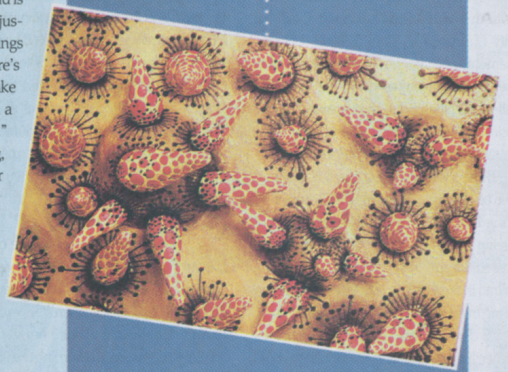
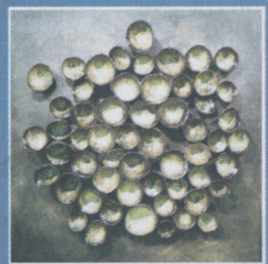


# ARTIST ELVAN ALPAY

## creates an epic world with 'thorny' figures



PHOTO □ TODAY'S ZAMAN, MEMET YAMAN



HATICE AHSEN UTKU İSTANBUL

Nature is not as far from us as we think. It is within the geometric flying patterns of flocks of birds; it is hidden in the soil we step on; it is in the branches of the pale trees in the city and in the thorns of hedgehogs.

Artist Elvan Alpay reveals this hidden nature in her latest exhibition, "Kirpi" (Hedgehog), on display through Feb. 25 at Galeri Nev in İstanbul's Beyoğlu.

Made up of paintings of birds and hedgehogs and sculptures that depict forms reminiscent of the organic elements of nature, Alpay's exhibition comes together to form a single entity.

"The works are arranged in harmony," explained Alpay in an interview with Today's Zaman. "I worked on the sculptures first and then produced the paintings. The paintings refer to the sculptures and the sculptures refer to the paintings. Even though they do not reiterate each other, they represent one entity.

"Of course, every exhibition has a unique story behind it," explained Alpay, continuing: "But the whole story of the artist is an entity in itself. If you look just at what I have done in 2012, you can see paintings of birds and hedgehogs. But it's a totally new story. My previous exhibition was 'Düş Orman' [Dream Forest], and the one before that was 'Organizma Orman' [Organism Forest]. These are not like narrative stories but rather like stories of emotion because there are not very tangible or direct references in my works."

In this respect, for Alpay, the materials she uses for her work are more than mere tools. "My story merges with the material," she said. "Every new material is a new method of expression. One of the differences of this exhibition from the previous ones is the [addition of] three-dimensional sculptures on canvas made using wood putty. The geometric forms may be reminiscent of the ex-

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hibition 'Organizma Orman'; however, that was an exhibition with much heavier, darker emotions. It had a different emotional influence. This exhibition is like a differentiated, colorized version of it."

### Wings and thorns

The leading role in the exhibition is played by hedgehogs and birds. "In the past, I have studied frogs a lot -- spiders, grasshoppers, crows..." remembered Alpay. "Every form in nature, particularly animals, expresses a different pattern and a different feeling. These forms are like my musical notes. I use them more easily than human figures to express myself; they are forms that I can manipulate very easily."

"It's a very thorny exhibition," Alpay described, referring to the paintings of hedgehogs and spiniferous sculptures in the exhibition. "But it's not a dark, pessimistic exhibition." Noting that the audience rarely feels depressed by her exhibits, Alpay explains that there is not always an analogy between mental state and the works produced. "If you are feeling sad or melancholic, you do not necessarily have to produce sad, dark works," the artist said. "Every work has its own language. It is

always said that your mood or mental state is always reflected in your work. I don't believe this argument anymore. I was not feeling so good while I was working on this exhibition. Indeed, it was a very depressing time. But when you look at the works, the exhibition as a whole is one of the merriest, most cheerful and carefree shows that I've ever realized."

For Alpay, the more skilled the artist becomes, the weaker the correlation between the mental state of the author and the work. "The work is not solely the projection of your mood; it's more than that," she said. "You can start to break away your work from your mental state as you become skilled in your art... A person may be living a very depressed, tough life in general. Even in that case, I don't believe that such a person will always produce melancholic works. On the contrary, I've generally observed the opposite. And they are the artists whom I respect the most because I think they bear their sorrow with honor. They prefer not to express their sorrow very explicitly and they don't propagate darkness and unhappiness to people."

Alpay said she wishes to bring light to the audience through her works. "We all pass through many things in this life," she related. "The world is not a great place to live; we witness so much injustice every day -- we struggle with so many things in our daily lives. But, on the other hand, there's a miraculous aspect to life. If I help people take a little breath of relief with my works in such a [depressing] atmosphere, I feel much happier."

Despite having just begun her showing, Alpay has already begun to think about her next exhibition. "I usually feel a certain emptiness after I complete all the works for an exhibition," she recalled. "But that's not the case this time. I know what I have in mind and what I am going to do. It will be a kind of continuation of this exhibition. I feel immediately ready to work on my next exhibition for the first time."