

**Istanbul Modern's new collection exhibition features 136 works by 180 artists**

# *Past and Future*

**Istanbul Modern**, with its new exhibition *Past and Future* that opened on March 20, highlights the links to the past that establish art museums as sites of memory, and their role in shaping the future through their commitment to collecting and preserving works of art.

Opened to visitors after the reorganization of the museum's permanent collection into a new exhibition model, *Past and Future* adopts a chronological format to address the transformations of modern and contemporary art in Turkey from its beginnings to the present day.

After the exhibitions *Observation*, *Interpretation*, *Multiplicity*, *Intersecting Times*, *Modern Experiences*, and *New Works*, *New Horizons*, the museum is now hosting its most comprehensive show to date with *Past and Future*.

Featuring 180 works by 136 artists from the museum's varied collection, the exhibition explores the exchanges across time that are inherent in art.

As well as hosting 91 works that have never been exhibited before, *Past and Future* features 22 artists whose works have recently been added to the collection for the first time. Through works spanning painting, sculpture, photography, drawing, installation, and video, the exhibition presents the story of Turkish modern and contemporary art by presenting its most prominent artists and work alongside international artists.

The exhibition brings together notable examples of painting, sculpture, photography, drawing, installation, and video ranging from the initial phases of modern art to contemporary practices, and allows the viewer to follow the history of art in Turkey from a new perspective.

*Past and Future* draws from the Dr. F. Nejat Eczacıbaşı Foundation Collection and private collections as well as that of Istanbul Modern. The exhibition also features donations accepted by the consent of the museum's Advisory Board.

## **Highlights from the new exhibition:**

- Since Istanbul Modern opened, collection exhibitions have been organized into corridor-like galleries. This new exhibition model whereby open spaces interact with each other allows the viewer to trace common threads linking artists of various periods and styles.
- With *Past and Future*, photographs selected from Istanbul Modern's Photography Collection are exhibited for the first time on the permanent collection floor. They highlight visual links between various disciplines and interactions between artists.
- The works of notable but forgotten artists from the history of art in Turkey are presented to new generations using contemporary language.

- Wall texts accompanying the works inform visitors about the social, cultural, economic, and political dynamics of the relevant time periods.
- Besides art historical references, *Past and Present* focuses on the most typical works of certain particularly innovative artists who contributed to major exhibitions and biennials during the artistic movements that emerged in the second part of the 1970s.
- The exhibition also gives priority to works that reflect the essence of everyday modern life and the interdisciplinary nature of visual culture, as well as those that challenge current macro and micro policies.
- To enrich visitors' experience, short videos have been produced in collaboration with the museum's communication and technology sponsor Turkcell. Visitors can access these videos, which present commentaries by artists and critics as well as additional information about the artworks, using their mobile phones.
- Artists newly added to the collection: **Rasim Aksan, Turan Aksoy, Tülay Tura Börteçene, Handan Börteçene, Orhan Cem Çetin, Canan Dağdelen, Ahmet Ertuğ, Ara Güler, Nilbar Güreş, Gül Ilgaz, Ali Kazma, Sıtkı Kösemen, Nuri Kuzucan, Burcu Perçin, Seçkin Pirim, Gülay Semercioğlu, Sabire Susuz, Aslı Torcu, and Ebru Uygun.**
- A notable aspect of *Past and Future* is that its international approach brings together artists from different parts of the world. The exhibition also features works by prominent artists of the international contemporary art scene such as Tony Cragg, Richard Deacon, Richard Wentworth, Michael Raedecker, Ghada Amer, Jennifer Steinkamp, Monica Bonvicini, Pae White, Mark Bradford, Julian Opie, Thomas Ruff, Olafur Eliasson, Thomas Saraceno, and Sterling Ruby. These artists working during the past 20 years are brought together on the basis of their works' common concerns.

### **The museum collection as a part of life**

Levent Çalikoğlu, Chief Curator of Istanbul Modern and the curator of the exhibition, emphasizes that the museum's collection has been the driving force for the transformation currently taking place in the Turkish visual arts scene, and says: *"Istanbul Modern is still the first and only institution to have retraced the history of art in Turkey from the end of the 1800s to the present using a chronological approach to the display of modern and contemporary artworks. This approach to display promoted a dialogue between past and present, introduced our art heritage through rare and unique examples, and revealed the interactions between artists. More specifically, by highlighting the connection between living art and the museum, we reminded the public that art was a part of life and that an artwork existed along with all the interactions surrounding it."*

