

The Eye of the Earth, The Mouth of the Ground

A Solo by Gözde İlkin

12 December 2022 - 25 January 2023

Gypsum is pleased to present *The Eye of the Earth, the Mouth of the Ground*, a solo show by Istanbul-based artist Gözde İlkin. İlkin's most recent body of work looks at traces left by the elements – wind, rain, sun – on natural landscapes, approaching rocks as memory objects that encapsulate a specific era. Paralleling how the found domestic fabrics on which she stitches and paints preserve elements of human culture and history, these stones act as a repository where earth's memory can be processed.

Through collecting rocks and consulting geological collections of museums, İlkin began to create a personal archive that traces her journey through natural and urban geographies. She anthropomorphizes these forms, imbuing the mounds, streams, and caves that populate her works with a dynamism that transforms them into limbs for a pulsing earth.

In *The Mouth of the Ground* – an installation of eight soft patchwork sculptures – fabrics that carry traces of human cultures and traditions, are combined with rocks and minerals that keep a record of the earth. The work is accompanied by a video narrated by the artist, in which she shares the diaristic notes and sketches from her collecting process.

Quiet Abrasion presents a series of pillow cases as stone tablets bearing inscriptions from a dream-realm, with the fabrics acting as carriers of knowledge between conscious and unconscious states. Contorted body parts, vaguely human in their appearance, are strewn across the hand-dyed pillowcases, their organic shapes contrasting with the pillowcases' stylized lace trimmings.

In the works *Unkept Secrets*, *Holding Onto the Mountain*, *Deaf Cave*, and *Eye of the Earth*, İlkin draws on recurring animal symbols – including the snake and the wolf – to reference a premodern knowledge, and the protective and destructive forces that defy the reason of modern man. Works set against a rippling, white and blue tie-dyed backdrop evoke a seascape or river, while neutral canvas-hued fabrics conjure a stark desert horizon.

Through incorporating figurative and animal motifs that draw on shamanic practices and mythical narratives, İlkin's visual language erodes the distinction between human and non-human, giving way to a representation of multiple pasts in which the natural and the man-made are entwined.

Gözde İlkin (b. 1981, Kütahya) uses painting and stitching to create works on repurposed domestic fabrics. Solo shows include *Entrusted Ground*, artSümer, Istanbul (2022); *The Trap*, Gypsum Gallery, Cairo (2016); *Stained Estate*, Françoise Heitsch Gallery, Munich (2015); and *Please Clear the Dance Floor*, artSümer, Istanbul (2010). Her work has been shown at Bündner Kunstmuseum in Chur, Switzerland (2022); as part of *Rooted Beings*, Wellcome Collection, London (2022), 12th Survival Kit Festival, Latvian Centre for Contemporary Art, Riga (2021); *UnNatural History*, Herbert Art Gallery and Museum, Coventry (2021); and as part of the 13th Gwangju Biennial (2021); The 15th Istanbul Biennale (2017); at Istanbul Modern Museum (2019) and at Arter, Istanbul (2015). She lives and works in Istanbul.

The Mouth of the Ground was commissioned and produced by *Invisible Dust* in partnership with the Herbert Art Gallery and Museum, Coventry for the exhibition *UnNatural History*, funded by Arts Council England and Wellcome Trust.

HOLDING ON TO THE MOUNTAIN / DAĞA TUTUNMAK, 2022

Painting and stitching on vintage bundle fabric 76 x 82 cm

Inspired by a limestone statue from the Neolithic era found in Karahan Tepe/Şanlıurfa, Turkey, this piece depicts a long-forgotten symbiotic relationship between humans and animals. Rather than representing a hunt or a battle or glorifying humans' dominance over animals, the original statue shows a live leopard being carried on a human's back. This unusual motif is reimagined here on a fabric strip that can itself be used to bundle and transport personal belongings, alluding to the nomadic origins of human settlements.

SAND DELUSION / KUM YANILGISI, 2022

Painting and stitching on vintage fabric 46 x 105 cm

This work was inspired by a photograph of the Wadi Degla protectorate, whose borders are being encroached on by residential construction. The work addresses the traces left by human dwellings and animal habitation on a desert landscape, presenting animal, human and stone formations on an antique tablecloth.

UNKEPT SECRETS / TUTULAMAYAN SIRLAR, 2022

Painting and stitching on dyed fabric 94 x 130 cm

This work depicts the seepage of knowledge from the past to the present, and draws on the symbolic power of the wolf and the snake in various mythologies, as well as the transportive power of water and earth. Water and earth are both leaky narrators that shape man and his character, eroding barriers and bringing everything that is unspeakable to the surface.

EYE OF THE EARTH / TOPRAĞIN GÖZÜ, 2022

Painting and stitching on vintage fabric 46 x 105 cm

This piece is inspired by the Nile – the Eye of the Earth in Ancient Egyptian mythology, from which all life flowed. The course of the Nile shapes the land it passes through, and determines the character and way of life of the people who live around it. It is embroidered on an antique tablecloth which symbolises the river that seeds, gives life, cares for, and watches over the earth.

DEAF CAVE / SAĞIR MAĞARA, 2022

Painting and stitching on dyed fabric 98 x 131 cm

In Deaf Cave, human-animal bodies and stone forms are mixed together. The humanoids attempt to hear one another through the echoes of their voices on the stones – or to hear the voices of the stones themselves – with this sensory symbiosis highlighting the interconnectedness of all animate and inanimate life forms.

QUIET ABRASION / AHESTE AŞINMALAR, 2022

5 pieces of pillowcase Stitching and painting on Natural dyed pillowcases

In this series, the pillowcases are painted with symbols inspired by ruins found at the Göbekli Tepe Neolithic archaeological site in Turkey, believed to be a site for religious ceremonies. The symbols inscribed there by ancient shamans could have been relevant to astrology or other ritualistic practice. In this artwork, the symbols on the pillowcases transport an unconscious knowledge from the dream to the waking realm.