

East and West Entwined: Tulu Bayar at Amos Eno Gallery

Essay by Nina Chkareuli-Mdivani



In her new body of work for the exhibition *Twine* at Amos Eno Gallery, Turkish-American artist Tulu Bayar visually culls together an identity made up of two, eastern and western, paradigms embodying distinct halves of her life. As an immigrant Bayar carries the sense of being the Other with her, not being fully at home either in the U.S. or in Turkey because she simultaneously exists within two historical and geographic continuums. Cultural theorist Homi K. Bhabha looks at the Otherness as integral part of post-colonial intellectual project; to him Otherness as a rigid attribute, something that is fixed in time, memory, and representation – it is something that stays. To examine this ambivalence between belonging and alienation Bayar merges two emblematic cities of the new and old worlds, creating a utopian city of her own and asking if they indeed could coalesce into one. Eschewing compartmentalized thinking of genre and media Bayar moves freely in-between photography, moving-image, drawing, sculpture and installation.

Bayar creates urban cityscapes devoid of crowds, but with hints and outlines of a mysterious feminine figure. This abstract being is a remnant of her earlier steps as an artist when she used to work with physical people, directly interacting with them on and outside of the streets, getting in their homes, learning about their daily strivings. Over time nature of this interaction has changed and it became more internalized. By providing us with a reference point of a human body, Bayar not only gives us a scale of her fantastic synthesized structures, but also a protagonist, a human being who is unlikely to inhabit these architectural marvels, yet, is presiding over them. The figure is like a hopeful immigrant herself trying to subvert the power of the golden city in the sky, yet trying to hold onto the reality available to her. Subversion of power is of interest to Bayar as a female artist coming from a traditionally patriarchal society. She is an advocate for independence, authenticity, and feminist agency although she would not want to frame herself only in relation to the feminist discourse. Patriarchy in Turkey and in the U.S. continues to be problematic through the seductiveness and blandness of its mass appeal, Bayar's earlier series of work including *Chimera* are more devoted to this social issue. "Through the act of including a female figure in my creations, I reclaim authorship of my narrative and assert my own agency," she says. In *Twine* we encounter a more nuanced and abstract meditation on the nature of immigrant experience.

Instead of simply showing sterile, translucent and meticulously transplanted images of the city the artist brings into the gallery the actual soil collected from various locales. Some of the photo transfers are coated with water, land, sand, debris. Their coloration differs based on the ratio of soil and water the artist uses to achieve and communicate her effects. Specific areas of Turkey and U.S. have a physical presence in the gallery through the color gradation in her prints. As Bayar says: "The photo transfer technique that I heavily use in *Twine* symbolizes the imprint of memory on the self, and the images themselves become a collage of moments that have shaped my path. I maintain a multidisciplinary practice that weaves through to produce reflections of immigrant experience." This reflection is not different from the concept of forensic architecture first implemented by Eyal Weizman as he pieced together architectural evidence coming from different types of civil conflicts. Yet, if Weizman is an avid advocate for human rights he investigates state strategies to eliminate these rights. Bayar, on the opposite, stands on the guard of the shared humanity and calls upon transformative force of the Sufism to do so. "The philosophy of Rumi, wholeness and oneness resonate with me and inform my artistic practice. I am, of course, talking about a spiritual influence, not a religious one. I am interested in the Sufist maxim regarding interconnected metaphysical nature of beings and forms; and how individual differences reside within communal existence."

In Sufism person connection to the supreme being is at the front and center of individual quest in understanding oneself, a pursuit fully corresponding to a path of an artist and a teacher. In the time of crisis of any kind, countries and individuals remember mythological figures of strength and so does Bayar in her metaphysical search, looking at the grounding presence of cities that have nourished her over time. To her "[o]therness becomes porous and translucent." Fragmentation of digital and physical realities is upon us, yet there is a way to realign. Through her multilayered citra solvent photo transfers and site-specific installations at Amos Eno Bayar provides an uplifting and personal image of a synthesis not strictly limited to reductionist approach to architecture. Grotesque and beauty are situated side by side here as do Invisibility and visibility; repelling and attracting. "I assemble disparate elements, ranging from salvaged images, photographs, photographic films, old drawings and maps to repurposed textiles and cultural belongings, and imbue them with new life. This process of amalgamation serves as a metaphor for the mosaic of human existence - fragments coming together to form a coherent whole."

Berlin-based philosopher Byung-Chul Han writes at length about bits of information we inhale without digesting thus creating an endless cycle of wasteful and empty consumption and the deep alienation as the result of it. In contrast to this tendency Tulu Bayar is in a long-term relationship with her art and invites her audience to remove layers and look at each one of them rather than to blindly accept a linear and clear-cut reality.



Obscure

Citra Transfer Print on cotton paper brushed with a paste made from soil, sand, water and vegetation collected from various geographical regions of the USA and Turkey.

6" X 4"
2023

Relate

Citra Transfer Print on cotton paper brushed with a paste made from soil, sand, water and vegetation collected from various geographical regions of the USA and Turkey.

10" X 7"
2023





Needs the Depths Below

Citra Transfer Print on cotton paper brushed with a paste made from soil, sand, water and vegetation collected from various geographical regions of the USA and Turkey.

7.5" X 5.5"
2023

Longing

Citra Transfer Print on cotton paper brushed with a paste made from soil, sand, water and vegetation collected from various geographical regions of the USA and Turkey.

9" X 7.5"
2023





You Never Know

Citra Transfer Print on cotton paper brushed with a paste made from soil, sand, water and vegetation collected from various geographical regions of the USA and Turkey.

14.5" X 4.75"
2023



The Life Ahead is a Life of.....

