

MURKY IMAGES BY EROL ESKICI AT SANATORIUM GALLERY

RUMEYSA KIGER İSTANBUL

Istanbul-based artist Erol Eskici takes art lovers into a dark world of images, delving into the sadness of leaving one's childhood, in his current exhibition at Sanatorium Gallery in İstanbul.

The title of the exhibition, "Nostomania," is a term coined by the artist by combining the Greek words "nostos" (a return to home) and "mania." It could be described as an intense homesickness, an irresistible compulsion to return home. "This series is about being not able to return to one's childhood. I chose symbolic elements that would give the feeling of what we call home. Most of them are fictional constructions; there are no buildings like this, for instance," Eskici says, pointing out one of his drawings from the "Nostomania" series.

"I'm always taking notes; sometimes a concept, sometimes the name of a bird. In time, they turn into networks for my artworks. For instance I put 'Anamorphic Architecture of Fascism' just across the 'Nostomania' series since they have a dialectical connection between them. The latter is mostly about childhood while the former depicts a weighty construction; they are each other's antagonists in a way," Eskici says during an interview with Today's Zaman.

At the show, in which the colors black and gray are very dominant, there are a number of large-scale paintings showcasing various architectural constructions; sometimes fictional buildings on a planet, sometimes columns taken from an archaic religion's temple. "Some of them are starting points of my research while deciding what kind of a texture I should use for one of my architectural works. I was trying to figure out what kind of a structure I should use for 'Residues of Time,' which is inspired from a now non-existent belief called Korsala. They have around 400 temples in the world and I did a mystical painting based on it, but before that this work, while deciding the right texture, 'Eight Columns' came," Eskici explains.

Although the colors are dark, the artist does not believe that it is a pessimistic exhibition. "We call a pessimist a person [who is pessimistic] when everything is going well; however, when everything is already going badly, then it means everything is going badly. Look at this one, for instance," Eskici says, pointing out his painting titled "Total Institutions-Fence Wall" which depicts an old building in a vast cloudy area and an imperious fence between the audience and the structure. "It might seem pessimistic at first glance but if you look closer, then you can see the small figure who has almost climbed over the fence with a smirk on his face. We can see this as a hope, too. He almost succeeded," he further elaborates.

Eskici's other series, titled "Subjects" and "Construction of Generation," are, on the other hand, works between "Nostomania" and "Total



A piece from the "Construction of Generation" series by artist Erol Eskici, on display at the Sanatorium art gallery in İstanbul.



Institutions." We see the portraits of young people who have come out of their childhood, who are students in high school. The images are all taken from the yearbooks the artist has collected for years. Sometimes he draws things on the pages or sometimes he scratches them and at the end they all turn into a series of paintings or an installation. Artist and curator Ludovic Bernhardt in his article for the catalogue of the show says that these works are based on the use of student photographs collected from a yearbook from the '80s.

"From this, Erol Eskici develops a gallery of painted portraits, anchored in the recent past of the Turkish nation, loaded with ideology. The

choice of this yearbook is caused by the artist's political substratum; it is an effective weapon of nationalism overwhelming the youth. The uniqueness of these images stem from the cutouts, the holes made by the artist on the faces of the children pinned down by the institution. These gaps are abysses in which the viewer and the subjects are isolated; where the memory and the history go astray; which open to other gaps inserted into other faces. There are as many holes as lost subjects... Yet, the faces get reunited; they emerge from under the damaged involved in the very construction of the work and its subjects. It thus seems that of the Nation-State which reduces the individual to a mask. Considering the weight of history -- in Turkey and elsewhere -- with its multiple exploitations against the structure-architecture of the ideology of language, these are eminently violent images," author further elaborates.

"Nostomania" will continue until March 28 at Sanatorium Gallery in Taksim district. For more information, visit www.eroleskici.com and www.sanatorium.com.tr.