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* ins & outs

It is all in your head

Anna Seaman previews an exhibition by the Turkish duo Mentalklinik that forces viewers to slow down to figure it out

It is a very 21st-century condition. FOMO, or Fear Of Missing Out, is a form of social anxiety rooted in the concern that one might be missing an opportunity for social interaction. This is the focus of Gallery Isabelle Van Den Eynde's new exhibition *Thank You For Your Co-operation*, presented by Mentalklinik, an artist duo from Istanbul, Turkey.

"We are always in one place but need to be somewhere else," says Yasmin Baydar. "And it must be the best place."

Baydar and the artist Birol Demir began collaborating together in 1998 and their work is usually sculptural or installation-based that purposely thwarts categorisation.

"We trying to talk around our work rather than define it," says Baydar. "We like to think it speaks for itself. Also, we like to open the work to the audience so they can read it for themselves."

Stepping into the exhibition is an experience in itself. At the entrance of the gallery is a metal gate, with the handwritten neon words *Thank You For Your Co-operation* glowing upon it. Once you pass this sign, you are, in effect, entering the world of Mentalklinik, which the artists say is a deliberate choice of moniker meant to make us to question our own sanity.

Neon surfaces reflect your image, a pair of strobe-light-heads swoosh in the corner and loud electronic sounds pierce the air. Listen carefully and you will identify them as commonly used notifications from mobile phones.

This sound piece is called *FOMO* and is the starting point of discussion.

"When you hear the notification sounds, everyone has a different



reaction," explains Baydar. "What might be one person's alarm can be another's ringtone. It is another kind of language for us because it is all based on emotions."

But on a more serious note, Baydar and Demir are pointing to the influx of a capitalist way of life that we have all adopted and are perhaps being suffocated by. "It is called semio-capitalism and hyper-complexity – we are swamped with information in the digital sphere, so switched on that we are paralysed by the system and not able to think anymore."

Pondering these subjects is interesting, especially when during the process, my own mobile phone keeps beeping, interrupting both the interview and my thoughts.

"This is exactly what I am talking about," says Demir with a genial smile. "This is the world we live in."

One of the most enjoyable pieces is *Profiles*, a series of tempered glass panes with polyester film sheets in bright pink, green, blue

and yellow sandwiched between the panes, giving them the appearance of mirrors. On these are printed words from online lingo but without space or punctuation, making them difficult to decipher. It reminds me of the Orwellian language used in his novel *1984* and as I slowly begin identifying the words – Hipster, Girly Gothic – Barak Alzaid, the gallery manager, puts the piece into context.

"The piece slows down time for the viewer, because these words are associated with online media platforms that are all about speed and transmitting an idea of yourself as fast as possible. So then we have to reconsider the way we read them.

"It is a form of poetry, because to appreciate it, you are forced to read slowly."

● *Thank You For Your Co-operation* runs until July 28 at Gallery Isabelle Van Den Eynde in Dubai

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Left, a metal gate with neon writing sits at the entrance of Gallery Isabelle Van Den Eynde. Below, *Profiles* consists of a series of letters with hardly any spaces and no punctuations. Photos courtesy Gallery Isabelle Van Den Eynde