

Tanya Leighton

Press Release

Elif Saydam
'GUT FEELING'

11 September – 24 October 2020

In a world of gut feeling, proximity is a vibe. That's how in the world of 'Gut feeling', the show, a 16th century ottoman miniature is capable of collapsing into a Kreuzberg gambling hall by simultaneously hovering above it. They're vibing. The vibe, while resonating with histories of Turkish migration and the class politics of taste (to the tune of a one-armed bandit buzzing), feels casual. It's of course also a complex environment: Withering embellishment and sandy branding screen-prints here are neither just uncannily pretty nor the uncannily pretty punchline of a bro-y conceptual twist. They rather provide a cranky and all the more precise organising principle for mapping how a set of mixed feelings, crisp abstractions, sparkling stickers, and formal ideas can relate. How they can't. Sheaves of wheat, unbound from a Soviet red ribbon, will melancholically lounge with the Hand of Fatima as it's suggestively reaching for ... some grapes? Whether the obvious infestation with mild decay that is permeating this closeness is what threatens it or what makes it possible, remains part of a crucial ambivalence. It's clear that hanging out, as the things populating 'Gut feeling' so often do, in all its cuteness and necessity is dependent on infrastructures: the applied symbolism of gay code or just, being able to pay rent.

It's a mood and it's also a mood ring mood chart – its limited options are haunting our feelings in only slightly more elaborate form. The curse of the value-form is hidden in plain sight here (in gold leaf) structuring the vibe of proximity: from day-to-day tastefulness production to housing politics. That's why when, from the other side of the painting, someone is hanging a trans flag out of the window, it could yes, just be a commodified quote the colours of which fit nicely. Precisely in nesting in this luscious vibe however, it could also be an actual sign meaningful to actual people. Plus it's just how a place like Kottbusser Tor works. Down on a possible street, an artist is on strike – rent strike? representational strike? – what kind of work is tucked into that suitcase?

On the way back from the demo, the artist flaneur-ed through fragments of the Zeki Müren Denkmal onto Admiralstraße. He, uh, they took a left onto the canal, then another left onto one of the gentrification streets. It was a Friday afternoon and the sunset was forever. The neighbourhood was unreliable. Sometimes even the faintest memory of workdays and embodiment disconnected one's room from the friends that supposedly lived around the corner. Or a tattoo from a fore-arm. Where is Herr Slug when you need them the most, the artist thought to themselves, humming the trap remix of a country song famous in the world of gut feeling: 'Oh, Schufa-Auskunft of beauty. Oh, Schufa-Auskunft of a mucous membrane'. Herr Slug, gossip had it, was close.

–Maxi Wallenhorst

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Elif Saydam (b. 1985, Calgary, Canada) lives and works in Berlin. They received their Meisterschüler in the class of Monika Baer/Amy Sillman from Städelschule. In 2021, Saydam will present a solo exhibition at the Kunstverein Harburger Bahnhof in Hamburg. Recent solo exhibitions include 'Selfing' at Mélange, Cologne (2020), 'What me worry' at stadium, Berlin (2019) and 'La belle dame sans merci' at Franz Kaka, Toronto (2019).

Past projects and performances include 'Miss St's Hieroglyphic Suffering' (KW Institute for Contemporary Art, Berlin); 'emic etic' (Between Bridges, Berlin); 'der kaukasische Kreidekreis' von Bertolt Brecht (Made in Germany Drei, Hannover); 'Le Misanthrope 1666' (La Biennale de Montréal 2016).

Saydam is an active participant in various collaborative publishing projects and their visual practice draws vividly from their own texts and performances.

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The gallery is open Tuesday – Saturday, 11am – 6pm and by appointment.