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## Laterna Magica: A magical journey through the history of Turkish art



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Bozlu Art Project's latest exhibition showcases artists from the Ottoman Empire, the earliest days of the Turkish Republic through to our current period on three floors of immaculately arranged, inspiring works. Bozlu Art Project is hosting a new exhibition called "Laterna Magica: The Dr Sukru Bozluolcay Collection." The exhibition is in Istanbul's Sisli district, in the famed Mongeri Building, an example of early Republican architecture of Turkiye, built in the mid-1920s by Italian architect Giulio Mongeri. The exhibition spans the years from the Ottoman Empire's first works of Western-style paintings to contemporary art of the Republic of Turkiye, and will be sure to give a broad sense of understanding to the viewer. Curator Dr Ozlem Inay Erten says she would be very happy if young people and students were to visit the exhibition which she believes bridges the generations of painters and artists quite nicely. The exhibition is arranged chronologically, with the oldest works on the ground floor. Upstairs, visitors can take in the modern artists, while downstairs in the basement, are the contemporary artists. Hoca Ali Riza, Boats and Sailboat by the Shore, oil on canvas, 32x65cm (signed A. RIZA 329). (Courtesy of Bozlu Art Project) Collected in nearly 40 years by Dr Sukru Bozluolcay, the exhibition features classical, modern and contemporary works, curator Dr Ozlem Inay Erten tells TRT World. Bozluolcay, who is 64-years-old, started collecting artworks in the 1980s. A business person named the 'Entrepreneur of the Year' in 2012, his collection featured at the exhibition covers a wide-ranging array of artists, starting with the Military Painters generation (in the last days of the Ottoman Empire), to the 1914 Generation (the Calli Generation). Then there are the "Independents" (Mustakiller) and "d Group" (d Grubu), the news release notes, all the way to the emergence of the "Paris School" of the '50s and '60s, "Generation of 1968", and contemporary artists of the aughts and beyond. "Preparing an exhibition from a personal collection, we could have gone several different routes," Inay Erten says. "We could have arranged the works thematically, according to subjects, or we could have combined them under a concept. We decided to display the integrity of the collection as a whole; we wanted to offer a perspective of the [Western-style] Turkish art history chronologically to viewers regardless of whether they know about Turkish art, or not at all." The first floor is dedicated to the oldest examples of Western-style

