

“Every language has its own silence”¹

“Mono-Traces” Left in the Present

The memory, formed by shaping and reconstructing cultural structures and representations within the framework of the present, is molded in a social and cultural framework. Symbols, icons and representations that contain meaning such as traditions, ceremonies, rituals, routines, monuments, idols form the framework of cultural memory. The transformation of cultural memory images into sophisticated contemporary art manifests itself in the images the artist produces by visualizing the geography and culture they live in while nourished by the layers of the artist's personal history. Tuğçe Diri, who deals with the relationship between past and future in the ongoing present, the dialogue between concrete practices and thought, knowledge and skill, technical understanding and creative imagination in the relationship between art and craft, approaches cultural visual heritage as an archeology of memory.

Tuğçe Diri's main axis of practice since her early works has been a desire to bring a unique explanation to her synthesis of the East and the West, traditional and contemporary, social and personal, and associating the intellectual/visual closeness and differences between these phenomena with her own experiences. Exhibiting a synthesisist spirit in her productions, blending the concepts of history, memory, culture and nature with the visual culture based on tradition, Tuğçe Diri collides cultural distinctions and similarities in the context of art and craft on a formal plane. In her holistic and direct expression, the artist inherits a legacy that erodes the boundaries between "representation" and "abstraction", from the ornamental motifs of Anatolia to the stylized imagination of Byzantine art, the refined simplicity of Japanese stamps to Turkish-Islamic calligraphy, the script-painting tradition of Eastern art to the dynamism of Abstract Expressionism. Although the artist interacts with calligraphic rhythms, embellishment and ornamental arts such as illumination, calligraphy, ornamentation, motion painting or gesture painting, she is unique in her geometric and organic abstractions that are dynamic in

¹ Elias Canetti, *İnsanın Sılası*, trans. Ahmet Cemal, İyi Şeyler Publishing, İstanbul, 1996, p. 14-25)

stain textures and based on spontaneous formation in patterns, and has developed an intricate drawing language.

In her paper and canvas productions, the artist adopts a gestural, agile and expressive painterly attitude in the relationship of dot, line and stain with each other and with the whole. The use of color in compositions that cover the surface like a net with open and endless arrangements and intricate decorations that overlap each other is predominant as it creates a restrained, absolute and neutral black space effect. While the lines entering the painting with pencil, charcoal, ink and acrylic pen transform the concept into simplified elements by abstracting it, they refer to the repetitive motifs and stacking system of traditional aesthetics. Considering cultural visual heritage as a memory layer, Tuğçe Diri uses traditional aesthetic language not as a nostalgic/ethnographic material repository, but as a language of expression that meets today's critical discourses and concepts.

Today, the most urgent of these concepts is ecology. It is claimed that we are in a new, human-dominated geological period, in which the effects of human-induced changes are noticed with devastating results, the relationship between man and nature has changed irreversibly, and the results of this transformation are being experienced. An apocalyptic period in which people will try to repair their eroded cultural memory, with their flora and fauna that have disappeared or their species under threat of extinction, using technological means. Conflicts that are centered on economy, ethnic identity, culture and gender, and are deeply entrenched in our lives lie at the root of many of the ecological problems we experience.² The concept of "ecosophy", which proposes a common understanding of social, mental and environmental ecology, emphasizes the tendency of ethics and aesthetics, art and science to approach each other, and their ability to comprehend each other's methods and gain flexibility. Social ecology, mental ecology, environmental ecology and all these are possible in the aesthetic ethic of an ecosophy.³

² Murray Bookchin, *What is Social Ecology?*, *Environmental Philosophy*, ed. M.E. Zimmerman, Prentice Hall, New Jersey, 1993, ss. 354-373

³ F. Guattari, *Üç Ekoloji*, trans. Ali Akay, Bağlam Yayıncılık, İstanbul, 2000, pp. 29-38

The ecological crisis is human-made, and the culture that rises on human-made products is constantly consuming itself, directly or indirectly. Waste, litter, flotsam and jetsam that appear as heaps in Tuğçe Diri's stack-compositions also recreate the image of natural disasters, catastrophes and destruction. Bringing an earth-centered eco-critical approach to her works, Tuğçe Diri emphasizes the traces left by human actions on our planet's ecosystem in her compositions, with the awareness that nature representation in art is directly related to social and political perceptions. The concept of "mass" has a clearly defined and negative value character. It can be said that this concept encapsulates a whole philosophy of history in a pessimistic way. Mass, in the sociological context, defines hordes and crowds, even clusters that are amorphous, nameless, impersonal and lack personality autonomy. Mass is anything that is thrown away after it has been consumed. Mass consumption of our time turns into social masses, and vast plains of trash and industrial waste become images of consumption on a massive scale. Masses are a cultural phenomenon of consumption. Tuğçe Diri physically and metaphorically divides these accumulations into pieces in her mind in "Mono-Traces", then rearranges them on the painting surface by stacking, sorting, accumulating and filling, and combines them through repetitions. These images evoking the representation of nature, the abstracted and transformed traces of garbage piles stacked on top of each other, become the landscapes of our age.

Tuğçe Diri, who designs nature as motifs, takes it out of her own reality and transforms it into a symbolic allegory of the world and life, creates a kind of woven texture in her productions, which reflect the traditional understanding of painting in the perception of surface and depth, generally on a monochrome backbone. The "Mono-Traces" that emerged in this context consist of the combination of patterns and laces. The thread used in lace, which is formed by the concatenation of knots made using different techniques with crochet, shuttle or needle, replaces the line in the patterns. The chains and loops that form the basis of lace making are cyclical, just like the movement of the universe. The artist considers sewing as a manifestation of the attempt to hold things together, to make them whole, within the elliptical cyclical perception of time that her works carry. While the artist's lace and sewing depict her feelings

for her mother, who is a tailor, they become objects of memory, reflecting both personal and social memory of rediscovering and honoring the female experience covered by the patriarchal and masculine mentality. Around elements such as elegant handcraft, labor and productivity, the artist gives us clues to penetrate the deep roots of an understanding rather than producing an art object while applying not only the historical context of embroidery but also the artisanal competence in working with materials and techniques.

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