

# GRIMSHAW

## Press Release

Grimshaw's major new art museum in Istanbul opens its doors to world

**Monday 16 September 2019**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

The new Arter contemporary art museum in Istanbul, designed by Grimshaw, has opened its doors to the public. A subsidiary of Turkey's philanthropic Vehbi Koç Foundation, Arter is a vibrant cultural hub that brings together artists and audiences to celebrate contemporary art in all its forms and disciplines. Conceived as a dynamic multi-layered, interdisciplinary public building for showcasing Arter's collection of artistic works, it offers a rich cultural programme, enhancing, stimulating and challenging audiences' experience and impressions. Arter provides an important contribution to Turkey's cultural life, enriched by the opportunities the building and its diverse programme creates.

Following selection to deliver their competition-winning project for Arter, Grimshaw led a multi-disciplinary team in addressing the scale, complexity and aspiration of the design and build process, including Istanbul's Turgut Alton Architects and other local consultants, specialists and contractors.

In articulating Vehbi Koç's vision for social responsibility, Grimshaw's design for Arter hinges around spaces designed to promote access for everyone, both within and outside of the museum. Derived from concepts of transparency and fluidity, inspiring and adaptive public spaces are at its heart, with carefully positioned large picture windows used as a way of opening the building to the street connecting the gallery to the city. This connectivity provides continuous links between Istanbul, the museum and its art.

A triple height entrance gallery forges a visual and physical public route through the centre of the museum, connecting Dolapdere street with the park to the rear, making the building effectively face both ways, accessible and welcoming to all. This 'internal street' is the main organising element of the building, drawing people in and giving a focus for physical and intellectual interaction.

Once inside, the new building offers a wide range of spaces that are interlinked and interwoven, with opportunities to create new synergies between art forms in innovative and immersive ways. A series of interconnected exhibition and performance spaces promote interplay and fluidity between visual arts, performance and multimedia, to stimulate, inspire and delight.

The versatility of the museum transforms Arter into a truly multi-disciplinary arts complex, with the inclusion of two performance halls accommodating programmes of film and performing arts, as well as conferences and panel discussions. The Sevgi Gönül Auditorium's telescopic seating system gives a capacity of 168, while the 'blackbox' Karbon theatre has a flexible seating structure for up to 332, as well as state-of-the-art lighting, sound and technical capabilities. Arter's library offers visitors the opportunity for further research, while retail and catering facilities provide relief and relaxation.

The building's galleries range in scale and volume, with interlocking double height spaces offering a multitude of flexible configurations and capacities for presenting diverse artistic programmes. Views and connectivity between exhibition areas provide natural wayfinding and orientation. Learning spaces overlook each of the main galleries, allowing discovery and interpretation programmes to remain connected to the exhibitions. These spaces straddle the double height galleries to reach the outer edge of the building and define the punctuated picture windows that give expression to the façade.

The main volume of the building that houses the exhibition galleries is articulated externally through subtle chamfering of the façade, adding plasticity to the blank facades typical of gallery building typology. 3D convex and concave rhomboid-shaped panels create a dramatic and inviting envelope across the building's exterior, and reflect the sun as it moves across the museum throughout the day. The rich palette of changing light and shadow animates the building in an exciting and dynamic way, providing an engaging and contemporary reinterpretation of Istanbul's historic mosaic facade.

A layered approach to form and detail roots the building firmly in the traditions of the city, while capturing the newfound confidence of the surrounding Dolapdere district. Grimshaw's design explores and reflects Istanbul's complex historical narrative, creating a must-visit destination and landmark at the heart of the new cultural district.

Kirsten Lees, Managing Partner of Grimshaw's London studio, said:

"The Foundation's complex and sophisticated vision for a major arts destination in Istanbul was a thrilling challenge. We worked hard to create a museum that will intrigue, invite

exploration and provide multi-layered opportunities for everyone to discover, enjoy and deepen their engagement with the arts.”

