in Europe: namely, in many cases, it has become a space where direct political discussion and criticism takes place. As far as censorship in Colombia is concerned, what is happening in many Latin American countries, such as Mexico, El Salvador, or Peru, probably happens there as well. Although there is violence or potential violence against journalists, whose profession can be life-threatening, there is, I would say at least, no open, direct, or official censorship as we know it in other countries – perhaps in Cuba, in Venezuela, or in Argentina and Chile during the dictatorships. Although, in my opinion, this official censorship does not take place, it can be said that this censorship is not even necessary in a country like

Colombia, because the biggest media – the biggest magazines, the biggest television stations – are already owned by very powerful families or financial groups, and so one could say that the question of censorship is solved by itself. In Colombia, it is very clear; for example, the biggest political magazine *Semana* (The Week, comparable to *Der Spiegel* – to a very important entrepreneur and banker, together with another entrepreneur, the son and grandson of an old, ex-president of Colombia. The current director-in-chief of *Semana* is, in turn, the nephew of the most recent ex-president of Colombia. Similar constellations can be seen in the biggest newspapers of the country: in *El Tiempo*, for example – the biggest newspaper of Colombia. And all important television stations belong either to very powerful families who have always played a very big role in politics, or to powerful individuals or powerful financial groups. And so you could say that these alliances usually ›do the job‹ of structuring a form of censorship.

But I have to say, and this very clearly, that, despite everything, the magazine *Semana* has nevertheless managed to be or to remain – or at least appears to be – more or less independent. Very important political scandals of the last few years have in fact been uncovered by *Semana* or *El Tiempo*, and yet, in a country like Colombia – and this is by all means true for other Latin American countries, not all of them but certainly for other countries in the region – you can always see a kind of governmental proximity in the media. This is always present.

In terms of censorship, or more specifically self-censorship, the most interesting case of the last years in Colombia took place within the *Revista Semana* at the beginning of 2019. There, a very popular and critical columnist was fired because, in his column, he criticised the magazine itself very strongly. The magazine had previously decided not to publish certain information that was unpleasant or dangerous for the government. *The New York Times* published this information, and it was learned that *Semana* in Colombia had always had the same information, but did not publish it.

As far as the topic of this congress is concerned, it is interesting to see to what extent cultural journalism in Colombia (for example in the cultural magazine *Arcadia*) – or more generally throughout Latin America – has taken on the role of discussing political issues and conflicts in the face of forms of self-censorship. The media has in a certain sense become ›places‹ where political discussion, political criticism, actually takes place – and sometimes not only cautiously but very openly. Following a lot of outrage at *Semana*, the columnist I mentioned was reinstated. He is now writing again in his normal working relationship. But the case has done a lot of damage to the magazine's reputation.

Now back to cultural journalism. I find it interesting how, in Colombia, cultural journalism becomes something that is not necessarily the case in other countries, at least not in Germany, as I know from my journalistic work here. In fact, here, there is indeed a discussion of politics in the features section, but this is not really the place where the larger political discussions take place.

As far as the magazine *Arcadia* is concerned, over the past few years, they have managed to represent and support very critical positions with regard to the government, and also to address very important political issues. In 2018, an entire issue was dedicated

to the presidential candidates, with very critical opinions. The editorial expressed open criticism, and the magazine continues to see itself as an oppositional force. Another full issue of the magazine dealt with the topic of religion and politics, and yet another included an editorial with the title *No More Murdering of Social Activists*. Such murders are commonplace in Colombia and this article appeared more or less two weeks after this columnist I mentioned was fired because he addressed this very problem. The magazine *Semana* decided against publishing exactly this information about the connection of the government with the murders, but *Arcadia* discussed it very openly.

The punchline of the story is that *Revista Arcadia* is owned by *Semana* – it is simply the cultural magazine of this powerful political magazine. What this means can, of course, be discussed for a very long time. I think at least two things are important here: firstly, that the media landscape in a country like Colombia is very complex; that political interests or alliances in the media do not necessarily, or not directly mean dependence or exclude independence or critical attitudes. Not all censorship is the same, and this is, of course, very problematic. You could probably talk about it for hours.

Secondly, I think that the insight you can gain from this is possibly a tragic one. Cultural journalism seems to be harmless, does not really seem to be the place from where decisions or statements have an impact. Perhaps culture is affected by it too; this is an open question. I also talked with a Venezuelan writer who wrote a very critical book against or about Venezuela. I asked her if the book will be published in Venezuela, and she said ›Yes, probably, but it doesn't matter‹ – so, it's not forbidden. But it's interesting to note how culture very quickly reaches certain boundaries, and criticism can actually take place openly; but in the end, *it doesn't matter*. Maybe that's a provocative statement – and yes, that's all.

