

Elif Erkan

In the Off Hours

by Valeria Schäfer

*And since there are all those ships,
I can stick myself to,
traveling is as uneventful as it was never before.*

It's all about transportation. Food is crossing the whole world to arrive on our plates, online shopping has become an everyday activity and on any day of the year you can get on board one of those gigantic floating villages which are invading the oceans. Is this all sustainable? Is this good for our planet? Of course not. The answer is simple. But it won't stop. Elif Erkan develops the questions revolving around her artistic practice from these socio-ecological issues.

We live in a throw-away society. Packaging companies produce meticulously designed packaging to make it easier and safer to send goods on their long journey around the world. Walter Gropius would be thrilled at the perfection of form and use of these objects. But in the end they just end up in the garbage. Elif emphasizes this process: the cardboard boxes she finds - such as cases of memory cards or steering wheels - she covers with a self-developed biodegradable plasticine: plastic without plastic. The resulting objects - exhibited on the gallery walls - elude any iconography. Her clay poles *How to wait* seem just as undefined. Barriers and stalagmites in one. Both forms exemplify the act of waiting, the human and the natural, and at the same time they raise the question about the future. Nature waits centuries for a stalagmite of this size to form. How long can we patiently wait? How long can our Earth wait? There is no doubt that the world is changing rapidly, the lungs of our planet are being put under great strain. To this regard, the video work *Sometimes, when I'm drifting* (2008-2022) can be seen as an auspice and a hypothetical response to the artist's questions. In the foreground, light waves crash against the rocks, while the evanescent image of a floating jellyfish accompanies the narration through Erkan's voice, which expresses the marine animal's inner thoughts. In the background a cruise ship is sailing into the sunset, slowly obscuring it and the whole image is bathed in a red-orange light. The vision couldn't be more idyllic, but appearances are deceptive. Like cruise ships propagating the protection of the ocean while at the same time polluting it. Not even a rhyming name in this case can help to fix the puzzle.