

The approach

this is tomorrow

Contemporary Art Magazine

The approach, 1st Floor, 47 Approach Road, Bethnal Green, London E2 9LY

Evren Tekinoktay: Serpentine



Title : Evren Tekinoktay, Serpentine, Installation view

Website : <https://theapproach.co.uk/>

Evren Tekinoktay: Serpentine

The approach

12 April - 13 May 2018

Review by Carolina Mostert

The lotus flower sinks its roots into the mud and shoots upwards through and above the water. The petals sweat out the dirt of the pond and float, clean, until darkness closes them like fingers around the palm of a hand. The pink fist loosens again with daylight. This autonomy allows the lotus flower to preserve its purity in the swamp; and to thrive in it.

The approach

The pond for Evren Tekinoktay's 'Lotus' is the 'Serpentine' exhibition at The approach, London. Currents lurk underneath the still, flat wall where 'Lotus' surfaces alongside other pieces by Tekinoktay. The artist's work is rooted in the history of the gallery. 'Serpentine' is in fact not the first exhibition of Tekinoktay at The approach. Besides featuring her in two group shows, 'Her Kind' in 2004 and '20 years' in 2017, the gallery also hosted three Tekinoktay solo shows. 'Wood in the fire' in 2005, 'A slightly pregnant man' in 2008 and 'Ulalume' in 2015 track the artistic development of the Danish woman: the media becomes more mixed, the use of technology increasingly prominent as multi-layered images are constructed through collage and neon reliefs are added to painted surfaces. By 'Ulalume', Tekinoktay exhibits her first 'moving collages', assemblages of painted paper presented through projected animations, and hand crafted neon reliefs worked with complex mechanical elements.

The overall aesthetic of the current exhibition, 'Serpentine', is remarkably conservative. The collages appear to be simple cut-outs; I stare at them, and they freeze. The lines, corners and edges form sharp patterns through the gallery wall; and they are softened by the pale colours outlining and filling the shapes. Surprisingly, there are no added neons. Tekinoktay's progress with 'Serpentine' cannot be measured in terms of the use of innovative media. 'Serpentine' harks back to the fundamental concepts underlying the experimentation typically associated with the artist. The cut-outs represent the original sketches made for Tekinoktay's neon compositions; their hues anticipate the artificial lights employed by the artist at a later stage. The novelty of the 2018 exhibition at The approach lies in the self-exploration conducted by Tekinoktay and the clarity with which she translates and showcases the first seeds of her art.

The subdued appearance of the works on paper allows fundamental themes to shine through with a clean, honest conceptual purity. Most importantly, perhaps, their smoothness and pastiness endows them with a heightened corporeality – a quality that Tekinoktay's works, early and late, strive to preserve. The nuanced red in 'The Puff' and the fleshy pink of 'Harlowe' undermine the abstract imagery and bear the sensuality of skin. Serpentine celebrates the inner structure of a body of work whose appearance changes, develops, shifts. To understand it, we must look at the cut-outs hanging in The approach and beyond, as if they were flower heads floating and hiding a deep, intricate world beneath.