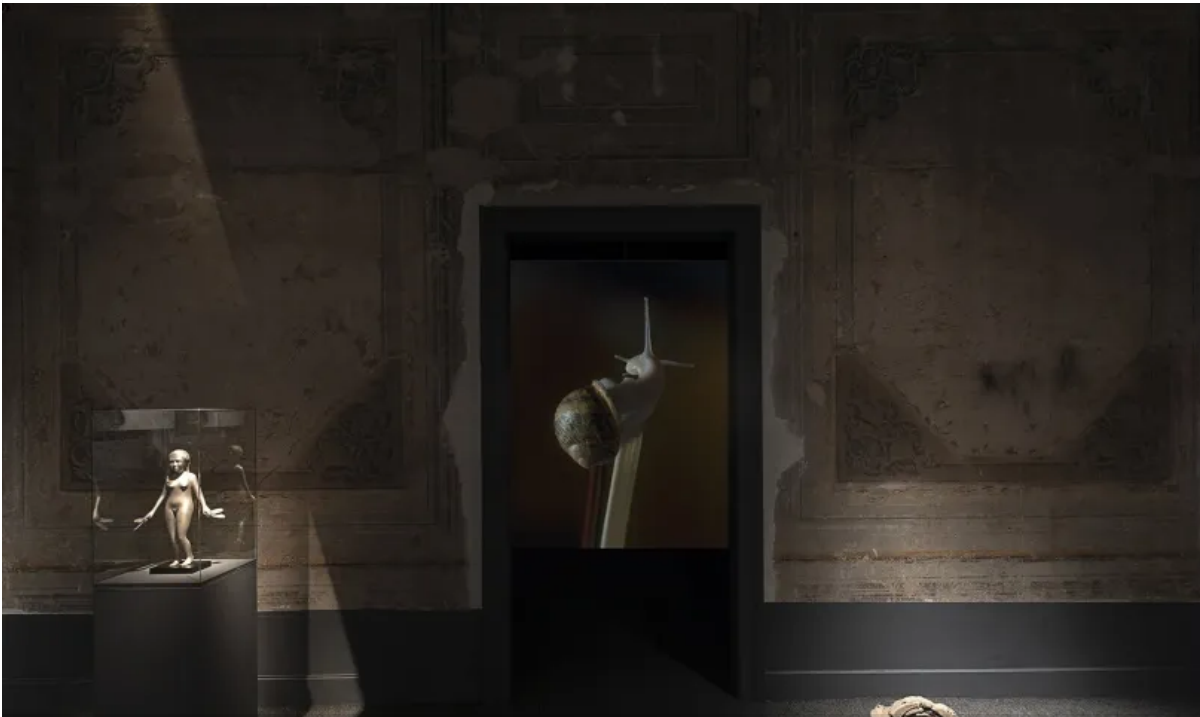



Arts and Literature

# At a loss for heart: Burcu Fikretoğlu curates at Galerist

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Titled after a Leonard Cohen song, 'True Love Leaves No Traces,' the ambient and impassioned group show curated by Burcu Fikretoğlu at Galerist is a meditation on the fragility and vulnerability of living

Within the elegant reaches of an antique Pera apartment, the contemporary art space Galerist maintains its singular aesthetic, touching on the sensitive zone where the decorative becomes philosophical, like the seer themselves immersed in surroundings that glow and spark with ideas manifest under dim, cinema lighting and sunny, domestic rooms. And what better muse to bring art together, like the joyous cosmology of a live audience, than the muse-keeper himself, the late modern meistersinger Leonard Cohen.

Ascending the stone steps of the historic building in Pera, entering the foyer space at Galerist for the show, "True Love Leaves No Traces," a work by Chilean-born artist, architect and filmmaker Alfredo Jaar conveys the natural disaster of human war, how its self-destructive capacity for chaos cycles back to the lives of creatives, prompting the inspiration derived from their struggles in a world where songs are deafened by blasts. In his large-print photograph, "Milano" (1946), Argentine-Italian painter Lucio Fontana stands in the ruins of Jaar's old studio.

