



## “Hypochondriac”: Turkish artist Seçkin Pirim about art, design and minimalism – interview

**Art Radar speaks to Turkish artist Seçkin Pirim about his latest work on show at New York’s C24 Gallery until 29 October 2016.**

Turkish sculptor Seçkin Pirim talks to *Art Radar* about interdisciplinary, exhibition making as a cure for hypochondria and wonders how to breathe a bit of “Romanticism” into minimalist sculpture.



Seçkin Pirim, “Hypochondriac”, 2016, installation view at C24 Gallery, New York. Image courtesy C24 Gallery and Seçkin Pirim.

Although Seçkin Pirim (b. 1977, Ankara) has exhibited widely in Turkey, Europe and the Asia-Pacific region, "Hypochondriac" at C24 Gallery in New York is his first solo show in the United States. His works can be found in various collections, as well as in parks and public spaces, where he has been commissioned to create larger works. In his studio in Istanbul, Seçkin Pirim works with a number of materials (from paper to industrial scale metal), subjecting them to various industrial processes of cutting and mounting.



Seçkin Pirim, 'Abyss 1', 2016, metallic paint on 490 pieces 300 gr bristol paper cut out, 95.5 x 69 x 8.5 cm. Image courtesy Seçkin Pirim and C24 Gallery.

Placing the challenges of form and content at the centre of his production, in the exhibition press release Seçkin Pirim describes:

*"Hypochondriac" as an exhibition that overlaps with my life, it lays my life bare. Each work has a story, and a corresponding title. I healed each of those conditions and deteriorations by working in a free and spontaneous manner. I had to genuinely force myself to venture beyond my own borders."*

Art Radar talks to the artist about his new body of work.



Seçkin Pirim, "Hypochondriac", 2016, installation view at C24 Gallery, New York. Image courtesy C24 Gallery and Seçkin Pirim.

**Your work is at the intersection of art and design. Could you tell us about this balance in your art practice?**



I studied painting at high school and sculpture at university; but I've always been interested in design since the beginning. Also, I've produced and had many exhibitions within this genre. One of my dreams is to design a building. I think it's not right to separate the disciplines of art in today's world. On the contrary, interdisciplinary works develop and improve an artist's whole production and creation process. Of course, there is a thin line between the design object and the art piece. It's important to be able to determine this.



Seçkin Pirm, 'Bullet', 2016, metallic paint on 300 gr 80 pieces on Bristol paper cut out, 91.5 x 222 x 5.5 cm. Image courtesy Seçkin Pirm and C24 Gallery.

**Your new show “Hypochondriac” at C24 Gallery is an exhibition of works made from a variety of materials, from paper to plexiglass. What informs your choice of materials for each work?**

As a sculptor, the material is very important for me. Discovering new materials and learning how to use them is like a game to me. Sometimes I design a new work and realise that it must be done by using marble only. And sometimes the material leads me. I discover a new material and its dynamics make me create a new art piece. For example, I had had an exhibition many years ago about the necessity of the human soul to be pure. When I was thinking about how to show this pureness without using glass, I came across plexiglass.

Using this material opened up many possibilities for me. I've started to push the material's boundaries and explore the different ways of using it. I'm still exploring this material's boundless possibilities. Of course, if you are creating a long lasting sculpture, you have to think like an engineer. You have to think about the work's durability for outdoor conditions like rain, sun or many other climate problems.



Seçkin Pirim, "Hypochondriac", 2016, installation view at C24 Gallery, New York. Image courtesy C24 Gallery and Seçkin Pirim.

**Could you tell us a bit about what the show “Hypochondriac” at C24 Gallery is exploring?**

Hypochondria is a situation that I have been dealing with for the last two years. As with all my exhibitions, this exhibition is about self-departure. I know a lot about this subject. The exhibition is the result of my journey of becoming a hypochondriac over the last two years. Hypochondria is a psychological disorder, which affects your mood. Besides the drug treatment, I've searched for ways to reverse the negative effects to positive.

Of course, the best way for me to resolve this situation was by producing my art. All my life experiences, the volatility of the country I live in, environmental problems, fear and finally this illness. All these formed this exhibition. Eventually, I've realised that I could be both the doctor and the patient so I think I've treated myself with this exhibition.