Citra Transfer Print on cotton paper brushed with a paste made from soil, sand, water and vegetation collected from various geographical regions of the USA and Turkey.

5.5" X 4"
2023



Connections but.....

Citra Transfer Print on cotton paper brushed with a paste made from soil, sand, water and vegetation collected from various geographical regions of the USA and Turkey.

12" X 5"
2023



Present Marks

Citra Transfer Print on cotton paper brushed with a paste made from soil, sand, water and vegetation collected from various geographical regions of the USA and Turkey.

7" X 9"
2023

Fences

Citra Transfer Print on cotton paper brushed with a paste made from soil, sand, water and vegetation collected from various geographical regions of the USA and Turkey.

12" X 7"
2023





What Could Have Been but Never Was a Place That Implies

Citra Transfer Print on cotton paper brushed with a paste made from soil, sand, water and vegetation collected from various geographical regions of the USA and Turkey.

14.5" X 5"
2023

River never flows the same way twice

Citra Transfer Print on cotton paper brushed with a paste made from soil, sand, water and vegetation collected from various geographical regions of the USA and Turkey.

13" X 6"
2023



Disconnected but in it

Citra Transfer Print on cotton paper brushed with a paste made from soil, sand, water and vegetation collected from various geographical regions of the USA and Turkey.

5" X 5"
2023





Refracted

Citra Transfer Print on cotton paper brushed with a paste made from soil, sand, water and vegetation collected from various geographical regions of the USA and Turkey.

8.5"X 7"
2023



Follow the Magic

Citra Transfer Print on cotton paper brushed with a paste made from soil, sand, water and vegetation collected from various geographical regions of the USA and Turkey.

6" X 4"
2023



At Odds with One Another

Citra Transfer Print on cotton paper brushed with a paste made from soil, sand, water and vegetation collected from various geographical regions of the USA and Turkey.

7" X 10"
2023



A Place that Implies

Citra Transfer Print on cotton paper brushed with a paste made from soil, sand, water and vegetation collected from various geographical regions of the USA and Turkey.

5" X 3.5"
2023

Trafficked in depth

Citra Transfer Print on cotton paper brushed with a paste made from soil, sand, water and vegetation collected from various geographical regions of the USA and Turkey.

8" X 5"
2023



Wildness to be Unlocked

Citra Transfer Print on cotton paper brushed with a paste made from soil, sand, water and vegetation collected from various geographical regions of the USA and Turkey.

6" X 7"
2023

Essayist Bio

Nina Chkareuli-Mdivani

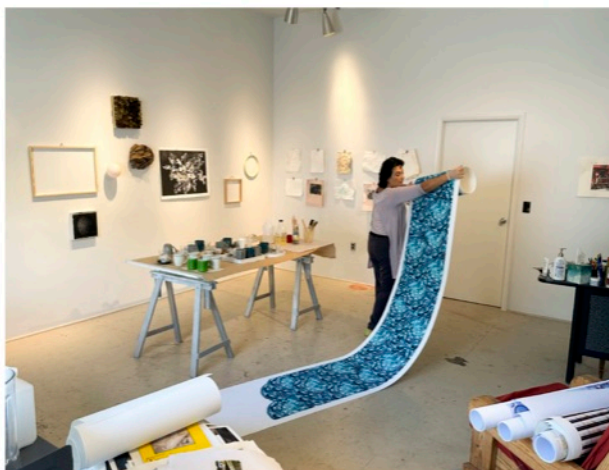
Nina Chkareuli-Mdivani is Georgian-born and New York-based independent curator, writer, and researcher. She holds undergraduate degrees in International Relations and Gender Studies from Tbilisi State University and Mount Holyoke College, and a graduate degree in Museum Studies from the City University of New York. Chkareuli-Mdivani's book, *King is Female*, published in October 2018 in Berlin by Wienand Verlag explores the lives of three Georgian women artists and is the first publication to investigate questions of the feminine identity in the context of the Eastern European historical, social, and cultural transformation of the last twenty years. Chkareuli-Mdivani has contributed articles to *Hyperallergic*, *Flash Art International*, *MoMa.post*, *The Brooklyn Rail*, *The Arts Newspaper*, *JANE Magazine Australia*, *NERO Editions Italy*, *Whitehot Magazine of Contemporary Art*, *XIBT Magazine Berlin*, *Eastern European Film Bulletin*, *Indigo Magazine*, *Arte & Lusso Dubai* and others. She has curated over 10 exhibitions in New York, Germany, Latvia, and Georgia. Her research involves the intersection of art history, museum, and decolonization studies with a focus on totalitarian art and trauma theory. As a researcher Chkareuli-Mdivani aims to synthesize historical and contemporary.

Tulu Bayar

Tulu Bayar has participated in numerous solo and group exhibitions at museums and galleries in the US as well as in Germany, Denmark, UK, France, Colombia, Turkey and China. Her work is part of public collections including Belfast Exposed Photography, Samuel Dorsky Museum, Elgiz Museum of Contemporary Art (Istanbul), and the Textile Museum at George Washington University. Her exhibitions have been covered by international media including NPR, Hyperallergic, The Irish Times, Afterimage, Photography Quarterly, TRT (National Public Broadcaster of Turkey) and the Bushwick Daily.

A Fulbright Scholar, she has also received funding from Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, Ténor Foundation, artist-in residency grants from Camac Centre d'Art in France and the Center for Photography at Woodstock funded by the Andy Warhol Foundation as well as William Sackett Fellowship through Virginia Center for Creative Arts.

Bayar received her BA degree in Communications and Journalism from Ankara University and her MFA in Electronic Arts from University of Cincinnati. She is currently teaching photography and multimedia courses as a professor at Bucknell University in Pennsylvania.



Tulu Bayar in her Studio