As curator, Burcu Fikretoğlu demonstrated an able talent for the creation of meaning through the connection of objects, and the space between them. By doing so, she also points to the spatiality inherent in objects themselves, not just in terms of their provenance but how they might be imagined to move, and sound. A series of sculptural works by Stefania Strouza, "433 Eros" (2022), is scattered throughout the gallery, instilling their meteor-like shape with the idea that they float, or land, haphazardly, from the moon, or some celestial phenomena.

Strouza's work, and their careful curation, sets the show on a romantic plane, lunar, otherworldly, under a night sky sparkling with light, myth, vision, mystery. With the name of Leonard Cohen echoing, subtly, in the backdrop of every thought as the first hall opens wide behind a thick, heavy pair of red curtains and single bulbs cast their soft, moody light. A trio of canvases titled, "Curtain Romanticism" (2021-2022) is lathered with acrylic and etched with pencil by Kostis Velonis, repeating the imagery of the entrance with its formal semblances.



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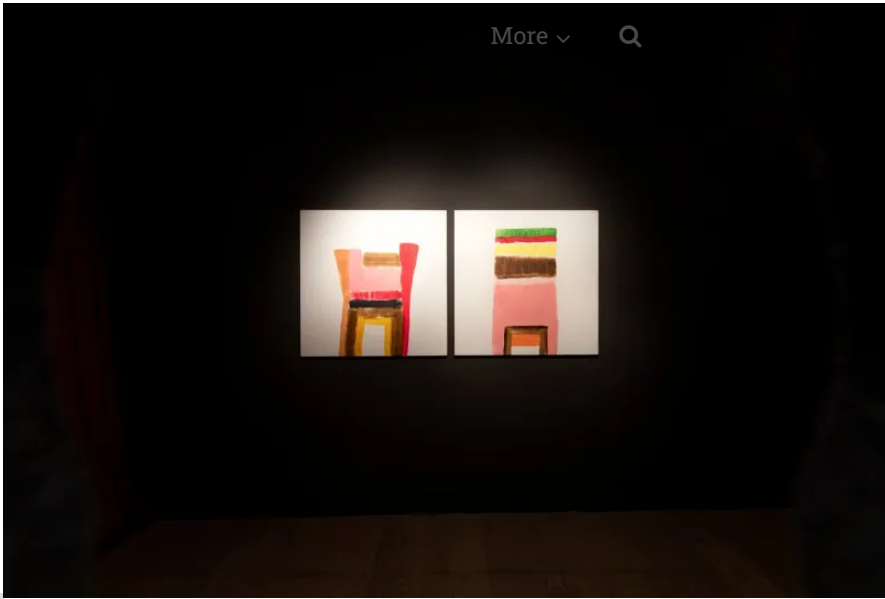
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Kostis Velonis, "A Curtain Romance," (2021-22). (Photo Courtesy of Nazlı Erdemirel)

## What is seen and scenes

In through the immediate room, the trailer to a film by Claire Denis plays on repeat, as does an eerie succession of notes on piano. The musical phrasing is drawn from a recording of Cohen's "True Love Leaves No Traces," although its alternate interpretation is on a more gloomy tone than the triumphant original. Denis' "L'Intrus" (2005) projects images of a man in need of a heart transplant, as he is stripped of exterior facade and plunges into the soil and forests of abandonment in search of his living, and perhaps everlasting, self.



An exhibition view from "True Love Leaves No Traces." (Photo Courtesy of Nazlı Erdemirel)

The visual motifs of remote desperation in the film fly past, in utter contrast to the fixed sculpture hanging on the opposite wall by Necla Rüzgar. The piece, "My Body Palace" is from a series in which she employed bronze casting to depict an antlered deer, its face flickering in the firelight of the movie, as its bushy neck fur covers a human portrait, downcast, glancing to the side, as if ashamed. If the relationship between nature and humanity is being painted by Fikretoğlu's curatorial work, it is broken, full of painful memories and the need for reconciliation.

The gleaming, metallic eyes of the deer stare directly into an adjacent room, where a new installation by Hale Tenger floats like the wafting of a dewy, floral scent in some familiar pastoral landscape. And with the repetitive chordal exclamation heard about its floating drapes and windblown transparency, the kinetic sculpture of silk fabrics suggests a cubist evocation of the ribcage in

And leading through into a more brightly lit space, there are traces of domesticity, of civilization and its discontents, in the words of Sigmund Freud. Across from its doorless entry, there are adaptations of intricately carved wooden furniture, the likes of which might be expected in such a classy flat as that occupied by Galerist. The clothes drawers are sliced, as it were, so that they are legless, and appear to sink into the ground, quite like the old churches of Mexico City, as their foundations disappear into the eroding wetland earth.

