

Pi Artworks London: Mehmet Ali Uysal **BLOCK** **12 February - 28 March 2015**

Mehmet Ali Uysal, an artist trained as an architect, transforms the architectural structure he is working in into an artistic medium that can be bent and shaped according to his desire. The layers of cement and plaster on the walls and floors no longer function as fixed and intractable structures but become soft and malleable strips that can be pinched, scored, parted, ripped, folded, and torn off. In previous works, sections of plaster were separated from the bare bricks and contorted into spiral forms (*Peel*, 2012), or the surface of a wall was moulded into something as flexible as human skin that could be pinched by wooden clothes pegs (*Untitled*, 2013).

Mehmet Ali Uysal has a particular interest in how the process of creating, exhibiting, and perceiving contemporary art remains intertwined with the austere, white-walled gallery space that continuously erases traces of its own history in order to appear impervious. Thus, his ludic manipulations often take place within the exhibition space, dissolving the distinction between the gallery and artwork. Instead of a protecting structure, encapsulating what lies inside, the gallery becomes a performing object. As the artist explains, *"central to my gallery-based work is how the background, the gallery space, becomes the foreground, the artworks' subject, with the intention of manipulating the viewer's experience of space."*

The new series of work created for BLOCK similarly pokes at traditional modes of artistic presentation, but instead of large-scale installations that are integrated into the material of the building they are situated in, the works are discrete, sculptural forms. Contorted and deformed pillars, stone blocks and angular wall sections are strewn across the floor and pinned to the wall. His subject matter, the contemporary art gallery, is cut up and transformed into objects of admiration.

Between the scattered blocks, two stiff pairs of protruding human legs convey a sense of human presence and imbue the exhibition with a sense of humor. The legs are the artist's reference to himself, as he says: *"It is a bit of a joke about myself and the way I am trying to get into the skin of these buildings and almost become consumed by them"*.

While the BLOCK series shares the evenly applied white paint of Pi Artworks London's walls, floor and ceiling, the origin of these fragments is in fact a lot less familiar than it may first seem as the artist has based them on segments of an imagined fictional home. As such, they become portals pointing to an elsewhere that is only imaginable.

Mehmet Ali Uysal's solo exhibitions include *The Past*, Pearl Lam Gallery, Shanghai, China (2014); *Pinch Me Awake*, Stiftungstarke, Berlin, Germany (2013); *Painting*, Pi Artworks, Istanbul, Turkey (2013); *Peel* at the Nesrin Esirtgen Collection, Istanbul, Turkey (2012); *Malist* at Q Contemporary, Beirut, Lebanon (2011); and *Mist* at Etemad Gallery, Dubai, UAE (2011).

Group exhibitions and art fair participation include Art Basel Hong Kong (2013);

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Eyeballing at the Ankara Contemporary Arts Centre, Turkey (2012); and *Figure Out* at Art Saw, Dubai, UAE (2012); as well as *Trade Routes* at Pi Artworks Istanbul, Turkey (2011). He has given speaking presentations at events such as *Kaleidoscope Europe*, Ankara, Lisbon (2009) and *BAUHAUS IMPACT*, Ankara, Weimar (2009) as well as the *XVIIth International Congress of Aesthetics*, Ankara, Turkey (2007).

His work can be found in numerous private and public collections in his native Turkey, including Vehbi Koç Foundation Collection, and Ozyegin University Collection. International collections include Le Vent Des Forets Festival Public Collection, Meuse, France; Chaufontaine Parks Public Collection, Liege, Belgium; Audi Collection (Audi Bank Lebanon) Beirut, Lebanon; Golden Harvest Group Art Collection, India; Samdani Art Foundation, Bangladesh and the City of Umea, Sweden Collection (2014 Culture Capital of Europe), Sweden.

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