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SILA CANDANSAYAR

Tenders

Opening Venerdì 17 Novembre, 2023

Curated by Studiolo with a text by Indira Béraud

Studiolo is pleased to present “Tenders”, the first solo show by the artist Sila Candansayar (Turkey, 1997). It features a series of 8 unpublished sculptural works created specifically for this exhibition during her residency at the École nationale supérieure des beaux-arts in Paris. The works are freely inspired and connected by the contradictory polysemic nature of the adjective “tender”. The word spans from the meaning of “offer” to “tender”, “sensitive” or “soft” – both in its figurative and objective senses- and even extends to the unexpected and irreverent notion of chicken tenders, a “strip of fried chicken”.

For her debut solo exhibition, Sila Candansayar envisions a process-oriented character where each artwork metaphorically prompts reflection on a different chapter of the evolutionary life of a person. In this specific case, the subject is explicitly feminine, both due to the intrinsic nature of certain forms and the presence of the elements related to the theme of nativity. This iconographic translation is encapsulated in the inclusion of eggs, made of marble or resin, in the oblong and filamentous configurations of some sculptural parts or in certain models where the archetypal memory of the female reproductive system is subtly and non-didactically impressed, reflecting the continuous progress of life. Sila pays homage not only to creation but also to a certain noble art history, where figures like Piero della Francesca – with his egg placed on the Virgin’s head as a symbol of the dogma of verginity - and Hieronymus Bosch – which opens a shell in its *garden of earthly delights* to open a refuge from the corruption of the ephemeral pleasures - serve as solid reference models for modulating this ancestral, hermetic, and extraordinary form.

The resin – a constant material presence indispensable within her work - in this exhibition is infused with a steel alloy, an internal core to make it more durable and malleable. She chooses to connect it with other materials such as marble, glass, wood, or even plastics for 3D painting; the result is a group of sculptures with an *alien* nature, their superficial textures often wrapped in a perfectly applied subtle green color, “stained” by artist through prolonged and painstaking hand sanding. This imparts an “organic” patina from which small translucent irises peep out, as if the inert anthropomorphic shapes were given sight and life.

The work “Baby Girls” serves as the incubator for this ideal evolutionary circle. It is a sculpture with a soft base of synthetic fur that contains within it objects symbolizing birth but also constraint and death, such as bird carcasses mixed with chains, turning this space into the *l’hortus conclusus* where beginning and end coincide. From the disciplined geometry of this enclosure, the artist moves to softer and more deformed structures, intending to represent not only the body’s transformation in its growth but also conceptually that moment in life when the experiential mark of adolescence are “deposited”, often marked by unpleasant and cruel events. “Missy” and “Doll” precisely depict this evolutionary stage in which the determination of our selves passes through the inevitable clash with the surrounding society. In a material narrative that leads to reflection on the various processes of our person – balanced between the concreteness of animal processes and science fiction imagination – “Better Half” and “Crone” represent the apex and also the descending curve of this journey. The polished surfaces and superficial satin colors begin to alter, and intimidating fishing hooks or supports shaped like limbs, emerge from the wall as if intending to condition or support the entities, now adults. The chromatic corruption of the surfaces, like the presence of these external “hands” – in the case of “Better Half”, they seem to want to entwine the sculpture and persuade it to accept an egg – hides a specific social critique: a denigrated model of femininity, sweetened to be objectified into an aesthetic conforming to the rigid cultural norm of this society; crushed and molded by the weight of external pressures. This statement is also articulated in the titles of the works, which can be traced back to some derogatory expressions used to define women (Doll, Crone etc...).

With “Tenders”, Sila Candansayar not only expresses her great passion for materials and experimentation with their potential but, also, offers a lucid reflection on the contemporary theme of femininity and emancipation. In a world where being tender, sweet, amiable or sensitive is not enough, unfortunately, one must also be ready to be consumed eagerly, much like fried chicken strips.

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Text by Indira Béraud

On the right bicep of Sila Candansayar is tattooed the figure of *Şahmeran*, the emblematic heroine of an Anatolian myth. Queen of the serpents, the creature with a hybrid appearance, half-woman, half-reptile, is endowed with great beauty. Because her flesh possesses healing properties, she will be sacrificed; her body cut into three, before being offered and then devoured by several men. The first solo exhibition of Sila Candansayar, "*Tenders*," presented at the Studiolo gallery, weaves a narrative that borrows as much from mythology, science fiction, as from intimate and sometimes banal experiences of everyday life. It all begins on a dreary autumn evening. Those somewhat morose evenings where one no longer has the strength to cook. The artist then opts for *Chicken Tenders*, which she will enjoy in bed while watching a TV series. The analogy is drawn between the body of this little chicken, butchered, cooked, and fried, and the body of *Şahmeran*, also dismembered, then eaten by men. In this sense, the expression "poulette" or "chick," which designates an appetizing young woman, is unequivocal: tender bodies are called to be devoured. If the title of the exhibition, particularly grim, is a direct reference to the dish offered by the famous fast-food chain, it is above all the echo of a deep reflection on the female body.

