



Infinite Strangeness Lying Within the Ordinary

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Erol Eskici's first solo exhibition in Germany, *Fields of Encounter*, meets viewers at Golestani Gallery in Düsseldorf between April 25 and May 30, 2026. We spoke with the artist about his creative journey extending from Adana to Istanbul and then to Cologne, his visual connection with archives, and his recent works.

Interview: Necmi Sönmez

I had had the opportunity to view Erol Eskici's works at his solo exhibitions held at different times and in various collections. As one of the most interesting representatives of his generation born in the mid-1980s, Erol drew my attention in 2022 not only with the multi-layered nature of his large painted canvases, but also with sculptures and three-dimensional objects I had never expected. Whatever material he worked with, Erol was one of the young artists I followed due to his meticulousness that did justice to his chosen technique, his interest in details, and his peculiar storytelling.

I had heard that he was continuing his work in his studio in Cologne, neighboring the city where he had been living for a long time. Finally, in the last week of January 2026, I had the opportunity to visit him in his high-ceilinged, sunlit studio and view his latest works. While I expected to encounter canvases, I was a bit surprised to see abstract paper works on the walls. After my short first visit, when we met for the second time, we spoke in quite some detail. We conducted a written interview with Erol about the development processes of his artistic journey, his time spent first in Istanbul and then in Germany, and subsequently his first solo exhibition in Germany titled *Fields of Encounter*, opening at Golestani Gallery in Düsseldorf between April 25 and May 30, 2026.

How did your interest in art and drawing emerge and develop? Is it possible to speak of any specific support from your family or close environment in this regard?

Erol Eskici: During my childhood, I didn't receive any special support from anyone. We would only come home in the evening to sleep; dogs, pigeons, and the mountains were far more interesting to me. In later years, my father taught me how to do hatching with a pencil; this technique would prove quite useful to me in subsequent years.

I suppose one of the most important turning points in your artistic career is receiving your education at Adana Fine Arts High School. What factors influenced you to make this decision? Looking back, how do you evaluate your education and artistic experiences at this high school?

Erol Eskici: When I went to the exams for that school in Adana, I was overcome by an extremely strange feeling, as if I had come to a place that had been waiting for me for a long time, a place I had belonged to for a hundred years. I never felt that way about any other place again. I experienced a kind of topophilia there. If I had gone to a regular high school, I would never have finished; I didn't have an ounce of interest or desire for those classes. Yet, this place made me come to my senses.

Since the school was an old building, it was spacious with high ceilings, massive windows, and tall doors. Today, a different school occupies that building. There was a peculiar spirit embedded in the walls of the building; it made you feel you were somewhere else. As soon as you entered the entrance hall of the school, Manet's three-meter-high *The Fifer* painting would greet you... At the same time, the school dormitory was in the yard, and I spent four years there. It was as if we were inside an Erving Goffman-style "total institution."

In that high school, at an early age, in relative freedom compared to other high schools, the warm and enjoyable atmosphere of living with a selected group of people around similar interests offered the ideal conditions to step out of your cocoon, if you had one. The transformation I experienced there was boundless. We experienced incredible things and had so much fun. Honestly, it was the most enjoyable high school life imaginable. Most students wanted to become art teachers later on. Our good fortune was coming across incredible women: Mine, Dünyanur, and Ms. Seher. Each of these teachers offered us a unique energy and vision; they were like friends to us. One day, during a one-on-one conversation by the stove, one of these teachers told me that I needed to go to Istanbul; she whispered softly that I could become an artist. At first I was surprised, because they didn't usually say things like that, but I could tell from her attitude towards me that she had been seeing something different in the work I had been doing for a while.



The Magnetic Fields -
240×190cm - oil on canvas -
2026

In the second half of the 2000s, you were a student at Mimar Sinan, in Istanbul. During this period when artistic shifts and transformations were taking place in Turkey, what were the factors that personally excited you? During your student years, was the legitimacy of the canvas—meaning whether it could accompany a current, contemporary visual language—being discussed? Can your partnerships during these years with collectives like Ha Za Vu Zu and Atıl Kunst be interpreted as breaking free from the residues of academic education?

Erol Eskici: When I entered school, it was quite a lively period. With biennials and exhibitions, along with hot money entering the market, everyone was in a state of euphoria. First I entered the graphic design department, then I took a break and switched to the painting department. Suddenly, many names from the previous generation—such as Ha Za Vu Zu, Gözde İlkin, İnci Furni, Sevil Tunaboğlu, Tunca, Guido Casaretto—had graduated. During those few years, I occasionally assisted Ömer Uluç.