Turkish art, with the Military Painters painting on canvases; such as Halil Pasha, Suleyman Seyyid, Hoca Ali Riza. "After military upsets, the Ottoman Empire focused on revising the army. Military schools' curriculum started offering technical drawing classes. The students who showed an interest in painting, who were talented, were sent overseas for art training, and when they returned, they started teaching in the schools they graduated from. That's how we got our first painters," Inay Erten explains. Nazmi Ziya Guran, Fatih Mosque viewed from Suleymaniye, oil on cardboard, 47 x 60 cm. (Courtesy of Bozlu Art Project) When you visit the exhibition, Inay Erten says, you will see how themes and materials change over the years. "For example, the Military Painters mostly focused on still lifes and nature paintings," she notes. "There aren't that many figures, with a few exceptions such as Halil Pasha, who has gone through an academic education in Paris, and is knowledgeable about figure and anatomy." Yet the milieu of the time, when there were no art museums, no gallery-hopping public, no art buyers, meant that the artists of the time would start not with nudes or human figures but with flowers and other still lifes, and nature paintings. The artists who worked with the human figure are represented in another room on the entrance floor, the "1914 Generation (Calli Generation)" with painters such as Ibrahim Calli, Hikmet Onat, Nazmi Ziya, Avni Lifij. Women become subjects rather than objects, nudes appear, they start working with live models, for example there is a nude painting of a man by Mehmet Nuri Arel. "Nature paintings continue, as we see in Nazmi Ziya's work," Inay Erten says, "but this time, it's in an impressionistic manner." This generation is important because after being educated overseas, they taught at the art university (now known as Mimar Sinan University) and published art magazines, wrote about art, organised art shows. "They paved the way for many important works in Turkish art history," Inay Erten summarises. Burhan Dogancay (1929-2013), Antiques, 1965. Oil and mixed media on canvas, 203.2 x 203.2 cm (Melis Alemdar / TRTWorld) Upstairs we have Modern Turkish artists, Inay Erten says. "You know how art trends go from one generation rebelling against what the previous generations have produced? Well here we have artists from the d grubu (Group D), Mustakiller (The Independents), who rebel against Impressionism, saying 'We need to catch up to European art, and no longer try to follow two steps behind.'" These artists produced works influenced by Cubism and Constructivism, as well as creating syntheses of Eastern and Western art. Nejad Melih Devrim (1923-1995) Untitled, 1964. Oil on canvas, 97x 162 cm. (Melis Alemdar / TRTWorld) "Turkish art begins producing abstract art in the 1950s, with pioneer artists such as Sabri Berkel, Zeki Faik Izer, then Paris School painters such as Fahrelnissa Zeid, Nejad Melih Devrim [who happens to be Zeid's son], Selim Turan, a painter who has also become a renowned educator Adnan Coker, who happens to be the first artist who set up an abstract painting exhibition, Ferruh Basaga," who are displayed on the upper floor. "On the other hand we have artists such as Cihat Burak and Burhan Dogancay or Omer Uluc and Erol Akyavas who with their use of materials and their perspectives can be called avant-garde artists." (From L to R) Serhat Kiraz, Figures, 2007; (in the background) Server Demirtas, Horse, 2017; Altan Gurman, Untitled, 1973 and Soldier, 1976 (2013); Server Demirtas, Homage to Gurman, 1991. (Mehmet Gokdel / Courtesy of Bozlu Art Project) Inay Erten says on the basement floor there is Altan Gurman, who produced the first examples of Conceptual Art in the 1970s in Turkey, with themes that are anti-establishment pervasive in his works. She adds Serhat Kiraz, Altan Gurman, Halil Akdeniz are also pioneers in their field. Traditional painting starts morphing into other materials. Damn Edison, Komet (1941). Neon light installation, 86 x 155 cm. (Melis Alemdar / TRTWorld) After the 1980s, Turgut Ozal's globalisation policies and Turkiye's closer ties with international players produced wealthy business people who started collecting art. They often visited other countries, saw the museums and galleries and other collections there. Inay Erten says these developments resulted in artists becoming freer in their choice of subjects: "Up until the 1950s art was always supported by the state. After the 1950s, with the Demokrat Party, it turned into personal outputs. You can read the history of the Turkish Republic in these artworks." According to Inay Erten, the exhibition is significant because it portrays the history of art in Turkiye and provides historical context to important artists of their

eras. "Private collections displayed in exhibitions will inspire new collections or new exhibitions, or as in the States, where private collections are combined and turn into museums, perhaps will pave the way to new instances like this." The book that accompanies the exhibition is available at Bozlu Art Project. (Courtesy of Bozlu Art Project) There is a book that accompanies the exhibition in Turkish and English that can be purchased at the gallery. Penned by Ozlem Inay Erten, it discusses Bozluolcay's collection and the pieces selected to be in the exhibition while giving them historical context. The exhibition, "Laterna Magica: The Dr Sukru Bozluolcay Collection" will be open to the public until March 26, 2022. Visiting hours are 10AM to 5:30PM Tuesday to Saturday. Bozlu Art Project is closed on Sundays and Mondays. Halil Altindere (1971), Portrait of a Dealer, 2010. HD video colour, sound, 4'14", makes a reference to artist Burhan Dogancay whose painting is smashed over dealer Yahsi Baraz's head. (Melis Alemdar / TRTWorld) THUMBNAIL PHOTO: Halil Pasha (1852-1939) Istanbul Trilogy, 1915. Oil on canvas 120 x 100 cm. (TRT World / Melis Alemdar) HEADLINE PHOTO: The exhibition, "Laterna Magica: The Dr. Sukru Bozluolcay Collection" will be open to the public until March 26, 2022. (Courtesy of Bozlu Art Project / Mehmet Gokdel)