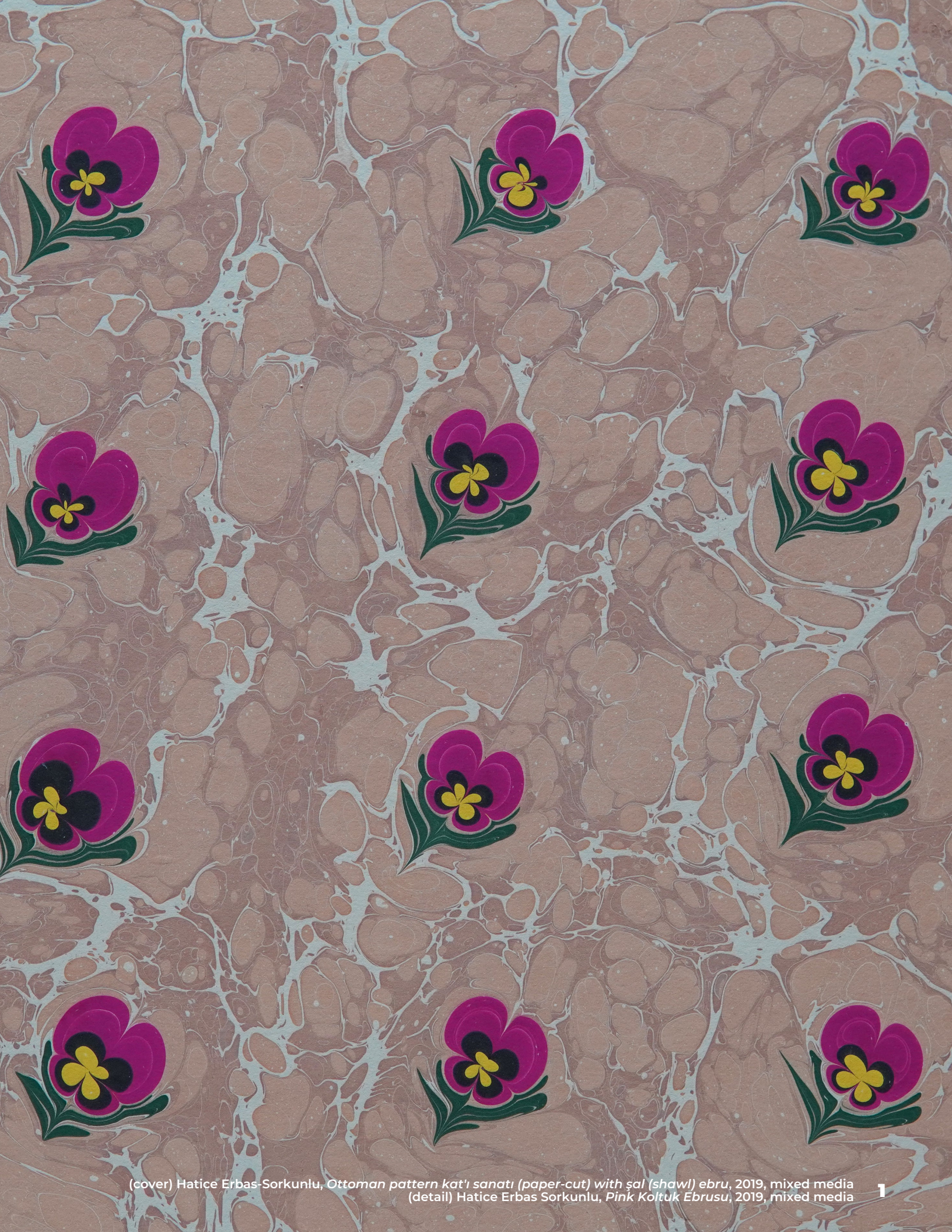


PAINTING WATER & CUTTING PAPER:

