

# 4,3,2,1, ZERO. COUNTDOWN TO THE FUTURE BEGINS.

**“The ZERO Movement” is at the S.U. Sakıp Sabancı Museum with its most groundbreaking artworks...**

With the generous support of **Akbank Sanat, S.U. Sakıp Sabancı Museum** (SSM) is hosting the innovative and dynamic spirit of ZERO, the biggest art network of the 20th century.

On view through September 2, 2015, the **“Zero. Countdown to the Future”** exhibition focuses on the ZERO movement, which was born in 1957 in Düsseldorf as a response to the stagnant and negative atmosphere at the heels of World War II, taking its name from the countdown until the launch of a rocket. The exhibition brings together over a hundred works in different materials and techniques by the founders of ZERO, Heinz Mack, Otto Piene and Günther Uecker, along with works by notable artists Yves Klein, Piero Manzoni and Lucio Fontana, who served as the spiritual forefathers of the movement. “ZERO. Countdown to the Future” is shaped by the core concepts that largely informed the movement, such as *Light, Time, Space, Color* and *Movement*, and is curated by the Founding Director of the ZERO Foundation, Mattijs Visser.

**Dr. Nazan Ölçer, Director of the S.U. Sakıp Sabancı Museum**, spoke at the Press Conference, saying, “With our mission of serving as a university institution, we assume an important role in shedding “light” on art in Turkey. We take great care in ensuring our contemporary art exhibitions organized around the Istanbul Biennial period are parallel to the zeitgeist of the contemporary art world. The story of holding the “ZERO. Countdown to the Future” exhibition at SSM started with a meeting with Heinz Mack, one of the founders of this major art and thought movement, during the 2014 Architecture Biennial in Venice. My friendship with Heinz Mack has led to art lovers in Turkey becoming acquainted with ZERO, the most important avant-garde movement of the mid-20th century. ZERO carried us to post-war Germany, specifically Düsseldorf,

which became a leading art centre in the 1950s. There we were reminded of how a group of young artists whose visions sparked by an idea that seemed utopian had changed the European art milieu in the course of a decade. ZERO was born in Germany, which was disastrous for all of Europe, left the profoundest marks on Germany.

Günther Uecker, a third artist who had a similar vision, joined Piene and Mack in their vision to “abandon pessimism and start from zero”, and these three founders, together with three major artists, Yves Klein, Lucio Fontana and Piero Manzoni, whom they regarded as their “forerunners”, they soon drew many artists from almost every corner of Europe and some from places as far away as Japan. When founder Heinz Mack announced the end of ZERO at the last exhibition in 1967, the ZERO concept had long since stamped its mark on a period of 20th century European contemporary art, despite a life span of just ten years.

ZERO was a product of its time. In this period when new technologies were flourishing, the space race was at its height and reaching the moon was no longer a dream, art was adapting to these dizzying developments. ZERO challenged the static approach of traditional art, imprisoned in canvas and frame taking a completely new path that was constantly in flux and invited viewers to communicate, and allowing modern technologies to find an extensive place in the concepts of modern art. But the focal point was always light. Instilling the world with hope and the philosophy of building a bright future are reasons why ZERO still maintains its relevance today. More freedom, transparency, a more humane future, the quest for peace and hope... Today, more than fifty years on, when evaluating these artists who carved out for themselves a role in art that was quite unlike anything so far, and the brief life of the ZERO movement, we respect all the hope they conveyed, the optimism they spread and their almost child-like enthusiasm.

Our exhibition was made possible with the curatorship of Mattijs Visser, Founding Director of the ZERO Foundation. His vast knowledge and experience introduced us to different collections. I can hardly thank him enough for his invaluable knowledge and advice. We are honoured that this exhibition is taking place under the protective wings of Akbank Sanat, an institution that is such a friend of the arts. For their invaluable support throughout the years on our museum's exhibition projects, I extend my profound thanks first of all to Suzan Sabancı Dinçer, Chairman and Executive Member of the Board of Directors of Akbank; to Hayri Çulhacı, Vice-President and Executive Member of the Board of Directors of Akbank; to

Hakan Binbařgil, General Manager of Akbank; and our esteemed friend Murat Gll, Senior Vice-President of Corporate Communications. I extend my congratulations to the museum's

Exhibitions Manager Hma Arslaner, who has organized successive stages of this multi-faceted and challenging project with outstanding professionalism, assisted by young experts on the museum staff. I invite all art enthusiasts to discover this multi-faceted movement and hope that, as the ZERO founders said, that ZERO is good for us all."

**Akbank Chairman and Executive Board Member Suzan Sabancı Dinçer** stated at the opening of the exhibition: "Akbank has supported and promoted cultural and artistic development in Turkey since our establishment, and we consider them as one of our leading responsibilities.

Once again, Akbank Sanat and Sakıp Sabancı Museum have worked together to create a valuable, successful and quality project. ZERO is one of the most influential and important avant-garde artistic visions that promotes innovation, dynamism, and creativity, thus harmonizing with Akbank's basic values. The primary color of ZERO is white (as "Ak" in Akbank refers to). Namely and significantly, this makes a perfect match with Akbank.

Gradually, Istanbul is taking its place among the most culturally enlivened cities in the world, and Akbank are delighted to be able to promote our country as such. We strive to contribute our country's cultural life by supporting and leading valuable projects, like ZERO."

**Akbank CEO Hakan Binbařgil** stated that they were glad to support the first extensive ZERO exhibition in Turkey: "Artistic events make an important part of our corporate social responsibility activities. It is an important tradition for Akbank to introduce worldwide artists and art movements to Turkish art lovers. We are pleased to present ZERO, one of the most influent art movements of the 20th Century, in cooperation with Akbank Sanat, and Sakıp Sabancı Museum.

The ZERO movement had set itself a different position in artistic universe by its courage to try the untried, and I hope that it will be inspiring for our young generations to be creative and to get them to recognise different points of view. We should keep in mind that culture and art are the most important legacies to our next generations, and Akbank will maintain our activities in cultural and artistic fields to enrich our country by our commitment to create sustainable values".

**Mattijs Visser, the curator of the exhibition and the Founding Director of the ZERO Foundation** said, “Art is a vehicle that brings artists and their ideas together with viewers of art; forging a bond between them that extends beyond boundaries and times. Art works are

travelers constantly wandering in time, and every generation takes a new stance towards them. People in Europe after the war, including artists of course, were obliged to come to terms with their existential experiences during the Second World War. In particular the young artists of the period set about creating opportunities for exchanging ideas and views. ZERO was born in such an environment. We are proud that this 'ZERO.

Countdown to the Future' exhibition at the S.U. Sakıp Sabancı Museum will sustain the principle of transcending and eliminating artistic and geographic borders, which lies at the heart of this movement, and support dialogue between different cultures.”

The exhibition instills the S.U. Sakıp Sabancı Museum galleries with the energy of ZERO and includes a tour of the exhibition with curator Mattijs Visser on September 3, 2015, along with numerous symposia, conferences, film screenings, children's workshops and an audio guide, and an extensive exhibition catalogue. The ZERO exhibition is open to visit through September 2, 2015 – January 10, 2016 at S.U. Sakıp Sabancı Museum. A 2014 documentary about the ZERO movement will also be screened throughout the exhibition at SSM, meeting art enthusiasts in the museum's conference hall with Turkish subtitles.