

Elif Saydam
Eviction Notice

Oakville Galleries in Gairloch Gardens
29 September 2023 – 6 January 2024

Curated by Theresa Wang

PRESS RELEASE

In their expanded painting practice, Saydam examines the formation and judgment of aesthetic taste and the forces that influence them. The artist approaches painting understanding its entanglement with the social inequities in material culture. With humour and rigour, Saydam employs strategies of abundance and excess—combining diverse techniques, materials, content, and style—to create works that defy medium-specificity. Their exhibition at Oakville Galleries continues their practice of addressing the circulation of economies, the socially transgressive, and the production of space.

The works in *Eviction Notice* encompass painting, textile, installation, and photography. Drawing upon traditions of ornamentation outside of the European canon, Saydam considers the dynamics of desire that are extended to objects and social spaces. They mine the decorative as a methodical tool, one inextricably bound up in racialized ideologies of class and gender, and mobilize its falsely attributed frivolity to challenge what, or who, is of value.

Set in the suburban backdrop of Gairloch Gardens where the gallery itself is a former home, *Eviction Notice* is grounded by a series of mural-scale paintings which extrapolate the material qualities of built structures to expose their skeletal foundations.

In *Beusselstrasse 17 10553 Alt Moabit (2023)*, Saydam assembles five dyed, hand-stitched panels on an open aluminum stud structure to form a multi-textured installation. Saydam repeats across the patchworked surface a trompe l'oeil, concrete cinder block pattern that is occasionally interrupted by collaged photos of apartment door handles and locks. Two sister works in the exhibition similarly employ motifs of different construction materials and offer varying approaches to ornamentation in order to challenge our internal biases and aesthetic hierarchies.

In addition, ten small paintings from Saydam's ongoing series, which take cues from Persian and Ottoman miniature painting, are interspersed throughout the gallery. These diminutive works explicitly reference historical and medieval painting traditions, but are further complicated with signs from contemporary urban environments and iconographies. Composed of photographic transfers which are then intricately embellished with oil paint, the works depict the essential independent variety stores of Berlin, Oakville and beyond.

Through Saydam's expressive visual language replete with the rich colours and iconography of ornamentation, these works form an expanding archive of cities bending and breathing under the inevitable forces of gentrification and the lives of those who dwell within them.

Furthermore, Saydam presents a series of installations in the form of laminated plastic curtains and glass sculptures which confront the notion of designated, partitioned spaces and propose the promise of unconstrained movement. Throughout the exhibition, Saydam uses the decorative as an invitation to project fantasy, a daring act during a time when it is becoming increasingly difficult to dream. Under Saydam's unique visual grammar, the works in *Eviction Notice* lead us to disrupt, take up, and reshape common spaces and offer emancipatory potential to the social relations of contemporary urban life.

ARTIST BIOGRAPHY

Elif Saydam (b. 1985 in Calgary, Canada) received their BFA from Concordia University and their Meisterschüler from Städelschule, Frankfurt am Main, Germany. They have exhibited internationally with solo and group exhibitions at Kunstverein Harburger Bahnhof, Hamburg; Taxispalais Kunsthalle Tirol, Innsbruck; Galerie Rüdiger Schöttle, Munich; Tanya Leighton, Berlin; Melange, Cologne; Kunsthalle Bern; Landes-Stiftung Arp Museum Bahnhof Rolandseck, Bonn; Kunstverein Nürnberg–Albrecht Dürer Gesellschaft; MMK Museum for Modern Art, Frankfurt; and Franz Kaka, Toronto. Saydam's work is held in the Public Collection of Contemporary Art of the Republic of Germany. The recipient of the 2020 Alfried Krupp von Bohlen und Halbach-Stiftung "Catalogue for Young Artists" award, Saydam's monograph titled 'Elif Saydam: TWO CENTS' was published by Mousse Publishing (Italy) in 2022. Saydam lives and works in Berlin.

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