

Taking Up Space

A YOUTHFUL YET BOLD STREAK PERMEATES THE WORK OF A LOCAL ARTIST WHOSE ART ROOTS ARE AS DEEP AS THE IMAGINARY WORLD HE INHABITS.

BY ERICA PRATT



When standing in front of a collection of Darius Yektai's paintings, a single word might come to mind: provocative. There is a definitive duality in these works, which are steeped in tradition and experimentation. The presence of thick, tactile

brushstrokes begs the viewer its acquaintance, while the appearance of sharper edges created by a voluptuous layer of resin registers a certain danger, a "don't touch me" element. Laura Grenning, a Sag Harbor gallerist who will host a solo show for the artist, poetically compares this effect of resin poured onto canvas as the first icy frost over a pond.

Yektai, born in Southampton, is the son of Manoucher Yektai, a renowned painter who had serious ties to and influence over the abstract expressionism movement. It is inevitable given this proximity to another's artistic fiber to hear echoes

of his father's work. However, Yektai has a brushstroke all his own. "We all work within our own limitations, and it's within those limitations where we focus our abilities and find something to say... and if it's good or new, sometimes other people listen... but that's not why I choose to sit in my studio every day and digest thoughts," Yektai admits. "I do it because no one else will do it for me, and I hear something calling me forward from the unknown."

Observing Yektai's works, one has a sense that he works fast and furiously. There is a youthful sense of urgency and an undercurrent of energy permeating the collection. The eye is able to explore these energetic routes on top of a highly

sculptural surface of paint and perspective. In a deliberate decision, he works within the classical repertoire of still life, portraiture and landscape. Looking forward to September at The Arts Center at Duck Creek in Springs, Yektai will show another side of his painterly personality with *Dark/Light*, a series of self-portraits bathed in shadow. One critic described these portraits as looking at a Rembrandt with the lights off. dyektai.com; grenninggallery.com



Clockwise from top: "Waxer" (2020, oil stick, acrylic and resin on canvas), 64 inches by 46 inches; "Large Yellow Tulips" (2005-2018, oil on linen), 72 inches by 144 inches; "White Vase" (2020, oil on linen), 24 inches by 20 inches.