Rafael Cardoso

I want to introduce Delaine Le Bas. She studied at Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design in London. She's a cross-disciplinary artist who worked with her late husband, the artist Damian Le Bas, on their installation *Safe European Home?* (2013). Her new installation and performance commissioned by Gorky Theatre in Berlin for the 4th Berliner *Herbstsalon DE-HEIMATIZE IT!* opened on 26 October 2019.

Delaine Le Bas

Right, I'm going to keep this very short. My upcoming *Witch Hunt* installation is the third witch hunt, because it's a project that I've been doing since 2008/2009. Sadly, for my community [Roma], this is a continued history I'm afraid. I won't go into that because I could stand here for hours talking about it and the different histories and the different countries and the different problems. I would like to read something that I wrote for a performance in 2015 because, as a community and as a body of artists and academics, we have decided empowerment and empowering ourselves is the best way forward.



Fig. 21: Delaine Le Bas, *The Scream. A Woman With Nothing To Lose*, 2018

»My skin is mine,
 my eyes are the colour they are meant to be,
 not collected from dust-bound manuscripts.
 Barefooted,
 flayed,
 skinned,
 silenced into a stolen artefact.
 Numbers,
 measurements,
 my skin is mine.
 Words drip from my lips,
 pose of darkness gathering clouds.
 My tears have stopped.«

Delaine Le Bas, My skin is mine, 26.03.2015

Thank you.

Rafael Cardoso

Thank you, Delaine, for that short but powerful intervention. We don't have much time. We only have until 7.30 pm, and I don't want to monopolise this podium and ask all the questions myself, so I want to open this up to the audience. First, I just wanted to comment on a thread that runs through what several people said here today, and that also came up in previous sessions. The way censorship has been diluted, so that we are not

necessarily dealing with censorship coming from a state, from one state power anymore, but from self-censorship, censorship through funding, through lack of funding, all kinds of dispersed forms of censorship. That is very much the case in Brazil where I am from. That's what's going on right now, less censorship coming from top to bottom and more coming from all sides and even from within. So, given that comment, I would like to open this up to questions from the audience.

William Messer

You probably have seen the protests in the street today, in Hong Kong, the first ones since the mask law, and everybody is wearing masks, including tourists, so they are not paying any attention to this banning. I just wanted to mention that. And I'd like AICA to play a much stronger role in standing in solidarity and fighting censorship. I hope we will do that in the future. I have two quotations that I keep in mind when I deal with censorship issues: One of them - I can't remember who said either one of them - is: ›self-censorship is the most insidious form of censorship‹. The other one is: ›assassination is the most extreme form of censorship‹. In the Hong Kong disturbances I think there was only one policeman using a gun with bullets in it, and he was not even wearing his helmet and other equipment. He was being Rambo or something. But the agreement with China was for fifty years right? So, it's known that this was going to come to an end, it was just a question of how soon, how quickly. But anyway, thank you. I'm very moved by hearing all of you speak about what's going on.

Rafael Cardoso

Thank you. More questions?

Well, I will take the opportunity to ask a question since no one else has one. Delaine, I want to ask you something about resistance because obviously your statement touched on that. Recently, after the election of Bolsonaro in Brazil, a very well-known indigenous leader and writer, Ailton Krenak, expressed an astounding sentiment. He said he felt sorry for the *white* people because the indigenous peoples have been dealing with this for 500 years. That immediately put a lot of this discussion into perspective, and I was wondering what you would make of that statement.

Delaine Le Bas

Well, it's a very similar situation in every country, and England is no different than anywhere else. This is really one of the problems, because I think people just don't recognise that this has been going on now for so long, and they'd been such an oppressed minority. Where do you start in trying to explain to people? Because it's a complex history from place to place. For example, there was slavery in Romania, which most people don't know about. And if you don't talk about it, it doesn't mean that it goes away. And it also doesn't change the majority perspective of people either. If we take that one thing in itself, to know that it hasn't been discussed; hasn't been talked about; it's not taught in schools; most people don't know about it at all anyway, and it's difficult. Also, top that off with most people - I have to say this, and I don't want to generalise here, but, even myself - people will come up to me and tell me that they sort of know more about me than I know

about myself. And that's really what that statement is when I read it, that's really what it's about, because we are a radically diverse community across the planet, we are multi-faith and, like I said, I could be here for probably days with various other people trying to explain the complexities of it, and it's difficult ... because you just feel like ... because no one, I don't know ... the picture came up of me screaming, because it's like a silent scream because no one listens, and a lot of the work I do has got garbled soundtracks in it, and when somebody asks, you can't really hear what you're saying. I say 'yeah', because no one listens anyway. And that's our history. So I assume, you know, it's a similar story really, sadly.