Describing previous exhibitions organized by Istanbul Modern as having sought solutions to problems that the past had carried over into the present and encouraging public reflection on these issues, Çalikoğlu adds: *"We tried to show that the commitment of art museums to contemporary art and their vital engagement with the present was essential for Istanbul and Turkey to gain a foothold in the global world. We now wish to stress the role we played as an art museum in safeguarding our artistic heritage for the future and to reiterate the informative value of the past in shaping the future. It does not require much foresight to claim that the past's positive or negative input can engender potential means for the future. We are convinced that Turkey's artistic output and heritage can make it a major player in the global art world and a guiding light to explore different modern experimentations and future directions in contemporary art. The active and concerted participation of Turkish artists in the current art scene are proof that we need to look toward the future."*

## Examples of the new acquisitions

**Haluk Akakçe**, in a multi-part untitled work (2012), creates a dream-like realm formed by organic undulations and sharp perpendicular lines that give the effect of an optical illusion. **Kutluğ Ataman**'s video *Women Who Wear Wigs* (1999) shows four women who use wigs to hide and transform their repressed identities in Turkey in the 1990s.

**Bedri Baykam** created *Ingres, Gérôme, This is my Bath* as part of an installation produced in 1987 for the first International Istanbul Biennial. Baykam adapted the left side of the work from Ingres' *Turkish Bath* and the right side from Gérôme's *Grand Bath at Bursa*, and secretly included himself in this new painting, giving an insider's answer to their Orientalist points of view.

**CANAN**'s *Exemplary* (2009) is a video about a girl in southeastern Anatolia, a girl who is "not permitted to be herself even in her dreams." Through the story's main character, the video investigates the mechanisms of discipline and control imposed socially on the female body, which is caught between secular and conservative debates. The title of **Taner Ceylan**'s painting *1553* (2012), inspired by Süleyman the Magnificent's wife Hürrem Sultan, is a reference to the year in which Süleyman had his son Prince Mustafa killed. The blood spread on the painting's surface reminds us of the tension between power, force, and violence.

In his series *Obstructions* (2009), which is centered on human labor and activities, **Ali Kazma** deals with trades that typically remain in the background. In the video *Taxidermist* he shows a taxidermist in Germany who stuffs game animals. In *Studio Ceramist*, another piece from the same series, he records the gestures of ceramic artist Alev Ebüzziya.

**Nur Koçak**'s series *Cahide's Story*, made between 1996 and 2003, takes as its starting point the biography of Turkey's first 'star', Cahide Sonku, and emphasizes how the image of the woman becomes an object of consumption in visual culture. **Azade Köker**'s *Landscape of Silence* (2010) explores the coexistence of reality and illusion through a forest landscape made of superimposed skulls.

Performed in a brothel on Yüksekaldırım in Istanbul in 1997, **Şükran Moral**'s video *BORDELLO* uses visual arts and the female body as materials for a theatrical production, thus exploring the inability of the visual arts to free themselves from consumerist culture. **Şener Özmen**, in his video *What an artist actually wants* (2012), explores through dramatic language the impossibility of accessing 'temples' of art that are at the center of the contemporary art world and the artist's tragicomic ordeal to be recognized by them.

## Catalogue

For the first time, a guest author has contributed to the catalogue prepared in conjunction with the exhibition. In an essay titled *Notes on the Adventurous History of Visuality*, **Hasan Bülent Kahraman** takes the rise of westernization as his starting point to focus on the evolution and creative dynamics of visual arts in Turkey. Kahraman's article can serve as a guide to understanding the internal structure of what he calls a "visuality that was partly imported and partly invented." At the same time, the essay offers important insights into ways of reading and interpreting the past – a concern very much at the heart of the exhibition, as its title underscores.

### Activities Held in Conjunction with the Exhibition

- The *Past and Present* catalogue, as well as design objects and giftware inspired by the works featured in the exhibition, are available at the **Istanbul Modern Store**.
- Books and catalogues about the artists in the exhibition will be available at the **Istanbul Modern Library**.

- In conjunction with the exhibition, the **Istanbul Modern Education Department** has designed a special program entitled ***My Museum Bag***.

## **MY MUSEUM BAG**

Through educational programs accompanying the collection exhibition ***Past and Present***, the Istanbul Modern is helping children reinforce what they learn in school and develop their creativity by learning about new possibilities of expression in art. In this program, which aims to render accessible the unique possibilities offered by museums that provide the opportunity to work directly with objects, children experiment, compare, research, explore, discuss, and study exhibits. Entitled *My Museum Bag*, the program focuses on art's relationships with other disciplines, on the connection it establishes with life, and on creative processes. All the activities in *My Museum Bag* are carried out in the hall where the exhibition ***Past and Present*** is held, using a bag full of educational tools aiming to make the artworks more understandable.

*My Museum Bag* consists of activities aimed at children of various age groups; it is carried out every day of the week except Mondays for primary-school groups, and on weekends for 4-5, 6-7, 8-10, and 11-13-year-olds.

*My Museum Bag* is held in Turkish. For more information and reservations, please call 0212 334 73 41 or e-mail [egitim@istanbulmodern.org](mailto:egitim@istanbulmodern.org).