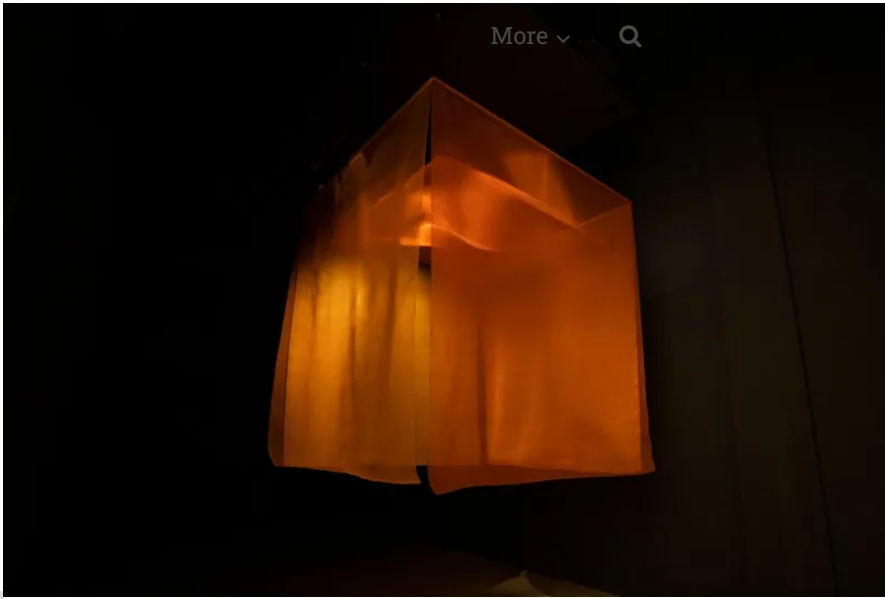


An exhibition view from "True Love Leaves No Traces." (Photo Courtesy of Nazlı Erdemirel)

## To be insightful in darkness

One of the more evocative works in the brightest of interior halls at "True Love Leaves No Traces" are a couple of photographs by Silva Bingaz, the first of which is titled, "Istanbul and its Painters" (2018-2022). The piece frames a multiple exposure of someone enduring a bout of excruciating night terrors, the heart of the city being an apt metaphor, visualized, for the confines of desire at the core of urbanization and its complex of aspiration in confrontation with the double binds of dream and reality.

"Istanbul and its Painters" depicts what it is like when the city maintains psychological sway over its protagonists, and assumes the role of lead character, controlling those who would have once sought to use it for their designs. Its madly Byzantine sophistication, blending social tension and industrial technology, are, at times, too much for a single individual to even fathom, never mind exploit. A Medusa-like visage of snaking locks of hair is fixed on the wall beside the image, created by artist Ismene King to capture such a mythic bearing.



Hale Tenger, "Happens to the Heart" (2022). (Photo Courtesy of Nazlı Erdemirel)

And wrapping around through the inner passages of Galerist, cloaked in heavy curtains, red and thick, double-layered, as if behind the scenes of a Shakespearian set, the last room is an ode to the Fibonacci sequence of the snail's shell. Aestheticized by Velonis, whose concrete mixed media sculpture, titled, "The Wheel of Fortune (Corner Soul)" (2016), complements a single-channel video, "If and Only If" (2018) by Anri Sala. The moving image of a violinist playing softly in tune with the movements of a snail on his bow is hypnotic.

Overall, the curatorial collectivization of artworks at the exhibition, "True Love Leaves No Traces" considers the theme of romance as a picture of tempestuous yearning and unrequited passion between the naiveties of the natural world and the unwitting horrors that follow from the ecological footprint of humanity. As Cohen might have sung, these traces are best extinguished by the irresistible sway of forgetfulness, a call to oblivion that heals the traumatic wonders of fully conscious attachment to anything alive in the ephemeral universe.

Courtesy: Dailysabah