

*Istanbul's Meşher Presents*  
**"I-You-They: A Century of Artist Women" Exhibition**

9 October 2021 – 27 March 2022



*Yıldız Moran, Echo, 1952, Yıldız Moran Archive*

Organised under the patronage of Çiğdem Simavi and sponsored by ÜNLÜ & Co, ***I-You-They: A Century of Artist Women*** opens at Meşher, Istanbul on October 9.

Curated by Deniz Artun, the exhibition features a selection of 232 works by 117 artists. Living and working in Turkey between roughly the 1850 and 1950, the work of these artists is largely unrecognised by the art historical canon.

***I-You-They*** takes its name from an exhibited work by Şükran Aziz, a Turkish-born international artist and the founder of the Cabaret Voltaire in Poughkeepsie, New York. Referencing Aziz's call to collectivity, the exhibition does not only recognise women's struggle for selfhood, the "I", but also explores the conditions for the formation of a collective "we".

The subtitle ***"A Century of Artist Women"*** refers to an "other" history when the stories of artist women and their works that remained outside the straight lines drawn from one name, group, or institution to another, are narrated and commemorated. Thus, in this exhibition, women are presented a "century" in which they themselves are the heroines. *I-You-They* also encourages contemporary artist women to examine their heritage.

Meşher takes its name from the Ottoman Turkish word meaning exhibition space and its mission is to advocate for the creation of new dialogues across time and cultures. In this context, *I-You-They: A Century of Artist Women* hopes to create an opportunity for its viewers to discover the forgotten or overlooked artist women of Turkey and lead to greater cultural awareness and appreciation.

## THE CONCEPTUAL APPROACH



Deniz Bilgin, *Madonna and the Child*, 1996, Emel Meltem Yilmaz Collection

While determining the scope of the *I-You-They* exhibition, curator **Deniz Artun** underlines that the existence of contemporary artist women in Turkey has no history. However, *I-You-They* will not claim to write this history. On the contrary, it recalls and reminds us that this history to be written is not singular, but plural. The exhibition is a call to a “we” in and through which each woman and each work can construct its very own history.

*I-You-They* is spread over three floors of the Meşher building. The ground floor “I” concentrates on fameless women who are faced only with their very plain existence in the mirror. Mirrors placed in different corners of the exhibition space are meant to catch a glimpse of more than one face or facet of a single woman.

The exhibition is an investigation that starts with the intention of rendering artist women visible –at times even despite themselves– in context other than their studios and especially their homes. There are many examples of women who deliberately scratched their own names from history. So, the mirror sometimes serves as a “magnifying” glass held up to those who failed to reflect the sparks of their creativity on history.

The first floor “You” offers an encounter with the soft and unifying “you”. It calls out for the children as the primary “you”s. Most of the portraits and self-portraits invite us to contemplate the experience of motherhood and subjectivity, the definitions of family and compassion, the power of creativity and immortality. In addition, “You” juxtaposes the sanctity of motherhood with the sensuality of nudity.

The second and last floor “They” looks at women through the eyes of others. Flowers, especially when in a vase, comprise all the adjectives attributed to women: emotional, vulnerable, amateur-spirited, ordinary, domestic and decorative. Often, artist women were able to express themselves only by painting flowers in a vase, since they were confined to depict the safe and the elegant. The ‘flowers’ that are scattered around the top floor of the exhibition without favoring any one artist over another, offer an alternative to a schematic family tree and a linear art history.

## ARTISTS

*I-You-They* is not about finding and listing all the women who have lived and worked between 1850 and 1950, the period the organisers roughly limited themselves to. Rather, it invites deeper exploration.



