



GÜLAY  
SEMERCIOĞLU



## Gülay Semercioğlu

### Reorganisation of Painting Through Rhetorical Operations

The challenge with art takes place in the immediate encounter with the unfamiliar. Gülay Semercioğlu's paintings provoke such a challenge in the first place as the artist chooses to use glossy enamel wire instead of paint, wooden planks instead of canvas. The stretched surfaces of her paintings do not convey sceneries, but bounce light; they do not portray anything, but themselves. Semercioğlu amplifies the concrete and abstract components of painting. Line and light undergo a process of significance that of which is juxtaposed by the introduction of new materials to the medium of painting. Her works appear as intricate and solid bodies of formal compositions with metal wire and small cross-head screws. Moreover, they introduce composite surfaces that display divergent behaviour of reflecting. The shiny surface of the wire is juxtaposed by their composition in a force field in a way in which the particular and overarching reflecting surface differ. Additionally, the surface of each painting is composed of transient layers of stretched metal wires – lines, which complicate the movement of light.

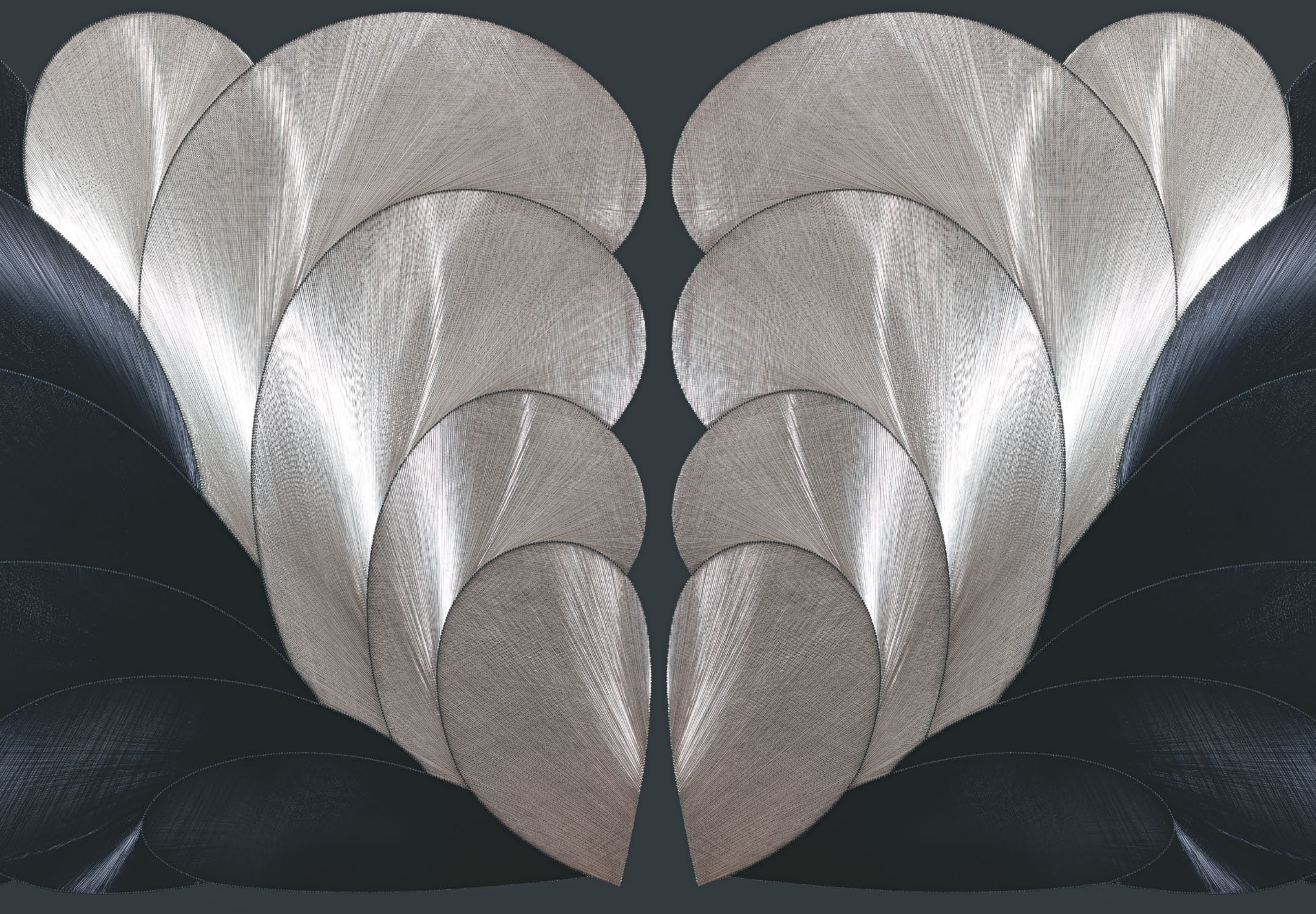
Gülay Semercioğlu's labour intensive work employs three methodologies: Layering, Obstruction, and Isolation. The application of layering wires as opposed to layering paint enables the surface of the painting to attain a three-dimensional presence in a way in which each painting is literally composed of several layers of stretched wire with space between. Focussing on painting with wires, Semercioğlu introduces her practice several obstructions from the use of material to its colour range, from the possible

