

## Press release

**Özgür Kar**

**ROT**

**October 19 – November 18, 2023**

Musca Depicta, the inconspicuous painted fly in early 15th-and 16th century Netherlandish still-lives and portraiture has long disturbed the gaze of connoisseurs with its incommensurable symbolism of filth, and decay. In Özgür Kar's latest exhibition *ROT*, flies take centre stage in a grim scene. Gone are the tragi-comedic rants and soliloquies of Death, the downcast skeleton, and melancholic clarinet players that frequently populate in Kar's monochromatic animations. Here, he depicts a desolate landscape on glossy flatscreens, where a broken chain link gate, a lone egg, and swarms of hovering flies are the last remainders. Following his 2023 trilogy of works *FALL*, *DAWN*, and *DEATH'S CROOK*, the multi-channel installation epitomizes the latest in the artist's observations on contemporary doom and malaise, and zeros in a decomposing depopulated world that is languishing in the threshold of being undead and unalive.

Plagued by the planetary catastrophe that humans, the most destructive and invasive of all species, are driving into at full speed, *ROT* probes the existential impasse poised between radical anti-natalist movements, such as the Voluntary Human Extinction Movement, and the enduring faith in humanity's collective survival in the future. The work brings to the fore questions of procreation, altruism, and mortality in an open-ended contemplation. Set against the pitch-black void, the five by two-meter life-sized gate was originally meant to restrict movements of bodies; now vandalised, it is fruitless in guarding against the descent of flies, let alone imminent danger. Through Kar's spatial dramaturgy, the audience steps into this insect-infested theatre of atrophy, overborne by a towering industrial fence while bearing witness to the fragile yet burdensome promise of life – a deserted nest with a solitary egg – come into bare existence.

Time crawls by in the pair of video vanitas; its slow march steered by the affective musical arrangement. The incessant drone of bugs buzzing and colliding into surfaces, waver from misophonic to entrancing, and is accompanied by occasional bird calls, and a haunting piano interlude–reminiscent of Erik Satie or Brian Eno's minimal compositions – almost falling apart at the seams. Like an audio Rorschach test, the trembling soundscape enters foreboding psychoacoustic territory, evoking spectral footsteps, fire cracklings, or shrill gusts of wind in the background. Kar confronts visitors with the infinitude of stasis, leaving them to fathom irresolute emotions and narratives in this atemporal tableau. What agency is left when one is immobilised by the profundity of inevitable degeneration ahead? As viewers catch their own reflections mirrored on gleaming TV screens, *ROT* implicates everyone in this oblivion of hope and wretchedness that makes us nothing but human.

Christina Li

**Özgür Kar** (b. 1992, Turkey) lives and works in Amsterdam. Recent solo presentations include: *DAWN REDUX*, Fridericianum, Kassel, 2023 ; *DAWN*, The Renaissance Society, Chicago, 2023 ; *GOOD NIGHT*, The Art Gallery of Western Australia, Perth, 2023 ; *FALL*, Basement Roma, Rome, 2023 ; *AT THE END OF THE DAY*, Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, 2022. Recent group exhibitions include: *Live Without Dead Time*, Ghost2565, Bangkok, 2022 ; *Cassandra Complex*, Basis, Frankfurt, 2022 ; *Optimized Fables about a Good Life*, Plato, Ostrava, 2022 ; *Manifesto of Fragility*, Biennale de Lyon, Lyon, 2022 ; *24h*, Braunsfelder, Cologne, 2022 ; *Fata Morgana*, Musée du Jeu de Paume, Paris, 2022. His works are included in several international collections including: Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; Musée d'Art Moderne de Paris, Paris; FRAC Picardie, Amiens; FRAC Nouvelle- Aquitaine MECA, Bordeaux; FRAC Champagne-Ardenne, Reims. Forthcoming exhibitions include: *Wild Grass: Our Lives*, 8th Yokohama Triennial, 2024 ; *Ten Thousand Suns*, 24th Biennale of Sydney, 2024.