

[Haber Link](#)

## A painter for adults and children, Can Goknil has been at it for decades



Can Goknil, a prolific Turkish painter who lives and works in Istanbul, has a new exhibition at Bozlu Art Project in Sisli, Istanbul, on view until June 25, 2022.

In a short documentary about her newest exhibition, "Maybe So, Maybe No", Can Goknil says this one is special – because "we had been stuck in our homes, wouldn't see anyone, couldn't even if we wanted to. Because of the virus, because of the fear of the virus, because of lockdowns."

At first, she tells TRT World, she enjoyed being cooped up at home with herself and her husband. She was working on two books. "One month, two months, then I was done with the books — now what to do next?"

Can Goknil in front of one of her favourite paintings in the "Maybe So, Maybe No" exhibition. (Melis Alemdar / TRTWorld)

So Goknil asked her helper to bring her materials from her studio to her home: "my paints, my brushes, my rolls, my pallets, whatever there is." Being stuck at home sparked a creative period in Goknil's life, "running after my dreams all day, painting all the things I missed; such as the sea, nature, animals, mothers and children."

In the two years during the height of the Covid-19 pandemic when she couldn't get to her studio, Goknil created more than 30 paintings at home, and thought it would be nice to display them at Bozlu Art. She also created a book, a codex with multiple paintings inside it, painted on wood, and encased in an exquisite wooden container built by her husband, Recep Goknil.

Goknil worked on six planets for the codex: "I always had a connection to mythology, I have done years of research on it. I went back to the time when the earth was dreaming, to the time when people tried to explain natural events with stories. I had worked on celestial events – in the past I explored astrological

signs, then I explored the planets ruling the signs. They have Greek names, but they also have names in Eastern mythology as well."

Goknil has conducted a lot of research on Turkish culture and origin myths, as well as creation myths and protection spells and the first Turkish painters. She says that even though she has spent time abroad in the US as a student, she did not know her own culture at the time as an immigrant.

Can Goknil's codex contains six wooden panels painted with acrylic. (Melis Alemdar / TRTWorld)

Can Goknil's artwork can be seen in Bozlu Art Project in Sisli until June 25, 2022. (Melis Alemdar / TRTWorld)

A publisher she met at the time recommended that she explore her own culture, advice she took to heart. It was only when she returned to Türkiye and dug in that she felt more knowledgeable.

"Seeing the Museum of Anatolian Civilizations in Ankara made me feel at home," she says. "It's all fine learning about Western cultures, but you shouldn't miss out on your own cultures, either. A lot of responsibility falls on families; or you can teach yourself when you're older, if you wish to catch up."

She marks the passing of time with her paintings with pendulums attached: "They represent the ticking of time, the passage of time," she says. Goknil has been painting for more than 50 years: "In 2018 there was a retrospective exhibition here [at Bozlu Art Project] marking my fiftieth art anniversary," she smiles. "Add another four years, and I've been at it for 54 years."

Axis of Terra by Can Goknil. Acrylic wood panel with pendulum. (Melis Alemdar / TRTWorld)

Goknil, a prolific painter, is also a writer of more than 60 children's books. "You have to make them humorous and curious," she says, "otherwise children won't be interested."

"Ms Goknil, as you know, is a multi-talented person with her paintings and the books she has written and illustrated," Ozlem Inay Erten, the director of Bozlu Art Project tells TRT World. "And even though she says her paintings in this exhibition are about her dreams and longings, they are not that far removed from her previous paintings. They are joyous, full of hope."

"Goknil has created themed exhibitions since the 1970s, and this one is no different," Inay Erten observes. "It is about time and mythology intertwined."

"In my opinion," Inay Erten says, "Goknil is an artist who cannot be categorised simply – she is an original, an innovator and an important artist because of this."

She's A She by Can Goknil. Acrylic on canvas. (Courtesy of Bozlu Art Project)

Goknil says "Maybe So Maybe No" turned out to be a happy exhibition: "People always tell me they end up feeling refreshed and at peace with the world after visiting one of my exhibitions," she says modestly.

Indeed, her naif figures and pastel colours draw the viewer in. There is no bloodshed or violence there.

"I am a person at peace with the world. The world has been kind to me," Goknil says. "I was lucky with my marriage, with our son, with our pets, with everything. This is reflected in my paintings."