

hall in the steel-frame structure of the former Museum of the Twentieth Century, recently taken over by the Belvedere, which focuses on Austrian art, and turned into 21er Haus, a site for contemporary work. Up on top of the cube, a roped party comprising the members of gelatin along with other experienced artist-climbers scrambled about, working on the Styrofoam with hot-wire cutters, boring holes and, little by little, demolishing the massif. Chunks of the stuff came crashing down; flakes whirled around and rained onto the floor. The prize was “negative space”: holes into which wet plaster was cast. Objets trouvés gathered from flea markets were used as handles for extricating the resulting sculptures from the Styrofoam matrix. These movable castoffs of civilization starred as playful grotesques sustained by the synchronicity of the real and the absurd, of satirical force and the courage to do the extraordinary. Cheered on by large and lively crowds of fans, gelatin and company lowered their random sculptures (which, to top it all, looked marvelous) to the ground, where more artist-helpers—some of them “Princesses” in picturesquely tattered wedding gowns—were waiting to receive the works and give them a cursory cleaning off. Boisterous elementary-school children enthusiastically lent a hand.

The expansive production was as perfect as it was chaotic. The thirty-three-member team commandeered the museum space—which boasts one of the richest traditions in Vienna—like there was no tomorrow: as a studio, as a stage, as a music club. Keen music aficionados, gelatin had invited such avant-gardists as Schuyler Maehl (US), Mundi (Iceland), Ágústa Eva Erlendsdóttir (Iceland), and Philipp Quehenberger (Austria) to boost the live performance with their sounds. As the participants in the Happening congregated, on one occasion, in what felt like a live replica of the ancient Laocoön sculpture; as they scattered across the museum’s garden like the peasants in Brueghel’s wedding picture; as a grove of sculptures grew around the Styrofoam quarry, we heard the message: It spoke of the urgent need for an unfiltered experience of artistic processes.

—Brigitte Huck

Nilbar Güreş

GALERIE MARTIN JANDA

Blood trickles from a potted plant into a puddle of water lapping at a blow-dryer. A magician’s hat floats above the dryer’s electrical cord, from which razor blades, revolvers, and a bottle of poison rise into the air. Farther to the right, we see a stage curtain, a folding screen, a dark and ghostly creature in an armchair, cockroaches, a sea horse. All these details have been painted in textile inks with a fine brush on various fabrics that have then been sewn onto a large piece of dark-blue cloth; some are fragments of fabric stitched onto the backdrop. This piece, *Artist’s Home Studio* (all works cited, 2013), illustrates the “life of an artist,” as Güreş told me. The left portion of the work is about death and, more specifically, suicide. The right side pertains to the artist’s perception of herself. The roaches, for example, are symbolic of inner worries that make her restless; the curtain suggests that art is a kind of stage on which artists talk about the worlds of their minds, observed by an audience that includes people, such as curators, who have power over their fate—thus the folding screen behind which the artist tries to hide.

Güreş—who was born in Istanbul in 1977, studied art there and in Vienna, and has lived in New York since 2011—uses the experiences of her own life to shed light on what is usually concealed, to break open rigid traditions, to point out contradictions, and to invest places with new meaning. The artist pursues her concerns in videos, photographs, collages, and, most recently, site-specific installations: For this show, she dressed up a freestanding column in the downstairs exhibition

space. What is otherwise an awkward room divider became part of the artist’s visual universe. The work *Red, Yellow, Black, Brown* also emphasizes the important role fabrics play in her oeuvre: Whether as a support for collage, as scraps used as pictorial or decorative elements, or as props, textiles are always vehicles of meaning. Fabrics veil and reveal, creating and altering identities and stories. On the column, floral patterns and staid styles, belts, and something resembling a ball gown recall different images of women’s roles across eras and cultures.

In *BDSM; Home Made*, Güreş started with a black cloth, from whose dark surface she imagined she saw a pair of bright eyes looming out from the dark surface. She then developed an intense set of images around this eye motif. A high chair and a baby bottle flank the handcuffs and chains at the center of the picture: Sexual fantasies are framed by familial domesticity; everything is transformed when night falls. Another collage, *Picnic im Dunklen* (Picnic in the Dark), presents a nocturnal scene with a woman dressed in a headscarf standing next to a pink mask, a symbol of queer identity. The moon near the upper edge adds a romantic note, contrasting with a television set that illuminates what the artist calls a “spirit bringing small pieces of wood for the fire” so the woman can have her picnic at night—a mystical scene that carries autobiographical associations. After moving to New York, Güreş recalls, she missed the Danube, on whose banks Vienna’s Turkish community picnicked.

Güreş’s videos involve friends and relatives in stylized scenarios. In the video *Kimlik* (Identity), a woman slowly rises from a pile of fabric in the middle of a road and then walks away. The video’s setting is the Kurdish village where the artist’s father grew up, and, as she explains, the work is an appeal to finally end the bloodshed of the Kurdish-Turkish conflict. But it is also a haunting symbol of the invisibility of women in Turkish social life and of their refusal to accept this exclusion. Güreş’s oeuvre attests to how difficult such protest is—to how much anger, anxiety, and loneliness it brings.

—Sabine B. Vogel

Translated from German by Gerrit Jackson.



Nilbar Güreş, *Baş Üstü (Overhead)*, 2010, C-print, 59 x 39 1/4". From the series "TrabZONE," 2010.

BERLIN

Brent Wadden

PERES PROJECTS

Working on a back-strap loom, this young Canadian artist intertwines acrylic yarns with hand-spun wools that he then stitches together and finally mounts on raw canvas. The large-scale works that result are more than simply intriguing: They take to task all kinds of preconceptions about painting. For starters, they brazenly refuse conventional distinctions between so-called “folk art” and “high art” practice. These works flaunt their indebtedness to indigenous traditions of artmaking, particularly those from the coast of Nova Scotia, where Wadden grew up. Initially just as important to him was the heritage of Abstract Expressionism. Remember the description of Jackson Pollock as