uses of the selected material to its impossibilities. In other words, by restraining herself to paint only with wires, Semercioğlu also accepts the complications of painting large scale, forming continuous compositions with lengthy use of wires that result in substantial bodies. In the course of isolation, Semercioğlu's paintings appear as a conveyor of components of the genre in a way in which the two fundamental elements such as light and line are highlighted as distinct bodies. Her paintings are composed of lines only while their collective surfaces proliferate the emergence of light reflected. The application of layering, obstruction and isolation are accompanied by Semercioğlu's meditative process of production. Each painting requires long working hours that are spread over days, let alone weeks and months. In this regard, the taming of the material, stretching kilometres of metal wire can only take place in the form of a meditation. Thus, each painting is a weaving of time and labour manifested in variant form and colour with patience and controlled discipline.

The horizontal, vertical and diagonal stretches of wire in her early body of work compose grids as their titles support their formalist, reductionist style. These paintings carry titles that depict the attitude and correspond to the theoretical framework. In her recent body of work, Semercioğlu introduces softer forms and curves while supporting their alteration with the change of style in their titles. At the exhibition entitled *Line of Life* taking place at Etemad Gallery in Dubai, Semercioğlu brings together seven new pieces that not only introduce a more



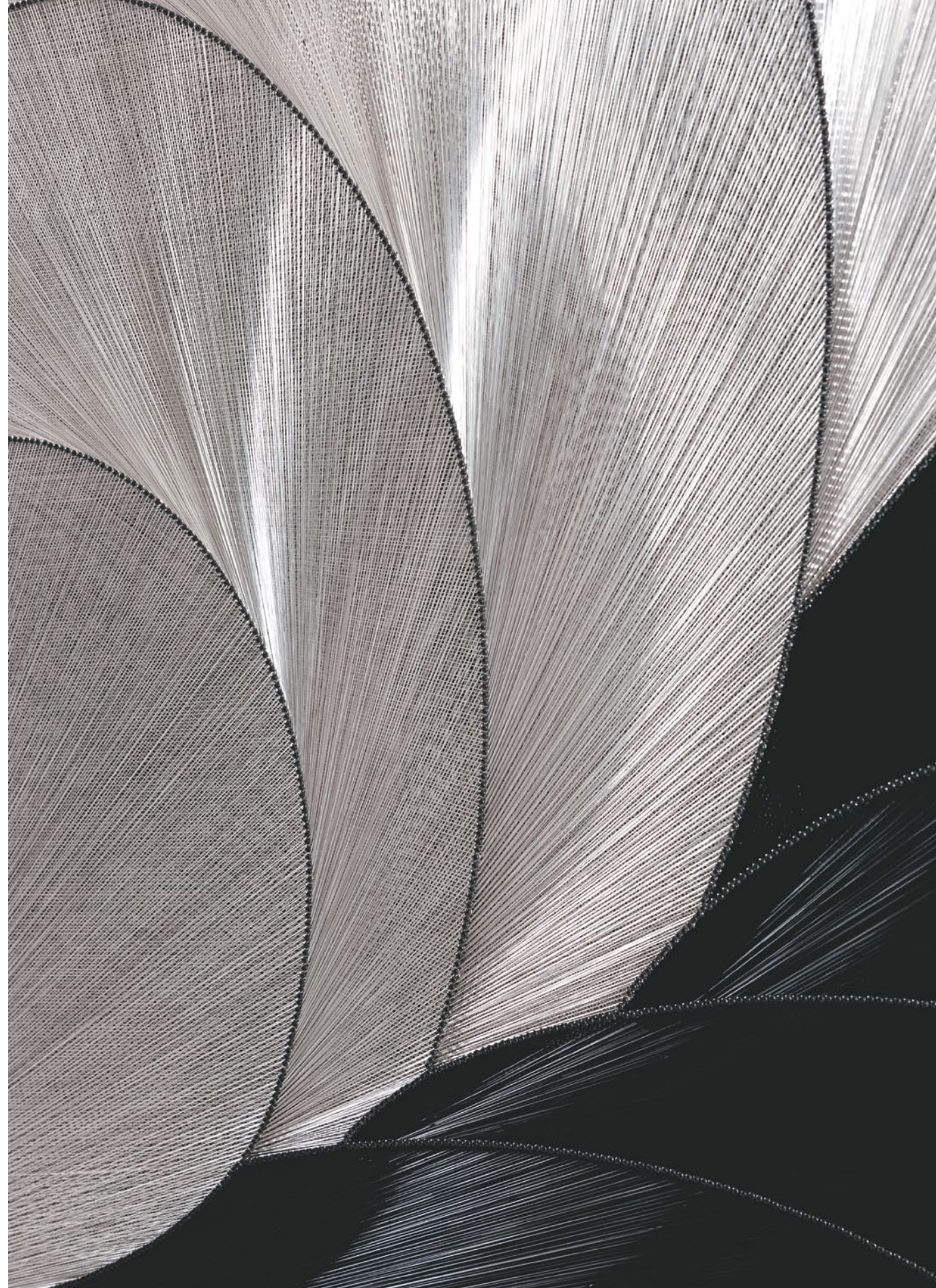






subjective attitude towards her production, but also display a rather playful approach in their compositions. The strictly mapped planes of Semercioğlu are gently replaced by more intricate and sensually vibrant compositions. The repetitive forms manifest continuity, a condition of frame within a frame. The transition of one form to its akin introduces movement to painting like that of a delicate symphony. Each piece brings forth a different composition that aesthetically and conceptually tackles conditions of narrativity that of which is completed by its title. The titles of paintings evoke rather subjective interpretations while their compositions illustrate a formulation, an elaboration of those concepts. For instance, the painting entitled *You and Me* formally recalls the symbol of yin and yang while appears as the further articulation of the symbol on a rectangular base. The associative condition of the symbolic form with the title indicating a close proximity, if not a partnership, triggers