

Park View

Flash Art

May-June 2016

Elif Erkan

Weiss / Berlin

In his poem "The Lotos Eaters," Alfred Lord Tennyson, in the persona of a connoisseur of the titular narcotic, asks, "Why are we weigh'd upon with heaviness . . . While all things else have rest from weariness?" Elif Erkan poses a similar question in her exhibition at Weiss Gallery, which borrows its title from Tennyson's poem — itself a reference to a famous episode in *The Odyssey*. The exhibition consists of a group of sculptures composed of plaster and beeswax overlain with familiar mass-market panaceas from contemporary life including Omega 3 oils, St. John's Wort, bath salts and vegetable juice. Erkan, a resident of the distinctly lotus-friendly metropolis that is Los Angeles, seems to be posing the question of whether objects, too, feel their own heaviness and grow weary beneath their too solid forms.

The plaster works are casts of metal roller doors, chipped and broken into vaguely anthropic forms. The bruised, shattered qualities of the sculptures evoke the ruins of the classical world, and, in the arrangements across the three rooms of the gallery, one can almost make out tableaux of figures in vanished landscapes. The fragility of the plaster belies the durability of the objects from which they are cast, and there is a distinctly Tennysonian weariness that they summon. Exploring them more closely, the salves Erkan has applied to their crumbling surfaces — salt crystals, jaundiced-looking Omega 3 capsules — seem more like wounds scarred into the plaster than balms. For an exhibition with such a melancholy air, "Lotos Eaters" possesses an addictive quality not dissimilar to the organic soporific of Homer's epic poem. For example, the curdled beauty of the beeswax sculptures, particularly *Floral* (2016), was entirely hypnotic; and the anguished roller door of *Half Tortoise* (2016) seemed to beg for human companionship. Like the island of the Lotos-eaters themselves, leaving the presence of such emotionally involving works felt like an extreme exertion.

by William Kherbek



836 S. Park View Street #8
Los Angeles, California 90057