

# frieze

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## Gili Tal

SANDY BROWN, BERLIN, GERMANY



Gili Tal, 'Panoramic views of the city', 2014, exhibition view

'Panoramic views of the city' was credited as the 'tagline' rather than the title of Gili Tal's solo exhibition at Sandy Brown in Berlin. Instead of presenting a single overview, Tal's show offered several micro observations on the schism between idealized perspectives of the metropolis and quotidian city life. Even approaching the gallery, the reverse side of *Love and War* (all works 2014) – a large printed curtain hanging in its storefront window – obstructed the view into the space. Inside, Tal's works further illustrated tangible ways in which our contemporary surroundings are obscured, manipulated or projected back upon us.

Printed on the other side of *Love and War* was a photograph of an typical high street in Berlin, as seen through the window of a *Spätkauf* – a late-night convenience store familiar in the city. Various stickers and advertisements for products sharing the multinational company Unilever's Heartbrand logo clutter the windowpane – items digitally added by Tal, which amalgamate into a sort of busy, aggrandized window display. It was easy to overlook the artist's digital handiwork here, but the show was perhaps less about being technically deceived and more about how caught up we are in commercials – so much so that we often fail to recognize their prevalence even when surrounded by them. At the same time, the subtle insertion of the recurrent heart design hints at an aggressive demand for what can only ever be an

unrequited love for commodities. What might happen if we give in to this desire? Would capital start to love us back?

Three paintings entitled *Cityscape Pictures 1–3* each depict a slight variation on the same motif – elongated letters spelling 'TOYKO' obfuscating an image of the titular cityscape behind them. The word itself is almost illegible, yawning vertically across the narrow stretched canvases. The imagery is derived from a high-street fashion for skylines printed on T-shirts. Yet representations like these are often instrumentalized in other ways, dispersing the aspirational urban image from commercial products to readymade canvas prints that decorate luxury apartments. The distortion of words and images in *Cityscape Pictures 1–3* provokes us to reconsider the ubiquitous cityscape image and, perhaps, our own position in relation to it. This restlessness, however, appeared somewhat pacified by the steady kinetics of three modified blenders stirring different shades of blue pigment together with yogurt, which slowly rotated at 60 revolutions per minute. Lined up on a low shelf, the installation *But the World Keeps on Turning (Der Himmel Über Berlin Version)* (*The Sky over Berlin Version*) serves as a kind of substitute for clocks showing different times around the world, while perhaps signifying a globe that, despite speed and modernity, just keeps turning.

Together, the works in this show recapitulated the subtle ways in which the cityscape becomes a symbolically desirable image, while our immediate surroundings are capitalized through assertive forms of lifestyle design and marketing. Tal's reassessment of everyday complacency within consumer capitalism is philosophically derived. She recognizes a power – a patriarchy, even – in the city as aspirational representation, calling attention to the insidious and ubiquitous nature of capital that pervades our vision.

- *Saim Demircan*