

Hi,

I am Nadir Sönmez. I am an actor, writer and director based in Istanbul.

I am also a 33 years old person living with his parents. Insufficient financial resources.

I am not poor because I am lazy. I am poor because I insist on creating art that I want in Turkey. And I am not planning to escape this country.

I don't smoke, I drink extremely rarely and I don't do drugs. I am a highly productive individual. I am working very consistently to raise my singular voice.

Here is a brief summary of what I achieved between 2020-2022, as a proof of my professional dedication.

I wrote and directed my first short film *New Releases*, a sexual parody of European literature's way of dealing with refugee crisis. (Creative Europe, 2020). I shared my digital performance *Murder of the Male* on WhatsApp which is a social autopsy of gay porn stars' suicides in USA. (Istanbul Fringe Festival, 2020). I won an extremely competitive artist residency in Paris with "*Les Fils des Hétérosexuels*", my homo-erotic play in French, about the representation of races in porn. (Cité Internationale des Arts, 2021). My play *Ama* has been invited to Dresden, Germany. (Fast Forward European Festival For Young Stage Directors, 2021). I worked with LGBTIQ+ activists in Diyarbakır, a Kurdish town in Turkey, for a solo lecture-performance project called *Diyarbakır.Tourism.Romantism.Activism*. (CultureCIVIC, 2022). I wrote *Libido*, a commission play on ecological crisis' impacts in arts which premiered in "Stage In The Museum" Festival. (Sabancı Museum, 2022). "*Business*", my play on gastro-nationalism has been a finalist of "City is Looking For Its Writers" Program. (Istanbul Municipal Theatre, 2022). I adapted my play *Ama* into a feature film. It became the most watched local content during the month it was released on Mubi Turkey. (2022)

After so much work and artistic achievements, I don't have any sign of financial freedom in the horizon.

Dinner outside is a luxury for me.

Watching plays is luxury for me.

Going to cinema is luxury for me.

Having sex with someone I fancy in a casual atmosphere is a luxury for me.

Going to holidays is a luxury for me.

Being a part of International Forum is a **need** for me.

## **What was your most impressive artistic experience in the last years?**

In the first half of 2022, I spent forty days in Diyarbakır, a Kurdish city in the Eastern Turkey, to work on a lecture performance project.

I met LGBTIQ+ activists, sex workers and discreet gay men there. I listened to them. I learned about their struggles and accomplishments.

It is difficult to be Kurdish and queer in Turkey. Although, during the days in Diyarbakır where I was surrounded by those people, I felt less depressed about the world. My problems seemed less worrying.

Kurdish culture is a very oral culture. It is in Diyarbakır that I learned deeply the value of conversation. And I transferred the simple pleasure of “talking” to the stage. I witness that the audience in Istanbul feels the emotional bonding I had with queer and Kurdish people of Diyarbakır. My works mostly have cerebral effects on the viewer but *Diyarbakır:Tourism.Romantizm.Activism* puts the audience in a very emotional state.

*P.S. I presented this lecture performance ten times in June 2022, in Diyarbakır, Mardin and İstanbul. During that pride month, LGBTIQ+ events were banned in Turkey.*

*I feel very honored and confident about this project because I told the stories of LGBTIQ+ activists, trans sex workers, polyamorous gay men of Diyarbakır on stage during those censored days.*

## **How do you relate to the question “Who has the privilege to not know?”**

Until working in Diyarbakır, I had a tendency to examine my racial and sexual identities in comparison to European people. Being Turkish often gave me an inferiority complex in European countries and European gays seemed very “lucky” because of their constitutional rights.

When I spent time in Diyarbakır, I realized that my Turkish identity was a privilege in Turkey where millions of Kurdish people also live. I also realized that being an open gay was unimaginable for many Kurdish gays fearing the reaction of their families.

The recent history of Kurdish people is full of wars. Some places were only names of “dangerous neighborhoods” that I have seen in the media. Now they are towns where people I know lost their loved ones.

**I had the privilege to not to know** about my privileges until CultureCIVIC, a European Fund gave me financial support to go work in Diyarbakır.

It is ironic but it is true.