Around the same time, I also started working as an assistant at Galerist, which had just moved to Mısır Apartment. I helped with exhibition setups and organized the storage room. I was in direct, hands-on contact with artworks. At school, however, I remember there was a kind of lethargy; they were far removed from current debates. On a somewhat tense day when we were hanging a lot of paintings in the school's central hall, a woman approached me and said, "I'm Gülçin." Thus, through Atıl Kunst, my path took shape at school. Together with my classmate Gökçe Erhan, we founded a group called *Halı Atölyesi* (Carpet Workshop). Gülçin Aksoy had an energy that reminded me of my high school teacher; her self-confidence made you trust in yourself as well. During a period when I felt very overwhelmed, *Halı Atölyesi* felt like a remedy. Moreover, we were also discussing painting. Gülçin Aksoy approached painting from an entirely different perspective.

What is interesting is that you held your first solo exhibition, *Alçak Gerilim* (Low Voltage), at Mac Art Gallery in 2010 while still a student. Although I searched in detail, I couldn't find many photographs of the canvases you showed in this exhibition. From the paintings I could get hold of, the pictorial cinematographic language that you would develop later begins to assert itself. On one hand, surrealist hybrids; on the other hand, compositions formed by image-based collages. Based on these, how should your understanding of painting in those years best be evaluated?

Erol Eskici: Looking at it from today, even in those early productions, rather than forming and shaping a single body of work, I started producing with scattered fragments. I remember trying to combine or separate them. In artists' early periods, even though they are still very premature, you can see certain signals. While in my case it wasn't that simple, it is possible to find traces in the form of points of sensitivity, processes, wandering through the labyrinths of technique, combinations, and compositional nuances. In other words, a model trackable through images might not work so clearly for me.

I was one of the artists affiliated with Sanatorium from the very beginning, but due to spatial issues, we decided to hold my first exhibitions at Banu and Hakan Çarmıklı's Mac Art Gallery at the time. In a way, I put out everything I had that could be exhibited: paper works, a collage-wall titled *Krallık*, video, sculptures, and objects, making it a highly layered and complex exhibition. Eleven months after this exhibition, we held my second exhibition, which was much more cohesive and integrated.

At that time, I didn't have the means to purchase materials like oil paints and canvases, so almost all my works were on paper. In fact, it would be more accurate to say "they were with paper." I predominantly used black and didn't include white at all; there were only various diluted shades of black. In some paintings, I reinforced the paper with special mixtures, preparing a substrate that could be worked on. On top of this first layer, I added a second layer containing images, and finally a third layer that I named the "Covering layer" (*Örtme katmanı*). By erasing parts of this final layer, I created a sedimentary appearance. During that period, I had developed quite a few techniques unique to myself. I suppose I was in a cycle of finding techniques that could be compatible with the narrative and following the new pathways those techniques gave rise to. For instance, the question "How can I show topography?" and my question "What can I convey with a visual texture obtained through henna?" complemented each other during this process.

In the period we're discussing, the early 2010s, it appears you entered into different experiments in theme, painting style, and coloration. Your interest in topography and your attempts at monochrome-figurative compositions using henna—an unconventional material—should, as far as I observe, be considered alongside a peculiar dilemma seen in the Istanbul art scene at the time. While under the growing pressure of the art market a generation of young artists clung to canvas painting full of decorative dilemmas to get a share of the pie, another branch of this generation placed canvas painting at the center of new inquiries. I think you are a representative of this latter branch. Topography and political geography seem to be subjects you particularly focused on during these years. When exactly did you begin the archive searches that directed you toward these themes?

Erol Eskici: While some painters are very conventional/orthodox, others are definitely more revolutionary. I position myself somewhere between the two. Neither do I rely entirely on tradition, nor do I make breaking away an end in itself.

During the time when the Internet was becoming widespread, I was a student living in a dormitory. My relationship with computers consisted merely of playing games rarely in Internet cafes under pressure from my friends. However, toward the end of high school, I gradually started spending hours on the Internet scanning museum archives. Being able to zoom in on paintings I had previously only seen in books and delve into their details represented a new way of seeing for me. I think my relationship with archives germinated right there, in that intense desire to look closely.

