

Erol Eskici's Unintentionals

FATİH ÖZGÜVEN

Erol Eskici's new exhibition 'Unintended Monuments' announces a new chapter in his work, forming a thread, a line that can be followed from one exhibition to another. The appearances on his canvases and the natural or imagined forms that constitute them, or in his own words, 'unintended monuments,' step out of the canvas in this exhibition and - perhaps as they should be, so to speak, by their very nature - become three-dimensional.

Many artists who have been interested in canvas lately prioritize creating three-dimensional works in their exhibitions for various reasons. But I can't think of any other artist who, like Erol Eskici, maintains such a tight, intentional relationship between the forms in his two-dimensional works and the three-dimensional forms.

If we recall Erol Eskici's past exhibitions, examples come to mind where the architectural form sometimes overwhelms the viewer with its oppressive authoritarian weight (architectures that approach the fantastical of official ideology), sometimes unexpected structures (like a wooden curtain) form architectural traces where the figure is trapped in its grid, trying (or not trying) to escape, sometimes nature takes on a dense, imprisoning mesh, and similar instances.

In Eskici's exhibitions, we also encounter meanings attributed to his sticks or rods, which spread out from the center like a fan or sun rays. But it was still too early for this because these forms, which may initially resemble a kind of local carving craft, had not yet 'stood up' or 'risen from

their places'.

The analogy may not be unwarranted, as these forms gradually 'straightened out', and as seen in this exhibition, they still maintain amorphous characteristics on the surface, yet they have formed smooth and orderly forests. One of the works in the exhibition consists of such densely packed and intricate 'forests' of these forms that you get the feeling that you're supposed to think it's made of a single piece of wood; that is, until you see the skillfully concealed joints (or unless you feel the need to see them).

These forests or the tower-like structures in the latest exhibition connect Erol Eskici to certain moments in art history ('forest' canvases also evoked this feeling for me). They evoke Max Ernst's series "Europe After the Rain," consisting of petrified or fossilized landscapes, or miniature versions of Brancusi's "Endless Column" in this exhibition.

However, considering that these forms have now emerged from the canvas and solidified, especially considering that they are not intended / this expression is not meant haphazardly, and even stand alongside the subtle perfection of woodturning craftsmanship / that Eskici approaches them using the German terms Denkmal (monument) or Naturdenkmal (natural monument, formations like Cappadocia, etc.) / that some of them are presented in undesired views that are not meant to be thought of together, if we also consider that the forms, beyond being mere monuments on their own, may be considered as Gedenkstätte (memorial sites in English), coming together to form memorial places, to put it in German terms. Gedenkstätte are places and structures that memorialize the place itself as a memorial site where an important event occurred or spread the idea of a memorial to the space. These ideas can trace a period of history or a ritual event. Different examples that come to mind are the concentration camps turned into memorial sites after World War II, or the Stonehenge stone monument circle in England, or the Memorial to the Murdered European Jews in Berlin designed by Peter Eisenman, the latter being a labyrinthine Gedenkstätte made up of 2711 concrete blocks forming a forest of steles.

Erol Eskici's exhibition, consisting of two unintended memorial sites (one tabletop, one in a display case), three unintended monuments (in which it can be argued that the boundaries of Denkmal and Denkstatt merge), and a canvas, prompts the viewer to ponder: why unintended, and what does unintendedness mean here?

The diversity of forms in Eskici's 'memorial sites' presents a rich landscape reminiscent of Calvino's "Invisible Cities" or Borges' imaginary structures. The forms on the table sometimes resemble 'fantastical towers' or 'endless columns' dedicated to past or future imag-



Detail from unintended monuments-raw materials

inary events. However, there are also those among them who aim to freeze the form in the middle of its formation stages, present form and material as a hybrid creature, and sometimes view the form entirely as an amorphous heap. In these states, they exist both in the past and in the future (with the futuristic idea also involved), these three-dimensional unintended forms in the (relatively) timeless realm of the fantastical... Perhaps the closest example could be one of the



view from exhibition

strangest transformations in the first season of the *Twin Peaks* series, where the Far East woman character, upon entering a room, is suddenly 'swallowed' or 'trapped' by a drawer knob, or is trapped inside it.

The forms in the display case, as suggested by their dark colors, visually convey the weight of ebony wood, one of the hardest woods (as described by Eskici, 'almost as heavy as stone').

