

## theartsdesk in Istanbul: Borusan boosts the Arts

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Jenny Zenuik's Wall Painting adorns the Borusan office

The workers at the smart Borusan Holdings head office are expected to be tidy, especially on a Friday. That's because their office doubles up as an art gallery, the Borusan Contemporary, at weekends. There are some paintings, like the attractive wall paintings of Jenny Zenuik, although the main thrust of the collection is up-to-the-minute electronic art. Some seem a little gimmicky, like superior executive toys, such as one where you place your finger in a hole and the frame turns into images of your fingerprint, but it's an excellent way to pass an hour or two.

There's a separate space for an ambitious installation with a theme of water called River Of History by the Madrid-based artist Daniel Canogar, combining video projections and sculpture. One piece uses 100 discarded plastic bottles hanging from the ceiling; another deploys a massive light box depicting submerged bodies in underwater chaos.

It may not be the first modern office to do this, but this is Istanbul, not generally noted for its cutting-edge status in the world of modern art. One local visitor comments to me on the "bravery" of Borusan in making the gap between "office life and art transparent". The philosophy of the place is that exposure to art can only increase creativity.

A clue as to who is behind it is in the best office, with a great view over the Bosphorus and a stereo system that cost \$80,000 (pianist Lang Lang tinkles on the system). There is a prominent copy of the Steve Jobs biography on the desk. This is a man who loves aesthetics and design, and like Jobs you sense has the urge to do something "insanely great", as the late Apple boss would put it.

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**“ The new aim was to up the level to compete with the world's top orchestras ”**

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The office belongs to Asim Kocabiyik, the head of Borusan Holdings, who is having an immense impact on the arts in Istanbul. As well as the fact that the HQ is also a gallery, there's the publishing company, producing fine art volumes with architect-photographer Ahmet Ertug. There's another building, the Borusan Culture and Arts (BCA), a charming edifice in the neighbourhood of Begoglu, which houses a music library.

They also organise studio spaces for artists, and things like annual music scholarships to study abroad. The Borusan arts portfolio is a considerable one and includes supporting excavation of the ruins at Ephesus through the Ephesus Foundation, and a handsome new Borusan Music House (pictured above), with state-of-the-art equipment such as a top-of-the-range new Steinway piano, which presents jazz, world and contemporary music.

But the biggest impact on the international cultural scene must be Borusan's investment to the tune of millions of pounds in classical music. They already backed a children's choir and a string quartet, but the big one is the Borusan Istanbul Philharmonic Orchestra (BIPO).