the semantic proliferation. *Vicious Circle* formally appears as a circular form denoted by a curved line composed of crosshead screws. The enamel wire is stretched between the bordering screws and the sequence composing the line that is seemingly on indefinite repetition. Semercioğlu, juxtaposes the semantic meaning of the title with the aesthetic and formal manifestation of the painting. She applies this methodology to other paintings where the rhetoric suggestion of the title is embodied in the painting as form and colour. Though the processes of juxtaposition in the series function in a non-linear way. In other words, the corresponding semantic and aesthetic indication facilitates a furthering in a way in which both influence one another. Family Tree as a word evokes a close-knit network of relations while

the painting displays an accumulation of the same form around a centre. The addition of perspective to the application of forms brings forth spatialisation of the painting as if the metal-knit surfaces are accumulating towards outside of the painting. In this respect, Semercioğlu branches out the piece as she also suggests a visualisation in its title. Beyond the semantic and aesthetic juxtapositions, the artist uses colour in an allegorical way in a sense in which each colour has a code that carries a certain meaning or feeling. The thematic of each piece with its title relates to the overall theme of the series, also applies to the choice of colour. The series of works in the exhibition are only composed of red, silver and black, intentionally. The choice of colour also associates with the concept of the series, let alone the individual manifestations in each painting. *You and Me* is composed of only silver and black, referencing the symbols original contrasting and balanced colour scheme while *Being in the Centre* is marked by use of red and silver colours while the red component is only used in the centring form of the painting. In a rather straightforward way, Semercioğlu refers to the three colours red, black and silver as signifiers of violence and passion, authority and power, purity and kindness, respectively. Additionally, Semercioğlu conceives a labyrinthine relationship with light. She not only provides multi-layered surfaces, but also formulates cluster points of reflection. In her early wire paintings, she has chosen to allow light to take its own pace and leave the frame as a continuum of the suggested linearity. Though, in her recent series she has chosen to complicate the ongoing relationship through encapsulating the movement of light in the painting, conditioning it to oscillate from one point to another. The curvilinear forms in

