

Art



The grotesque circus of life

Erkut Terliksiz is a Turkish designer and artist based in İstanbul. In April, he will host his fourth solo exhibition called 'Hunger' at x-ist art gallery. Before that, he invited me over to his atelier for a chat. By **Antoine Remise**.



At first sight, Erkut Terliksiz's paintings seem to invite you into a childish fantasy world. In luminous landscapes of light blue skies and pale pink background, flourishing forests and pink clouds, we get to meet friendly, amusing and comforting characters such as a yellow elephant, a happy wolf with a cloak and a hat, a smiling genie or a giant white duck guiding a man between the clouds. If you still acknowledge the little child inside of you, you might as well plunge directly into these sweet sceneries and round-dance with these surreal fellows.

But that would make you gullible, like Snow White naively eating a shiny but

poisonous apple. Erkut Terliksiz's work is deceptively ingenuous. "My paintings have this comic book like appearance but they have another more realistic story within them. Looking at my paintings, people can find a story for themselves but also miss the message that I had hidden," he explains.

The artist decided to title his third exhibition at X-Ist Gallery, 'Hunger'. The term refers as much to his own insatiable curiosity about life and human behavior as to the battle of egos dictating our existence as individualistic social creatures. "The sentiment of hunger carries that default, this ego problem with it. With hunger, you have to

hunt," tells Erkut. What nourishes his work are the people around him, their stories, their personalities, their emotions and how they behave among their peers. His ambition is not to judge these people (he counts himself among them: "We all have faults") but to reveal the grotesque aspect of the social circus and to give glimpses of the tensions and violence behind it.

In one of his paintings, a babyish giraffe hunter ends up cutting the head off the animal as if he couldn't help it – he had to be the tallest one. In another, the rose behind a man's teeth might as well be blood or poison. And there is something vicious in the look of this

smiling wolf with a hat that resembles a Disney character, something strange coming out of his mouth. "It's his bad breath. He is evil," slips Erkut.

This last painting is called 'Don't Tell Lies' and by using Disney-like imagery, the hypocrisy of the capitalistic society of entertainment ends up in the artist's sights. Erkut Terliksiz also works in advertising, so he knows the dirty tricks of the trade: wrapping base selling intentions in seductive and heartwarming images. Like ads, Erkut's pictures kindly welcome us into enchanting and seemingly innocent worlds, but there is a darker truth behind. "It's a schizophrenic life in



“They are both. It changes with the mood and the way you look at them. [Showing me a painting] These two greedy twins I painted for example. I see their comic aspect but people might see them as monsters.”

One can find some similarities between Erkut Terliksiz's paintings and Lowbrow art, a visual artistic movement also referred to as 'pop surrealism' that arose in California in the late 70s with cultural roots in underground comics. They share the same way of picturing people's neuroses through grotesque and absurd storytelling. “I'm inspired by artists like McGee or Gary Baseman. My art connects to theirs on the level of comics. But I'm not Lowbrow, I have different perspectives and feelings,” Erkut explains. Recording a funny anecdote, Erkut told me that during one of his shows in San Francisco, a viewer said his work looked like “Robert Crumb on acid.”

The art of Erkut Terliksiz is also an art of reaction in the sense that a person he meets or an object he finds on the street can give birth to his creative impetus. “In my work in advertisement, I meet a lot of new people and then they suddenly appear in my art. I also drew Dilek

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advertising because you tell mostly lies... not exactly lies but almost. In a way, this is a perspective that I use,” he explains. However, his work does not depict a simplistic Manichean vision of the world. Darker details might cast a shadow over joyful scenes but his use of light colors, childish characters and his grotesque universe, which seems to come out of comic books, are a way of forgiving the flaws of human nature. We are all fools anyway. When I asked him if his paintings were optimistic or pessimistic, he answered:

[his girlfriend] a lot these last two years but it's not my intention. It just happens.”

All the materials in 'Hunger' are comprised of pieces from abandoned furniture he collected on the street: wooden doors, ripped canvas, cardboard, drawers, etc.

“Found objects already have a texture and a story with them on which I just mix my feelings. A white surface can

be quite boring for me. It's more challenging to create a new surface out of found objects and give them a new depth. Sometimes, I will just find a big stain and use it as a starting point,” he explains.

