

BRUCE SILVERSTEIN

Ahmet Ertuğ

Edifice as Artifact

July 14 – September 17, 2022

Opening Reception with the Artist: July 14, 5-7pm

Bruce Silverstein Gallery is pleased to present *Edifice as Artifact*, an exhibition focusing on the monumental, large-scale color photographs of Turkish artist Ahmet Ertuğ. A trained architect and a lifelong photographer of architectural heritage, Ertuğ has identified and masterfully documented the interiors of civilization's most exemplary structures since he began in the early 1970s. From Unesco World Heritage Sites, vaulting places of worship, and opulent palazzos, to staid university libraries, magnificent theaters, and classically styled banks, Ertuğ's formalist photographs have explored the role of architectural spaces within all segments of society and presented them as stand-alone works of art.

For this exhibition, Ertuğ reflects upon images produced over the last 50 years in his homeland, Istanbul, Turkey, exhibiting dramatic large-scale color photographs taken within some of the world's most historical and aesthetically significant structures: the Hagia Sophia, the Topkapı Palace, and the Selimiye Mosque in Edirne. Using large-format cameras, extended exposure techniques, and his trained eye for architecture, Ertuğ captures each venue's enormity with infinite detail. Each image is composed of rich tonalities that echo the characteristics of the Old World aesthetic, which the artist attributes to his Byzantine and Ottoman heritage, resulting in photographs that immediately transfix and transport the viewer to another place and moment in time.

Born in Ankara in 1949, Ertuğ first began his career as an architect, after studying architecture at the Architectural Association School of Architecture in London, from 1969 to 1974. However, a passion for Japanese culture and photography set Ertuğ on a fortuitous path after graduation. While beginning his photographic journey, Ertuğ exhibited large-scale black and white images of Iranian architecture. Japanese film director and photographer Banri Namikawa saw the show and became friendly with Ertuğ, which led him to recommend Ertuğ for a fellowship with The Japan Foundation.

Ertuğ was awarded the fellowship with The Japan Foundation in 1978 and spent the next year performing research on the traditional architecture of Japan, traveling extensively throughout the country, photographing ancient temples, Zen gardens, and traditional festivals. While there, Ertuğ was greatly influenced by legendary photographer and publisher Yukio Futagawa. Futagawa's large-format

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books made a lasting impression on Ertuğ, inspiring him to publish his own architecture books and begin working exclusively with large-format cameras.

After his year in Japan, Ertuğ returned to Istanbul and became a consultant for the Ministry of Culture and Tourism. His knowledge of the historical quarters of the city inspired him to photograph the architecture and art of the Byzantine, Ottoman, and Roman Empires.

The artist began with bodies of work capturing famous monuments in İstanbul, such as the Hagia Sophia, edifices built by master architect Sinan, and Topkapı Palace, featured in this exhibition. Inspired by these projects and blending his formal education and experiences in Asia, Ertuğ decided to pursue photography and publishing full-time. The artist founded his publishing house in the 1980s and published thirty art books on Byzantine, Ottoman, Hellenistic-Roman, and Asian art.

Ertuğ has had many solo exhibitions on the international stage, including one with the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization, at Couvent des Cordelier and La Conciergerie in Paris, as well as the Ephesos Museum in the Kunst Historisches Museum Wien in Vienna. In addition,

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photographs of Buddhist sculptures were exhibited at Musée Guimet and published in an award-winning book in 2004.

Invited by the director of the Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg, Ertuğ photographed the building and published a book on the institution's 250th anniversary. His exhibitions on Byzantine art in America include *Vaults of Heaven: Visions of Byzantium*, which was first shown in the Spring of 2006 at the World Monuments Fund Gallery in New York. The exhibition traveled to the Kelsey Museum of Archaeology from 2010 through 2011, the Penn Museum at the University of Pennsylvania in 2012, the University of Michigan, and Fairfield University's Bellarmine Museum of Art in 2016. He also had an exhibition of Leonardo da Vinci's *Last Supper* in New York at the Union League Club in 2019 and at the New Canaan Library in Connecticut in 2020.

Ertuğ currently lives and works in Istanbul.

