

For Immediate Release

Franz Kaka is pleased to announce Elif Saydam’s second solo exhibition with the gallery, *RAUS*.

Saydam is a Berlin-based, Turkish-Canadian artist whose work examines the construction and absorption of aesthetic value systems. Drawing on histories of decoration and ornamentation, they raise questions of what constitutes valued labour, identification, and social mobility within late capitalism. Their meticulous style references miniature painting traditions, complicated by incorporating incongruous materials, as well as transgressive iconographies.

RAUS presents a series of seven still life paintings, each depicting a bowl of pears that pass from full to empty. The bowl is rendered in a style of pottery associated with Greco-Roman Antiquity, chosen by the artist as a subtle reference to the recursive nostalgia of the far-right for Western empires of yore. In each tableau, one, two, or three pears are removed, evoking a spot-the-difference graphic script or stop-motion animation. Hanging together, the paintings present a narrative of being sorted, separated, excluded—of disappearing, one-by-one. The paintings are uniform in size and orientation with the exception of one, *Zusatzblatt* (2025), depicting a dish viewed from above, emptied of fruit with only PLU (price look-up) stickers left behind.

Saydam often incorporates covert gestures that flag feelings of ambivalence, anti-capitalist grievances, and subversive fantasies into their meticulously crafted works. For *RAUS* (translating to “out” in German) the artist has, rather remarkably, hand-woven their own canvas, embedding an additional layer of labour into the painting ground. Citing the Myth of Penelope—who delays her remarriage to unwanted suitors by never completing a shroud, instead weaving it by day, and secretly unweaving it by night—Saydam is interested in this devoted act of technical mastery that then gets disavowed. In what the artist describes as a hyper-literal act, a red line is woven into the canvas itself. The red line signifies something that should not be crossed, a margin on a sheet of loose leaf, or the delineation of borders—one can deny that the line is there, but it’s literally embedded into the structure.

Saydam has titled several works after German state documents that regulate immigration and work status. *Fiktionsbescheinigung* (2025), for instance, refers to the document that provides the provisional right to work in Germany and travel freely while awaiting a residency permit, translating literally to “Certificate of Fiction.” Cognizant that the still life genre is historically loaded, rendering objects procured through colonization and trade, Saydam’s titles act as frames, refuting the possibility of projecting neutral or reactionary meaning onto the empty(ing) vessel. To go “pear-shaped” is for something to go unexpectedly wrong and the paintings together convey an anxiety of separation, of striving for the agency to stay together. Saydam’s reprisal of the still life genre is as if to say: The painting itself may or may not be political, but it hangs in a world that most certainly is.

— Kate Whiteway, 2025

Franz Kaka

Elif Saydam

RAUS

February 14 — March 15, 2025

Elif Saydam (b. 1985, Calgary, CA; lives and works in Berlin, DE) received a *Meisterschülerin* in painting in the class of Monika Baer/Amy Sillman from Städelschule, Frankfurt (2016) and a BFA from Concordia University, Montreal (2009). Recent solo and group exhibitions include MIT List, Cambridge, US and Kunsthal Thy, DH (both 2025); *Hospitality*, Audain Gallery, Simon Fraser University, Vancouver, CA (2024); *A Crack We Sprout Through*, SANATORIUM, Istanbul (2024); *it's not you it's me*, Sentiment, Zürich, CH (2024); *Stealth*, Galerie Rüdiger Schöttle, Munich, DE (2024); *Half Life*, Franz Kaka, Toronto, CA (2023); *Eviction Notice*, Oakville Galleries, CA (2023); *Cleaning up the Neighborhood*, All Stars, Lausanne, CH (2022); *Lose Enden*, Kunsthalle Bern, CH (2021); *F*rgiveness*, Tanya Leighton, Berlin, DE (2022); *...schläft sich durch*, Kunstverein Harburger Bahnhof, Hamburg, DE (2021). Saydam's first monograph *TWO CENTS* was published in 2022 with Mousse Publishing, Italy, and they frequently collaborate on interdisciplinary text-based projects with other artists and writers. Saydam is the recipient of the Hessische Kulturstiftung Atelier Stipendium in New York City for 2024-25, where they are researching camp aesthetics as an emancipatory tool for diasporic survival and political imagination.