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Fresh Art: Sibel Kocabasi

This artist loves painting, animals.

by Colleen Dougher

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"Your Grandparents"

"Your Dear Deer," the largest oil painting in [Sibel Kocabasi](#)'s most-recent series, depicts nine bright-red deer. Her smaller paintings, which are 6 inches by 6 inches, depict more deer, cows, a rhinoceros and a rabbit that has assault rifles pointed at its head.

"I'm using animals as a metaphor and, at the same time, I also am really concerned with the earth and how we forget that animals are living on this planet, too," Kocabasi says of her recent works. "I don't think we are treating them fairly, so I'm questioning what I am supposed to do as an artist."

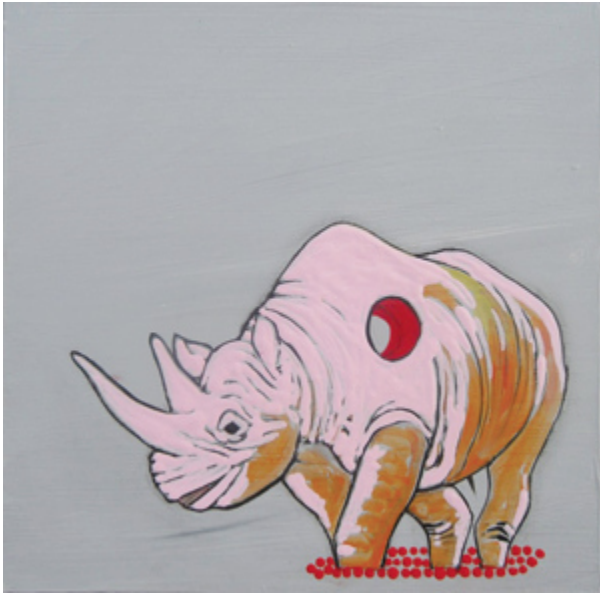
Kocabasi, who won a \$15,000 **South Florida Cultural Consortium** fellowship in 2010, says she's always been interested in the environment but began learning more about the plight of animals while working on her recent series. "I mean, really, sometimes I am sitting and crying," she says. "How can it be how we are treating them?"

Growing up in Istanbul, Kocabasi says her family ate meat about once a month, and it came from a

butcher rather than a supermarket or fast-food chain. She's appalled by the rate at which people consume meat today.

"Can you imagine how many animals are being slaughtered every day just for fast-food companies?" she asks. "So much consuming, millions of chickens, millions of cows. But they don't treat them as animals anymore — they're product, so it's hurtful seeing these things.

"We're not nice to them, we are damaging," she continues. "Since I started doing this series, I became a vegetarian."



"Your Hole"

Her depiction of a rhinoceros with a gaping hole in his midsection is titled "Your Hole," while her painting of five black-and-red cows in a field is titled "Your Dinner." The aforementioned rabbit painting is titled "You," while some of the deer paintings are named "Your Second Cousin," "Your Sister" and "Your Grandparents." That last work depicts a deer looking up at another deer's head mounted on a wall. "We kill them, we eat them, we use their skin, and that's not enough so we're using them as decorations in our house," Kocabasi says. "I mean, they don't do that to us."

The subjects of "Your Dear Deer" are wandering through grass, some standing upright on their two back legs. "I was thinking how innocent they are in nature, waiting for some kind of miracle maybe," Kocabasi says.

Like humans, she adds, they're stuck on Earth and looking skyward with the hope that things will change.

For Kocabasi, things do appear to be changing thanks in part to the Consortium grant. "It gave me more courage and confidence," she says.



For two years, the Lake Worth painter, who also curates shows and teaches art at Palm Beach State College, Lighthouse Art Center and Armory Art Center, has been driving from her 1920s Lake Worth cottage to the garage of a friend's clinic to make her art. Half of the space is devoted to the clinic's files, and Kocabasi rents the other half as studio space. "But there are no windows in the garage, and it's also not in a secure area," she says. "I cannot stay until late night and work."

She plans to use her grant money to pay for an apartment or condo. "I will convert the living room to a studio," she says. "I have to have a studio." There, she'll continue to explore the animal-human connection in works that she says will relate more of a story.

Sibel Kocabasi's works will be on display through Aug. 21 in the South Florida Cultural Consortium Exhibition at the **Patricia and Phillip Frost Art Museum at Florida International University**, Mitch Maidique Campus, 10975 S.W. 17th St., Miami. Other exhibiting artists include Francie Bishop Good, Jonathan Rockford, Bert Rodriguez, Friends With You and the TM Sisters. Call 305-348-2890 or visit Thefrost.fiu.edu.

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