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EXHIBITION FEATURE - *EVERYDAY HEROES* BY IRFAN ÖNÜRMEŒ AT C24 GALLERY

June 16, 2022



For his fifth solo exhibition at C24 Gallery, *Everyday Heroes*, on view through July 9, 2022, İrfan Öñürmen presents a series of fifteen new monochromatic tulle wall hangings. In addition to these physical works, the exhibition includes Öñürmen's first series of NFTs, *NFTulle: Origins*, 150 unique digital works that explore contemporary society through its complex system of codes and symbols.



Curatorial Statement:

Önürmen has long been known for his multi-dimensional works that examine notions of identity in the rapidly changing digital age, presented in a wide variety of two and three-dimensional mediums. In this new collection of work, the artist has streamlined his use of symbols and imagery to its minimal foundations, utilizing one of his favorite mediums, tulle, in layered, monochromatic constructions and digital renderings.

Önürmen's silhouette-like figures represent people at their most basic, their physical forms navigating landscapes punctuated by the shapes and signs common to everyday living in both the real and virtual worlds. As repetitive motifs of varying scale, the depiction of ordinary people engaged in mundane activities takes on an almost heroic quality and an exalted significance, particularly when these activities are undertaken against the backdrop of current global conditions, such as war and the continuing pandemic.

The artist's decision to place his anonymous human forms in stripped-down, geometric representations of cities and streets, asks us to recognize their shared humanity minus the identifying marks of nations or tribes that might divide them. In this way, Önürmen's black and white works lead us to explore the shades of gray that could help us transcend the separation and confrontational nature of so much of the world's current discourse.



"Dueling Shadows", 2022 - Tulle - Unframed dimensions: 106.5 x 96in. (270.5 x 243.8cm)

Artist Statement:

Everyday Heroes is my fifth solo exhibition at C24 gallery. Inspired by the public images and symbols of modern life, it represents the routines of daily living imposed by the state, made heroic by their sheer ubiquity, especially during challenging times. I'm interested in the traces of humanity that remain, filtered through photographic and digital interference and reduced to their essence. These silhouette-like images take on a spiritual dimension, and are the main motifs of the exhibition.

These shadow figures have been a part of my imagination since my student days. I do not believe that the human figure has a one-sided reality, but has changed and transformed due to the possibilities of time and material. In my early tulle works, the figure has an inner and poetic character, and in my paintings, more of an expressionist character. In my sculptures and installations, the figure is social but also political. My figure has always wanted to turn into a fragmented image and has been a symbol that tends to be a shadow, free from all details of identity. I have used such a symbolic human figure in my exhibitions as a way of welcoming a general audience.

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This current work begins with symbolizing the ordinary-ization and de-identification of human beings. My biggest work, located in the atrium section of the exhibition, is about today's global political balance. This work takes us to the irony of superpowers and then to the parody of shadow play. This attempt to symbolize aspects of heroism, ideologies and political discourses also causes us to ask questions about what is happening today.

We usually have a tendency to believe what is shown. Governments have used this to their advantage throughout history. Art has the function of breaking this tendency and showing the facts from different perspectives. In this sense, this large-scale work may cause us to think about concepts such as ideological polarization, war, globalization and the balance of power, and the enormity of the work may cause us to ask questions about our own existence.

The formal as well as the emotional inspiration for the shadow-associated figures as the main motif in this exhibition stem from my recent interest in film noir and comics noir aesthetics. Cinematographic frames and plastic language in comics are implicit in my art language. Although my exhibition is full of contemporary references, the pattern of the exhibition is black and white and contains extremely sharp contrasts, embodying elements from the past, present, and future. In this exhibition, representing elements from our ordinary daily lives and human characteristics, I tried to construct and understand the black and white balance in the giant, global mechanism of war.

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