previously asked questions of last 10 years damla sari

the kid feigning reluctance in the house

do you want it wrapped as a gift?

at your peril

tell if I see



previously asked questions of last 10 years

ezgi bakçay

Today, contemporary art moves away from being imaginative and textual and investigates ways of approaching reality without putting subjects in the center. This attitude coincides with a period in which new philosophical approaches that put the object forward were established. Antitheses are emerging to the post-Kantian philosophy that establishes the relationship between subject and object, as well as thought and being, on a subject-centered basis. Objects guide philosophy and art as ontological possibilities for reconsidering a reality independent from the human mind not only through their use of values and symbolic meanings but also through their very own existence. As objects gain their autonomies, they build relationships with each other in their reality and tell their own stories. This object-oriented ontology appears determined to dethrone the subject. Damla Sari's exhibition titled Previously Asked Questions of Last 10 Years carries traces of this contemporary thought. Sari's artworks are looking, touching, following, feeling, suffering, sneering, and making jokes. They lead their own lives instead of and despite their owners. They have their own sense of

The "object's gaze" and "object as the viewer" constitutes the backbone of the exhibition. The object becoming the subject that performs a Gaze, and distinguishing between the eye's look and the Gaze is among the main discussions of Lacanian psychoanalysis. The object turns into an image for the subject positioned at a certain point of view, however, the subject remains under the gaze of the object.

The subject has already been seen by the object even before it looks at the object. The objects that Damla Sari use can see, trace, and follow. They are the bodies of the gaze freed from the eye. The artist, as the subject, feels this gaze on her skin. To protect herself from the evil eye, she generates two opposite methods: she hides, covers herself, or strips and eventually places herself right in the center of the eye.

Placed at the center of the exhibition, the installation titled You Tell. I'm Listening is reminiscent of the Hitchcock houses. The lightning and fog that seeps through the cracks of a piece of furniture that witnessed the artist's childhood dominate the space, bringing another layer of meaning to the atmosphere. This isn't just any piece of furniture, it is the first item of the family, it is a showcase. It is an object that has been used not only to show, to display, but also to preserve and hide. The family's flamboyant secret box. After all, aren't all secrets family secrets? One can imagine a child hiding inside, frightened by the lightning flashes in the gaze of this object; the rain is hiding her. In the artwork titled If I See I'll Tell, the child attempts to ingratiate herself in her family's eyes, to tame this threatening gaze. Standing in the form of an eye, she places herself in the socket of the eye that is gazing upon her. Her time to become the seeker in a game of hide and seek has come as she becomes a grown-up. Counting down over the last ten years, she waits for life to keep all her secrets.

Another work of Damla Sari that focuses on the gaze of an object is I'll Be Ready in 5 Minutes, a video that evokes emotions similar to Cindy Sherman. The artist is plucking out the snake shell glued on her skin with a tweezer. With a proud, coldblooded attitude, looking into the eyes of the spectator after she is done peeling the skin. The grace of the tulle gloves on her hands documents her indifference to the pain of tedious labor. The subject being gazed at is ready to fight back, saying, "I am not who you think I am!" Watching minutes of the same routine activity leads the viewers to reflect on their own gaze: I got caught looking at something personal. I had no right to do so and I did not stop.

The grace of the tulle gloves on her hands documents her indifference to the pain of tedious labor. This time, the subjectartist under the gaze challenges: "I am not what you think I am". Minutes of routine action in the video leads the viewer to reflect on his/her own gaze: "I was caught looking at something private without having any right, and I continue to look. Moreover, I am suspended outside, in a dullness that does not meet my expectations, in a strangeness that does not allow me to identify with". What this work conveys may not be the act of peeling/undressing the woman but the perverse look caught by the gazed subject. The object declares its independence: The same glove with snake shells used in the video is placed in a glass pedestal, looking like a corpse that may or may not be dead; the thin tulle glove is freed from the hand. As the objectification of a past touch, it declares the victory of the object, bared free of shame, sin, love, and pain.

A similar approach is present in It's Not Like I Wouldn't Say It To Her Face, a kinetic installation that consists of three different classical wooden chairs placed on a platform. The chairs turn their heads to follow the audience entering the space. The old chairs are embodiments of their owners' spirits: veteran gossipers. These elder women sit on the street, insistently accustomed to watching the passerby. The chairs place the viewer in a position of being watched, persistently observed, and judged. After encountering It's Not Like I Wouldn't Say It To Her Face, you feel that ordinary objects are staring at you. After this experience, when you see a chair, you can't help thinking it is looking back at you.

"On the first day I moved to Istanbul, I dreamt I was creating a work, naming it the kid feigning reluctance in the house of grief. I woke up and decided to create a work with that title. What I needed was a skinny, small chair. I wanted this to have a smaller skeleton than those chairs I used in my other artworks."