Of course, the Gezi events and the current sociopolitical tensions do not leave him feeling indifferent. “I would come to my atelier angry and would use more violent colors, more blood, more

rage. Like that guy with his nose cut.” Actually, that guy is a tall painting that stood above us the whole interview. He's disfigured, holds his nose in his hands and his expression conveys a mixed feeling of pride and disillusionment. Kind of saying: “What's next now?”

Erkut Terliksiz - 'Hunger'
at x-ist between April 3-26



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Critics' choice

The four best exhibitions on this month



HUNGER

Turkish artist Erkut Terliksiz depicts people's neuroses through grotesque and surreal imageries.
x-ist Apr 3 ▶ Apr 26

PAZAR

English sculptor Jonathan Trayte portrays İstanbul using the language of food.
Time Out İstanbul's office ▶
May 31

THE SLEEP OF REASON

Conceptual art superstar Marc Quinn is showing his paintings and sculptures for the first time in İstanbul
ARTER ▶ April 27

2+1

Taking inspiration from her two bedroom, Merve Morkoç paints the disrupted relationship between the person and its living space
Galerist Apr 17 ▶ May 17

Mixer

Tophane. www.mixerarts.com.
Tue-Sat 11.00-19.00. Sun 12.00-18.00

A Matter of Timing

Meltem Sirtikara's work visualizes the unavoidable effect of mass media devices on human life, centering around the concepts of 'communication, relationships and detachment'. Figures in her compositions appear in close proximity, yet they are not engaged in dialog. The tension is subtle but noticeable. Sirtikara amplifies the 'isolation' of the figures using symbols referring to communication, like telephones, letters and headphones. The figures frequently don blazers, bowties, gloves and hats: a style commonly associated with socially idealized gender identities. One of the fundamental matters in Meltem's work is individual's alienation from him/herself and from its surroundings. Threads are used as a medium on her canvases and installations, serving as a way out from the plane that the figures exist.
March 28 ▶ May 4

Pera Museum

Tepebaşı. en.peramuzesi.org.tr. Pera Museum is open from 18.00-22.00 on Fridays and admission is free throughout the course of the exhibition. For the other days that the museum is open, as well as hours and prices, see website.

Picasso: Engravings and Ceramics from the House of His Birth

Starting this month, Pera Museum hosts the engravings and ceramics of Pablo Picasso, chosen from the house where he was born, aka the Museo Casa Natal Collection in Málaga, Spain. This is also your chance to see personal objects belonging to the artist like the bib and shoes he wore as a baby as well as his lead toy soldiers.
Feb 5 ▶ April 20



2+1

GALERIST

The recent works of Morkoç springs from the experience of being a two bedroom (2+1) home owner and in time morphing into an everyday item similar to a lifeless object such as a sofa decorated with traditional embroidery or a table cloth... Using a variety of techniques and materials, the artist reflects the disruption of the relationship between the figure and its living space and gathers beauty and foulness in harmony on the same body and surface. Merve Morkoç's paintings are inspired by the culture and life of the streets, where she feels independent. For her, the Internet, streets, gallery walls, paper and materials of any size can easily turn into an effective medium. In this context, the artist is enthused by animation figures, commercials and narrative styles of urban origin that surround her.

In her works, Morkoç is

capable of creating alluring narratives and forms, while keeping a characteristic distance with the viewer. Her approach can be summarized as: "Ugly as a concept, yet charming as a package". Referring to her murals Morkoç says: "An infinite presence is not my concern. On the contrary, what matters is to be able to paint on that very wall. Five years or five minutes; well, frankly, to me, it doesn't matter at all." Merve Morkoç was born in 1986 and has graduated from the Graphic Designs at Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University. The vigor in Morkoç's statement is a warranty that ensures her works, which are inspired by the street, will exert their presence and vitality as strongly in the gallery space.

