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The Land Across The Blind, Hera Büyüктаşçıyan, Exhibition view, Galeri Manâ, May 20–June 28, 2014.

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The feeling of submersion is immediate. A large sculpture dominates the gallery's ground floor—an oversize cast-iron balcony that seems to have sunk at the bottom, tilted on its side. A thick marine rope extends from the outside to the center of the space where the balcony has landed. The end of the rope meets a heavy chain buried in a small hole dug in the floor (one of Büyüктаşçıyan's earlier site-specific works), which evokes the old cistern just beneath the renovated 19th-century building. More than a symbol, the rope physically connects the interior and exterior, to the building's history.

Büyüктаşçıyan's minimal display also features blue filters applied on the windows—a straightforward allusion to the idea of submersion—and a triptych hung from the ceiling as if it were floating. Each panel comprises a grid of black-and-white Xeroxed photographs dating from the 1930s of the city's Byzantine-era water sources (cisterns, fountains and wells). The artist intervenes with a blue marker, depicting water in the images that overflows from the structures, sometimes submerging them. This work goes beyond a narrowly institutional site-specific gesture, engaging in a personal investigation of the city's past.

The image of the balcony reappears in a variety of delicate forms. Abstracted balconies (mostly one- or two-legged sculptures) sit on ceramic wheels, suggesting the sense of looking and wandering. In a series of small-scale pencil drawings, the balconies twist through or flee the confines of the space. But the wooden shelves on which they sit—small replicas of balconies—regrettably risk repetition.

Dominating two floors, the creaking sound of two wooden docks rocking in uneven rhythm gives an eerie feeling. Set in the middle of the second floor, the docks sit on worn-out, low-slung tables that join the domestic with the unfamiliar. Although fragile and uncanny, the dock sculptures connote departure as well as the idea of connectedness from a safe distance. In this show, Büyüктаşçıyan estranges mundane objects and turns them into alluring tools of observation. Here the sculptures toy with both individual and collective memories in search of ways to remember, interpret, and eventually own the past.

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