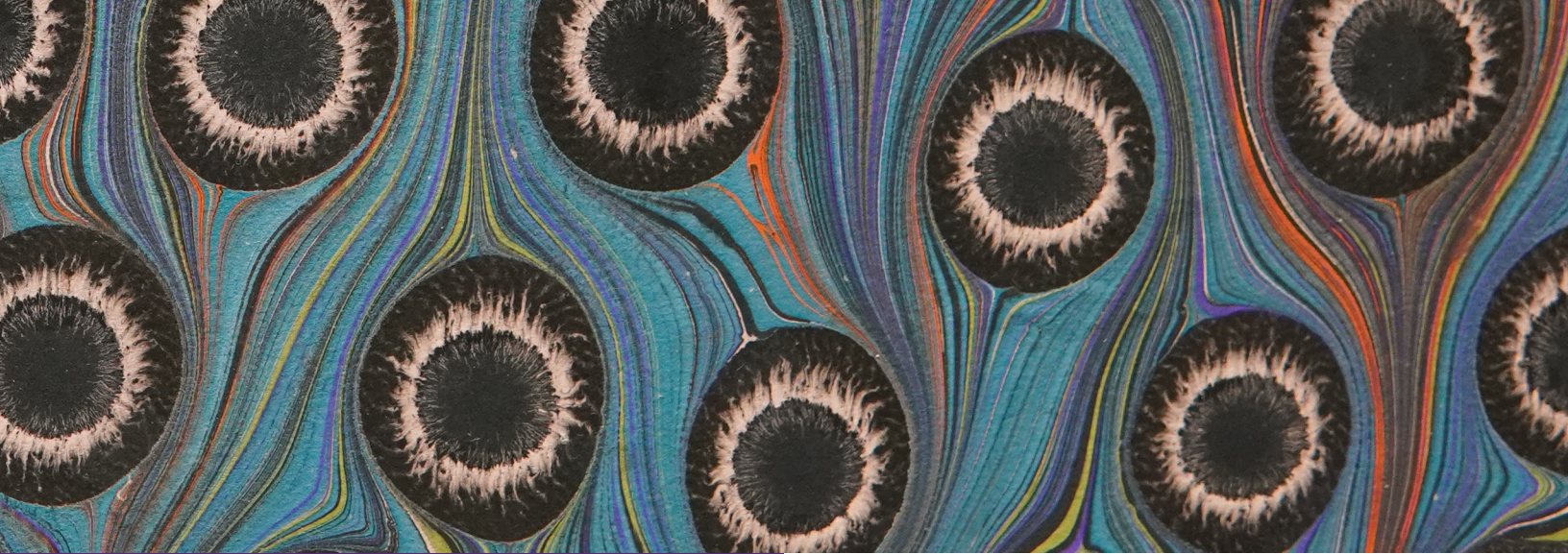
TRADITIONAL TURKISH PAPER ARTS



CAM



(cover) Hatice Erbas-Sorkunlu, *Ottoman pattern kat'ı sanatı (paper-cut) with şal (shawl) ebru*, 2019, mixed media
(detail) Hatice Erbas Sorkunlu, *Pink Koltuk Ebrusu*, 2019, mixed media



Curator's Foreword

Painting Water & Cutting Paper: Traditional Turkish Paper Arts provides an introduction into the traditional arts of Turkish Paper Marbling and Turkish Paper Cutting through the *ebru* and *kat'i sanatı* works of Hatice Erbas Sorkunlu, an ebru artist based in Upstate New York.

Ebru is a traditional art from Turkey where the artist floats paint on the surface of water, makes a design with metal tools, and then places paper on top to copy or 'take' the design.

Also known as Turkish Paper Marbling, traditional designs in *ebru* include a variety of abstract, geometric, and figurative patterns, such as *battal* (stone spread), *gel-git* (comes-goes), and *çiçekli* (flower).

Every material in *ebru* is natural and organic: from the rosewood and horsetail brushes (*fırça*) used to add paint to the water's surface; to the *kitre* (carrageenan) mixed into the tray of water to increase its density (so the paint doesn't sink to the bottom); to the ground paint pigments (*boya*) used to create the vivid colors in *ebru*.

Ebru is also used as a background for another traditional art: *kat'i sanatı*, or traditional Turkish paper cutting. *Kat'i sanatı* designs are cut using a sharp knife to make abstract, geometric, figurative, or calligraphic forms.

Edward Yong Jun Millar

Curator of Folk Arts
Castellani Art Museum of Niagara University

About the Artist

Hatice Erbas-Sorkunlu is an *ebru* and *kat'i sanatı* artist originally from Turkey, currently living in Upstate New York. Hatice studied the traditional Turkish tile art of *çini* at university, and during her studies became interested in *ebru*.