Galerist

Beyoğlu. www.galerist.com.tr.
Tue-Sat 11.00-19.00
April 17 ▶ May 17

Art

Aurora: Contemporary Nordic Glass Art

This exhibition features examples of contemporary glass art from Norway, Finland, Denmark and Iceland.
Feb 5 ► April 20

Pi Artworks

Beyoğlu. www.piartworks.com.
Tue-Sat 11.00-19.00

Beyond NoThing

Susan Hefuna works and exhibits internationally across a wide range of media, including drawing, sculpture, and installation as well as video, photography and performance. Hefuna's second solo show with Pi Artworks İstanbul will focus on her textile works, exploring the visual and cultural signifiers that have come to embody her unique inter-cultural identity. Susan Hefuna has been creating her striking graffiti-like textile works since 2001. Encompassing costumes, installations and textile wall pieces, she draws on a variety of influences and traditions from around the world and, in doing so, has developed her own unique artistic language. Her textile works are informed by the aesthetics of Africa and Japan, the traditional craft of American quilts and storytelling, with their iconic layered cloth patchworks, as well as the Egyptian heritage of tent making, or Khayamiya, of Old Cairo.
Apr 5 ► May 3

RAMPA

Akaretler. rampaistanbul.com.
Tue-Sat 11.00-19.00.

Hatice Güleyüz – Fast Forward

Well-known for her intimate 8mm film installations that garnered her international recognition, Hatice Güleyüz's oeuvre cuts across many different modes of expression and image making, and focuses on a set of themes such as constructed realities, memory and language. "Fast Forward" is her first solo

exhibition in Turkey and is based on the artist's experiences of languages. For her, language is a constantly fluctuating entity, from which she takes snippets through painting, videos and signage to make sense.
March 1 ► April 5

Ergin Çavuşoğlu – Adaptation/Cinefication

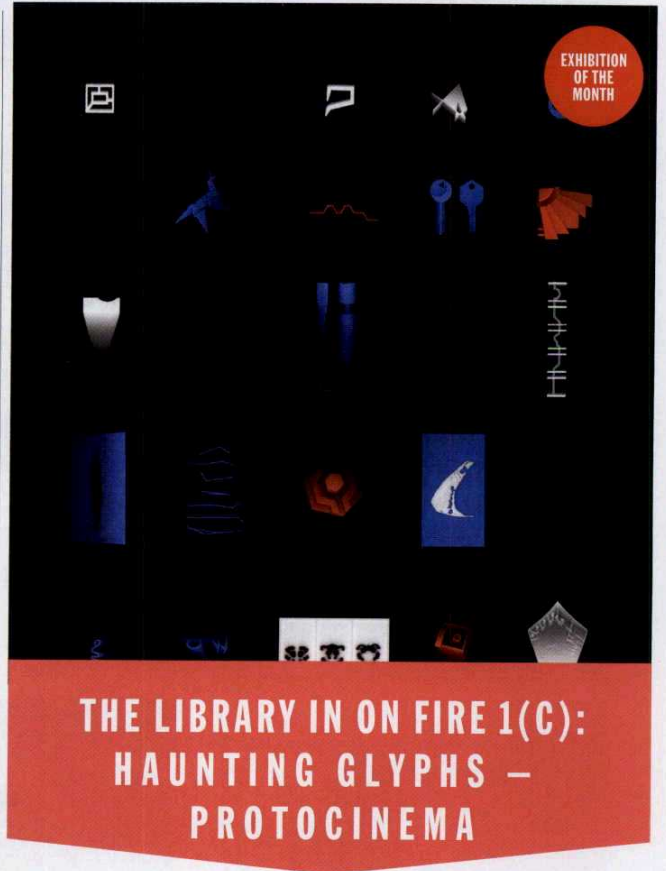
Ergin Çavuşoğlu's "Adaptation – Cinefication" is made up of two distinct elements. The exhibition examines the artist's engagement in the past with painting in its classical and contemporary guises, and juxtaposes them with his better-known film installation works. Çavuşoğlu thus retraces recurring preoccupations in his practice, showing older work in a new context. The wider concept refers directly to "The Soviet project of 'cinefication' that represents the most grandiose scheme of film distribution, exhibition, and reception that the world has known to date," as described by Thomas Lahusen. Çavuşoğlu borrows this framework to comment on the current globalized system of "cinefication" of the arts.
March 1 ► April 5

SALT Beyoğlu

Beyoğlu. saltonline.org. Tue-Sat 12.00-20.00. Sun 12.00-18.00

The Disobedience Archive

The Disobedience Archive is an ongoing, multi-phase video archive and platform of discussions that deals with the relationship between artistic practices and political action. The project is an atlas of the plurality of resistance tactics such as direct action, counter-information and biological resistance. By setting in motion different signs and situations, Disobedience is presented as a network of open topics, brought together by artists, activists, film producers, philosophers and political groups. The archive is an itinerant and ongoing entity that changes its form and content every time it is



