

Mari Spirito

protocinema.org

Curator specializing in collaborative projects that explore shared human experiences through commissioned artworks, exhibitions, and public programs, bringing international expertise across New York, Turkey, and the region, with a strong record of innovation and transnational concerns.

PROTOCOLINEMA, New York, U.S.

Curator, Executive Director, Founder 2011 - present

- 14 years leading grassroots internationally networked art non-profit organization.
- Focus on curation, artwork production, installation, community engagement, and project management.
- Research artists, program, fundraise, manage team, budget, communications. Identified, cultivated and secured specific people to be on board of trustees.
- Advocates towards an understanding of difference, shared experiences, across regions through its exhibitions, commissions, public programs, publications, and mentorship.
- Innovation incubator with a creative approach to problem-solving and openness to diverse perspectives.
- Artistic alumni such as Abbas Akhavan, Rossella Biscotti, Ahmet Ögüt, Ulya Soley, Trevor Paglen, Hale Tenger, Alper Turan, and Cansu Yildiran have strengthened their profiles through our exhibitions, contributing to the advancement of their content development, visibility and careers.

Select Achievements:

Art, Ancestors, Ghosts and The Dead, June 3, 2023, New York, U.S.

- One-day symposium on attitudes towards death across cultures.
- Provided support for the grief process and opened conversations to help dispel fear of death and dying.
- Contextualization and interpretation of content on mortality and loss from varied cultures for local audiences.
- Translated ideas into engaging visual experiences.
- In partnership with ICI Independent Curators International, The Clemente Cultural & Educational Center, New York.
- Attendees reported that the event was helpful and indicated a desire for similar future programming.
- Artists: Korakrit Arunanondchai, Sofia Gallisá Muriente, Shaun Leonardo, Kameelah Janan Rasheed, Pinar Öğrenci, Shahzia Sikander
- *Few In Many Places*, 2020 and 2021
- Curatorial leadership, exhibition planning team supervision of multi-city physical group exhibition.
- Took place in Istanbul, Bangkok, Berlin, Beirut, Guatemala City, Montreal, New York, Philadelphia, Santurce and Seoul.
- Ability to manage multiple projects simultaneously, strong time management.
- Success collaborating with artists and institutions, such as Art Center LMCC, Governors Island, New York; Kiraathane Literature House, Istanbul; Marfa' Projects, Beirut.
- Publication: Protozine, with original texts by five authors.

Launched Protodispatch 2022-2024

- Monthly digital publication, in collaboration with Laura Raicovich.
- Commissioned original texts by artists from around the world addressing transcontinental concerns, such as: sanctuary and peril of public gathering (Jordan Deal), collective memory (Ximena Garrido-Lecca & Ishmael Randall-Weeks), relearning of traditional crafts (Jorge González and Angela Brown), local agrarian traditions and art as a means of survival (Nida Sinnokrot with contributions from Sahar Qawasmi, based on the collaborative project Sakiya), and regenerative cycles of destruction and regrowth (Basel Abbas and Ruanne Abou-Rahme).
- Publication partners: Argonatlar (Turkey) in Turkish, Ground Control (Thailand) in Thai, for one year Artnet (New York)
- Readership between 40,000 - 2.1 million depending on partners.

Launched Protocinema Emerging Curator Series Mentorship Program 2015-on-going

- Initiated, managed, fundraised and presented a mentorship program, along with 2 invited international mentors.
- Utilized exhibition making process as a teaching tool for young curators.
- Professional training utilizing exhibition making process, "soup to nuts" as a teaching tool, networking and essential early fundraising skills.
- 13 promising alumni curators from Turkey (9), Syria (1), Iran(1), New York (1), Ukraine/Uzbekistan (1) who have gone on to positions in institutions such as Asian Art Museum, San Francisco; Hamburger Bahnhof, Berlin; Istanbul Biennial Foundation (IKSV), Istanbul; and Phd candidate University of Toronto.

ART BASEL, Basel, Switzerland and Miami Beach, U.S.

