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Douglas Fogle on HALUK AKAKÇE

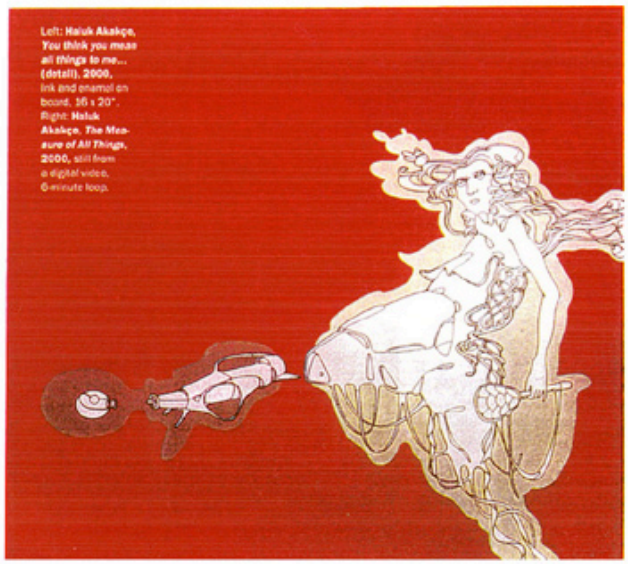
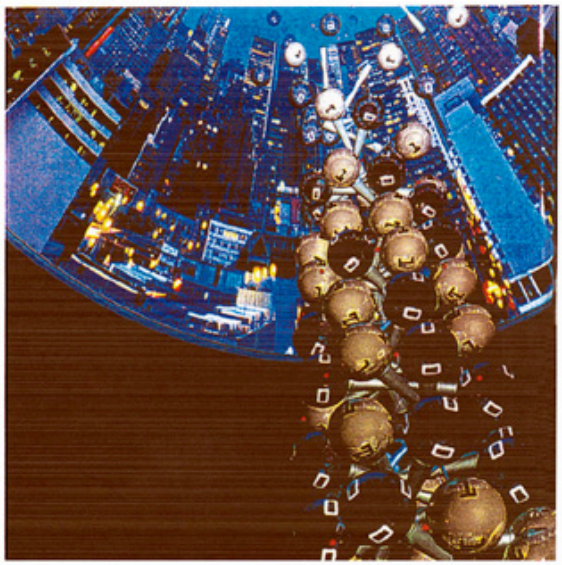
IN THESE PAGES, ROBERT SMITHSON ONCE QUOTED Vladimir Nabokov's observation that "The future is but the obsolete in reverse." It is precisely this paradoxical sense of the future as a future anterior that pervades the work of Haluk Akakçe. Born in Ankara, Turkey, in 1970 and currently based in New York, Akakçe is a child of the digital revolution who works in a broad range of media, effortlessly moving from low-tech drawing and wall painting to, more recently, digitally animated video. But no matter the medium, Akakçe takes us through the looking glass into a world where the future is often yesterday and flatness manifests a new kind of depth.

Over the last two years, Akakçe has produced several series of works, including the more intimate automatic line drawings on paper and carefully staged mural paintings that redefine the walls that support them, suggesting a kind of biomorphic, digitally inspired Lascaux. In both types of work, Akakçe's rendered lines create a Möbius-like folding of space and form in which figure and ground morph seamlessly together in a sea of flat pigment. The figures inhabiting Akakçe's protoplasmic space are cybervisions of techno-organic hybrids that at least one critic has likened to Art Nouveau's merging of the technological and the biological but that also warrant comparison to the fluid morphology of the body in Japanese *manga* (comics), the contorted visions of Hieronymus Bosch, and the arabesques of classical Islamic architecture. In the end, it becomes clear in Akakçe's work that what is new is old and what is old is new.

Akakçe's move from wall painting to video is not as large a leap as one might think given his conception of the wall as a site of projection. One of Akakçe's most recent works, *The Measure of All Things*, 2000, is a six-minute video loop realized using 3-D design software and live-action digital video. Opening with text that reads in part "The Future Awaits You Now," Akakçe's animated video proceeds through a set of digital scenarios featuring an Edenic cybergarden, a virtual room with classical architectural details, including a mantle inscribed with the words "*natura naturans*" (the nature that creates nature, or God) that becomes the scene of a high-tech insemination. All the while, the film's pregnant, live-action protagonist poses questions about the value of the Internet and technology in general. Akakçe's film closes with a scene in which a digital DNA-like structure ascends through the ceiling of a darkened space, rising into the city above, as the sound track exudes the soothing strains of Tony Bennett singing "Stranger in Paradise." And a strange technological paradise it is that links "*natura naturans*" with the ontological space of a high-end PlayStation game. Fecund with possibility yet also falling apart? Is the future tomorrow or was it yesterday? Welcome to the digital age, to the "shock of the old" that Haluk Akakçe has just begun to investigate.

As a curator at the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, thirty-six-year-old DOUGLAS FOGLE has actively championed the art of his generation. In addition to initiating a series of exhibitions dedicated to emerging artists (Kristin Oppenheim, Daniel Oates, and Bonnie Collura all received shows), Fogle was the force behind the Walker's 1997 "Stills: Emerging Photography in the 1990s." A contributor to *Frieze* and *Flash Art*, he is currently at work on "Painting at the Edge of the World," opening next month at the Walker (see preview, p. 47).

Douglas Fogle. Photo: Philippe Vergne.



Left: **Haluk Akakçe, *You think you mean all things to me...* (detail), 2000,** ink and enamel on board, 36 x 20". Right: **Haluk Akakçe, *The Measure of All Things*, 2000,** still from a digital video, 6-minute loop.