The Library is on Fire is a project led by Charles Arsene-Henry in collaboration with Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster and Tristan Bera. It is an experiment based on two initial phrases: "What if a library was to function like a novel or a film?" and "a creature is looking for the form of its intelligence". It leads us to think of a library as a form and to consider its possible functions, volumes, movements and operations. As such, 'The Library is on Fire' is an attempt to explore the renewed and unlocked potential of a library. It sees it less as an archive than as a multidimensional airlock. İstanbul will witness the third apparition of the 'Library is on Fire' in a new episode presented under the name 'Haunting Glyphs'. Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster had started a research on the presence of images in novels and with

Charles Arsene-Henry, they multiplied its dimensions looking for an interzone between text and images. The use of a 3D printer as a literary machine is a way to track and measure the movements of the creature in the realm of fiction. The idea is observing the possible behavior of a 3D printer within a library and raise a question: If you're an extended writer, what kind of manuscript will you send to a printer in the future? The relationship between the text and the image becomes less a matter of illustration than one of cooperation as if the text needed the image to make progress and the image an alphabetical landscape to exist.

strongly in the gallery space.

Protocinema

www.protocinema.org Wed-Sat 12.00- 18.00
March 29 ► Apr 12

exhibited. This approach is strongly connected to the flux of contemporary politics and movements, because they can never find a definitive final shape (trade unions, party, parliament, etc.) but are always under construction.

► April 22

SALT Galata

Galata. saltonline.org. Tue-Sat 12.00-20.00. Sun 12.00-18.00

You don't go slumming

Combining Can Altay's urbanistic approach to the ecology of the city with Jeremiah Days's concern for story telling and memory, 'You don't go slumming' presents a fractured investigation of the city and the flows (of population, commodities, waterways) that come together in the popular but semi-legal and often dangerous food of stuffed mussels. The mussels themselves, known as "the kidneys of Bosphorus", which filter the waterway, absorbing traces of pollution, are found by Altay and Day to filter and absorb all kind of other, more abstract places.

► May 18

Sakıp Sabancı Museum

Emirgan. muze.sabanciuniv.edu. Tue-Sun 10.00-18.00 (until 20.00 on Wednesdays)

The "Distant Neighbour Close Memories: 600th Anniversary of Turkish - Polish Relations" exhibition covers a period beginning in the first half of the 15th century and continuing with trade, peace and war up to the late 17th century, when the Second Siege of Vienna became a turning point not just in relations between Ottoman Turkey and Poland, but in the history of Europe.

In this context, historical developments in the Ottoman Empire and the Kingdom of Poland are reflected in documents, maps, paintings, personal possessions of eminent figures, accessories and printed material. The exhibition presents visitors with

examples of trade goods, and Ottoman tents, weapons and other artefacts abandoned after the army's defeat at the Siege of Vienna, alongside objects that illustrate the border clashes and other stages leading up to the siege.

► June 15

Sanatorium

Beyoğlu. www.sanatorium.com.tr. Tue-Sat 11.00-19.00

Drones, Pills & Yantras

Ludovic Bernhardt's new solo exhibition aims to draw attention to the post-industrial society's some of the visual rituals. Medicines and pills packaging, military codes, fictional maps, Yantra diagrams and Mandalas, and so on, are used as signs that infiltrate bio-politically our daily life. Bernhardt mentions that "My aim is to combine various everyday objects and signs which frame politically the life of the 'one dimensional man', with a kind of subtraction of the material traces". In the exhibition, he considers these pieces as 'psycho-objects' by using a variety of mediums, light installation, soap boxes, pseudo-mystical posters. According to the artist, one of the main important problematic which underlie the artworks is the issue of how an ultra-protective environment can be connected with the political reality.

Apr 3 ► May 10

Time Out Istanbul

Kuruçesme. www.istanbulartproject.com. Mon-Fri 10.00-18.00, Sat 11.00-18.00

Pazar

See Art feature.

► May 31

x-ist

Nişantaşı. www.artxist.com. Mon 11.30-19.30, Tue-Sat 10.30-19.30

Hunger

See Art. Feature.

3 Apr ► 26 Apr