

# The New York Times

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**ELIF URAS**

**The Occidental**

*Smith-Stewart*

*53 Stanton Street, Lower East Side*

*Through Nov. 4*

Born in Ankara, Turkey, and educated in the northeastern United States, the painter Elif Uras has seized on the buzzword Occidentalism — a retort to Edward Said's Orientalism. Her new oils and ceramics combine scenes of Western upper-class leisure with the nature-inspired motifs of Ottoman art, although they do not appear to privilege one over the other.

Four vases, produced in Turkey with the help of artists at the Iznik Foundation, show skiers and polo players practicing in abstracted landscapes of fish scales and tree branches. Cartoonish figuration, however intentional, gives these objects the unfortunate look of a paint-your-own-pottery project.

The paintings create a more mysterious hybrid of Eastern and Western sensuality. The best exaggerate the keyhole gaze (though not the seductive surface) of Moorish bath scenes by Ingres and Gérôme. In "Turkish Bath" women wield hand mirrors like tennis rackets, deflecting beams of light across a blue-tiled grotto. The large-bosomed central figure in "Free" pinches her own swollen nipple. These scenes play out in the sort of richly patterned, indeterminate spaces that made Ms. Uras's previous work so appealing.

She also experiments with color: Each of her five paintings has a dominant hue. In "White on White" she creates an iridescent interior of eggshell and vanilla tones. In "Stendhal Syndrome" she lets loose with an erotically charged red. "Keep Them Out," an ochre-hued aerial landscape partly obscured by a chain-link fence, shows that Ms. Uras can be both decorative and topical. Otherwise, her "clash of civilizations" is more an arranged marriage. **KAREN ROSENBERG**