

REVIEWS ISTANBUL

# Şakir Gökçebağ

Arter

By Kaya Genç



Şakir Gökçebağ, *Fluxus II*, 2017, roofing sheets, 1 3/8" x 32'9 3/4" x 4'11".

Şakir Gökçebağ, a Turkish-born alumnus of the Kunstakademie Düsseldorf who has lived in Hamburg since 2001, has had shows in his home country before (at Baksı Museum in Bayburt in 2019–20 and at Istanbul's Ferda Art Platform in 2021), but "As It Seems," curated by Emre Baykal, is his most extensive presentation in Istanbul to date. Appropriating existing objects, distorting their forms, or hindering their functionality, his playful installations, sculptures, and photographs sustain the spirit of Marcel Duchamp and Fluxus. A flurry of low-cost, disposable materials, including garden hoses, sieves, shirts, folding rulers, toilet-paper rolls, shoe brushes, wooden pegs, and red lentils coalesce to form amusing, provocative installations. *Untitled*, 2011, for instance, is an unassuming black umbrella that he has bent at a ninety-degree angle. Placed so that the vertical portion rests against a corner where two walls meet, the umbrella, with its bizarre deformation, appears to be melting down and seeking escape.

This deconstruction and reconstruction of objects is a defining feature of Gökçebağ's practice. For *Fundamental*, 2023, he dismantled an oriental carpet, rearranging its parts so that he formed a square, a triangle, and a circle from the negative space of his cuttings and from offcuts that he'd stitched together into thin lines. The reconfiguration of the carpet yielded an alluring dynamic between form and void, presence and absence. Similarly, *Untitled*, 2021, uses peripheral parts of a rug to create two massive shapes: a triangle and a kite-shaped quadrilateral. By placing those shapes adjacent to each other at a corner, Gökçebağ created an illusion of three-dimensional space. Positioning the carpet on the wall instead of the floor, Gökçebağ transformed it into a window or a door, a portal to a rich past where handicrafts once mattered.

*Black Forest*, 2015/2024, uses the fabric parts of 240 black umbrellas to produce a likeness of the Schwarzwald, or Black Forest, in southwestern Germany. Stretching from Karlsruhe in the north to the Swiss border in the south, this mountainous, forested region takes its name from the fact that, from a distance, its trees look black. The tips of the umbrellas point upward, their canopies resembling tree tops, while the long interwoven strips of disintegrated black fabric recall tree silhouettes and dense shadows. The result is a mystical, awe-inspiring mass.

With its title and execution, *Fluxus II*, 2017, was the most straightforward embodiment of Gökçebağ's aesthetic on display. Comprising 635 corrugated roofing sheets carefully arranged on the floor in the shape of a flowing river, the installation transforms a basic, locally sourced industrial material into a rippling current of water. *Fluxus II* contrasts the texture of a building material with the natural form of the work's composition. The installation also conjured the climate crisis and the extreme weather events that turn rooftops into rivers. As a section featuring Gökçebağ's photographic works from the 1990s reminds us, the artist's accessible practice has sustained the spirit of Fluxus for decades, dismantling, repeating, and reassembling everyday objects in transcendent variations.

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