

Greener Pastures
Bahar Oganer's Figures of Sadness and Hope
by Ipek Yeğinsü

Bahar Oganer's painting resembles a window the artist opens from her inner world to the outside, which she wishes to cross in the viewer's company. Oganer uses the lonely and fragile figure looking out through the window, carried away by the horizon or by a book, to symbolize the sensitive, permeable boundary between the individual's inner and outer worlds. The woman escaping from the universe of truth, taking refuge in the universe of dreams, is filled with a sad romance, a deep nostalgia for the unknown. She is not in the moment; she is entirely someplace else. She compels us to join her in her journey to that world of mystery, to empathize with her, to share her dreams, to listen to her story. The fact that the paintings do not give away a geographical or cultural context facilitates the empathy. The viewer, who follows the figure from a very close distance, is invited into the artist's mind; from there, in the artist's company, then sets sail towards his own horizon.

The choice of naming the exhibition as *Greener Pastures*, the idiom meaning 'a better, more exciting job, place or life option', is deliberate. Despite the sadness they carry, these compositions are loaded with a childlike spirit never to be lost, a sincere hope for the future, for the expected. Although Oganer's amusing, colorfully dressed figure existing in a space surrounded by bright colors is reminiscent of fictional, fairy tale characters such as *Peter Pan*, *Alice in Wonderland* or *Dorothy* in the *Wizard of Oz*, she belongs to a realistic world. The color and the form the artist is using in a way to bring illustration into mind, contributes to the optimistic atmosphere even further.

Despite their close kinship with illustration, Oganer's works maintain their painterly character thanks to the artist's fine craftsmanship. Even avoiding ascribing a face to the figure, Oganer approaches detail as an aesthetic element in her decorative patterns. The principal area where she attributes conceptuality to pattern are the figure's stockings; they tell even more than her face about her multicolored, enthusiastic personality that does not give itself away at first sight. They express her character, her passion, the living joy that she often loses and regains in the face of the real world and its cruelties; they simultaneously harbor joy and sadness.

The exhibition's structure is based on the close interaction between the space and the artworks. It brings side by side the large-scale paintings identified with Oganer's artistic persona and creating a window perception, with Salon Dahlmann's widespread windows, one aligned next to the other throughout the space. Each painting is reminiscent of an enormous book cover hidden in the wall and evokes the sensation that we would find a long story behind it. On the other hand, we encounter for the first time in this exhibition the artist's series of small-scale portraits seamed onto fabric stretched on embroidery hoops. Leaving the viewer face-to-face with the figure, remaining completely outside of the artist's material, dimensional and technical vocabulary, these portraits depict real individuals from Oganer's life. When juxtaposed with the other artworks, they emphasize their 'female' identity; they also establish an artistic breaking point. The context Oganer has carefully been avoiding in other works now has the leading role: the artist's autobiographic memory and the presence of manual labor as a woman, generates a curious path towards the artist's future inclinations.

Greener Pastures promises an artistic experience combining Bahar Oganer's yesterday, today and tomorrow, filled with both sadness and hope.

Salon Dahlmann
Marburger Strasse 3, 10789 Berlin

Duration May 1 - 31, 2014

Opening hours during the Gallery Weekend
May 1 - 4, 2014, 11 am–6 pm; apart from that
Every Saturday 11am–4pm & by appointment

BAHAR OGANER

Born in 1980, Ankara;

Lives and works in İzmir, Turkey

Education

2003-2008 Dokuz Eylül University, Faculty of Fine Arts, Department of Painting, BFA

Artist Residencies

2010 Studio Residency, Cité International des Arts, Paris

Solo Exhibitions

- 2012 "Dreamland", Dirimart, İstanbul
2011 "Secret Garden" (with Ozan Oganer), Alan İstanbul
2009 "Crystal", Dirimart, İstanbul
2008 "Dream", Dirimart, İstanbul

Goup Exhibitions

- 2014 "The Spirit of Paper", Alan İstanbul
2013 "The Ideology of the Image", curated By Efe Korkut Kurt, Alan İstanbul
2012 "Encounters: Turkish Contemporary Art in Korea", curated by H. B. Kahraman, Seoul, South Korea
"Who Left What Behind", Ankara Contemporary Arts Center, Ankara
"Various Artists: Turkish Contemporary Art", Artspace Gallery, London
"Self-Portrait", Alan İstanbul
2010 "Popartist", Alan İstanbul
"Last Six Decades of Turkish Art: Hüma Kabakçı Collection Exhibition", Modern Hungarian Gallery, Pecs, Hungary; Museum Moderner Kunst, Goslar, Germany; Osthaus Museum, Hagen, Germany
"İstanbul Cool: Turkish Contemporary Art at Close Proximity", LTMH Gallery, New York
"Chaotic Metamorphosis", curated by Burcu Pelvanoğlu, Proje 4L, Elgiz Museum, İstanbul
"Dirimart Presents III", Dirimart, İstanbul
2009 "The 28th Contemporary Artists İstanbul Exhibition", Akbank Sanat, İstanbul
"Plastic Tree Vol.III", curated by Ekrem Yalçındağ, Dirimart, İstanbul
"Dirimart Presents I", Dirimart, İstanbul
"Dirimart Presents II", Dirimart, İstanbul
2007 "Small Gestures / New Stories", Koridor Gallery, İzmir
"Acid and Dust", K2 Contemporary Art Center, İzmir
2006 "Trouble Search Engine", Koridor Gallery, İzmir

Selected Collections

- Elgiz Museum, İstanbul
Papko Art Collection, İstanbul
Hüma Kabakçı Collection, İstanbul
İstanbul Modern Museum, İstanbul