Artists, whose works are shown in the exhibition include: Naile Akıncı, Nükhet Aksoy, Maide Arel, Hale Asaf, Perran Berrünnisa Atamdemir, Jülide Atılmaz, Can Ayan, Neşe Aybey, Şükran Aziz, Hatice Şahiye Barlas, Iraida Barry, Behice Nuri, Saime Belir, Belkıs Mustafa, Lerzan Bengisu, Sabiha Bengütaş, Nimet Berdan, Aliye Berger, Semiha Berksoy, Mevhibe Meziyet Beyat, Deniz Bilgin, Zerrin Bölükbaşı, Zabelle C. Boyajian, Sabiha Bozcalı, Halet Çambel, Refia Edren Çiray, Nevin Çokay, Hamiye Çolakoğlu, Gül Derman, Didar Tahsin, Şükriye Dikmen, Tiraje Dikmen, Güzin Duran, Ayhan Dürrüoğlu, Afife Ecevit, Nazlı (Emin) Ecevit, Efruz Cemil,

Melahat Ekinci, Esmâ Ekiz, Emine Semiyî Hilmi, Selma Emiroğlu, Özden Akbaşoğlu Ergökçen, Nebahat Erkekli, Mari Ertoran (Kaloyan), Semiha Es, Esmâ İbret Hanım, Eren Eyüboğlu, Fatma Saime Cenap, Seniye Fenmen, Sühendan Fırat, Bilge Friedlaender, Lina Gabuzzi, Filiz Özgüven Galatalı, Ruzin Gerçin, Mari Gerekmezian, Vildan Gizer, Nevide Gökaydın, Beyza Gönensay, Bedia Gülerüz, Hatice Süleyman, Hayriye Nuri, Seta Hidiş, Sara Farhi Huntzinger, Selime Işıtan, Mürşide İçmeli, Nasip İyem, Naciye İzbul, Sare İsmet Kabağaçaçlı, İvon Karsan, Gencay Kasapçı, Nevzat Kasman, Sevim Kent, Türkan Kıran, Sabahat Kırılı, Füreyâ Koral, Hakkiye Koral, Emel Korutürk, Melike Abasıyanık Kurtiç, Müreccel Küçükaksoy, Harika Lifij, Mihri Rasim (Müşfik), Yıldız Moran, Muhterem Ömer, Muide Esad, Müfide Kadri, Nedime Ahmet, Nevin Edhem, Nimet Raif, Nüveyre Faik, Maryam Özacul (Özcilyan), Necla Özbay Özdemir, Rahime Yusuf Ziyaeddin, Rana Salih, Ruhiye, Safiye, Kristin Saleri, Mukaddes (Erol) Saran, Bedia Sarıkaya, Leyla Gamsız Sarptürk, Melek Celal Sofu, Harika Söylemezoğlu, İvi Stangali, Virginia Stolzenberg, Emel Şahinkaya, Maryam Şahinyan, Nasra Şimmeshindi, Şükûfe İbrahim, Tâciser Salih Şâkir, Cahide Tamer, Leman Tantuğ, Zekavet Bayer Taş, Frumet Tektaş, Celile Uğuraldım, Melahat Üren, Mary Adelaide Walker, Fahrelnissa Zeid, Elisa Pante Zonaro. Image: Şükran Aziz, I-You-They, 1993–1996 Foil-cut letters on wood, 25 plaques; each 33 x 33 cm, Fuat Yalın Collection

## ÇİĞDEM SİMAVİ, PATRON OF THE EXHIBITION

Çiğdem Simavi, the patron of the *I-You-They* exhibition, expresses her purpose of setting out as follows: “As a woman, I have always believed in women’s endeavours, power, solidarity and the unifying role we play. My greatest dream has been introducing artist women of Turkey to a wider world, bringing them out of obscurity into the light. I have never ceased to pursue that dream, never doubted that women are the unsung heroes behind my country’s cultural and artistic heritage which I have always admired.”

