



Poligon Gallery will be about sharing the joy of creativity. This gallery aims to stimulate artists' growth,' says Kerimcan Gülerüz.

## Two art venues support two phases of art production

After opening The Empire Project, Kerimcan Gülerüz is preparing to open a new gallery, Poligon, in Galata. The venue takes on the creative side of art



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Gallery owner Kerimcan Gülerüz is a true gem hunter in terms of finding and unveiling artists who are unfamiliar to the Turkish contemporary art scene.

Art galleries function on different models and these models are in the end business models, says Gülerüz, but he also says he has never been a big fan of market-friendly artwork.

"The artwork and artists that I tend to show should open peoples' eyes; they should show them what they haven't been seen before, and it shouldn't just be about being unique or thrilling, it should have the potential for consistency. I am always looking, searching to find something that is unique, and I believe this is the proper function of a unique gallery," Gülerüz said in an interview with Hürriyet Daily News. Gülerüz never likes to open a show simply in order to sell the artwork. He feels there should be a deeper meaning behind the show and the artwork. "Showing work just to sell it would be a dishonest relationship for me."

Gülerüz's current gallery, The Empire Project, will continue to show a mixture of established, semi-established and emerging artists from different art scenes. This season's opening show at The Empire Project, titled "Timekeeper," will be organized in collaboration with Dam Stuhlragger Gallery, of Berlin. It is a curated project that includes two works from the top new media lab in Russia related to the idea of time, as well as a collection of letters from well-known people writing about how their own work has changed over time. Devrim Kadırbeyoğlu will represent the Turkish section of this collaboration, and Elena Gubanova, Ivan Govorkov, Anna Frants and Alexandra Dementieva will also be among the artists participating in the project.

Another ground-breaking show upcoming at The Empire Project is Mehmet Gülerüz's brand-new solo show. "These all will be long term shows which will spread to two months," said Gülerüz, adding that when a gallery is first opened, it sends an overall message as to what that space is all about. The new



MEHMET GÜLERÜZ



ALP SİME



ERDOĞAN ZÜMRÜOĞLU



ATHIER MOUSAWI

season of shows at The Empire Project once again aim to do just that.

"What is important for me is to show that this is an institution that is here to stay," said Gülerüz. Just as in the previous season, The Empire Project aims to stay a little bit off the mainstream. Gülerüz once again aims to show liberating art works in six primary shows. "Timekeeper" will open on Sept. 27.

**The new gallery: Poligon**  
Gülerüz is also working to open the new Poligon Gallery, which he calls a "shooting gallery."  
"In the new gallery we will be

supporting the production of art. We are getting our hands dirty on this side," he says.

While The Empire Project will show prêt-à-porter artwork, Poligon Gallery will be about sharing the joy of creativity.

"This gallery aims to stimulate artists' growth. That's why we opened this place, as an artist studio space," Gülerüz says.

The first resident artist at Poligon is Iraqi-British artist Athier Mousawi, who recently completed two residencies in Jordan and Beirut with the charity STRAT, during which he worked with young refugees and children with special needs. His show at Poligon will open on Oct. 4 and continue until Oct. 20.

Poligon Gallery plans to continue with photographers including Loris Savino, who is also a photojournalist, and Ahmet Can Mocan, who chooses to reflect reality with images from various locations. Frederic Lezmi and Gökem İrgün are also among those whose work will be exhibited at Poligon.

### Collector or art investor?

As a part of the ever-developing art scene, Gülerüz also deals with collector's role in that scene. Art collectors are in fact art investors, he says.

"The role of the collector has changed in recent years. Now they are investors. We shouldn't call them collectors, we should call them art investors. There is nothing wrong with that," Gülerüz said.

As a gallery owner, Gülerüz feels he also has a duty to serve collectors. "That is my role and my job, actually. My desire is to feed the collector who has a passion for art. What I strive for is to cater to a collector who is willing to take a risk and buy art without spending lots of money. My aim is to show works that are accessible now but will increase in value."

"The problem with brand-name artists," says Gülerüz, "is that the collector needs to know that they are paying too much when they are paying for a brand name. Because the work already has brand-name approval, they are paying the money for the name." ● HDN