

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

EXHIBITION: ELIF URAS: THE OCCIDENTALIST

RECEPTION: Thursday, October 4th, 7-9PM

October 4 - November 4, 2007

HOURS: Wed. - Sun. 12 PM - 6 PM

Smith-Stewart is pleased to present THE OCCIDENTALIST, a solo exhibition of five new paintings and four Iznik china vases by Turkish-born artist ELIF URAS.

The title of the exhibition refers to Occidentalism, a concept that is the inversion of Orientalism, reducing key principles the Western world defines itself by, such as liberalism, secularism and capitalism, to crude stereotypical depictions. Uras, herself is a product of a hybrid world, born in the “east” and educated in the “west.” Through her paintings and ceramics, she explores the “clash of civilizations” and its clichéd and prejudiced depictions.

The paintings are presented in distinct monochrome – white, yellow, red, green, and blue. Their subjects blend Western-painting genres – in particular, interiors, landscapes and figures – with an Eastern sensibility of ornamentation, vibrant color, narrative and the arabesque line. *Turkish Bath*, 2007 portrays a bath scene in a tradition celebrated by European Orientalist painters such as Ingres. While the Turkish bath has traditionally been a sexually segregated space, Uras depicts unabashed women in an “occidental” environment that could just as easily be a nightclub or a contemporary temple of pleasure. *White on White*, 2007, depicts a voyeuristic scene of two people in a muted and fractured space engaged in sexual intercourse. The entangled bodies allude to the domination of white and Western world and its pursuit of pleasure and hedonism. In *Stendhal Syndrome*, 2007, an odalisque floats in a red landscape of exotic flora and fauna. Here, Uras merges divergent artistic traditions to hint at the trappings of excess and the exoticization of the Other.

The four under-glaze painted vases on view were produced in Iznik, Turkey with the collaboration of artisans at the Iznik Foundation. Highly valued during the Ottoman period (15th-17th centuries), traditional Iznik design combined floral, abstract, and animal patterns with other design elements inspired by Chinese porcelain. The shape of the vases is inspired by the traditional Turkish tea glass. In Uras’s vases, she transforms some of these traditional motifs and blends them with Western notions of luxury and leisure.

Elif Uras was born in 1972 in Ankara, Turkey and is now based in New York and Istanbul. This is her second solo show in the United States. Uras received her Master of Fine Arts from Columbia University, New York in 2003. Her work was included in *GREATER NEW YORK 2005* at P.S.1/MoMA, New York. Uras has mounted solo exhibitions at GAVLAK, West Palm Beach, Mario Diacono Gallery, Boston, Galerist, Istanbul and Kenny Schachter / ROVE, New York. Her work has also been exhibited at Proje4L, Elgiz Museum of Contemporary Art, Istanbul, Mary Boone Gallery, New York, Greene Naftali, New York, Andrew Kreps, New York and Roberts & Tilton Gallery, Los Angeles.

SMITH-STEWART is located on 53 Stanton Street, between Forsyth and Eldridge Streets. Gallery Hours are Wednesday through Sunday from noon to six. The nearest subway stops are 2nd Avenue/Houston Street on the F and V lines, Grand Street on the B and D lines and Bleecker Street on the 6 line. For more information, please contact the gallery at amy@smith-stewart.com, 212.477.2821. Or visit the website: www.smith-stewart.com.