Melih Fereli, Founding Director of Arter said:

“We are absolutely delighted with the fact that Grimshaw have taken our entire team on board during the lengthy design process, which culminated in the creation of a building that provides us with a range of spaces that are welcoming, sophisticated and highly flexible, while being equipped with state-of-the-art technology. All this meets the very focus of our mission of bringing together artists and audiences through celebration of today’s art in all its forms and disciplines. Arter strives to be a sustainable, vibrant cultural hub, making its broad range of programmes accessible for everyone discover their own creativities through an enjoyable engagement with a variety of artistic disciplines. We are deeply grateful to Grimshaw.”

Arter opened to the public on Friday 13 September, with seven inaugural exhibitions.

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#### **Notes to Editors:**

For further information please contact Matthew Horne, Communications Coordinator ([matthew.horne@grimshaw.global](mailto:matthew.horne@grimshaw.global) / +44 20 7291 4119)

#### **Images:**

High resolution images are available to download via <https://we.tl/t-gGuu9M2NDW>  
(Please credit Arter and photographer Cemal Emdem)

#### **About Grimshaw**

Grimshaw was founded by Sir Nicholas Grimshaw in 1980. The practice operates worldwide with offices in London, Paris, New York, Los Angeles, Dubai, Kuala Lumpur, Melbourne and Sydney, employing over 650 staff.

The practice’s international portfolio covers all major sectors and has been honoured with over 200 awards for its commitment to excellence and innovation. Grimshaw’s expertise in the arts sector includes the University of Bangor Arts and Innovation Centre ‘Pontio’ in Bangor, UK, the Experimental Media and Performing Arts Center (EMPAC) at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in Troy, NY, USA, Queens Museum in New York, NY, USA, the Phillip and Patricia Frost Museum of Science in Miami, FL, USA, The Cutty Sark Conservation Project in Greenwich, UK, and Caixa Galicia Art Foundation in La Coruña, Spain

In 2019, Founder Sir Nicholas Grimshaw was awarded the Royal Gold Medal for Architecture by the Royal Institute of British Architects.

[www.grimshaw.global](http://www.grimshaw.global)

### **About Arter**

Opened in 2010 as a subsidiary of the Vehbi Koç Foundation, Arter has moved to its new building in 2019, which marks the 50th anniversary of the Foundation. Ready to reopen its doors in Istanbul's Dolapdere district on 13 September, Arter will strive to be a sustainable, vibrant cultural hub, making its broad range of programmes accessible to everyone.

From 2010 to 2018, at its building on Istiklal Street, Istanbul's main pedestrian artery for culture and arts, Arter presented 35 solo and group exhibitions to date with accompanying publications, talks, performances and workshops; and provided support for the production of 183 artworks in the framework of its programme. At its new building, Arter will present exhibitions from but not limited to its collection as well as performances and events across disciplines, expanding the range of its programmes.

[www.arter.org.tr](http://www.arter.org.tr)

### **About Vehbi Koç Foundation**

Vehbi Koç Foundation, which is one of the first charitable foundations of the Turkish Republic, was established on 17 January 1969 by Vehbi Koç with the aim to revitalise the custom of foundation dating far back, yet sunk into oblivion in Turkey. The Foundation started to carry out extensive activities in the field of education, health and culture, which are among the basic requirements of life for a modern and developing Turkey and has been a model for philanthropists since its establishment. It founded many premises like schools, dormitories, libraries and clinics, and transferred those to the related public institutions. It paved the way by first establishing educational, health and cultural institutions, and then by managing them on a non-profit basis. In order to create equal opportunities, it provided scholarships to thousands of talented youngsters, who have limited financial means.

Through the institutions managed by the Foundation in the field of education, health and culture, with the projects it supports and the regular programmes it carries out, Vehbi Koç Foundation aims to contribute to the rapid development of Turkey and to serve the country by setting an example for "the best" in all of its activities and via sustainable and reproducible models.

<http://www.vkv.org.tr>