

ARTFORUM

Viola Yeşiltaç

by Allese Thomson
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Viola Yeşiltaç, *Vom rudimentären Unverständnis* (About Rudimentary Incomprehensibility), 2012, calligraphy ink, royal blue fountain pen ink on paper 19 1/2 x 25 1/2".

What Viola Yeşiltaç cannot photograph, she paints, and what she cannot paint, she photographs. Her debut solo exhibition in New York comprises four pieces in each medium, all of which possess pictorial elements that gesture at stories but lack a cohesive narrative. Her works are very attractive, their allure resting in winsome shapes and an ability to leave just enough unsaid: This is art that courts its viewer.

Yeşiltaç paints in calligraphy ink on colored paper—the pieces here are rendered on yellow, pink, gray, and green, and they all share the same title, *Vom rudimentären Unverständnis* (About Rudimentary Incomprehensibility, all works 2012). Each work consists of a variety of motifs: In some there are faces with circles for eyes and inky black spots for pupils; elsewhere one finds stick figures, a building with rectangles for windows, and a mouth with square teeth. Throughout are swirls of shapes that could be letters or figures or countless other things. Short lines of cursive are sprinkled about, with statements like PRACTICE IDOLATRY; STIRRING THE POT; A KIND OF ASTONISHMENT OF PHENOMENAL IMMOBILITY; A VERY PROFOUND ALIENATION; and SPEKULATIUS.

As cryptic as these statements are her photographs: She pictures sheets of paper that are too thin to stand upright, but all the same, stand upright, often leaning against the other. It's notable that the artist does not digitally alter her images—after all, these are formations nearly impossible from the standpoint of physics, which emphasizes how dependent the medium is on the physical reality of an instant in time. In contrast, her paintings gesture at the way a moment is psychologically formed, experienced, and then remembered—often in ways that pay no heed to temporality. These modes of registering the outside world are collapsed within images that are elegant and nostalgic, wafting with nuances (those cryptic qualities) that spike visual and intellectual curiosity, prompting questions about the way we imagine and the way we exist.