Rafael Cardoso

So, can I extend that question to the rest of the panel. Are we talking about something new? Is this censorship we're seeing something new, different, or is it just the same old thing, and the focus has changed?

Erden Kosova

Well in my case it's not new. The previous regime had quite strong militaristic leanings and, of course, socialists in the 1970s, 1980s... I mean, just to give you an example, In the 1980s, Kodeta had 600,000 people taken into custody. That's more crowded than most of the cities in Europe I would say. Of course, the previous state was not something feasible, but I would say the current situation somehow combines the worst of the past and the present, the conservatism, religious fanaticism, nationalism and racism. There is this strange combination of different strands and an intensified assault on the context of cultural activities.

Hernán D. Caro

As I said, in the case of Colombia, we don't really experience big censorship. It is not really a new thing that big media belong to big families. It's as old as the history of the country or the continent, so I think what is maybe new – and I just speak for the case of Colombia – is that the media seem to be losing the role they had in past decades, as the possibility of showing things that are happening in the country. So, I think that's an extra drama, like the fact maybe, that in clear cases like Turkey, a government is really doing things directly against artists or journalists. That is not what we have, and maybe it's even more terrible, because it generates indifference and economic structures that create a situation like no one is listening. What I talked about may give the impression that I'm completely pessimistic about cultural journalism, or culture in general, but I still have the feeling that it's very important. Cultural media and art can really play a role in creating communities, which is very clearly happening in Colombia. Afro-Colombian communities, indigenous communities etc. find a place in the arts and sometimes in cultural journalism. I'm thinking about *Revista Arcadia*, and that may sound like a publicity announcement but I think this is the case also in Brazil. Cultural media open a door for some people to tell their stories where they can't really tell their story in another place. So, I think it still has a role, but the fact that censorship is something that is not so solid now – it's still very problematic. It would be easier maybe to fight against a censorship that's tangible and not censorship from within.

Sebastian Baden

My name is Sebastian, I'm from the German section of AICA, and I want to address especially Erden and Hernán, but also all of you, because when we talk about censorship what are your personal strategies for spreading your own message? We have some screenshots from publications on the internet, and obviously the internet is the only platform to spread messages if printed newspapers are undermined by self-censorship. So, maybe you can talk, from your toolbox, about how you are working personally to spread your message and what are your channels to reach those that you want to reach, and how you can get through to your audience.

Erden Kosova

Well of course a number of oppositional newspapers have been closed down or forced to change hands. So, let's say printed media became more difficult for political reasons. But, also economically, it is getting more and more difficult to publish something in print because of the freefall of the Turkish economy at the moment. Many things move onto the Internet. I'm on the board of an editorial e-journal, which was actually initiated by Osman Kavala, called *Red Thread*. I would say I personally never considered limiting myself, but I can tell a story, a kind of experience, which might give a glimpse of the situation. I wrote something, and the first paragraph was a sober description of what is being experienced. It was about an exhibition, but related to political events, so I wanted to start with one paragraph stating what's been experienced directly, without overt emotionalisation or whatever. The editor, who is a good friend of mine, quite progressive, politically close to me, said, Erden, can we take two or three sentences out of the first paragraph? And in that moment, of course you can say no. I didn't see any problem with what I'd written. It wasn't a lie or falsification. I was trying to get at the truth. I could have said no, but, at the same time, there is also some background information, that her husband was an academic who was the only one in a provincial university who signed a petition, and the fascists, the ultranationalists, came to his house and put a kind of death threat on the door, and then the next day he resigned and came back to Istanbul. Knowing this kind of information, knowing the sensibilities, their fear, you somehow say, OK I'm all right, you know, if you feel threatened by what I express, I would never want to put people in a more fragile position, so I agreed. But, of course, this retains a kind of bitter taste to me.

Delaine Le Bas

I suppose that what has happened is that we have met at different points, lots of us, and so we spread information amongst each other, but we also collaborate a lot with many other people, in many different countries. What's happened across Europe for example, we have almost created our own network, where we work together but also work in different ways, and also my own and my late husband's practice was to work anywhere. So, to go to places where people would say ›why are you going there?‹ for example, and also not necessarily being in a gallery space, to be able to talk to people on the street. I suppose I, we, have always wanted to speak to as many people as possible. I work cross-practice as well, because I feel that opens many doorways to people to access what I'm trying to talk about in my work, and also using the Internet in as many ways as possible.