## ŞEBNEM KALYONCUOĞLU ÜNLÜ, ÜNLÜ & CO EXECUTIVE BOARD MEMBER

Şebnem Kalyoncuoğlu Ünlü, Executive Board Member of ÜNLÜ & Co, the sponsoring firm of the exhibition, said: “As ÜNLÜ & Co, since our establishment in 1996, we aim to

*develop a thriving, leading and pioneering investment services and asset management group in Turkish finance market. At the same time, we carry out activities that will bring the power of women to the fore and also support different art projects, which we consider as the unique reflection of human creativity. In this special year when we celebrate our 25th anniversary, we are proud to sponsor such an exhibition that reveals the centennial endeavours of artist women from Turkey. The I-You-They exhibition will be an important milestone in recognizing and making visible the women artists who have gone unnoticed or have been neglected in art history."*

## EXHIBITION PUBLICATION

Together with the exhibition, an exhibition book containing visuals of the works and ephemera has been prepared. The texts for the book were written by curator Deniz Artun, as well as Şeyda Çetin and Ebru Esra Satıcı, who carried out the research and curatorial work of the exhibition. Documents compiled by Şeyda Çetin and Esra Satıcı were included in the book as a kind of shared album. The book, which is published in two separate editions in English and Turkish, can be purchased from Meşher and Koç University Publishing, or ordered from online bookstores.

## EVENTS

The event program of the *I-You-They: A Century of Artist Women* exhibition, which will be organised by the curator of the exhibition Deniz Artun and the Meşher team, will take place simultaneously with the exhibition. Various talks, adult workshops, and children's workshops will take place online and free of charge. The up-to-date event program can be accessed on the Meşher website and its social media accounts.

---

**Notes to editors – \*\*\*For images please check out the folder [here](#).**

**"I-You-They: A Century of Artist Women" | 9 October 2021 – 27 March 2022 | [www.mesher.org](http://www.mesher.org)**

For the latest news, follow @mesherofficial on Facebook and @mesher\_official on Instagram

For further information please contact: [flint-culture.com](http://flint-culture.com) | @flintculture

[pepin.davidyan@flint-culture.com](mailto:pepin.davidyan@flint-culture.com) | +90 537 399 19 85

[naz.turkmen@flint-culture.com](mailto:naz.turkmen@flint-culture.com) | +90 534 237 32 34

## VISITING INFORMATION

The exhibition can be visited free of charge from Tuesday to Sunday between 11:00 and 18:00. Events and guided exhibition tours are also offered free of charge at Meşher, which is located on İstiklal Street. Information on the health measures implemented in the building and new visiting hours can be found at [www.mesher.org](http://www.mesher.org).

## ABOUT MEŞHER

Initiated by the Vehbi Koç Foundation (VKF), Meşher advocates the creation of new dialogues across time and cultures, not only through its exhibitions ranging from historical research to contemporary art but also its comprehensive array of parallel activities such as publications, workshops and conferences. With its overall interdisciplinary approach, Meşher, which takes its name from the Ottoman Turkish word meaning exhibition space, has been carrying on its activities since September 2019. With 900 square meters of exhibition space spread over three floors and 100 square meters of activity area, Meşher presents exhibitions on a wide range of

subjects, in a time span ranging from the Middle Ages to the present. With its versatile program, research-based academic aspect and publications, Meşher continues to contribute to the culture and art scene as a reference point. [www.mesher.org](http://www.mesher.org) | [Instagram](#)

#### **ABOUT ÜNLÜ & Co**

Established in 1996, ÜNLÜ & Co Group has become Turkey's leading merger and acquisition advisory firm with the 113 successful transactions it has advised on since 1998. The Company also ranks first in terms deals above USD 30 mn, with total number of concluded transactions, total number of cross-border transactions, and total number of private fund transactions since 2010. (Source: Mergermarket)

ÜNLÜ & Co also offers personalised investment advisory services to qualified retail and institutional investors through DAHA Investment Advisory, which operates within its premises. In the realm of Asset Management services, ÜNLÜ & Co is active with Fund and Portfolio Management, ÜNLÜ Alternative Assets, and Non-Performing Loan Management, with an employee headcount in excess of 280. Headquartered in Istanbul and having a total employee count close to 500, ÜNLÜ & Co also has offices in Istanbul – Bağdat Street, Ankara and Izmir, along with subsidiaries in New York and London. [www.unluco.com](http://www.unluco.com)