



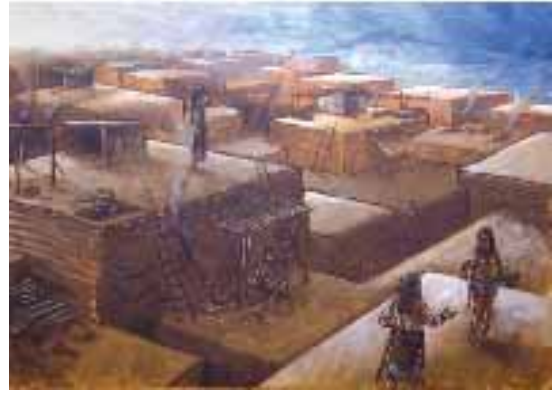
## SkyLife

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### Çatalhöyük

*Another time, another life*

*Continuously inhabited for 1400 years between 7400 and 6000 B.C., Çatalhöyük, while illuminating the history of mankind, its art and way of life, also raises numerous questions.*



Forget everything you know about civilization: places, tools, relationships, diseases, what you eat and drink, your beliefs... In fact, put aside everything you have ever learned about the history of civilization. For Çatalhöyük is going to open up entirely different doors for you. In the history here, art flows not alongside life but right through it. There is no hierarchy, no war, no male-female strife. Use your imagination to understand this civilization of thousands of years ago.

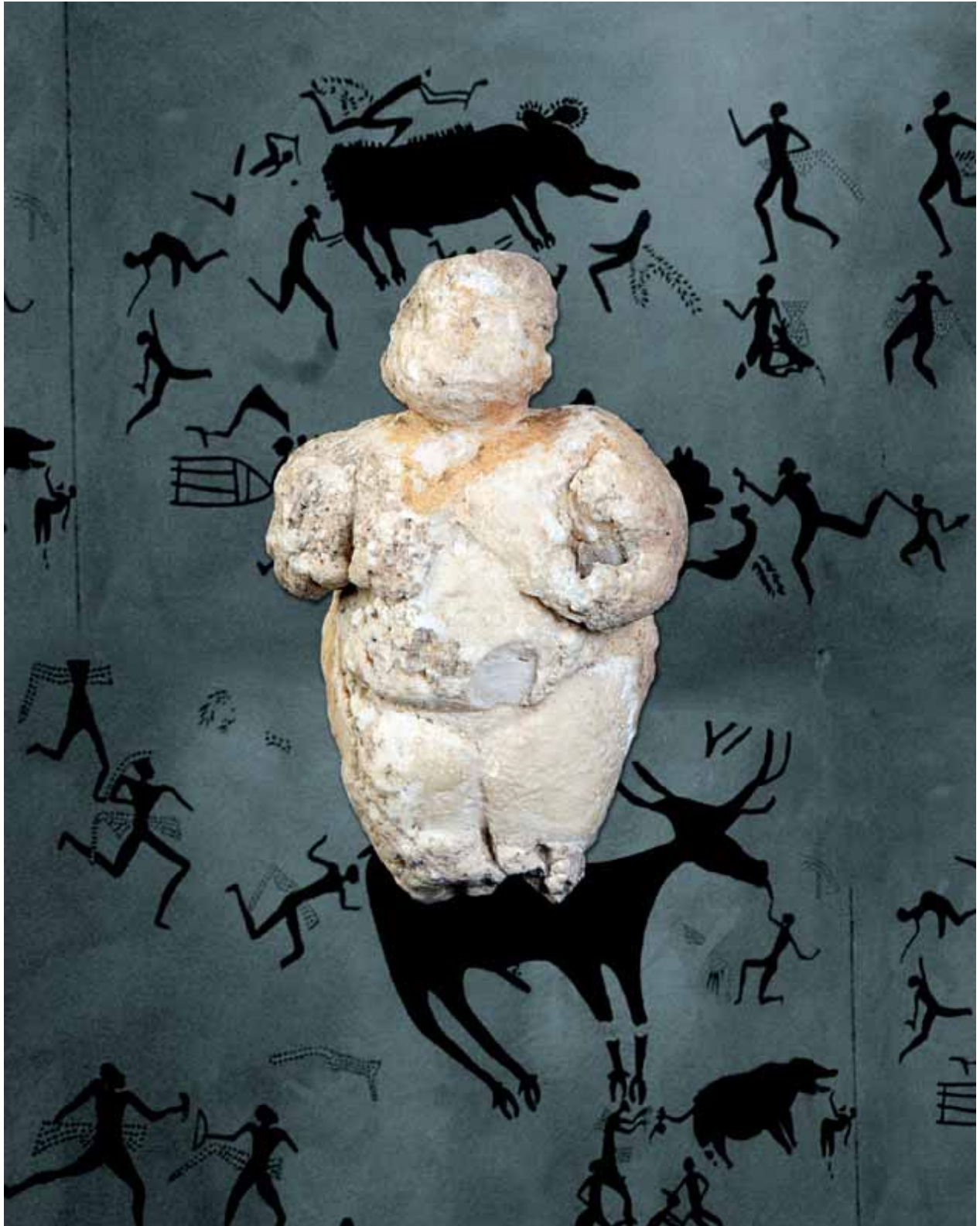
Or, better yet, visit the 'Çatalhöyük From Earth to Eternity' exhibition at the Yapı Kredi Vedat Nedim Tör Museum, which promises new information about mankind that will strain the limits of your intellect and give you a chance to test once again your perceptions of time and civilization. Set your clocks to Çatalhöyük time, to nine thousand years—or 376 generations—ago, and prepare to be floored.

