

# Şakir Gökçebağ turns daily life OBJECTS INTO PLAYFUL GAMES

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Using simple daily objects such as coathangers, umbrellas, slippers or a garden hose and creating unique compositions with them is a trademark of Turkish contemporary artist Şakir Gökçebağ, whose newest solo exhibition is on view at Galerist in İstanbul.

Titled "Think Tank," the show brings together several installations by the Hamburg-based artist in which he creates various games for the audience.

"A state of play is prevalent in this exhibition," Gökçebağ, who is also a photographer, told Today's Zaman during a recent interview at the gallery.

"I like it when viewers try to find out the missing parts in [one of my installations]. Sometimes people actually count [the pieces]," he said.

"The title of the show also refers to that, too. A think tank is the production of thoughts and ideas. I demand the audience to produce visual ideas. One can practice philosophy even with the simplest things in life," said Gökçebağ. "It doesn't have to be mysterious or incomprehensible."

Although the viewer wants to see stories in artworks most of the time, Gökçebağ instead aims to lead his audience to come up with a story while viewing his work.

"I generally don't comment on my work. The title 'Think Tank,' for example, is open to interpretation. I want interactivity, I want the spectators to think with me and be part of the game. The games I create [in my artworks] are solved within few seconds most of the time. They are not like 'concept art,' which leaves the audience clueless most of the time. I do things that both a 7-year-old and a 77-year-old can understand easily. This way art also becomes universal," said Gökçebağ.

"An Eskimo, a Japanese, or a Turkish person can understand my art. The object itself is not significant; what's important is only the fact that it's known to everyone," he said.

"Of course, people sometimes ask what I'm trying to express in a specific work, but even when I'm not there [to explain it], everybody finds something from their own in a work of mine. I could as well do abstract compositions and leave them shrouded in mystery but this is my method," he added.

One of the distinguishing features of Gökçebağ's installations is that the spectator usually doesn't notice the material he's used in a specific work upon first glance from a distance. Only after coming closer to the work can one realize what the material is and that is something the artist does intentionally.

"I use 'defamiliarization' techniques. For example, I use a simple umbrella in an entirely different way than its practical use in daily life. I also use a technique called bunching together. The idea of an umbrella is the same in our minds and it has a specific form -- I use many of them at the same time to create something else," the 49-year-old Gökçebağ explained.

Noting that he never waits for inspiration to come since "one can find an interesting idea anytime," Gökçebağ makes numerous experiments to come up with the final form of his works he presents to the audience and he explains this as "being in a constant state of [re]search."

"Sometimes I draw sketches beforehand and sometimes the work [transforms] during the [creation] process. I don't really have limits about what to use for my works. I use whatever I see around. Once, to describe this situation, I said, 'I'm one of those happy people who find what he is looking for just next to him.' An apple, a comb, an umbrella would suffice. But sometimes I go to the flea market on weekends, where I can see many different objects together, side by side. When you do that, of course that nourishes [ideas]. Or I go to a [DIY] store to buy things but flea markets are always my favorite," Gökçebağ said.



Turkish contemporary artist Şakir Gökçebağ poses for a portrait in front of his 2014 installation "Parabol" (Parabola), on display at his solo exhibition "Think Tank," which runs until Feb. 14 at the Galerist art gallery in İstanbul.



"Black Forest" (front) and a wall installation from the series "Trans-Layers" by Gökçebağ.



"Gökkubeler" by Şakir Gökçebağ

Art critic Müjde Metin writes in the exhibition catalogue that the artist's works are installed within a unique context according to the characteristics and connotations of the object used in the work, its positioning in the past and now, its aesthetics and humor.

"He dissociates everyday objects from their habitual characteristics and re-contextualizes them into pure forms. This act becomes authentic by its symbolic and intellectual combination. ... In Gökçebağ's works we encounter the purity of the object as well as the connotations that come to the artist's mind. Hence, he makes the viewer perceive that there are multiple ways of perception. The viewer questions the meaning and position of these morphed objects in the artist's world and is even compelled to imagine new ways of adapting it," Metin writes.

"Think Tank" continues until Feb. 14 at Galerist in the Tepebaşı neighborhood in Beyoğlu. For further information, see [www.sakirgokcebag.com](http://www.sakirgokcebag.com) and [www.galerist.com.tr](http://www.galerist.com.tr).