

INTRODUCTION

This exhibition was generated by a desire to reveal to the American public the fascinating creativity of Turkish artists working at home and abroad. It shows an enormous variety of different approaches and styles and proves at the same time that, in being parallel with other modern movements, the Turkish artists have succeeded in preserving their own national characteristics.

To understand contemporary Turkish painting it is necessary to relate the past cultures which began, flourished and vanished on the soil of today's Turkey, to the present international movements. The glorious Hittite, Greek, Roman, Byzantine and Ottoman civilizations have left a deep mark on the artistic heritage which is evident in the decorative aspect, brilliancy of colors and the use of calligraphic and interlaced geometric designs. These traditional elements combined with modern movements point to the existence of "Turkish Painting" even if we do not accept it.

Historically speaking, the reforms of Kemal Atatürk in the twentieth century introduced a radical change in Turkey. Not only did they effect the political and social life, but also the cultural and artistic life, and Turkish artists turned from the Islamic tradition to the Western European styles. In 1928/29 modern Turkish painting began with the foundation of the "Society of Independent Artists" and "Group D." Since that time, Turkish painters have been actively participating in international exhibitions and have worked and taught in Europe and America.

Without a doubt, the present exhibition covers many directions and points of view. Parallel with other modern movements in the last decade, the most important new direction in Turkish painting is non-figurative. However, the general character of these new forms relates closely to their traditional color patterns and reflects once again the exuberance and energy of the Turkish creative spirit.

In spite of the multiplicity of styles, the majority of the exhibited paintings preserve some national characteristics. Traditional subject matter is depicted in Akbaşoğlu's *Peasant with Cart* (cat. no. 1), Erbil's *Istanbul* (cat. no. 19), Erol's *Pigeon Homes and Ankara* (cat. nos. 23, 24), Esirkuş's *Folk Dancers and Goat* (cat. nos. 27, 28, 29), Kabaş's *Exile* (cat. no. 39), Kalay's *Water Buffalo and Buffalo Cart* (cat. nos. 41, 42, 43), Kalmik's *Fishing Nets, The Birds and Girl* (cat. nos. 44, 45), Kavruk's *Anatolia* (cat. nos. 47, 48) and Turani's *Motif for a Turkish Rug* (cat. no. 50). Ancient calligraphic compositions are used by Elderoğlu in his paintings (cat. no. 17, 18). The more recent artistic developments can be seen in Çoker's *Les Cadres Orientales* (cat. no. 13) and in Gursoy's *Ottoman Red on Green* (cat. no. 37). Dogancay's *Walls 70* (cat. nos. 14, 15, 16) speak clearly of urban America and the effects of magnified, torn and ripped billboard posters, yet perhaps the bright colors and the intricate blending of forms reflect his Turkish heritage.

These paintings that represent the most important trends on the Turkish artistic scene today, show the harmonious way in which the old and the new have blended together into a vital and meaningful message. This exhibition of Contemporary Turkish Painting, we hope, will bring a better understanding and appreciation of Turkish art and culture.

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