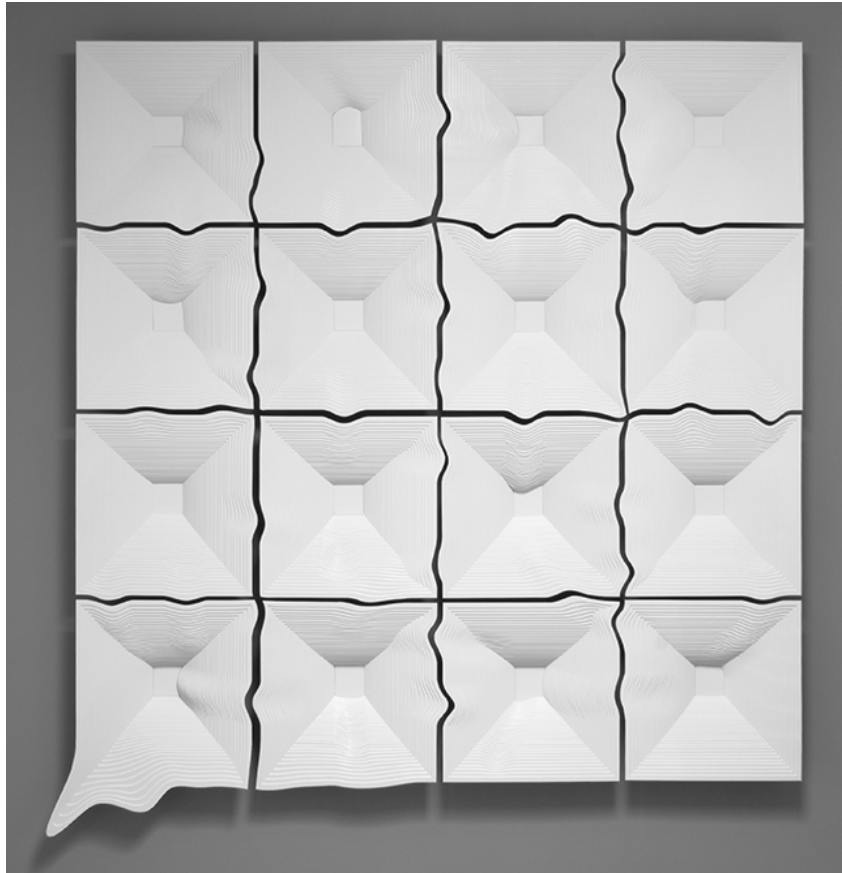
Seçkin Pirim, “Hypochondriac”, 2016, installation view at C24 Gallery, New York. Image courtesy C24 Gallery and Seçkin Pirim.

**In your experience what has been the most successful of your experimentation with industrial processes for making art since the early 2000s?**

I love technology and I use it in all areas of my life as much as possible including in sculpture. I follow the inventions in engineering, design and the technology besides art. New materials and techniques open new doors to my dream world. I think it's very important to use a machine built for a different purpose to create an artwork. It's like when the video camera was invented, the artist immediately used it to make video art.

Recently 3D printers emerged and they carve even better than Michelangelo. This doesn't mean sculpture art is over. What's important is [to use] the artist's creativity to get

ahead of the machine and to use the latter just as a tool. In my case, the experiments I did with the laser cut machine had been very successful and produced results that improved my production.

