

Colazione a Barriera 2022

TUNSTATE ASLI ÇAVUŞOĞLU

curated by Sergey Kantsedal
with the assistance of Yuliya Say

with the support of SAHA Association

06/11 – 17/12/2022

opening: Sunday 06/11/2022, h. 10 – 13

Barriera presents Asli Çavuşoğlu's exhibition TunState, opening alongside Artissima on Sunday November 6th, and continuing through Saturday December 17th.

Cryptobiosis is the state into which certain living organisms enter, in response to adverse conditions in their environment, including extreme heat, cold and fluctuations in levels of salinity, oxygen and moisture. In a cryptobiotic state, normal metabolic functions cease, as the machinery of self-preservation kicks in, producing a state of indefinite suspension. When hospitable environmental conditions re-emerge, the organism resumes its normal cycles of development, reproduction and repair. Cryptobiosis is observed in brine shrimp, yeast, many varieties of seeds, and in tardigrades, microscopic aquatic organisms whose cryptobiotic state – the “tun state” – lends Asli Çavuşoğlu's current exhibition its title.

TunState presents a potent metaphor and a playful provocation, asking us to consider the diverse ways in which creatures, human and non-human, respond to existential threats and inhospitable conditions. In a moment when apocalyptic scenarios fueled by prevalent conditions of war, the ravages of global capitalism, and irreversible ecological degradation are proliferating across media sources, Asli Çavuşoğlu steers her research-based artistic practice towards an inquiry into instances of resilience and regeneration in the natural world.

In a series of newly produced works, Çavuşoğlu continues her longstanding exploration of material histories, properties and states. She begins with the *bursera fagaroides*, a tree with a shrinking habitat (owing to climate change) that is native to the Sonoran Desert, extending across parts of the southwestern United States and northern Mexico. In response to the discovery of a reliable source of moisture, the tree sheds its bark in order to grow larger. Pieces of bark, like peeling skin, appear suspended on its surface and eventually fall off. Çavuşoğlu traveled across the desert landscape in Mexico, collecting these fragile fragments, and worked closely with a paper restorer to produce from them a stable surface for mark-making.

The salvaged bark of the *bursera fagaroides* recurs across works in the exhibition, in combination with handmade paper, leather and obsidian, creating connections with other natural materials – namely tree fibers, animal hide, volcanic glass – that embody specific histories, processes, and temporalities of transformation. A work like *TINA* (2022), in which leather, bark-paper and drawing come together in the form of an accordion book, is informed by documented instances of natural mummification in conditions of extreme heat and cold (in Pompei following the eruption of Mount Vesuvius or in the case of Ötzi found in a glacier in South-Tyrol) while cheekily riffing on the conservative politician Margaret Thatcher’s now infamous utterance, “There is no alternative.” In another work, *Holy Stick* (2022), Çavuşoğlu re-works a slogan from a different historical moment and position on the political spectrum – Greta Thunberg’s “Our house is on fire” – assembling and burning long strings of Palo Santo that is derived from another tree in the *bursera* family (*bursera graveolens*). In the words she engraves on the pieces of wood before burning them – “House/Has/ Burned/Bad/Energy/Gone” – the artist underscores the irony of this tree being irresponsibly and rampantly logged across Peru, Colombia and Mexico to meet the international demand for Palo Santo as an agent of purification and cleansing marketed by the wellness industry, based on its shamanic and healing uses across Central and South America.

Çavuşoğlu’s own location in the Eastern Mediterranean has directed her to the *pinus brutia* tree, witness to rapid environmental changes, the movement of peoples, and in recent years, victim to widespread wildfires. Çavuşoğlu extracts pigment from the bark of such pine trees, which she uses to dye fabric. This fabric is then suspended in the form of a column, evoking the very tree trunks from which the pigment is derived. The transmutation of specific, regionally sourced materials and their deployment as connotative visual form is equally resonant in the case of *Lambadistrion* (2022). Here, beads made from labdanum, the fragrant resin native to Crete, are strung together on a frame made of wood and thread that resembles the whip traditionally used to collect the resin that is referred to in the work’s title. The patterns produced by the suspended labdanum beads mimic those found on Anatolian textiles that reference the movements of people and transformations in the environment. Traces and trajectories of migration are equally central to Çavuşoğlu’s research in the Sonoran Desert, an active passage for people between Mexico and the United States, where those attempting to cross without the requisite paperwork traverse the sandy landscape wearing special shoes that leave no trace. Çavuşoğlu purchased a few pairs of such “carpet shoes” while traveling in Mexico and used their soles to generate marks on bark derived papers that appear in the exhibition, including amate, which has been produced in the Mexican state of Puebla since well before colonial contact through a process that transforms pulp from the inner bark of fig and mulberry trees.

Across the exhibition, Çavuşoğlu subverts the nihilism and alarmism of media and populist discourses that generate a sense of helplessness and loss of possibility in the face of crises. The ability to transform – across material and metabolic states – comes into focus as a key mechanism of the adaptability that allows survival and alternative ways of being in the world.

Rattanamol Singh Johal

During the opening the catalog of the exhibition in the form of a newspaper will be presented. The publication hosts texts written by Kit Hammonds, Milovan Farronato and Sergey Kantsedal.

Artissima Event

6 November 2022, 14.30-15.30

Artist Talk: State of Tun

Milovan Farronato in conversation with artist Aslı Çavuşoğlu.

Associazione Barriera is a non-profit association for contemporary art, founded in 2007 in Turin by a group of art collectors. Through various initiatives, shows and events, the space creates opportunities for dialogue between artists, curators and collectors to prefer contamination from other cultural areas.

Barriera promotes curatorial strategies aimed at encouraging young artists in research and directing the latter towards a production that responds to the specifics of the space starting from a process of sharing. Barriera is curated by Sergey Kantsedal and Yuliya Say.

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