

Press release

Galerie Fons Welters

19 January – 23 February 2008

Opening Saturday 19 February 17:00 – 19:00

Opening hours: Tuesday to Saturday, 13:00 – 18:00

The New Professionals by **Yesim Akdeniz Graf**

A theatrical curtain has opened and the drama begins. For her second solo exhibition at Galerie Fons Welters, **Yesim Akdeniz Graf** (Izmir, Turkey, 1978) presents us with her own version of a soap story, singling out certain characters and suggesting their mutual relationships.

Isolated figures cut out in white, painted cardboard gaze at us as they pose in their staged setting. A man wearing a suit, for instance, adopts a self-confident stance. But his expression gives him away, revealing his vulnerability. In the large window behind him, we see a skyscraper amid a mass of dark clouds. The tension reflected in the man's face derives added emphasis from his surroundings and their cool colours; in fact they have something of the effect of a psychogram, exposing the character's true nature.

Yesim Akdeniz Graf has constructed her exhibition *The New Professionals* like a storyboard for a TV series. Each scene reveals part of a character's life, and in the context of the exhibition it prompts us to guess at the mutual relations: intrigues, awakening loves, and broken hearts. Each character stands alone, not just in relation to the others, but also, in a sense, in relation to reality.

The men and women who appear in the work of **Akdeniz Graf** play predetermined roles. The soap story is an extension of the artist's exploration of modern society. How is it built up, and how do we all fulfil our roles, for instance as men or women? Do we, like the characters, adopt the ready-made roles assigned by society? Or are we able to escape from these structures?

Here as in her earlier work, **Akdeniz Graf** draws on a mix of elements from the spectrum of our present-day and historical visual culture. Postmodern architecture, cubist constructions and 1930s design are blended effortlessly into a single image. Themes such as cultural morality; post feminism; family values; the struggle of civilization; the forces of nature; cruelty of fate; the owning and enjoying of art are all part of her research. The artist's approach to materials is just as eclectic. Cardboard features and daubs of glitter are added to her acrylic paintings. Every aspect of her work, from visual elements to material, is deployed as a prop in a theatrical scene. The importance of each element's origin fades into the background, leaving us with a sense of nostalgia.

[Laurie Cluitmans]