

“Habitat”

In its new exhibition “Habitat”, the **Istanbul Modern Photography Gallery** presents diverse approaches by Turkey’s leading contemporary photographers with respect to living spaces. “Habitat” brings together works by **13 prominent artists**, selected by the Istanbul Modern Photography Advisory Board, around a conceptual framework in order to look at new tendencies pertaining to the present and future of photography in Turkey. “Habitat” has been selected for the Invited Venues within the scope of the PHotoEspaña Festival of Photography, whose 2016 program is devoted to European photography.

Curated by **Sena Çakırkaya** under the advisorship of **Merih Akoğul, Orhan Cem Çetin, Murat Germen**, and **Sıtkı Kösemen**, “Habitat” treats of subjects such as humankind’s relationship with the city and natural life, migration, urban transformation, travel, personal space, and dystopia. It features photographs and videos by **Kürşat Bayhan, Kerem Ozan Bayraktar, Zeynep Beler, Görkem Ergün, Beril Gür, Çağlar Kanlık, Oğuz Karakütük, Barbaros Kayan, Gündüz Kayra, Neslihan Koyuncu, Desislava Şenay Martinova, Ali Taptık**, and **Serkan Taycan**. The exhibition will be on view at the Istanbul Modern Photography Gallery from **December 23, 2015**, to **May 22, 2016**.

The subject and title of “Habitat” refer to a concept that defines the setting for life’s basic motions and conflicts. Through photography, “Habitat” brings together the different states of this setting, the ways in which it is perceived, and its transformation over time. “Habitat” features spaces that are physically reproduced and redefined almost every day, and therefore, in the long run, establish a relationship of belonging that runs counter to social memory. Many of the works also focus on habitats that conflict with one another because of the relationships between different existing social dynamics or boundaries. “Habitat” aims to give a say to the many factors involved in the constitution of living spaces and thus to objectively track shifting balances of power.

Different representations of helplessness and power, dreams and realities

Curator Sena Çakırkaya remarks that today, discussions center on how individuals are resisting the transformations of their cities, who can define the ideal human habitat, and what existing conditions have to offer us. Çakırkaya states that the exhibition “Habitat” brings together different concerns about living spaces: **“By considering such issues as the power of metropolises over their flora and rural districts, the constant need to recycle urban memory due to changing policies and demographic concerns, and the creative struggle for the right to shelter, the exhibition draws attention to the basic requisites for existence. Our lives and perception of living spaces are framed by the roads we travel to find work or merely ‘to find ourselves’, the journeys we take while enclosed by walls, and the physical or imaginary borders we draw. The defensive or offensive choices we make to feel safer determine our life strategies. Ultimately, our struggle to have a say about our habitats –the common stage of our lives– brings together different representations of helplessness and power, and of dreams and realities.”**

Diverse approaches of 13 artists to living spaces

Kürşat Bayhan’s project “Away From Home” (2006–2012), produced over a period of approximately five years, focuses on the lives of people who migrated from Anatolia to Istanbul. By also capturing

the hometowns from which these people came, Bayhan bears witness to how their lives have been diminished by migration.

Kerem Ozan Bayraktar's series "Air Conditioners" (2015) involves digitally removing windows from the external facades of buildings in his photographs to expose air-conditioning systems and gas pipes. His point of departure is to reveal the closed systems we create in our living areas by drawing attention to the ordinariness of a situation we take for granted, such as our struggle against natural weather conditions.

In her series "The Estates" (2014), **Zeynep Beler** draws attention to the strange desolateness of gated communities in Urla, Izmir, whose construction was either abandoned or left half-finished for diverse reasons. Beler also draws attention to how the great excess in the supply of luxurious housing estates contrasts sharply with the growing demand for shelter caused by ever-increasing immigration in Turkey.

In his series "Loot" (2015), **Görkem Ergün** reveals the arbitrary and manipulative aspects of the predetermined game that humans play in hunting and killing. In the relationship he establishes between public statues and found hunting photographs, Ergun uncovers monumental symbols of power reflected in the silhouettes of his images.

In her series "Street Photos from Home" (2011–2012), **Beril Gür** observes the public domain from within the private domain over the course of her journeys "between windows", inspired by the book by Xavier de Maistre "A Journey Around My Room". Through the observations she makes from the privacy of her home, Gür assumes the role of narrator while expressing the flow of everyday life around her, which is as ordinary as it is absurd.

Çağlar Kanlık's series "Penalty" (2012) originates from the goalposts drawn by inmates on the walls of the Bayrampaşa Penitentiary in Istanbul. During the initial phase of the project, he photographed walls adorned with inmates' drawings. Then, by inserting these images into photographs of vast, desolate lands stretching out into the boundless distance, he connotes invisible boundaries that are socially or personally established.

Just as a river creates a delta by wearing down and reshaping the stones it drags down its course, in his series "Delta" (2014–2015) **Oğuz Karakütük** creates a whole new conception of reality using images of the nature he encountered during his long, solitary journeys to unfamiliar places.

In his "Ayazma" project (2008), **Barbaros Kayan** focuses on the stories of 15 families who lived in Ayazma, Istanbul –an area of urban transformation. These families had nowhere to go following the demolition of their homes, and built shanties from the construction waste. When these shanties were also demolished, they rebuilt them from the rubble and continued this cycle until obtaining their right to shelter.

Gündüz Kayra produced the series "The Aegean" (1990–2000) in the small town on the Aegean coast to which he moved many years ago. In these photographs, Kayra presents the sceneries of stillness that welcomed him after leaving the chaotic environment of the city. The artist follows the marks left behind by crowds of people who, having laid siege to this geography during certain months of the year, abandon nature to its own devices once the season changes.

Neslihan Koyuncu's project "Fingerwill" (2014) goes back to December 2013, not long after the artist learned of her mother's cancer and they began fighting it. She tries to regain control of her life and her environment by covering with her finger the parts she does not want in the photograph.

In her series “Nightlings” (2011), **Desislava Şenay Martinova** considers the night a habitat in its own right and records the living spaces of people who emerge once night has fallen. Focusing on life in the city at night, she revives through photography the peculiar moments ingrained in her memory and the extraordinary happenings and individuals she has personally witnessed.

In his project “Towards a Flora” (ongoing since 2010), **Ali Taptık** meticulously explores plant forms that we try to introduce into urban life or which sprout on their own, in order to identify and categorize them. He focuses on the different attitudes we have toward plants in urban settings, and on our effort and ambition to keep them alive, or perhaps to tyrannize them.

In his project “Shell” (2012), **Serkan Taycan** addresses Istanbul’s panorama in the context of recent urbanization policies and lays bare the city’s new topography. His images of constant excavation and its multiple colors and layers reveal both the demolitions taking place in different parts of Istanbul as well as a cross-section of the cycle of different spaces and timeframes.