

EMRE HÜNER

Arter

Review by Kaya Genç
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Since his 2009 show “Juggernaut,” Emre Hüner has used clay, polyurethane, and other materials to build sculptures that embody what he calls “fictional artifacts.” His contribution to the 2015 Istanbul Biennial, whose theme was “Saltwater: A Theory of Thought Forms,” was “Perpetual Island Infinite Vehicle,” 2015, a series of bulky sculptures made of glazed ceramics, steel, and paint, which imitated nature’s organic forms to suggest a topographical landscape. Hüner’s latest show, “[ELEKTROİZOLASYON]: Unknown Parameter Extro-Record,” curated by Aslı Seven, offers eclectic assemblages scattered around Arter’s massive space like piles of Lego pieces, dazzling in their bright colors and serpentine shapes. Tackling archeology, futurism, and waste under the rubric of the Turkish word for electrical isolation, they form imaginatively titled groupings, such as *Anoxic Event*, 2021, which comprises objects made of epoxy resin, clay, glazed ceramic, silicone, and iron. Using cast reproductions of materials scavenged from factories and workshops, including plumbing equipment, exhaust fittings, and polystyrene packaging, Hüner creates science-fictional works that function as meditations on industrialization. Among the dysfunctional, speculative assemblages is a massive replica of an industrial fan like those that ventilate the arts hub Arter. Elsewhere one sees reimagined, repainted, and re-created windshield washer-fluid reservoirs and gas cans, cast in clay or polyurethane, as well as real bicycle handlebars and 3D prints of fish brains. Hüner’s unsettling forms suggest an archaeology that enmeshes past and future. The aura of car-repair shops and mannequin ateliers that populate Dolapdere, the street where Arter is located, seeps into these baffling creations.

Untitled Aggressive Mimetic, 2009–21, a massive sculptural seawall made of Styrofoam and cement, mixes Metabolist and Brutalist architectures to ponder ecological collapse. This fictional remnant of a natural disaster may have survived Fukushima but couldn’t halt the tsunami: a symbol

of another failed human intervention into nature. [*ELEKTROİZOLASYON*], 2021, a more than five-hour-long video that continues this survey of an apocalyptic world, was shot in different parts of the gallery itself with an eye toward making the building's invisible parts visible, revealing, for example, a tank used to store water in case of fire on one of the underground levels, the unseen rooftop that remains closed to the public. One of the film's characters, during his nocturnal wanderings around Istanbul, mulls over this catastrophe-ridden world, and the film's striking black-and-white photography captures dilapidated parts of the city. Footage showing a washing machine being assembled by gigantic robots on a production line makes a sly reference to Arçelik, the household-appliances manufacturer owned by Koç Holding, Turkey's largest industrial conglomerate, which also funds Arter: another intersection of art, industry, and capitalism. Some of Hüner's sculptural works function as props in [*ELEKTROİZOLASYON*], and this continuum between the film and the exhibition space produces an uncanny sense of déjà vu. Costumes worn by the actors, for example, have been molded into sculptures that are displayed in the gallery.

Concluding these inquiries is *Hypernavts*, 2021, a booklet authored by one Meliha Erem, a specialist on "technology in Neolithic Age settlements," who is actually an invention of Hüner's. Erem describes a homeless person "perched in one of the burnt-out holes covered in concrete," watching a fuel barge resembling a floating gas station as it rises "out of the desolate dark green of the waters." A yellow-gray fish's skin "shone from soaking in the mercury that leaked from the thermal power plant." These flash fictions expand Hüner's ambitiously collated specimens of sculpture, language, and film, extending his search for a novel way of thinking about forms, functions, and futures.

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