

## Gökhun Baltacı

### *The sky is black and golden and the moon is shining red*

kaufmann repetto is pleased to present *The sky is black and golden and the moon is shining red*, the first solo exhibition of Turkish artist Gökhun Baltacı in Italy. In this new series of pastel works, Baltacı's vision unfolds as viewers navigate through scenes that seem familiar at first, only to reveal a deeper, more complex narrative at a closer inspection. What initially appears simple is soon complicated by subtle details – unassuming objects that, as they accumulate, begin to shift the tone of the work, creating a quiet but unsettling atmosphere. These meticulous additions form a constellation of references, drawing the viewer into Baltacı's unique world, where the boundaries between the known and the strange blur.

Born in Ankara in 1989, Gökhun Baltacı took part in his city's underground art scene already during his early years at the Hacettepe University, co-founding the Avareler collective, a street-art group that focused on thought-provoking interventions in public spaces of the Turkish capital. The strong sense of community that emerged from this experience facilitated intellectual discussions among its members, creating the opportunity of an anarchic artistic expression in a city that is mostly known for its strict bureaucracy and rigid politics.

The leap from guerrilla interventions with spray stencils on huge billboards in the city traffic, to oil pastels in the intimacy of his family home was "intuitive", as Baltacı himself puts it. While transitioning to a more traditional medium, the artist focused on a more personal storytelling by gathering elements from his upbringing, and elaborating on them in a journey of self-discovery.

Gökhun Baltacı's artistic practice is marked by a continuous exploration of the subconscious. By drawing on the principles of displacement and condensation, he reconfigures everyday objects into symbols loaded with uncharted psychological significance. These objects, though seemingly ordinary, become vehicles for exploring the tension between inner desires and external realities, represented figuratively by the constant shift between the outer world landscapes, and the portraits and the still lifes in closed, home-like environments. Imbued by a dreamlike, almost hypnotic atmosphere, the artworks invite into a realm where meaning is fluid and interpretations are ever-shifting.

What is particularly captivating in Baltacı's work is his ability to illustrate the mundane with a childlike sense of wonder and trepidation. The artist's choice of medium itself, the soft and pliable pastel, almost seems to mirror the malleability of a child's imagination. The objects in his works—often repeated across compositions—are permeated with a sense of ritual, like fragments of a game, yet they are placed into spaces where they evoke discomfort and curiosity. Semi-transparent paravents – almost an oxymoron – recur in Baltacı's works as if to encourage the viewer to breach through the first layer, while music cassettes of Johann Sebastian Bach and Nirvana act as a sort of soundtrack scattered throughout the series. References to 18th and 19th century iconography appear in

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the form of corals - which were long believed to ward off the "evil eye" in the Renaissance due to their similarity to blood vessels - and vibrant food such as watermelons and sea urchins, in eerie contrast with the darker tones of Baltacı's color palette. Each repetition, rather than dulling the impact, deepens the mystery, as if the objects are gradually revealing new layers of meaning, much like the strange reconfigurations of childhood play.

The title of the exhibition stems from a verse of the 1992 song *Picture of Maryanne* by experimental post-rock band the Swans - another testament to the importance of music in Baltacı's oeuvre. *The sky is black and golden and the moon is shining red* seems to allude to this heightened sense of a world teetering between the known and the unknowable. There is an unsettling beauty in Baltacı's work, an almost melancholic recognition of how reality, when viewed through the prism of memory and fascination, becomes distorted. This title evokes the same edginess that runs through his works, as if to say that even the most ordinary objects—when examined through the artist's gaze—can evoke both comfort and turmoil, wonder and dread.

Gökhun Baltacı was born in 1989 in Ankara, Turkey. Since 2010, he took part in several institutional group shows, including *Shaken Image* at Pera Museum, Istanbul, and *The Same Garden* at Evliyagil Museum, Ankara. Baltacı is working with Galeri Nev and was exhibited several times in Turkey (2022, 2019, 2017), in addition to a solo presentation at Paris Internationale (2022). Gökhun Baltacı was selected for the prestigious Cité Internationale des Arts residency program in Paris during 2024.