İstanbul Modern presents a selection of its photography collection

“After Yesterday”

February 16 - June 3, 2012

İstanbul Modern hosts After Yesterday, a selection of its photography collection gathered since the day the museum was founded. Featuring 179 works by 53 artists, the show will be held between February 16 - June 3, 2012 at İstanbul Modern Photography Gallery and at the museum’s lower floor. A further 66 works by 213 artists will also be on display in digital format.

Bringing together modern and contemporary examples of photography in Turkey, the exhibition displays the technical and conceptual development of photography from the Ottoman Era to the present. It shows photography’s adventure in reverse chronology, starting at the point reached by photography in present-day Turkey moving back to the Pera of the 1800s.

After Yesterday is curated by Engin Özendes who has been the director of the Photography Gallery since the day it opened and has shaped the collection’s identity. While presenting viewers the photographic story of the past and the present, the show also sheds light on how the collection developed over the years.

220 artists in 26 photography exhibitions

Chair of the Board of İstanbul Modern Oya Eczacıbaşı spoke at the press conference for the show and noted that since the day the museum was founded in 2004 the İstanbul Modern Photography Gallery has been hosting exhibitions presenting examples that reflect the development of photography in the world and in Turkey while also featuring young artists with new and different perspectives. Eczacıbaşı also mentioned exhibitions held abroad: “İstanbul Modern’s Photography Gallery also develops projects aimed at sharing Turkey’s photographic heritage with international audiences. It has introduced various Austrian cities to a selection of its vast archive of work by their countryman Othmar Pferschy, one of the first and most important documentary photographers to introduce the world to the emerging modern face of our country during the early years of the Turkish Republic. It collaborated with two museums abroad to assemble, for the first time, the works of young artists in Turkey, Russia and Greece and exhibit them in İstanbul, Moscow and the International Photo Biennale in Thessaloniki. As
part of the Cultural Season of Turkey in France celebrations, our photography department organized an exhibition in Paris of specially created work by six innovative photographic artists focused on the Galata Bridge and surrounding neighborhoods.”

Eczacıbaşı stated that thanks to the dedicated efforts of Engin Özendes, curator of the İstanbul Modern Photography Gallery for seven years now, the photography department, boasting one of the few archives in Turkey, has constantly added new works to the collection encompassing different periods, styles, and approaches.

Curator Engin Özendes stressed that İstanbul Modern was the only museum in Turkey to have a photography department with its collection and gallery. Özendes added: “İstanbul Modern’s photography collection includes prominent artists ranging from the Ottoman Era to the early Republic, from the foundations of photography in Turkey in the post-50s to the 60s, and from the 70s to the present. We began our collection seven years ago with 312 photographs and have now reached 7311 works.”

Özendes added that at the İstanbul Modern Photography Gallery, works by a total of 220 artists from both Turkey and abroad have been displayed in 26 photography exhibitions to date. Özendes further mentioned that the photography department has also exhibited works by young artists from Turkey and samples from its collection in shows held in Austria, France, Russia, and Greece.

**After Yesterday: From The Photography Collection of İstanbul Modern**

**The first steps of Ottoman photography**

Only a year after the invention of photography, French painter Horace Vernet and daguerreotypist Goupil Fesquet set sail from France to arrive in Izmir in 1840. The pioneers who spread photography around the world were adventurers, writers, people interested in archaeology, painters, and architects. These traveling photographers first took landscape photos in cities of the East which seemed different to them; later they turned their camera to people in the streets as well. With people becoming part of the composition in photographs of monuments, bazaars, streets, and village markets, local studios were opened in the Ottoman Empire. The first studio owners were Armenian and Greek. Starting in the 1850s these studios sprang up on the Grand Rue de Péra where the Western lifestyle was most visible in İstanbul. Featured in the exhibition are the Abdullah Frères, Sébah & Joaillier, Guillaume Berggren, Mihran İranyan, and the Gülmez Frères who all left us pictures from the 19th century.

**The Republic and documentary photography**

The most prominent documentary photographer from the early years of the Turkish Republic was Othmar Pferschy who traveled throughout Turkey and took thousands of pictures. Photos from those years especially reflect a positive
and beautiful image of Turkey including its historical places, people in natural landscapes, and the modernization of cities.

The community centers (halkevleri) opened in 1932 greatly contributed to the spreading of photography. While it became common for photographers to travel Anatolia and document it, the interest urbanites started showing in rural areas and the tendency to document the realities therein are notable. Artists such as Aziz Albek, Cafer Türkmen, Nevzat Çakır, İbrahim Zaman, Gültekin Çizgen, Arif Aşçı, and Atilla Torunoğlu produced major examples of documentary photography with their original interpretations.

The trend toward taking artistic portraits began with Süreyya Bükey during the early years of the Republic; later it went beyond the studio to focus on people’s habitats, their lives, and facial expressions. The exhibition includes portraits of major personalities of the artistic and literary world such as Samuel Beckett, Nazım Hikmet, Aliye Berger, and Can Yücel taken by three artists from different generations – Lütfi Özkök, Sedat Pakay, and Bennu Gerede.

**Modern Works**

Over time documentary photography was replaced by conceptual approaches and constructed photographs in which the artist’s intervention could strongly be felt.

During the first half of the 20th century when digital possibilities had not yet developed, experimental works were created using darkroom techniques. We can consider photographs produced under the enlarger with multiple exposures as predecessors of today’s digital manipulations and as the first examples of constructed photography. The photographs by Mustafa Kapkın and Baha Gelenbevi featured in the show are examples of this type of experimental work. Also included in the exhibition is Şahin Kaygun who, starting in the 1980s, added paint and collage to his photographs which can be seen as one of the first examples of painting-photography in the photography of Turkey.

In approaches that take everyday life as their starting point, the city itself becomes an area for artists to experiment. Observing the city and wandering through its streets, photographers capture the city’s architecture, its chaotic structure, walls, and people from their individual perspectives. Sevim Sancaktar, Burhan Doğançay, and Selim Güneş obtain conceptual effects in their photographs of city walls taken with no intervention on the walls. Jak Baruh, Burcu Aksoy, and Murat Germen achieve a similar effect using digital possibilities.

Also featured in the exhibition are Sıtkı Kösemen, Kamil Firat, Paul McMillen, Ahmet Öner Gezgin, İzzet Keribar, Cem Turgay, and Orhan Cem Çetin whose works in the show combine reality and construction based on themes pertaining to the individual such as time, existence, and death.
Artists in the exhibition: