

The Collective Drunkness of The Personal Thing

In her exhibition titled "Lilac Wine" in which Hayal İncedoğan focuses on the theme of love and brings together different works of art from oil paintings, photographs to neon installations and videos in a feminine sensibility, the presence of an emotional 'climate' change is unquestionably dominant.

The spineless cactus, named 'Echeveria' and a member of the 'succulent' family, plays the leading role in this climate as it stands out in this sudden and eerie 'transition' climate to which we are exposed through love. This succulent plant blossoms once a year and as it makes concessions to life and death, the pink-yellow and ingratiating flowers gain strength, nourish, cherish and bloom in the tormentful semi-lightness and the willful droughtiness of love. Hence, twilight becomes as crucial as light in İncedoğan's solo exhibition.

Turning the gallery into a wonderous 'greenhouse', this plant in question is also referred to as the 'Tears of Love' by some in Turkey because of its destitute beauty. Through photographs İncedoğan offers an intoxicating and diverse kaleidoscopic presentation of Echeveria which has more than 150 different kinds and is named after Basque born Atanasio Echeverria y Godoy who was an 18th century Spanish botanist, biologist and a naturalist painter.

Echeverria, who formerly portrayed butterflies and has his works preserved by the Hunt Institute, made an incomplete expedition of Mexico with two of his colleagues because of the domestic disorder caused by the Napoleonic Wars in New Spain. Yet, his studies still maintain their historical significance for documenting the flora and the fauna of the region.

James Shelton is the actual 'meteorology' engineer in this tender climate exhibition which İncedoğan devotes to love and relentlessly searches for the pain, suffering and intoxication it embodies for the sake of discovering love's form. Shelton is known as the composer and songwriter of the song "Lilac Wine" after which the exhibition is named. This song which was first sung by Hope Foye in 1950 in a short-lived musical "Dance Me a Song" and since then has been rendered by Nina Simone (Wild is the Wind, 1966), Jeff Buckley (Grace, 1994), Eartha Kitt (C'est si bon, 1953), and even by Susan Boyle and Katie Melua who enchanted the listeners by touching their souls.

As in her previous solo exhibition titled "Wild is the Wind" where İncedoğan offers visual interpretations to the namesake song composed in 1957 and rendered by David Bowie and Nina Simone, she follows a similar path in her new exhibition. It is also possible to refer to İncedoğan's works of art as plastic 'covers' or new interpretations or allusions.

The formation of love in İncedoğan's exhibited works; in more neutral words, the formation of emotions has been dealt with as if it was the most significant plastic problem. I think, it is high time to recall the lyrics of the song in question:

*I lost myself on a cool damp night
I gave myself in that misty light (small g)
Was hypnotized by a strange delight
Under a lilac tree*

*I made wine from the lilac tree
Put my heart in its recipe
It makes me see what I want to see
and be what I want to be*

*When I think more than I want to think
I do things I never should do
I drink much more than I ought to drink
Because it brings me back you...*

*Lilac wine is sweet and heady, like my love
Lilac wine, I feel unsteady, like my love
Listen to me... I cannot see clearly
Isn't that she coming to me nearly here?*

*Lilac wine is sweet and heady, where's my love?
Lilac wine, I feel unsteady, where's my love?
Listen to me, why is everything so hazy?
Isn't that she, or am I just going crazy, dear?
Lilac Wine, I feel unready for my love,
Feel unready for my love.*

Thanks to its spleenful colour scale and graceful evocation of the Art-Nouveau movement, the large scale oil painting titled "Lilac Passage" meets the visitors at the entrance of the exhibition and serves as an obvious imaginary preface for the presented artworks.

The allegory of 'Echeveria' plant and its derivations that stands for femininity and endurance welcome visitors in the prominent photograph series titled "Lilac Garden". In İncedoğan's presentation, this erotic but at the same time romantic and natural climate is strengthened through the lyrics of the song "Why is everything so hazy?" that is created by using lilac neon lights and a touchy and aesthetic handwriting.

Another series of works that keep the heads spinning in the exhibition are four photographs, probably depicting a city and showing the vague moment of a fall down in the title of "Escape from..." Nor is this all; İncedoğan's two works of mirror art titled "Infinity" and "Loyalty" in which she applies plastic experimentalism reveal the paradoxical awareness of the intoxication of the intrapersonal and the nonchalance for the rest of the world that are fed by the same paradox: The mirrors of infinity and loyalty serve as metaphysical passages through which visitors may question themselves as input and output objects.

In this exhibition, the instruments confronting representation with reality, mirrors as objects of recollection and confrontation are turning into two temporary auto-portrait options, two different 'catharsis' offers left to the mercy of the viewers; the reality and its representation will not last forever; they will only be visible as long as the viewers' presence.

At the gallery corridor the poetic lines by Henri de Regnier in one of Marcel Proust's books, "Through the forgetfulness we seek from counterfeit delights / Amidst our frenzies come, more virginal and sweet/ The melancholy scent of lilacs", nurture and cherish the above mentioned climate.

What's more is that the cyclic and audio video presented in the installation "Lilac Wine Vol.1", approximately three minutes long, is the prototype of a series in which 'Echeveria' images will be treated.

Scrutinizing the intimacy of the image and its secondary/personal imagery/impression/feeling potential in painting and plastic arts as a manner of discourse and action, Incedoğan repeats the 'interpretation' / 'cover' tendency within the plastic context and presents another work of art titled "Lilac Migration 1" inspired by a project of the English conceptual artist Jeremy Deller, the Turner Prize winner in 2004, and instigated The Bat House Project.

This work of Incedoğan reveals out the secondary 'echo' or reflection both in the interpretation itself and the 'other'ness of the form and style and therefore adds another dimension to the plastic issue she deals with.

Incedoğan, in an intoxicating manner like a pendulum, applies rhythm and repetitions to her works as an instrument of disintegration and reproduction, forgetting and recalling, uses the rising tide effect. Thus she enables us to grasp that showing the fragility to the life is the reflection of awareness and courage.

The artist, on the other hand, uses the exhibition space as a threshold where the subject and object / concept and form / single and plural, artist-individual and visitor / anonymous one, the present physical simplicity and the imitation (mimetic one), what's more, the conscious and unconscious mind are faced with each other. From this aspect, the exhibition space provides the artist the opportunity of freedom as she is able to express herself. On the other hand, this space resembles an 'open door' cage for the viewers where they voluntarily experience and follow impossibility and ideal image. At this point, we should remind ourselves of the similarity between dual relation and love with a smile. Considering the radical nature of the emotional realist subjective approach in Incedoğan's works and the willfulness of loss, it will be good to recall the words of the French sociologist and philosopher Jean Baudrillard which have the delectable taste of the "Lilac Wine":

"To seduce is to appear weak. To seduce is to render the seducee weak. We seduce with our weakness, never with strong signs or powers. In seduction, we enact this weakness, and this is what gives seduction its strength. (...) We seduce with our death, our vulnerability, and with the void that haunts us. The secret is to know how to play with death in the absence of a gaze or gesture, in the absence of knowledge or meaning." ()*

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(*) Baudrillard, Jean. *Seduction*. Trans. Brian Singer. Montréal: Ctheory Books. pp: 83, 2001.