#### NO HIERARCHY, MEN AND WOMEN EQUAL

They are our first relatives, of the same species, that is. History has recorded their time as the Neolithic period, and one of the earliest centers of agriculture. They lived for 1400 years and left behind a höyük or mound 21 meters high on a 13.5-hectare area at Çatalhöyük, located near Çumra township in Konya province on today's map. We met them through the excavations that are being carried out on that mound. The finds unearthed in the excavations made by English archaeologist James Mellaart at the beginning of the 1960s amazed both him and the world. History began to be read in a different way.

At Çatalhöyük there was no hierarchy, for there are no spaces here where administrative decisions could have been taken, or areas where such decisions could have been announced to the people, or indeed any streets to bring them to such places. There are no gods but rather depictions of 'fat women' with large bodies symbolizing power and fertility, which further cemented the belief that a matriarchal era was experienced here. But as the excavations progressed minds were confounded.

Men lived longer than women and were taller. But there are no signs of a ruling class that ate more or better than the others. Compared to men, women had more tooth decay, but their teeth are worn down in the same way, and the time men and women spent in the house and the tasks they performed were almost exactly the same: they made tools, ground wheat, kneaded bread, and prepared to lead a family. More than an age of matriarchy, these findings heralded the existence of equality between the sexes. Among the skulls that were passed down ceremonially from generation to generation, or, more precisely, from house to house, there are those of both men and women, indicating that both sexes could be 'head' of their family or line.



**Above:** Depiction of the ancient Anatolian 'Mother Goddess'.



### EVERY HOUSE A MINIATURE WORLD

Houses at Çatalhöyük were attached to each other and there were no streets at all, or very few. The 'life' of a house was at most 80 years, at the end of which it was abandoned and a new house built over it. The upper portion of the dried brick walls of the old house would be torn down and the lower portion carefully filled in with dirt. The new walls would then rise over the old ones and a new house emerge. The house, which was entered from the top by a staircase, had two rooms. The large, well-lit room where the hearth was located was used to cook food, weave baskets and produce tools and pottery. This room also contained figurines, to whose spirits wishes were made.

Under the ground next to the hearth was a store of obsidian (natural volcanic glass). This hard material, which has been proved to have been brought from Cappadocia, was used for making tools. Arrowheads were usually of obsidian, while the tips of the tools used in basket weaving were made of animal bone. There was also a storage space next to the hearth of the house, in which some five to ten people are thought to have lived. Dried meat, peas, tiny turnip seeds, lentils, wheat, barley and nuts were preserved in apertures made in the dried bricks. The higher and cleaner areas inside the main room were the graves. With all probability the area directly above them was used for sleeping, veneration of the dead giving rise to the belief in a gentle transition between life and death. The people believed that even if they had buried the bodies, the dead were still there with them in their daily life.

### THE STORY TOLD IN WALL PAINTINGS

Large stone mortars and pestles, stone vessels, and milling and grinding stones were the objects used in the preparation of food. Vessels with thick sides made of mud mixed with vegetable matter were also used for cooking food. Balls of clay heated red-hot over a fire were used for the cooking process, while roasting was done by tossing the grains similarly in a basket with red-hot balls.

But what really amazes a visitor at Çatalhöyük is the art work that was created in the main room, which continues to inspire fashion and the design of accessories even today. Three types of figures are observed: human, animal and those that defy definition. Benches with bull's horns, installations of plaster bull's heads and leopard reliefs accompanied the 'fat woman' figures, which were made of clay, marble or stone. And on the walls, paintings exhibiting a mature power of imagination depicted everyday life, relations with nature and ties with ancestors. Animal and human figures and geometric designs characterize these representational paintings done in red, the characteristic color of art at Çatalhöyük. Human bodies, animal skins and fabrics woven from flax were decorated with stamped designs.

When the first inhabitants arrived at Çatalhöyük they had with them domesticated sheep, goats and dogs. When they went hunting they returned with wild cattle, wild horse, donkey, boar and stag. Horse meat and beef were a sine qua non at their special ceremonies and feasts. What most excites Ian Hodder, who took over the excavations after Mellaart and is leading them today, is a find relating to the leopard figure that is so frequently observed in the paintings—a claw with holes pierced in it for wearing as a necklace or bracelet. Hodder even titled his book about Çatalhöyük 'The Leopard's Tale'.

#### ÇATALHÖYÜK IN ISTANBUL

The approximately 250 neolithic period skeletons found under the floors of the houses indicate that the people who lived at Çatalhöyük, as well as eating meat, lived on a diet of agricultural crops in general, for they had considerable tooth decay. Living in such close quarters also fostered the spread of epidemic diseases, and anemia was inevitable as well. In short, life at Çatalhöyük was not very healthy, as is further evidenced by the high rate of infant mortality. Children were important, and certain figurines that can be regarded as toys were either used for pedagogical purposes or possibly to illustrate the creation myth. More importance was given to choosing graves for very tiny or newborn infants than for adults, and their deaths were observed with even more ceremony.

Between three and eight thousand people lived in each layer at Çatalhöyük, in other words, about 50,000 at the least and 150,000 at the most. And they had their own time and their own concepts. While establishing a bridge between Çatalhöyük and the present, the exhibition, which runs until 20 August at the Vedat Nedim Tör Gallery, also puts paid to any notion that we rule time and the world.

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