

ARTFORUM

CRITICS' PICKS



Elif Saydam, *Artists*, 2019, twenty-three karat gold, oil, and inkjet transfer on canvas, 11 3/4 x 8 1/4".

Meet like-minded individuals" and "Are you crushworthy???" Find out now"—and fictional phone numbers to a hotline that will never ring.

Yet things aren't quite as bad for the critters as they may seem. Amid the austere advertisements hangs a pair of lush mixed-media paintings on canvas, both titled *Artists*, 2019, that feature opulent gold-leafed fountains inspired by a 16th-century Ottoman miniature against textured pink and blue backdrops. Saydam's interpretations of the medieval paintings replace the slaves that once bore the fountains with cartoon cockroaches lifted from a 1970s Raid commercial, gambling and feasting at wealth's feet. On the gallery's floor, a pair of legs peeks out from beneath the sculpture *Schrödinger's Cat*, 2019, squished by the sickly sweet feast of a sugar-coated white cube.

Despite their technical refinement, Saydam's works can seem deceptively amateurish. Yet it's precisely this rejection of seriousness that lends the lives of her impoverished protagonists a sense of humor, perhaps even relish. After all, parasites still play an essential part in any healthy ecology. And who could deny the joys of debasement, especially when it means being the shit someone else has to scrape off their shoes?

— Stanton Taylor

BERLIN

Elif Saydam

STADIUM

Postdamer Str. 70

October 26–November 23, 2019

Scattered throughout the gallery we find dead skin, old packaging, and other undesirables. This urban detritus is home to the bottom feeders of our world: parasites, insects, worms. For "Hotline," 2019, a series of inkjet transfers on translucent silk, Saydam took images from exterminators' websites that compare bugs with coins for scale. Next to the pennies and dimes, the insects' lives are made to feel little, smaller even than the smallest of change. These appropriated photos are accompanied by slogans lifted from flyers advertising to the hopeless—such as "Lonely on the margins?"

Artforum, October 2019