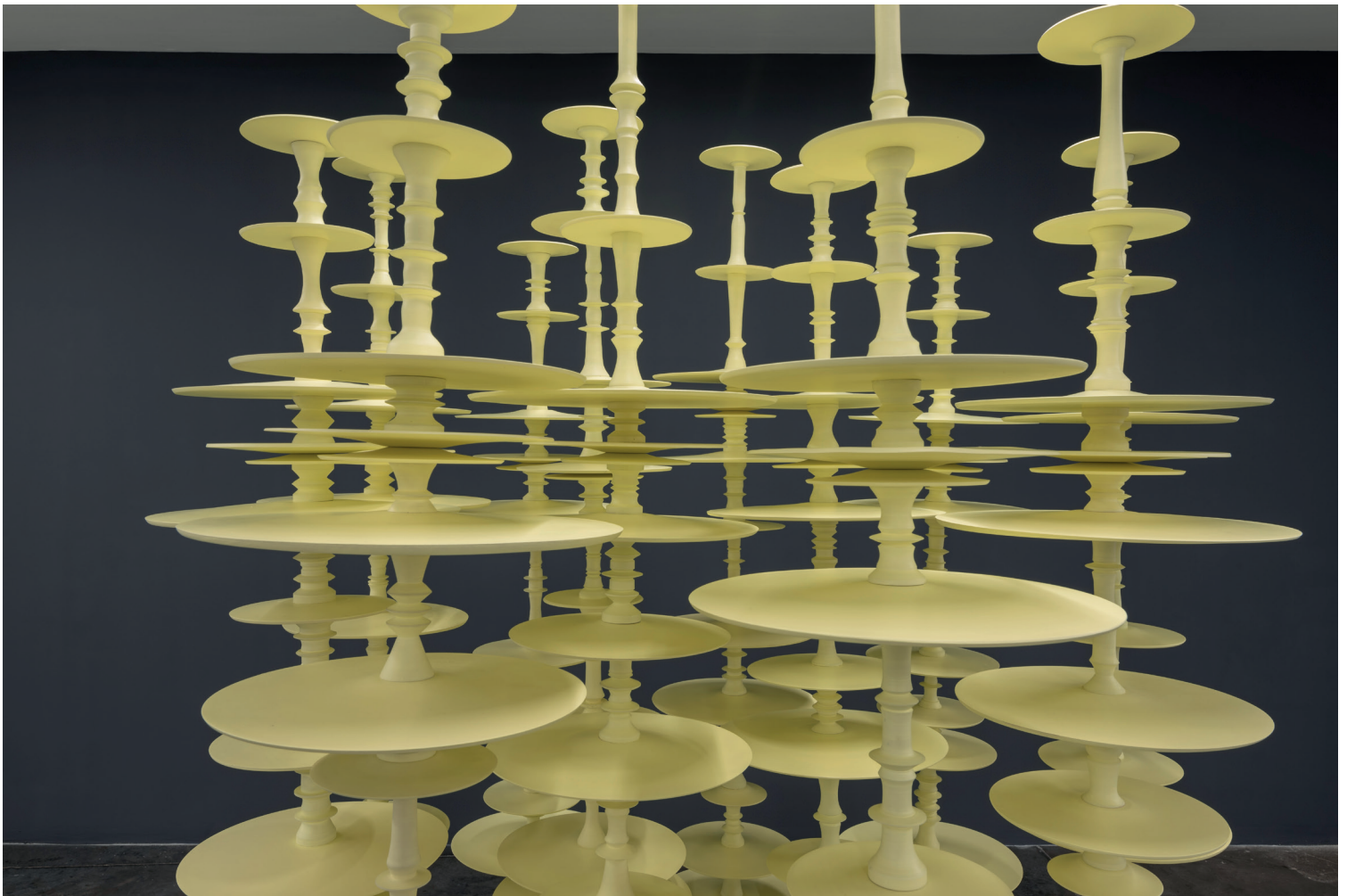
The surprising heaviness of unexpected things encountered in the world, to the extent of being described as 'spatial' (meaning reminiscent of meteorites, celestial bodies), is also encountered in Borges' story "*Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius*," which feeds the fantastical nature of that story: "...from its

sash, it also dropped a cone of bright metal, about the size of a dice. One of the boys tried in vain to pick it up from the ground... Lifting it from the ground was a task for more than one person. I remember holding the cone in my palm for a few minutes, feeling its unbearable weight, and even after dropping it, its weight seemed to linger. The sensation of holding a very small but extremely heavy object evoked a unpleasant feeling of both disgust and fear in me. (...) These small, very heavy cones (made of a metal not found on Earth) were considered divine symbols in certain regions of Tlön."

Just as Borges stories have their unique form, Erol Eskici's work also has its own unique story of form. As Borges indicates, it's important to enter into the story not by trying to read/consume it, but by passing through the story of the form itself. The con-



Residues of time - 170x200 cm



Unintended monument no.4



detail

tinuity, tension, and what remains unconsumed in his works are all results of this.

Additionally, in this exhibition, there is a piece by Erol Eskici that makes a reference to the idea of unintendedness with a lighter tone from within popular culture. If one of his unintended sculptures, like an impenetrable, eerie, authoritative forest, distances the viewer, another one approaches the viewer as a futuristic 'monument' made of green circles (perhaps leaves of a tree?). In this state, it evokes both the fleets from Star Wars movies and the carefree, paradisiacal joy of the design of popular futuristic animated films like *The Jetsons* (early 60s). A footnote to the unintended monuments...