I didn't approach painting, the market, or the environment in general with the mindset of "producing a product." Therefore, I had no goal of producing a specific type of painting that was particularly demanded. I didn't automate my methods, because I felt that would lead to both a kind of monotony and intellectual laziness. I specifically avoided repeating the same thing excessively. ***When I play with a material, combining and mixing it with something else and tinkering with it, I reach a point of concentration. At that threshold, an intuitive impulse emerges telling me that I can bring out something different from it, and I follow that impulse.***



Concretion - 1 - 56×77cm - oil on paper - 2025

Petrification - 9 - 50×70cm - ink on paper - 2025

Petrification - 17 - 50×70cm - ink on paper - 2025

Can we say that these archive searches brought a visual language based on concrete images of an abstract thought into your works? First of all, I don't think your orientation toward the theme of "home" was a coincidence.

Erol Eskici: Yes, that can be said. Kant says that the mind works initially not with clear and completed images, but with drafts. Perhaps for me, too, the process starts like this: not with a clear image, but with a kind of image-draft. At times, a cloud of feeling and thought begins to float in my mind; I try to catch the images and signifiers belonging to it. I don't think an image is something isolated on its own. It is not merely an image or motif, but emerges within a network of various relationships. For instance, "grass" or "ear" on its own might sound dry to the ear. But when you say "an ear among the grass," as in *Blue Velvet*, it instantly turns into something that draws you in and forces you to ponder. I say this independently of montage theory; I see it more as a matter of the image intensifying together with its context.

The theme of home was actually present even in my very early works—for example, *Far from the Non-Existent Home...* Initially, it arose from a more personal place, but over time it expanded. When I started changing cities incessantly after a certain point in my childhood, the question of space became even more pronounced for me; home became not just a structure, but a space I began thinking of in connection with loss and longing. The feeling that drew me in during high school lasted so long perhaps because it was about finding a dormitory that resembled that lost space. When I watched Kiarostami's film *Where Is the Friend's House?*, I felt as though I were looking at my own childhood and dove into this issue like a mole. Consequently, my relationship with houses is not theoretical; it rests directly on lived experiences and early memories.

In 2015, you held your third solo exhibition at Sanatorium, which functioned as an artist collective. The title of the exhibition was *Nostomania*. Is there a specific reason why all the works here were black and white? Would it be accurate to evaluate this as the beginning of "rhizomatic" investigations that both developed your personal signature and led your works toward a new expressiveness?

Erol Eskici: I can say that my working practice is rhizomatic; perhaps it could also be called molecular. I sense it through a structure that is decentralized, multi-layered, where different intensities coexist. This is not a linear or orderly progression. That's why entirely different orientations can sometimes intervene between works expected to follow one another. On the other hand, there are periods like *Nostomania* where the system is constructed in a more demanding manner. But generally, when works start settling into a comfortable spot, I tend to abandon it. Indeed, my next exhibition was *Stratigrafi* (Stratigraphy), which was related to geology, where color entered for the first time, and which consisted of canvases produced using completely different techniques.

Another phenomenon that emerged decisively in 2015 is that the understanding of composition you developed reflected a certain digital experience, a visuality acquired in front of a screen. I think digital perception also influenced the phenomenon of atmosphere in your works. Once perspective and foreground-background relationships in the classical sense disappear, an undefined, homeless flow of images seems to take center stage in your paintings.

Erol Eskici: By 2015, the screen had entered the equation more visibly, but there were still compositions I created by cutting and pasting analogously. The digital experience was influential, but it wasn't the sole defining element. At least half of the work I do today has no direct relationship with screen experience. For instance, the *Ripple* series or the water-based ink works cannot be designed in advance by their very nature; they emerge during the process.

Even the light of a screen affects painting. A painting produced under the candle light Goya attached to his hat cannot be the same as one made under LED light. Considering Vermeer's relationship with optical tools, had there been no lens, he probably would have made different paintings. In this sense, the screen is not merely a tool, but an element that transforms the way of seeing. Elements of art history believed to be eternal are historical. In fact, even certain artists presented beyond temporality are entirely products of environmental conditions. I think somewhat with concepts, but mostly with images and obsessions.

In your 2019 solo exhibition where *Stratigrafi*—treating geological history through scientific methods—formed the starting point, it appears you focused on "textures" and tilted toward a quite abstract narrative language. Simultaneously adding figures and objects to your compositions, it is as if you bring "opposite layers" side by side. What catches attention here, in my view, is how you conceal the traces of the paths you crossed while constructing your painting. Based on details revealing that you do this with pleasure, especially starting from the painting *Merak Dolabı (Biyostratigrafik Menzil Bölgesi)* [Cabinet of Curiosities (Biostratigraphic Range Zone)], I would like to ask: Why does the unity formed by your images coming together remain alien and fragmented?

