

The Turkish Coalition of America and Turkish Heritage Organization Present

AFRICAN AMERICAN- TURKISH CONNECTIONS THROUGH THE ARTS

CATALOG

February 28, 2018

TURKISH COALITION OF AMERICA

The Turkish Coalition of America (TCA) is a 501(c)(3) public charitable organization based in Washington, D.C. dedicated to fostering friendship, understanding, and cooperation between the United States and Turkey and educating the public about issues important to Turkey and Turkish Americans.

Since its foundation in 2007, TCA has focused on reaching out to American minorities and ethnic communities in an effort to build mutual understanding between cultures and build bridges between the Turkish American community and other communities in America. Several programs have been developed by TCA to expand relations with the African American community, including providing scholarships to African American college students to study for a semester in Turkey and increasing faculty exchanges between Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) and Turkish universities.

TURKISH HERITAGE ORGANIZATION

The Turkish Heritage Organization is a young, independent, nonpartisan, nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization that promotes discussion and dialogue around Turkey's role in the international community and issues of importance in the U.S.-Turkey bilateral relationship.

Founded by a group of Turkish Americans with backgrounds in community leadership and run by a staff with demonstrated interest in and commitment to U.S.-Turkey relations, THO strongly believes that any successful bilateral relationship rests on cooperation and constructive discussion between the people of both countries. Without taking an institutional position on political issues, THO and its Advisory Board of global scholars and practitioners strive to foster a deep and comprehensive dialogue that is independent of any political orientation to strengthen the relationship between Turkey and the U.S., as well as the larger international community.



AHMET ERTEGUN

(1923-2006)

As co-founder of Atlantic Records, Ahmet Ertegun – a Turkish-American who was the son of the Republic of Turkey’s first ambassador to the U.S. – dedicated much of his career to promoting African American musicians and their work while also fighting for racial equality.

Avid acolytes of Washington, D.C.’s jazz scene during the ‘30s and ‘40s and keenly aware of the injustices of racial segregation, Ahmet and his brother Nesuhi organized the first integrated jazz concert in D.C. at the Jewish Community

Center. They continued to hold integrated concerts at the Turkish Ambassador’s residence in D.C., pushing back at the conventions of segregation and welcoming African Americans through the front door.

As both a writer and producer of music at the helm of Atlantic Records, Ertegun helped develop the careers of some of the U.S.’ most celebrated African American musicians, including Aretha Franklin, Ray Charles, and Otis Redding.

Speaking to *Slate Magazine* about how he would like his legacy to be remembered, Ertegun said, “I’d be happy if people said that I did a little bit to raise the dignity and recognition of the greatness of African American music.”



Ahmet Ertegun and Esther Phillips



Otis Redding, Ahmet Ertegun, and King Curtis



Ray Charles and Ahmet Ertegun



Ahmet Ertegun with the Modern Jazz Quartet



Solomon Burke and Ahmet Ertegun



Nesuhi and Ahmet Ertegun



Aretha Franklin and Ahmet Ertegun



James Baldwin in Istanbul. Photo by Sedat Pakay.

JAMES BALDWIN

(1924-1987)

Born in 1924 in Harlem, New York City, James Baldwin was a novelist, essayist, and playwright who was one of America's most influential writers and Civil Rights intellectuals.

Baldwin spent much of his life abroad, including extended stays in Turkey, primarily between 1961 and 1971. Baldwin's claim that Turkey "saved my life" referred to the freedom he felt in Istanbul from racial and sexual oppression, the freedom that transformed him both as a gay Black writer and as a Civil Rights activist.

Speaking in *James Baldwin: From Another Place* (1970) – a short film by Sedat Pakay chronicling three days in Baldwin's life in Istanbul – the author says that "one sees [the United States] better from a distance...from another place, from another country."

He first arrived in Turkey in 1961, worse for the wear in both body and spirit, struggling with the book that would become *Another Country* (1962). In Istanbul, surrounded by the welcome and generosity of his friends, Baldwin was able to quickly finish this novel. During the time he spent in Turkey, he worked on many of his later books, including *No Name in the Street* (1972), and he also collaborated with Turkish artists, including by helping stage an adaptation of

John Herbert's *Fortune and Men's Eyes* for a Turkish audience.

To this day, Baldwin's legacy remains strong in Turkey, just as Turkey left a strong impression on Baldwin's later work and his relationship to the U.S.' reckoning with race and sexuality in the latter half of the 20th century.



James Baldwin in Istanbul. Photo by Sedat Pakay.



HULIS MAVRUK

Hulis Mavruk is a painter who was born in southern Turkey. He specializes in painting Black individuals and their cultures. Hulis Mavruk started professional painting at the tender age of six. His works have received acclaim from several quarters, including art critics. Although he has made a breakthrough in the mainstream arts industry, he managed to do so without any formal arts education to precede his professional career. By simply teaching himself and learning by observation, he has become a respectable painter whose artwork is exhibited in different locations across the globe. At one point

in his career, Mavruk owned a gallery in Incirlik Air Force Base in Turkey, close to the Mediterranean Sea. Because of the location and the people he often interacted with, his gallery mainly had paintings of American officers. While there, Mavruk made contact with several Black airmen and service officers, making portraits of them. And that's how he got inspired to paint Black individuals.

In 1972, he moved to the United States, where he began making paintings of mainly African Americans, their cultures, and the subjects that define them. His main goal was to create images that would inspire African Americans to be proud of their African heritage and follow in the footsteps of their leaders. Mavruk's paintings also captured



Blessing with King, 2016



Aiding a Comrade, 1996



Innocence, 2013

renowned African American figures such as Malcolm X, Martin Luther King Jr., African American women, Buffalo Soldiers, and a host of other subjects. His insistence on depicting Black individuals in his paintings is also evident even when he's painting Bible scenes. Mavruk currently runs the H&M Gallery, which he founded in 1973 and is based in New York City.



Last Supper, 1987



Friendship, 2015



First Move, 2015



Great Thinkers, 1986



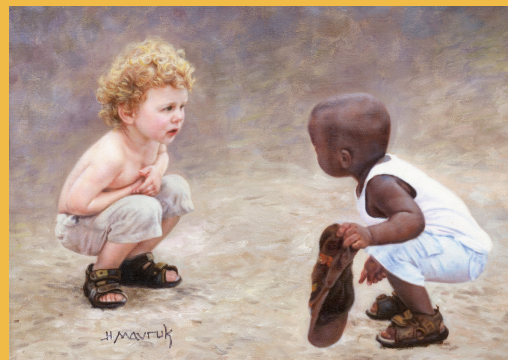
Baptism, 1986



35 Great Ladies, 1989



Cotton Picking, 1887



Love Reflects, 2017



March to Freedom, 2016

TURKISH
COALITION *of*
AMERICA

www.tc-america.org



TURKISH
HERITAGE
ORGANIZATION

www.turkheritage.org



James Baldwin

The Price of the Ticket

Photos by Sedat Pakay of James Baldwin in Istanbul reprinted with the permission of the James Baldwin Project (jamesbaldwinproject.org), which produced the feature-length documentary, *James Baldwin: The Price of the Ticket*.