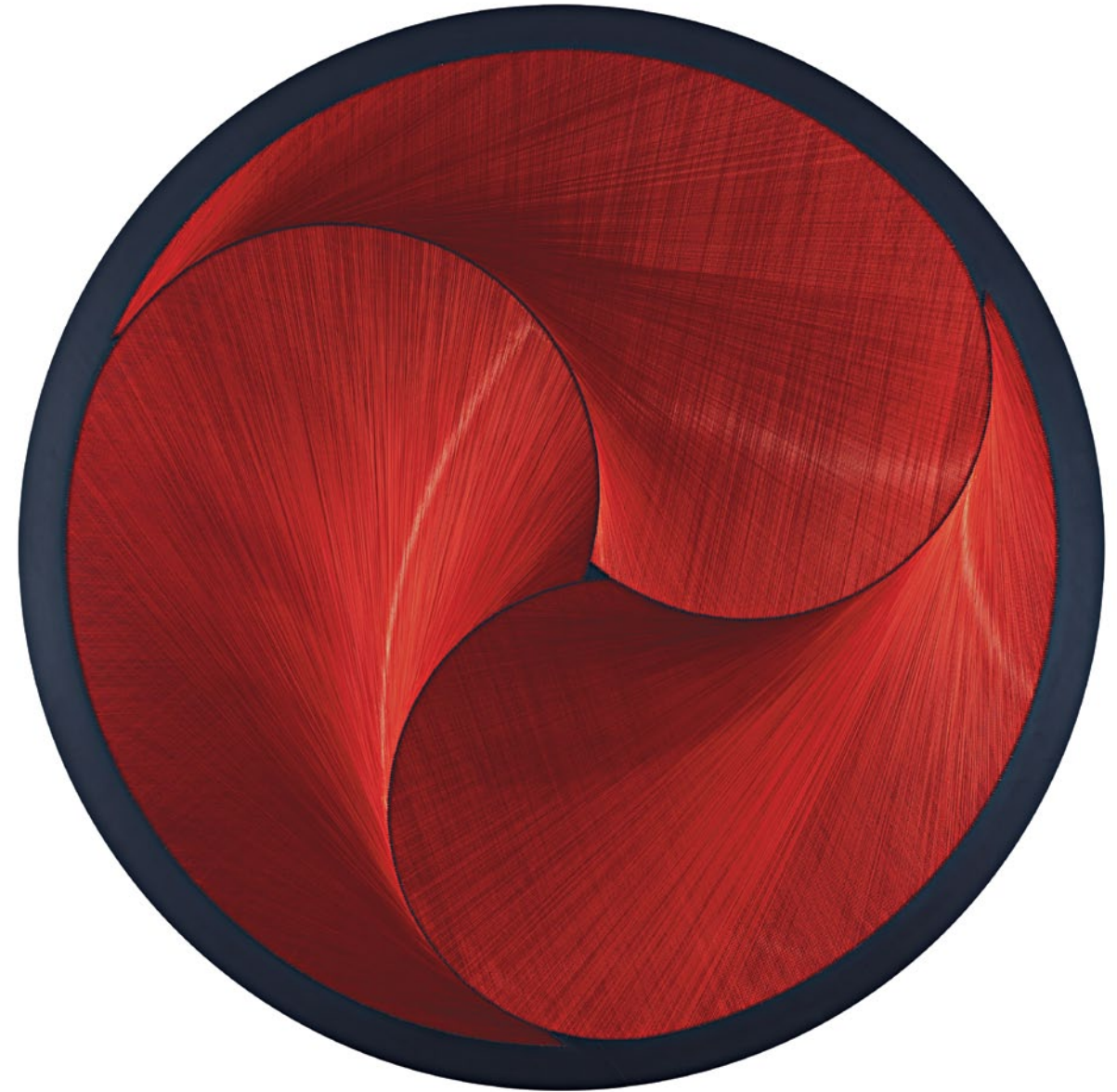




*To Change of Heart* lock in the light hence the gaze of the beholder. The smooth transition of light among the adjacent surfaces formulates the direction of movement while substantiating points of reference for its audience. *In Meeting*, Semercioğlu chooses not to provide an entry point to the viewer in a way in which the forms share a horizontal equality and occupy the same surface-area.

The series *Line of Life* has a significant position in the artist's overall practice of painting with glossy enamel wires. The series formally, aesthetically, semantically evoke the feeling of their subject matter. In other words, her new body of work is a sensual production that goes beyond the formalisation of painting without paint, through lines and light. Moreover, she introduces two phases of movement into painting. The first is the necessitation of movement of bodies in space - such as the visitors of the exhibition, that of which leads to proliferation of the appearances of the paintings. The second is the induction of the sense of movement in the painting through application of curvilinear forms. The two phases of movement are supported by the movement of light on the surface of the painting as it is received by the observer, differentiating at various locations of perception. Semercioğlu's rhetoric, semantic and aesthetic constellations emerge as metaphorical manifestations. Unlike depictions of a scene or abstractions of an encounter, the series conceptualise subjectivity and sensuous spaces within the material corporeality of wires and screws.

Fatoş Üstek is an independent curator and art critic, from Istanbul, currently based in London, UK. She is member of AICA TR, guest tutor at Vision Forum, Linköpings Universitet, Sweden and regular contributor to contemporary art magazines and publications. She is a member of Ouunpo and leads La Duree with Per Huttner and Infra in London under the framework of Vision Forum. Ustek is editor of *Unexpected Encounters Situations of Contemporary Art and Architecture since 2000* (2012), founding editor of *Nowiswere Contemporary Art Magazine* (2008-2012) and author of *Book of Confusions* (2012). [www.fatosustek.com](http://www.fatosustek.com)



*One After The Other*, 2012, Wire, screw and wood, 190cm diameter