I found the object of my story as I was passing by the vintage store in my neighborhood. It progressed rather strangely because the history of this object was the same as the story I imagined it would have. The former owner of the chair was a 90-year-old woman. His grandson and great-grandson's wife had sold all her items to this antique shop. I followed my dream, and it brought me to this object. I traced the object's history back to my dream.

The objects catch the artist in an antique dealer shop, on the street, or in a dream. Moreover, they haunt her. Furthermore, the artist allows them to tell their story, sail under diverse personalities and play games. She mobilizes possibilities of the technique to bring qualities other than the purpose of usage of the objects. With usually opposing, symbolic names, she puts the words also under the order of objects while naming her work.

An installation entitled 'What do you want to be when you grow up?' is also an anecdote of an object that crosses the artist's path. Damla Sari reproduced the story inspired by a cupboard and its drawer used as a color palette. She thought that it could not appertain to an artist, and it should be someone kept away from paint and brushes in her/ his childhood to earn one's bread, pursuing the advice of her/ his family. Now, when one stares at it, this object draws a water pistol to the person's face; it is a sculpture depicting a child's vulnerability and vain effort to protect her/ his dreams. That kid grew up long ago, maybe already dead, and her/ his dreams, as well as the things that have been sold, but the time that flows slower and heavier is stuck in the cubboard.

Eventually comes one of the most challenging questions of the last ten years* in the form of an installation entitled "How the time of the water floats?" an azoic landscape made from air, water, blue velvet; a nature-mort, a ditchwater. The time which collapses on a person as a heavy blue velvet curtain; piles up under one's feet, representing a lifetime that has been lived and has come to an end. The tale of the objects determines temporarily, with the time of the subject becoming objective.

*In Turkey, certain preparation books are named "Previously asked questions of the last ten years" for all grades to prepare the students for coming examinations. Sari named her solo show ironically with this title.



It's not like I wouldn't say it to her face

Kinetic Installation 108 x 150 x 50 cm 2019



carry, for all one's worth, the burden of notions such as puissance, power, sedentariness, possession, social or bureaucratic situation, along with their companion sneaky spy, set the viewer in a position that they are watched, overseen, and







at your peril

Fine Art Print 50 x 89 cm 2022

Woman, denying all definitions, renewing herself, tears to pieces her armor that squeeze her into sin. This is who the story of a woman wants to exist through alternative realities.



previously asked questions of last 10 years

damla sari

5 minutes

i'll be ready in

am listening

you tell, I

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"I've bought and brought this object to my home. When I started to observe it, I saw a shelf used as a color palette, and I didn't think it belonged to a painter. I saw a kid forced to do another job to earn one's bread, pursuing the advice of their family. I wanted to place that person's shelf and their dreams in the background of this cupboard, and I aimed as they take it under their protection."

previously asked questions of last 10 years damla sari

"How the time of the water floats?"

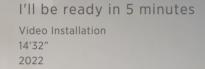
chitchat

Kinetic Installation 180 x 85,5 x 71,5 cm 2022



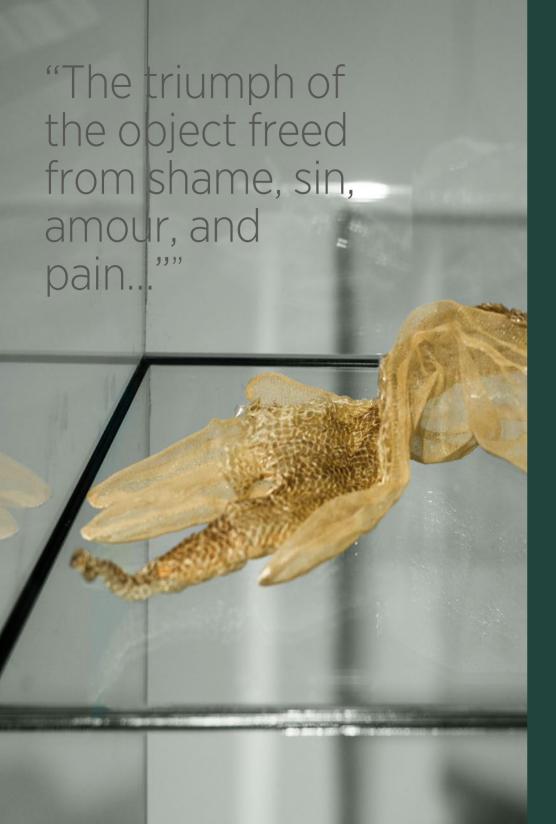








The woman first parries the 'love' that comes disguised as a snake, afterward, being detoxified from the venom of its potion. Woman, denying all definitions, renewing herself, tears to pieces her armor that squeeze her into sin. This is the story of a woman who wants to exist through alternative realities.



EXHIBITION CATALOG

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