Erol Eskici: The exhibition focused on the correlation between strata, topographies, segments, interiors, and architectures. Stratigraphy is a kind of rock detective work, I might say. While preparing for this exhibition, I approached what I did like a detective. For example, when creating the *Ripple* series, which dealt with ripples—wave-like sedimentary structures formed on sandy and sedimented surfaces by water or wind as a result of fluid dynamics, carrying direction and speed information—I studied how ripples form in nature, how they are categorized, and their principles of formation. There was an index classifying these formation types, and I was researching how I could produce visual representations as close to these principles as possible. Although I don't recall the exact details today, bringing the right materials together and finding the right hand movement parallel to that took quite a lot of time.

While considering how I could use the resulting abstract, repetitive, and entangled structure in contexts other than ripples, I tried both not to stray too far outside the exhibition's framework and to expand that frame. The painting *Merak Dolabı (Biyostratigrafik Menzil Bölgesi)* was one of the outcomes of this search. The unity created by the images remaining alien and fragmented is a deliberate choice. There are both technical reasons for this, and a structural tension stemming from elements coming from very different contexts meeting on the same surface.

At this point, I would like to move on to the paintings you have been working on for your first solo exhibition in Germany. When I saw some of them on the studio walls, the initial impression they evoked in me was that the pictorial elements brought different wholes together. Discussing them, the conversation eventually arriving at the concept of parataxis completely changed my perspective on your recent works, I must say. How did you discover parataxis?

Erol Eskici: I stumbled upon the concept of parataxis in one of the texts I read while reviewing my last exhibition at Sanatorium, *Amaçlanmamış Anıtlar* (Unintended Monuments). Although the distinction between parataxis and hypotaxis—a grammatical contrasting pair—initially seemed like a syntactic issue, I soon realized that it didn't belong solely to language. Parataxis implied an organizational model operating through juxtaposition rather than an order established through hierarchical and causal connections. In this respect, it established an affinity with clustering, rhizomatic structuring, and non-hierarchical forms of connection.

Considering that a search for an asyndetic (conjunctionless) structure was already present in my paintings, the alignment of this concept with my production was not surprising. It was a structure where elements were not subordinate to one another nor gathered around a center, but rather established togetherness through mutual tension, attraction, or simply the principle of proximity. Here, parataxis became not merely a formal choice, but also an ontological mode of production: a structure where unity is not given in advance, but emerges within relationships.

When my encounter with a Japanese poetry style called Haiku was added to this, the pieces began to fall into place. The interrupted structure in Haiku, the juxtaposition of two images or situations without conjunctions, and the emergence of meaning from this gap drew an unexpected parallel with paratactic organization. Thus, I began to see more clearly that the evolution in my painting progresses not linearly, but through conceptual concentrations. In this sense, there is no moment where my painting isn't evolving; there are only moments where different organizational logics come to the fore.

Recently, I have been transferring more spontaneous, gesture-based formations on paper onto canvas and reordering them. In these series, instead of using matter to create an image, I surrender myself to the elemental power of matter itself—of paint, mineral, and water. Rather than drawing or painting an object, the production process turns into an event, a "state of becoming," or a "fluidization." Forms, structures, and substances appearing in space position themselves on the canvas as clusters, accumulations, and groupings. In this process, composition is no longer a balance problem aiming for unity in the classical sense, but a problem of temporary togetherness established by heterogeneous elements through juxtaposition. In other words, composition gives way to configuration.

I don't know if I've mentioned it before, but I am particularly interested in canvas painting acquiring a new identity to speak about today, about what we experience. In your new works, one senses "pictorial unease" making reference to today's uncertainties and apprehensions, which is in extremely close relationship with the state of being in constant uncertainty during the era we live in.

Erol Eskici: Perhaps my approach to painting or the instruments I possess belong to today, but I'm not so sure that what I show is specifically such things. I don't make a special effort for it either. None of the trends like Glitch, Pixel, Post-Internet, Metamodernism, or Zombie Formalism interest me. I think they also say very limited things about today. I view them more as specific visualization templates.

Painting can of course touch upon the current realm, but it is not a discipline that merely chases the contemporary. It has its own historical tensions, its own branching moments. But today, whether even that historical branching is authentic is debatable. Market discourse constantly announces a "return": figuration returns, abstraction returns, Expressionism returns, Romanticism returns. Everything returns at the same time, everything dies at the same time. This is not history; it is a circulation economy.



