



## “Who Is the Victim?” at the Venice Biennale



### **SANDY ZURİKOĞLU ERDOĞAN**

*The 52nd International Venice Biennale will open its doors to artists and art lovers on Sunday. Thousands of guests are expected to visit the biennale to see the latest works of contemporary art from June 10 until November 21 and artists from 77 countries including Turkey and Armenia will participate.*

#### **The Armenian Pavilion**

Armenia, which has had a pavilion at the Venice Biennale every year since 1995, will be represented by Sonia Balassanian this year. The pavilion, hosted by the The Mekhitarian Armenian Congregation and The Armenian Center for Contemporary Experimental Art – Yerevan, will be opened at Palazzo Zenobio which is owned by Moorat Rafael Armenian College. The curator of the exhibition is Nina Möntmann and the honorary commissioner is Jean Boghossian. Mark Cassar and Gagik Ghazareh are the editors and Arne Z. Balassanian and Rey Akdoğan are the production assistants.

Palazzo Zenobio, where the exhibition will be held is at Canale della Giudecca near the Santa Maria dei Carmini Church and the opening ceremony will take place between 1:00 PM and 4:00 PM on Friday 8th June. The palace, built in Venetian late-Baroque style by the Greek Zenobio family has been owned by Mekhitarists since 1850. The beauty of the interior decoration and the magnificence of the architecture add another dimension to the works of Sonia Balassanian.

#### **Sonia Balassanian**

Balassanian (maiden name Amirian) was born in Iran in 1942. The artist who lives and works in New York, USA and Yerevan, Armenia has studios in both countries.

After she graduated from Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, she received her Master of Fine Arts degree at Pratt Institute, Brooklyn, N.Y. She also attended the Independent Study Program of Whitney Museum of American Art, New York.

Her works have been exhibited in Holland, Iran, Italy, Germany, Switzerland and Armenia and her portraits have been included in The Museum of Modern Art in New York, under the name “Committed to Print”.

Balassanian, who has strived for the progress of modern art in Armenia since 1992, achieved her purpose in 1994, when The Armenian Center for Contemporary Experimental Art (ACCEA) was founded.

The books of Balassanian, who is also a poet, have been published in French, Armenian, Persian and English.

#### **“Who is the Victim?”**

“Who is the Victim?” Sonia Balassanian’s work for the Biennale, is a multi-screen video-installation. The artist aims to tap into the universalized misery and suffering of war. Balassanian states that the way in which war is waged has changed and tries to explain us that international relations are highly complex and that people are helpless as they try to obtain information about war and crisis from the media.

“In order to build international sympathy, critical protest against an economy of global war is required,” she says, and in “Who is the Victim?” she depicts events from the eyes of an Armenian soldier who was sent to the Karabagh War.

The soldier relates his war experiences in a monotonous voice – the cold, the hunger and the brute violence. Simultaneously, another video shows a woman who is waiting for her husband to come back from the war. The woman, who is waiting for her husband in despair, tells her own story. The “dialogue” between these two people who don’t hear each other is strengthened by dramatic images.

Although “Who is the Victim?” seems to revolve around Armenia, it actually interests everybody who has experienced war or violence, even for a short period of time.

Balassanian points out that while people are asleep, crisis are caused out of nothing and she invites everybody to take action – rather than remaining on the sidelines – in order to create a more humanistic world.

Georgy Frangulyan’s works will also be exhibited at the Venice Biennale. The artist who is participating in a group exhibition for Russia, displays his work on San Michele island. Hüseyin Alptekin’s installation for Turkey at the Venice Biennale is titled “Don’t Complain” and can be visited at Artiglierie, Arsenale. There are various entrance fees at the biennale and special entry cards are also on sale: The Biennale Silver Card is € 50, the Gold Card is € 130 and the Platinum Card is € 300. Detailed information can be found at [www.labiennale.org](http://www.labiennale.org)

*Translated by Bahar Mucuk Demirtaş*