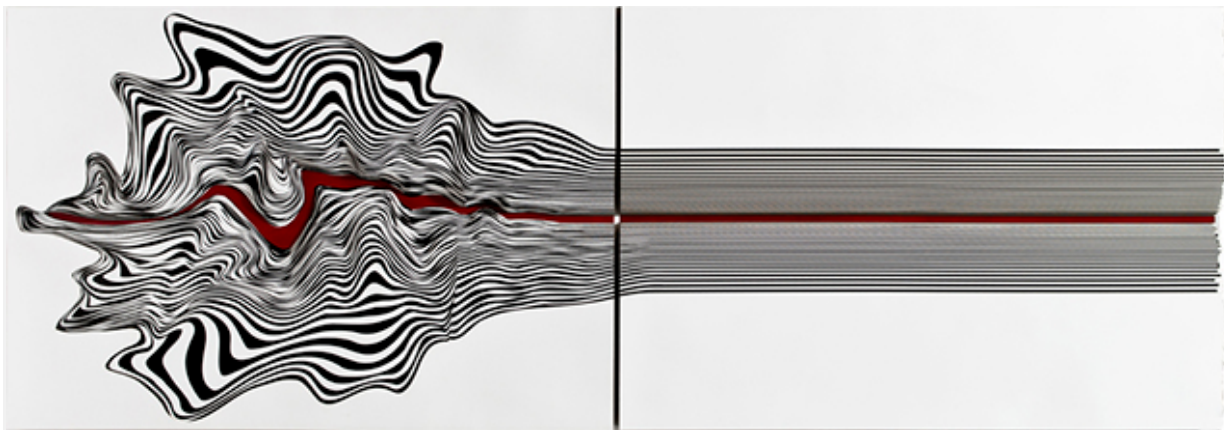


Seçkin Pirim, 'I Think Therefore I Am, Nobody Said You Don't Exist', 2016, metallic paint on plexiglass, 100 x 100 x 25 cm. Image courtesy Seçkin Pirim and C24 Gallery.

**How has your art practice been informed by your formal education?**



I'd begun as an apprentice to an artist when I was eight. I think this changed my life. This apprenticeship had continued throughout high school. It's a long process. Much of my art practice had already developed in this period. I had figured out almost all the technical problems of sculpture in this process. The biggest advantage of this was to have lots of time to think about the conceptual problems of my works instead of technical problems when I eventually attended the university's sculpture department.



Seçkin Pirim, 'Bullet', 2016, metallic paint on 300 gr 80 pieces on Bristol paper cut out, 91.5 x 222 x 5.5 cm. Image courtesy Seçkin Pirim and C24 Gallery.

**What other spaces, communities or fellow artists nationally or internationally have been important for your development as an artist?**

I visit many art fairs, exhibitions and museums as much as possible. Different artists and spaces have inspired me at different times. And the source of my inspiration varies depending on the mood I'm in. But Eduardo Chillida, by catching the romanticism in the field of abstract sculpture, touches my soul at each of my stages. When I look at artists of my generation, it's hard to name a specific artist, but recently I'm seeing exciting artworks.





Seçkin Pirm, 'It', 2016, 300 gr bristol paper cut out, 90.5 x 120 x 6.5 cm. Image courtesy Seçkin Pirm and C24 Gallery.

**Your work has been described as “neo-minimalist”. The minimalist canon was established during the 1950s around particular modes of working with massive, simple and industrially produced forms. Which of the intentions and interests of minimalist sculpture do you share and what is not so relevant to your current practice?**

My art is minimal because my life is minimal. Also my soul too. I don't create minimalist sculptures especially. These are the outcomes of my living. But in [the] history of art, the critics position my works in this category. I am trying to attain something else with my works. I am interested in if I can make someone cry or if I can touch someone's soul without using any figure, just using abstract forms. Can I create a romantic piece without any figurative image and how much can it get closer to my soul? In conclusion, I admire minimalism so much. Maybe what's irrelevant of minimalism with my works is that I name my works and give meaning to them.



Seçkin Pirm, “Hypochondriac”, 2016, installation view at C24 Gallery, New York. Image courtesy C24 Gallery and Seçkin Pirm.

**You have made huge gallery installations and public sculptures in the past but also paper cut works displayed inside tiny matchboxes. What does the choice of the scale of the work define for you?**

For me, scale is a very important issue. I cannot give a mathematical answer to this question of scaling a work. It depends on the process and the effect I want to give. But in my opinion, among the artists, there is always an endless impulse to create bigger works.

**Could you describe your most ambitious artwork?**

I haven't created my most ambitious artwork yet.

**What are you working on at the moment?**

This exhibition process at C24 Gallery came out great for me. You cannot retire from being an artist. It's a lifestyle. Because of this, I'm always working. Even if I don't have an exhibition soon, I'm always at my studio and continue to work. Nowadays, I'm working for the Contemporary Istanbul art fair and after that, we have Art Miami. The new works are for these fairs for now.

**Rebecca Close**