

previously asked questions of last 10 years

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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 time.

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.

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 cupboard.

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.

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, cold-blooded 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 subject-artist 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'll tell if I see I fine art print, 70x100 cm, 2022

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

Kinetic Installation
108 x 150 x 50 cm
2019



These chairs that 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 judged.



You tell, I am listening

Video Installation
201 x 204 x 37 cm
2022

“ After all,
aren't all
secrets family
secrets? ”



"The first day I moved to Istanbul, I produced artwork in my dream, and I titled my work "the kid feigning reluctance in the house of grief." I decided to realize this work when I woke up. Wondering around to find an old chair, I've started seeking a mature, ancient-looking senior chair. I wanted a smaller carcass- compared to the chairs I used for my previous production. When passing by the antique dealer shop in my neighborhood, I felt I'd found the ideal object of my story. The process was bizarre, considering this object's past was nearly identical to my fiction. I've traced my dream, and it led me to an object. I've traced the object's history, which made me return to my dream."



"the kid feigning reluctance in the house of grief"

Kinetic Installation
143 x 180 x 140 cm
2022



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

i'll be ready in 5 minutes
you tell, I am listening
chitchat
it's not like I wouldn't say it to her face
the kid feigning reluctance in the house of grief
do you want it wrapped as a gift?
at your peril
what do you want to be when you grow up?
i'll tell if I see



The 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 cupboard.

What do you want to be
when you grow up?

Kinetic Installation
102 x 38,5 x 32,5 cm
41 x 51,5 cm
2022



"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."

“ How the
time of
the water
floats? ”



chitchat

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



do you want it wrapped as a gift?

Fine Art Print
70 x 75 cm
2022

"In this self-portrait installation, the image of the water that collapses on me interrupts my time and motion. When I think about my time stopping, I wonder how the time of water stops, and it feels like time can't rule over water. Indeed, thinking about this topic brought these phenomena of water, time, and death together and made them collapse on me."



“I’m not thing
what you think
I am!”

I'll be ready in 5 minutes

Video Installation
14'32"
2022



The woman first carries 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.

“The triumph of
the object freed
from shame, sin,
amour, and
pain...”



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My friends who did not leave me alone during the process, I would like to express my heartfelt thanks to: Carlo Caglio, Glenn Clark, Arthur Jan, Michel Harris, Sergio Jaffe, David Lyle, Jonathan Soto, Tony, Frank Saper and Cigdem Frenk, Daniela Sari.

This catalog has been prepared for Daniela Sari's exhibition titled "Previously asked questions of the last 10 years" held at ART ON between 10.02-11.10.20.

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