***Conversations Curator* 2013- 2018**

- Curator of Public Conversations for both Art Basel and Art Basel Miami Beach.
- Well-informed about current developments in the national and international art scenes through ongoing research, networking, and active engagement with the field.
- Developed topics, identified and invited speakers.
- Under my leadership Art Basel Conversations grew from auxiliary to a full fledged Art Basel Sector, Art Basel sectors are distinct sections within the Art Basel fairs, each with a specific focus or curatorial theme. These sectors include Galleries, Meridians, Nova, Positions, Survey, Kabinett, and Conversations.

303 GALLERY, New York, U.S.

***Director* 2000-2012**

- Director of a contemporary art gallery representing twenty seven international artists.
- Placed artwork by gallery artists in private and public institutional collections.
- Grew the annual budget from 1 to 5 million USD, staff from 5 to 25 colleagues.
- Strong understanding of both the non-profit and commercial art sectors.
- Implemented large scale artists' commissions in commercial and institutional settings which took years to site, fabricate and secure funds for, such as Mike Nelson, *I, Imposter*, Great Britain Pavilion, Venice, Italy, 2011 and Doug Aitken, *Frontier*, Museum of Contemporary Art Roma, Tiber Island, Rome, Italy, 2009
- Stood as the external face of the gallery with an approachable, engaging with art field professionals, public and press.
- Added valuable artists to gallery's representation including, Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster, Mike Nelson, Alicja Kwade, Ceal Floyer and Jacob Kassay, and re-activated attention on senior artist Hans Peter Feldmann (1941-2023).

ALT ART SPACE, Bomontiada, Istanbul, Turkey

***Director, Curator* 2015 –2017**

- Director and Curator of public exhibition and event space sponsored Pozitif Productions and Doğuş Holding A.Ş. (Doğuş Group) corporations.
- Worked together with local artists to co-create space that supported artistic practices and their communities.
- Produced and presented artists' commissions, visual arts, performance and public programs.

Select Achievements:

Rodney Graham, *Trilogy*, January - February, 2015

- First one person exhibition in Turkey.

Ahmet Öüçt, *Round-the-clock*, July - September, 2016

- Major solo mid-career with new commissioned works, opened days before the Republic of Turkey staged coup d'état

EDUCATION

1985-1992 Bachelors of Fine Art, Painting, Massachusetts College of Art, graduated loan free

TEACHING

2023-ongoing Faculty, Part Time: Department of Sculpture, MFA, Rhode Island School of Design, Providence
2024 Faculty Part Time: 2D Department, Undergrad, Massachusetts College of Art, Boston
2023 and 2021 Visiting Curator, MFA Visual Art, Vermont College of Art, Vermont
2020-present Speaker, Açık Diyalog İstanbul, Curating Contemporary Art Seminar Program, Turkey

JUROR/ADVISORY/BOARD POSITIONS

2009 - ongoing Participant Inc, New York, Vice President, Board of Directors, New York, U.S.
2025 Juror, Mamut Art Project, Istanbul, Turkey
2024 Juror, Civitella Ranieri Foundation International Residency Program, Italy
2023 Critic, Rhode Island School of Design, Department of Sculpture, Part Time Faculty
2022 - ongoing Mentor, Spring Call, Sanatorium series supporting independent initiatives, Istanbul
2023 and 2021 Visiting Curator, MFA Visual Art, Vermont College of Art
2021, 2022 Nominate candidates, Civitella Ranieri Fellowship in Visual Arts Jury, Umbertide, Italy
2020 - ongoing Advisory Committee, AGYU, Art Gallery of York University, Toronto, Canada
2020 - ongoing Speaker, Açık Diyalog İstanbul, Curating Contemporary Art Seminar Program
2014 - 2016 Juror, Art Basel Crowdfunding Initiative
2017 International Advisory Committee, Inaugural High Line Plinth Commissions, New York
2012 Advisor, *Double Take*, 2nd Mardin Biennial, Turkey, with curators Paolo Colombo