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Atalay Yavuz, Nightblue

By TRAVIS JEPPESEN, NOV. 2014

For his latest exhibition, Atalay Yavuz is working with the roving New York- and Istanbul-based gallery Protocinema (<http://www.protocinema.org>)— which never stages an exhibition in the same space twice. This time, the exhibition takes place in Özge Bakkaliye, a tiny convenience store situated in the hip Beyoglu quarter of Istanbul. If it is unexpected to find an art exhibition in such a banal locale as a convenience store, the twenty-six-year-old artist has made the most out of the situation by

collaborating with his surroundings, rendering something of a cross between a site-specific installation and a subtle commentary on substance and consumerism – so subtle, in fact, that one suspects that many of those who come in to buy a Coke or a pack of smokes might not even notice that something’s afoot.

The exhibition consists of three sculptural works. From the door-length window outside the shop, one can view *Strata*, 2014. It is a transparent glass panel, the bottom half of which has been sprinkled with a bubbly blue liquid. The way it leans against the window inside the shop, you might mistake it for an unhinged door that has been set aside in the midst of construction work. The blue liquid, one learns from the press release, is ultrasound gel, which enables medical professionals to see inside the body when applied to the skin before x-rays.

Upon entering the shop, you might miss a small mirror, framed in white, sitting on a shelf immediately to your left. You look in the mirror, all your features are slightly distorted – a bit of a funhouse mirror effect. That’s because this “mirror” is actually a transparent container filled with the anti-depressant Prozac, whence the work derives its title.

The most conspicuous of the three works on display is *Nightblue*, 2014, a metallic circular object suspended from the middle of the shop above a small wooden table. The top half of the circle contains a blue substance, while the bottom half is transparent, yet speckled with liquid. Actually, both the blue and transparent are liquids: samples of commercial eye make-up remover.

The three works seem to blend in, oblivious to their surroundings, yet clearly forming a triadic harmony among themselves, for the wanderer perceptive enough to notice their placement among the drinks, chips, ads, and cheap consumer detritus that are the stuff of the mom-and-pop world of Özge Bakkaliye. Yavuz’s socially aware abstraction beckons us to dig beneath the surface of this world in order to examine our own involvement with it – as individuals belonging to larger and more complex social nuclei.

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Travis Jeppesen's novels include *The Suiciders*, *Wolf at the Door*, and *Victims*. He is the recipient of a 2013 Arts Writers grant from Creative Capital/the Warhol Foundation. In 2014, his object-oriented writing was featured in the 2014 Whitney Biennial and in a solo exhibition at Wilkinson Gallery in London. A collection of novellas, *All Fall*, is forthcoming from Publication Studio.

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