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The Personal is Political: Viola Yeşiltaç's "Strawberry of Cosmo"

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Viola Yeşiltaç, *fruct IV & untitled (foam)*, 2016, glass
(Courtesy the artist)

Six luminescent cast, colored glass sculptures stand as if in formation in the center of David Lewis's Lower East Side gallery space. Viewing these works—the focal point of Viola Yeşiltaç's exhibition "Strawberry of Cosmo"—in the daytime is optimal as the light from the fifth floor windows sets the works in an almost otherworldly scene. It is the dissonance between the fragility of these objects and their mass that strikes first.

Yeşiltaç's personal biography is central to the exhibition. All of the glass pieces—a pair of salad tongs, a little blue tupperware, and a hot water bottle among them—are replicas from Yeşiltaç's childhood home in Hanover, Germany. Visiting family in Istanbul this past summer, Yeşiltaç witnessed the attempted coup as well as the daily construction taking place throughout the city as part of Turkish president Erdogan's so-called "urban renewal" plans. Recalling the men, many of whom are immigrants from North Africa, working to build glossy high rises, Yeşiltaç could not help but notice the countless foam pillars ubiquitous at these sites. A cheap source of insulation, the pillars are also transformed into makeshift benches and lunch tables throughout the city. Sneaking onto construction sites at night, the artist gathered several, which now serve as the plinths for her sculptures.

The precarious combination of glass sourced from her mother's home set atop stolen construction material from her father's homeland has a dual function. Without ever becoming sentimental, it reveals the foundation of a life story. Perhaps more importantly though, it weaves that story into a much larger one about migration, capitalism, and identity. Yeşiltaç's great accomplishment is the honesty with which she finds harmony within this discord.

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