Actant - 190×130cm - oil on canvas - 2025

The title of one of the paintings I saw in the studio and that you continue to work on, *The Magnetic Fields*, particularly caught my attention. This name brings along many associations. Besides its physics equivalent, it is also the title of the book *Les Champs magnétiques*, co-authored in 1920 by André Breton and Philippe Soupault and considered the beginning of Surrealism. There is also an American music group carrying the same name. What do you think about these overlaps?

Erol Eskici: I love the book very much. I didn't know about the music group. Even though it was written a hundred years ago, when you read it, you immediately feel it has a different energy and vibration.

Actually, this painting could be considered a continuation of a work titled *Encounter*, which I made earlier but never exhibited. That painting was a kind of encounter scene. Today in literature, especially in the New Weird movement, we come across the state of encountering the unknown. In our previous conversations, we mentioned the ear in *Blue Velvet*. That ear was like an object of trouble; it dragged the character into the dark psycho-map of a town that appeared calm on the surface. In this new painting, I used one of my forms as the magnet of the painting. Here, the elements are connected not through sequences of meaning, but through mutual attractive forces. Their juxtaposition is not the result of a logical chain; it's the result of attracting one another. Therefore, a very paratactic situation is involved. Two sentences from the book: "*Our habits, our crazy masters, call to us. Broken dissolutions, even heavier silences...*"

I'd like to continue discussing this painting. If I grasped it correctly, there are different intertwined planes in this composition. Figurative elements in the foreground, a layer behind them bearing traces of your recent abstractions, and at the very back, a forest landscape evoking almost 18th-century landscape painting, massive trees, and a dramatic sky. Would it be accurate to interpret the coming together of these three distinct planes and perspectives as a visualization of Parataxis?

Erol Eskici: Absolutely, it could be, and in addition, what's happening here is somewhat beyond a simple collage or assemblage. The continuity of space and the unity of the light regime are factors that distinguish it from a collage. Rather than sharpness, a formal organicity is present. In a way, this is a regional painting. One can still find a pastoral tone in landscape painting; but here, a leaden blueness now prevails. The curved abstract entity in the middle, also resembling a source, could be called the painting's rhythmic motor, or perhaps its dynamo. It both divides the painting and gives it rhythm and direction. It makes one feel there is something sculptural about the painting.

One night when I was walking on paths where I live, I suddenly encountered two extremely strange figures made of concrete, appearing as if flying, wrapped and rendered almost invisible by wild ivy and bushes. These things, possessing a Cronenberg-esque deformation, created almost a portal effect on me. Instantly, I remembered feelings I had felt in very old memories. Actually, since childhood, such sudden encounters have always affected me. In what artists create, one needs to be careful not to get overwhelmed beneath issues or situations from daily life that sound very, very ordinary when we hear them. After all, what matters is being able to distill the infinite strangeness lying within this ordinary nature. Consider a simple Foley technique, for instance, and remember that the sounds made by the creature in the movie *Alien* were the sound of lettuce or cabbage...

When I looked together at your three large-scale paintings to be exhibited at Golestani in Düsseldorf, I sensed a certain commonality regarding color. Looking back at my earlier notes, I felt that through the use of chromatic color in these compositions, you arrived at certain emotional concentrations. While reflecting on these, I stopped by the Josef Albers Museum in Bottrop. I learned that Albers meticulously kept an archive of chromatic color combinations for all two thousand compositions belonging to his famous *Homage to the Square* series. May I hear your thoughts on these topics?

Erol Eskici: I started using color quite late. After working achromatically for years, I entered this field cautiously and slowly. During this process, I drew nourishment from many sources; Albers was one of them. However, rather than taking his practice as a direct model, I viewed it more as a learning space. The color relationships within square forms are textbook lessons showing how composition can be established purely through chromatic tension.

But for me, when forms intertwine, when various elements come side by side—with light, atmosphere—color no longer stays put as it does in the bottle. In these recent works, beyond basic values of color such as tone, light-dark, and intensity, I was also interested in the opacity and transparency of the paint. I made some of my paintings entirely in transparent colors, and as painters will know, this is a rather difficult thing. I discovered that I mostly loved colors that look optically toxic, often for reasons I couldn't explain.

Consequently, if there is an affinity between systematic color research like Albers's and my practice, it lies mostly at the level of discipline and attentiveness. For me, however, rather than an element balanced within a geometric order, color becomes an active agent circulating between layers, dividing space, and defining the atmosphere.



(detail) Adsorbates - 190×250cm - oil on canvas - 2025



Assemblage - 240×190cm - oil on canvas - 2024