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Artist Ahmet Doğu Ipek showcases works that emerge from the idea of darkness

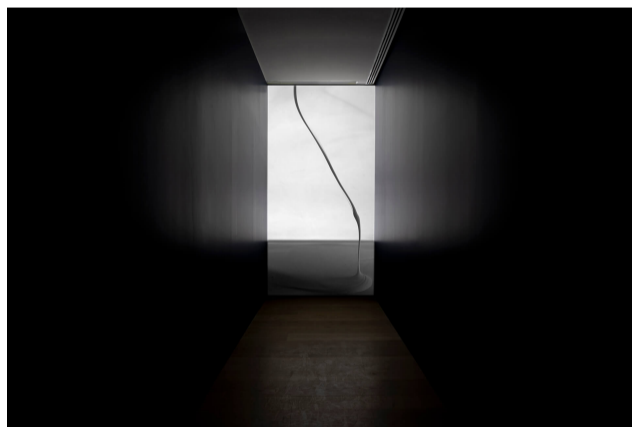
Gallery Arter exhibits works produced by the artist in the past two years that metaphorically evoke a sense of darkness, referencing the pandemic and the natural phenomenon around us.

by [Rahul Kumar](#) | Published on : Dec 04, 2022

Artist Ahmet Doğu Ipek presented works created between 2020-2022 in the [exhibition](#) *A Halo of Blackness Upon Our Heads*, context of which stems from the absence of light. Borrowing its title from a verse in Edip Cansever's poem titled *Tragedies III* [1964], the exhibition brings together works of various mediums Doğu Ipek has worked with. Natural phenomena such as sandstorms, volcanic eruptions, landslides and sun eclipses; the [paintings](#), [drawings](#), [installations](#) and video works gathered in the exhibition interpret by way of abstraction awe-inspiring events that exceed human scale.

These works build a space for mutual interaction between material and psyche, fiction and reality, the natural and artificial, the tangible and the transient. *A Halo of Blackness Upon Our Heads* bonds with phenomena that not only stems from the absence of light but also continually produces darkness.

I speak to the [visual artist](#) on the sidelines of his ongoing exhibition at gallery Arter in [Istanbul, Turkey](#).



Zephyr I, 2021 Single-channel video; Composer: Ah! Kosmos, Production: Onur Kolkır, Emre Başak; Post-production: Onur Kolkır
Image: Courtesy of Gallery Arter

Rahul Kumar: Through this exhibition, you are exploring multitudes of dichotomous emotions. How do aspects of fiction vs. reality and natural vs. artificial come together in the presentation?

Ahmet Doğu Ipek: The subject of dualities constitutes both a multi-layered way of thinking and producing, and a way of exhibiting for me. In this regard, it has been one of the 'keywords' from the very beginning.

If we consider the conceptual structure of the exhibition as a pyramid, there is 'time' in the most basic layer, and all other layers exist upon it. The rotation of the planet gives birth to the concept of time, and phenomena such as day-night, summer-winter, hot-cold are dualities themselves. Besides nature, things designed by humankind (electrical systems consisting of positive and negative poles, computers that operate with 0s and 1s, doors, buttons, stairs we go up and down), cultural structures (upper-lower, good-bad, beautiful-ugly) and various states (female-male, short-long, far-near) also consist of dualities.

It is also a dichotomy that the cultural and the natural are no longer incompatible. The installation called *Subjected* located in the middle of the exhibition, may be the most obvious example of this. The strange combination of an industrial sponge, the product of the [technology](#) we created, and a natural rock, is the epitome of this polarity in our age: ancient and contemporary, designed and spontaneous, light and heavy, soft and hard...I think that the crisis the planet is in stems from precisely this disharmony. Without taking sides or establishing a hierarchy between the two sides, I think that this duality contains energy and potential, it lays the groundwork for various possibilities, and even triggers these possibilities. The energies that emerge from these unions/frictions can bring disaster as well as create alternative solutions or a miracle.

The exhibition actually emerged from various needs and requirements, although it seems like the differences and dualities in it were totally designed. As a result, it is was heavy and light, black and white, soft and hard, many and few, static and dynamic. Because of its

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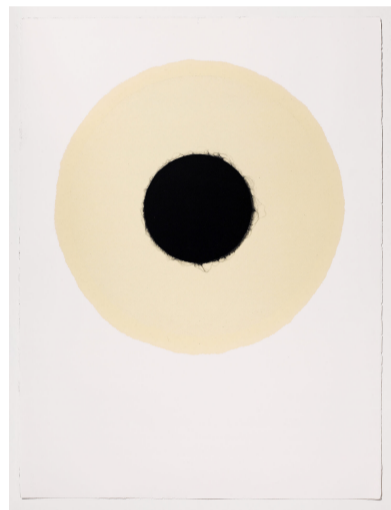


Installation view: *A Halo of Blackness Upon Our Heads*
Image: Courtesy of Gallery Arter

Rahul: Further, how are the works metaphorically “continuously producing darkness”, extending beyond mere absence of light?

Ahmet: Yes, the lack of light in the exhibition has a purely metaphorical meaning. The exhibition traces the emotions stemming from being destitute of light (in its various meanings and connotations) for a long period of time and explores the forms this emotional state can take.