It's really trying to do as much as you can that is self-organised in a way, I would suppose, because as a community it's still very difficult for us. A lot of my friends who work in other countries – I won't mention the countries, but you know them – very often their work is not represented, or it's always easier for someone else to be showing work that is about us, rather than by us. I'm not against collaborating with our people, people who aren't from our community, that's not what I'm saying, but I still think there is a majority oppression going on, oppression of a voice of the community really being allowed to come forward. Also, funding does not help a lot with that, because it often asks for particular things, and sometimes that is a form of censorship in itself. There is self-censorship sometimes as well, because people are frightened, and they are right to be frightened, because sometimes even their own families threaten them for example, and then one community might also threaten another community, so there is this going on in the background as well. The people who are this other stuff that is coming from the community, so there are a lot of different things like self-censorship, like political censorship ... so you just end up feeling that, as far as anyone is concerned, we shouldn't be speaking at all.

Hernán D. Caro

Thank you for your question. I'm not even sure that I have a message, to be honest, or, at this moment I wouldn't know what my message would be. As a journalist, I still think that information has some power, although we are maybe flooded by an exaggerated quantity of information, which makes specific messages irrelevant, if you don't find them. But, I really think that information has power and, like I said, I have the feeling that cultural media, in some countries at least – I don't think it's the case in Germany, definitely not – are able to give a voice to some people who don't usually find a voice in other aspects of reality. I see that very clearly in Latin America; I see that very clearly in Colombia, and I think that's already a very important step towards a better reality. I also think that quality in journalism – that may sound quite conservative, which maybe I am – is very important, and I think you can really do things and change things through journalism, if you consider quality as the first, or one of the first things.

I just wanted to say one more thing about the message and the possibility of giving voices to people. I've been working for two years for a project funded by the Goethe Institut, which is called *Contemporary Art in Latin America* and which has a very important Afro-Latin American focus. This kind of magazine didn't really exist two or three years ago. I think it's more or less the only art magazine which is trying to look for Afro-Latin American voices in the arts, in contemporary art, especially. So, even if I don't have a message, I think it's possible through journalism to open doors for other people to send their message.

Rafael Cardoso

I would like to echo what Hernán just said, in the sense that we live in a very strange paradox in terms of the art world, at least in countries like Brazil, and I think maybe Colombia too, where there are less and less spaces for art criticism, especially in the mainstream press. That's something AICA International could really give some attention to; to provide more, to encourage more spaces where people can discuss and think

about art and think about culture, because that is a form of censorship too. We're being squeezed out of the mainstream press, being pushed into alternative corners of the Internet, and our voices don't get heard anymore. The simplest way to get rid of your political enemies is to make them irrelevant, so I think this is perhaps a project that we collectively, as people engaged in AICA and engaged in art criticism, could think about, how to make these voices reverberate and be heard across the political divides in countries that are suffering from political oppression. And since there are more and more countries fitting that description, there is no shortage of fronts to work on.

I don't know if we have any more time, I would like to allow one last question.

Yukiko Shikata

My name is Yukiko and I am from AICA Japan, and I'm actually preparing an international symposium for AICA Japan next year, so that's why I'm here to learn about the current situation. I want to introduce the latest news from Japan, or around the Japanese situation. Maybe you have heard that there is one exhibition inside of the Triennial, titled *Unfreedom of Expression*. It was closed three days after the Triennial opened by the president of the Triennial, for safety reasons, because there were threats of possible terrorist attacks, not only to the exhibition but also to schools. There were discussions and movements by artists and cultural workers. The president set up a committee in August and many things happened. After two months of discussion in Japan, last week, on 26 September, the agency for cultural affairs of Japan announced it would withdraw support. From that day, demonstrations, petitions by artists, art people, and students started, and today, at the beginning of this session, I just received the information, the latest news. I want to share this information, so I want to make this available to you if you are interested.

Rafael Cardoso

Thank you very much for your participation, for being here. I want to extend personal thanks to Uta M. Reindl for asking me to be here as well, along with Danièle Perrier. Thank you very much for coming, and see you tomorrow.

Translation: Jochen Stremmel/G rard A. Goodrow (Kosova presentation)

MY SKIN IS MINE
 MY EYES ARE THE COLOUR THEY ARE
 MEANT TO BE
 NOT COLLECTED FROM DUST BOUND
 MANUSCRIPTS
 BARE FOOTED
 FLAYED
 SKINNED
 SILENCED INTO A STOLEN ARTEFACT
 NUMBERS
 MEASUREMENTS
 MY SKIN IS MINE
 WORDS DRIP FROM MY LIPS
 POOLS OF DARKNESS
 LATHERING CLOUDS
 MY TEARS HAVE STOPPED
 DELAINE LEBAS
 26.03.15

Fig. 22: Delaine Le Bas, *My skin is mine*, manuscript, 26.03.2015.