

Leylâ Gediz

THE PILL

Leylâ Gediz's show "*Serpilen*" (an unusual Turkish word meaning something that blooms as it is dispersed) was a poetic rendition of her studio, a distilled portion of her work, a pristine and spiritual space created by paintings and some of her working environment's "clutter," as she puts it. All became part of a total installation—not a grand, socially loud one, but a quiet contemplation of in-between moments and the intimacy of objects, of lives shared or interconnected, in which viewers could create their own stories through what they saw.

Gediz's works have always been thoughtfully studied and composed. Her paintings use a limited palette of mostly grays, pale blues and pinks, and black; her drawings of everyday objects are meticulously refined; her installations project a layer of meaning beyond the obvious—a question, a sense of wonderment about what has happened or continues to happen. She tells stories with coolly charged details that are personal and inclusive at the same time. At the Pill, her oil-on-



canvas paintings of cardboard boxes (*Untitled [Boxes]*, 2016), candles (*Doctrinaire*, 2016), wooden stools (*Serpilen*, 2016), a supermarket receipt (*Resistance*, 2016), a table with a mirror (*Palmyra*, 2016), and a portrait of a man seen from one side (*Rip Curl*, 2016) were minimally rendered and faintly hued. But they reverberated with a strange intensity that was further enhanced by the surrounding memory-filled “clutter,” such as fiber cement planter boxes (*Nisilden Nesile* [From Generation to Generation], 2017), stacked tires with a large teddy bear on top (*Peekaboo*, 2016), beer cans and a metal chain (*Zor Zamanlarda Sanat* [Art in Hard Times], 2016), a bed covered with gessoed canvas instead of sheets (*Untitled [Bed]*, 2017). A sense of connection among all these objects was undeniable; from any point in the space, the paintings and the objects together suggested a story, or stories.

In this way, the show was a testament to Gediz’s conceptual approach to painting. For her, a painting is not just two- or even three- but four-dimensional, adding time past, present, or future: One could venture that there were once plants in the tin boxes, that the snuffed-out candles were once lit, that someone was or would be moving since the boxes were taped up. *Explosion*, 2016, a painting of a wooden artist’s mannequin with one leg broken below the knee and seemingly about to stumble out of the canvas, coupled with a frame shaped like a shelving unit, is a study—and perhaps an overcoming—of the limits of pictorial representation. Gediz questions both figure and frame. In the black, gray, and white painting *Default (Self)*, 2016, the lean female figure bent forward is repeated in continuum toward an endless background, suggesting digital layering.

The work used as the poster of the exhibition (*Le Connaisseur*, 2016), is a portrait of an art dealer Gediz read about in a *Life* magazine from the late 1950s. The picture shows a man looking at an abstract painting that apparently earned him a fortune, even though he bought it very cheaply. This was the one work in which Gediz deliberately commented on the financial side of art: She has put a divisive white streak between the painting within the painting and the man. *Histoire universelle*, 2016, which depicts part of the spine of a worn-out copy of a volume from the 1913 *Histoire universelle illustrée des pays et des peuples* (Universal history of nations and peoples), may be another timely comment. Big conflicts and new world orders shake the earth, but beneath the superfluous ambitions of nations and peoples runs a sadness and a joy that only art can tap. Gediz neither condemns nor laments this world, because even though it may seem to be crumbling, it still grows richer in details.

—Mine Haydaroglu