The exhibition took shape in the last two-three years, parallel to the many oddities caused by the **pandemic**, in a time when we were imprisoned in our homes, in a **Middle Eastern** country where political and economic pressure was increasing. The works were produced by a person who had a dozen existential anxieties in the middle of his life, trying to survive only by producing **visual art** and constantly worrying about the future. There is nothing bright in any of the situations listed here; on the other hand, it seems that this darkness will continue to multiply and reproduce itself for a while due to the repressive climate and ipse-dixitism. I can briefly say that the period in which I prepared for the show has infused the works and the exhibition in general.



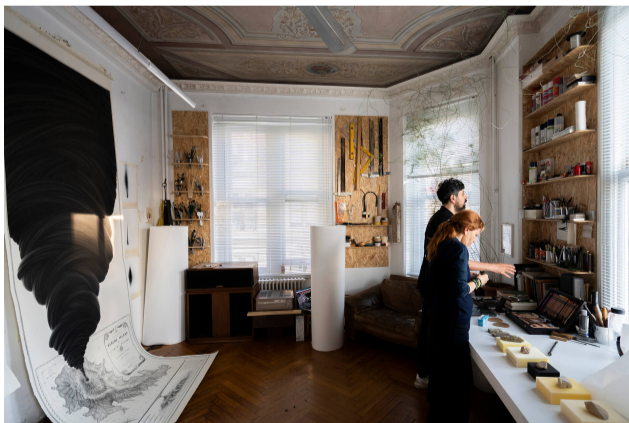
From faraway and always, 2020-2022, Oil paint, linseed oil and crayon on paper
Image: Courtesy of Gallery Arter

Rahul: How did you go about researching the invisible forces for your practice, like the subterranean activities, tectonic movements, and buried memories?

Ahmet: Since my childhood, I was interested in what is underground and beyond the atmosphere in both spiritual and scientific senses. When I look back, I can see the traces of this curiosity in my other works as well.

The reason why we see the forces of nature and invisible energies intensely in this exhibition is the repression we are subjected to and the emotions that the oppressing atmosphere creates. Here, I use the expression ‘subjected to’ on purpose: Sometimes the things that happen or that we are subjected to create intense emotions; and sometimes this emotion is so strong that we can only describe it by comparing it to things that are much larger than us in scale and over which we have no control: a broken fault, an exploding volcano, a hurricane’s whirlwind, a solar eclipse, or a meteorite falling onto the earth. Great phenomena for which we have no choice but to stand still, watch, and surrender.

I think that if the emotions created by the things, we are subjected to had visual forms, they would be similar to the works I produced. I think the expression “like a rabbit caught in the headlights” sums up our confused and needy state well.



Selen Ansen and Ahmet Doğu Ipek at the artist's studio, Istanbul, 2022
Image: Courtesy of Gallery Arter

Rahul: You have attempted to convey complex ideas of entropy and concepts of time and death. How do these micro and macro ideas layer the interpretations? How do you envisage the viewers responding to the works?

Ahmet: I guess that every person has a period when they face the concept of time, disintegration and death. Mine coincided with the pandemic when we heard the word *death* often, and our mortality was constantly reminded to us. Did I mention that I am close to middle age? Haha...

Looking at time, death and entropy not as philosophical matters but as a matter of daily reality has allowed me to better understand and deal with these complex and multi-layered concepts. If you start to see the notions that frighten you deeply, such as running out of time, mortality, as the laws of thermodynamics, the feared thing can suddenly turn into a refreshing feeling. I think death is the most democratic thing in the universe, it happens to everyone and everything. To your favourite mug, to rocks, to my mother, to the world, sun and universe itself... The lamp that illuminates my small studio also gets its share from

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I don't know how much these concepts, which guided me while preparing the exhibition, were obvious or legible to the audience. I have actually never tried to control or direct the audience. The exhibition does not have a single statement, so I would like it to re-produce new meanings with each and every visitor and to be read differently each and every time someone re-visits it. Like when you look to the coffee cup for fortune telling...




Ahmet Doğu Ipek in his studio, Istanbul, 2022

Image: Courtesy of Gallery Arter

Rahul: How have the experiences of the curator, Selen Ansen, in diverse disciplines like literature, cinema, and philosophy inform the exhibition?

Ahmet: Selen Ansen may be the best thing that has ever happened to me about this exhibition. Rather than taking the role of a **curator** in the classical sense, she accompanied me throughout the process, helped me get up whenever I fell and fed me a lot with the resources she provided. It would not be wrong to say that Selen's rich knowledge, high intuition and interdisciplinary experience were the reasons I dared to work with such multi-layered concepts and different techniques. I will revisit the concept of dualities again, but my being too eastern and Selen's being extremely western is one of the contrasts that form the backbone of this exhibition as well. I'd like to express my gratitude to Selen Ansen and Arter again.

 **arteristanbul**
Ah! Kosmos, "Zephyr I", 2021

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Rahul is responsible for curating the Art section. He has been a Consulting Editor with Arts Illustrated and has written for various publications like Mint-Lounge and Vogue. Before retiring from mainstream corporate roles, he led an art venture for NDTV and was also involved in its television...

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