

## **The group exhibition *I Am Nobody. Are You Nobody Too?* opened at Meşher**

**Meşher, one of the exhibition spaces initiated by the Vehbi Koç Foundation, welcomes visitors to its new exhibition *I Am Nobody. Are You Nobody Too?*, which opened on September 14, 2022. Curated by Selen Ansen, the exhibition is inspired by the myth of Echo and Narcissus and their unrequited loves, and it features nearly 120 works by 44 artists from both Turkey and abroad. It will remain open until February 12, 2023.**

The group exhibition *I Am Nobody. Are You Nobody Too?*, which is inspired by the ancient Greek myth of Echo and Narcissus and their unrequited loves, opened at Meşher on September 14, 2022. Curated by Selen Ansen, this exhibition interprets the themes of reflection, resonance, and metamorphosis that are highlighted by the myth in light of contemporary artistic and social dynamics. *I Am Nobody. Are You Nobody Too?* features nearly 120 works by 44 artists from both Turkey and abroad, including works created for this exhibition with the support of the Vehbi Koç Foundation. The exhibition, which spans all three floors of Meşher's exhibition space, will be open until February 12, 2023.

In her opening speech, Selen Ansen emphasised that the exhibition takes its cue from the concepts of metamorphosis and duality, which are pivotal in the myth of Echo and Narcissus. Ansen noted that instead of depicting this ancient narrative, *I Am Nobody. Are You Nobody Too?* is built upon the story's remnants—what remains from Echo's unrequited love for Narcissus and Narcissus's unrequited love for his own reflection.

The exhibition title is a reference to the Emily Dickinson's poem "I am nobody! Who are you?" The exhibition invites visitors to a sensitive space, where numerous *yous*, *Is*, desires, narratives, images, and experiences are intertwined. It adopts the circular and repetitive structure of the mythological narrative. Valuing the remnants of bygone lives, *I Am Nobody. Are You Nobody Too?* highlights at the same time the distances that are necessary for things remote, past, or foreign to reach out to us and graft themselves onto our lives.

The works on display actualise a space where the visible, the audible, and the tangible intersect, allowing for an experience of various forms of relationships between skin and voice, voice and shape, self and other, human and non-human beings, and material and immaterial phenomena. Connecting with actual issues related to reflection and illusion, it also presents artistic approaches to elements that have been associated throughout history with the body, appearance/disappearance, identity, and representation, such as faces, mirrors, shadows, and traces.

**Artists:** Marina Abramović, Erol Akyavaş, Dieter Appelt, Koray Ariş, Eylül Aslan, Levent Aygöl, Mehtap Baydu, Deniz Bilgin, Handan Börüteçene, Elina Brotherus, Betty Bui, Claude Cahun, Aslı Çavuşoğlu, Laurence Demaison, Lee Friedlander, Ryan Gander, Nan Goldin,

Jessica Harrison, Camille Henrot, Charles Holland & Elly Ward, Talbot Hughes, John Isaacs, Fatoş İrwen, Gizem Karakaş, Nermin Kura, Marcantonio Raimondi Malerba, Bevis Martin & Charlie Youle, Radenko Milak, İz Öztat, İz & Ra, Evan Penny, Gerhard Richter, Necla Rüzgar, Stéphanie Saadé, Fabrice Samyn, Jenny Saville & Glen Luchford, Yusuf Sevinçli, Yaşam Şaşmazer, Ayça Telgeren, Defne Tesal, VOID

### **A special book for the exhibition**

The publication *I Am Nobody. Are You Nobody Too?* was conceived as an extension of the exhibition. This book elaborates on the exhibition's pivotal themes, such as reflection, resonance, and self/other, by bridging the past and the present and bringing the mythological background of the exhibition into focus. Edited by the exhibition's curator Selen Ansen and Meşher's curators Ebru Esra Satıcı and Şeyda Çetin, it brings together numerous visual and textual sources, including some which have been translated into English for the first time, as well as two commissioned essays, one by Cana Bostan and one by Fatih Özgüven.

### **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

#### **Echo and Narcissus**

The myth of Echo and Narcissus has many versions. The exhibition *I Am Nobody. Are You Nobody Too?* takes its cue from the version provided by Ovid in his epic poem *Metamorphoses*, which dates to the first century CE. The myth revolves around the unrequited love of the nymph Echo for Narcissus, who is known for his legendary beauty. The gods punish Echo for being "talkative" by not allowing Echo to utter her own words, dooming her only to echo/duplicate the sounds and repeat the last words of what she hears. One day, Echo sees Narcissus from afar and falls in love with him; however, the young man does not reciprocate her love and pushes her away. Over time, Echo falls into despair over this unrequited love and fades away. Only a bodiless voice and bones that have turned to stone remain of her. Narcissus's fate is similar: that is his punishment. One day, he falls in love with his own reflection, which he sees on the surface of a lake. He too surrenders to death when he realises that the face he fell in love with is merely his own reflection, and that his love will never be requited. Every year, just before spring arrives, the narcissus flower blooms in his final resting place.

#### **About Selen Ansen**

Selen Ansen was born in 1975 in Istanbul. After she obtained her master's degree in Modern Literature and Cinema from the Université Marc Bloch in Strasbourg, she received her Ph.D. in Theory and Practice of the Arts in 2001. She worked as a lecturer of art theory and philosophy of art in several art and design schools of France, including the École Supérieure des Arts Décoratifs. Between 2009 and 2015, she taught classes as an assistant professor in the Philosophy and Social Thought and Comparative Literature MA programmes at Istanbul Bilgi University.

Ansen formed her initial connection to Arter in 2011, when she curated Berlinde De Bruyckere's exhibition *The Wound* (2012). Joining Arter's curatorial team in 2015, Ansen curated the exhibitions *Marc Quinn: The Sleep of Reason* (2014), *It takes two to make an accident* (2015), *Not All That Falls Has Wings* (2016), *Words Are Very Unnecessary* (2019–2020), *Céleste Boursier-Mougenot: offroad v.2* (2019), *Cevdet Erek: Bergama Stereotip* (2019–2020), *KP Brehmer: The Big Picture* (2020–2021), *Locus Solus* (2022), and *Ahmet Doğu Ipek: A Halo Of Backness Upon Our Heads* (2022); she also contributed to various international publications. Ansen curated the Performance Programme (2019–2020) that was part of the inauguration of Arter's new building in Dolapdere.

### **About Meşher**

Initiated by the Vehbi Koç Foundation (VKF), Meşher advocates for the creation of new dialogues across time and cultures, not only through its exhibitions, which range from historical research to contemporary art, but also through 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 active 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 that cover time periods from the Middle Ages to the present. With its versatile programme and its research-based academic aspects and publications, Meşher continues to contribute to the larger culture and art scene.