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Vaults of Heaven Press Release

Fairfield University Art Museum

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Vaults of Heaven: Visions of Byzantium

April 15 – September 16, 2016



The splendor of Byzantine sacred art, preserved in early Christian churches in both Constantinople, the capital of the Byzantine Empire, and the Cappadocia region of Turkey, is the subject of this photography exhibition opening April 15, 2016, at the Bellarmine Museum of Art, Fairfield University.

Vaults of Heaven: Visions of Byzantium features 8 large-scale works by innovative, acclaimed Turkish photographer Ahmet Ertug. The exhibition documents the interiors of three churches—the Karankik Kilise (Dark Church), the New Church of Tokali (Buckle Church), and the Meryem Ana Kilisesi (Church of the Mother of God)—each more than 900 years old. The photographs include images of the dramatic church interiors and close-up views of elaborate wall paintings depicting scenes from the life of Christ and images of saints. Ertug's descriptive, detailed photographs capture the evocative mystery and grandeur of these ancient structures, all designated UNESCO World Heritage sites.

Ahmet Ertug is a 1974 graduate of the Architectural Association School of Architecture in London, who practiced architecture in England, Iran, and Turkey. His commitment to photography started with a year-long fellowship to study architecture in Japan, where he traveled extensively and photographed ancient temples, Zen gardens, and festivals.

Returning to his native country Ertug came to a realization: "the foundation of creativity is the profound knowledge of one's heritage." He has photographed much of Istanbul's impressive Byzantine, Ottoman, and Roman remains, using a large-format camera that has enabled him to capture their full splendor. Over the past three decades he has produced 25 acclaimed books of his photographs.

Ertug's work has been exhibited around the world. A permanent exhibition of his photographs is on display in Hagia Sophia in Istanbul.