The fiction unfolds in a strange, arid landscape, where the works compose the fragments of an alternative reality. The recurrence of the egg (six, in total) and the mutant forms evoke the unsettling universe of science fiction films, like "*Alien*" (1979) directed by Ridley Scott. Embodying a single heroine through various stages of life, the sculptures — *Babygirl*, *Doll*, *Missy*, *Better Half*, *Crone* — testify to the identity, physical, and symbolic transformations that occur over time. Thus, *Babygirl*, an installation placed on the ground, resembles a cradle. Inside a glass cube, on a powdered pink faux fur blanket, lie the whitish bones of the chained animal. Bulging eyes stare at us fixedly. While next to it rests an egg of sky blue stone. If the egg symbolizes a promise, the hope of a subsequent birth, or the transformation from one state to another, it is juxtaposed here with death, foreshadowing a most dire fate. The power of the work undoubtedly lies in its narrative potential. Half-kitsch, half-gore, the horror scene contrasts with the infantile imagination that unfolds. As a medium for projection, it condenses several temporalities: the past drama, and the one that is presumed to come.

The sculptures *Doll*, *Missy*, *Better Half*, and *Crone*, each take the form of a bow tie. Traditionally, the ornament embellishes gift packages. Pulling the ribbon's threads provides a certain pleasure: the act, which prolongs the suspense, intensifies the excitement before the present is revealed. The bow is found in girls' hairstyles, embroidered on panties, and sometimes even adopted at the neckline, as a «*choker*». Supposed to add a touch of charm and sophistication, the bow carries a symbolic weight that relates to the idea of an offering. While the loops are round and airy, the action of tying, more authoritative, involves pulling the threads tight to keep them in place. Commanded to be desirable, bodies are decorated, prepared, constrained. Here, the anthropomorphic dimension of the sculptures will transform their bodies into accessories. Here, they are reduced to the state of objects, objects intended to please.

The works adopt positions and physical attributes according to the age to which their title refers. They also embody certain character traits. *Doll* is placed at ground level. The material, of a pristine celadon green, seems soft like velvet. In fact, the artist will have polished it for hours to achieve this silky texture. Sila Candansayar likes to say that she cuddles it, that she rocks it. *Missy*, for her part, is perched on a stainless steel podium. Her filaments dance elegantly, but her balance, which only holds by the egg, is precarious. Moreover, the work is placed on the side, and not in the center of the base, as if, shy, she could not quite take her place. More assured, *Better Half*, rises a little more in space. The corporeal envelope of the piece is marked, revealing traces made from glazed ceramic. Although its elongated and sinuous morphology is in motion, its body does not seem free for all that. It is held to the wall, as if confined by external forces. More tired, *Crone* is supported by two metallic hands with witch-like fingers. She has gained height and watches powerlessly over the scene.

The exhibition of Sila Candansayar, which brings together a finely produced corpus of pieces, unfolds like a political fable. The works relate the weight of a subjugating gaze cast upon women, overshadowed by their bodies. Around the soft and naive, carnal and sensual forms — characteristics of the feminine archetype —, there always hovers a dark and threatening aura. Evoking certain scenes from "*Videodrome*" (1983), a film directed by David Cronenberg, or the manga series "*Parasite*" (1988-94) written and drawn by Hitoshi Iwaaki, the metamorphosis that the pieces undergo, and the violence that accompanies it, are reflected in their psyche.

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Sila Candansayar

Born in 1997 in Ankara. She lives and works in Paris

Studies

2023 - BA Bachelor of Arts, Beaux-Arts de Paris, Paris

2020 - BA Bachelor of Philosophy, Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne, Paris

Selected Solo Shows

2023

Tenders, Studiolo, Milan

No Place Like Home, Beaux-Arts de Paris, Paris

Selected Group Shows

2023

Sur le Feu, Palais des Beaux-Arts, Paris

Lascaux6, espace nonononono, Paris

Studiolo Lounge #3, Cabinet Studiolo, Milan

2022

We Were Never Human, La serre, Paris