Hatice learned to do *ebru* while living in Istanbul and later taught traditional Turkish arts to international students at Fasl-ı Bahar. Hatice has been practicing *ebru* for over six years.

(detail, above) Hatice Erbas Sorkunlu, *Black Kaplan Gözü (tiger's eye) ebru*, 2020, mixed media

(detail, below) Hatice Erbas Sorkunlu (left) leading an ebru workshop at the Buffalo History Museum, Buffalo, NY 2018



“In ebru art, the **foundational design** of all is **battal** (stone spread)...



...the **moment** the **drops** of **paint fall** from the brush to the tray...

...**shapes** and **designs emerge** that are **out of** your **control.**”

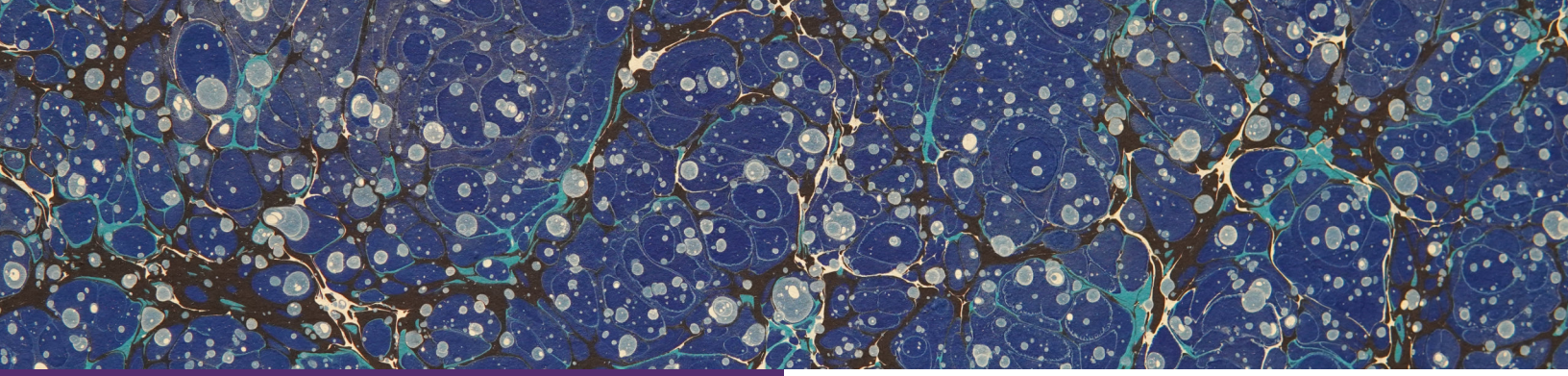
Hatice Erbas Sorkunlu



PAINTING WATER

EBRU

(detail) Hatice demonstrating the creation of a lale (tulip) ebru during a workshop at the Buffalo History Museum, Buffalo, NY 2018



History of Ebru

Ebru is the traditional art of Turkish paper marbling, dating back to the 15th century. According to scholars, *ebru* likely first emerged in Central Asia and Iran, and then made its way into Anatolia carried along the Silk Road route.

Once in Turkey, it grew into an extremely popular art-form within the Ottoman Empire.

Historically, *ebru* had been used for book bindings or decoration, and in 2014, *ebru* was added to UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage register.

Ebru continues to be practiced in Turkey and among the Turkish diaspora, in the form of traditional patterns and new innovative designs.

Ebru Materials

Ebru relies on a wide range of handmade materials and tools derived from nature.

Kitre (tragacanth) or *karagenan* (carrageenan) is used to thicken the density of the water that is poured into a *tekne* (metal tray): where the design will be made and the *kağıt* (paper) placed.

Kavanoz (glass jars) are used to store the *boya* (paint), which is prepared by mixing water, ground pigment, and *öd* (ox-gall).

Fırça (rosewood & horse-tail hair brush), *damlalık* (dropper), and *bız takımı* (metal pins) are used for adding paint to the water and for creating designs.

Making Ebru

Paint is added onto the prepared water by tapping a *fırça* (brush) against a finger, or using a *damlalık* (dropper) or *bız takımı* (metal pin) for individual drops.

Different tools – including a *bız takımı* (metal pin) or a *tarak* (metal comb) - may be used to create designs by pulling the colors in different directions.

Finally, *kağıt* (paper) is gently placed on the water, resting flat on the surface and gently rubbed to ensure full image transfer.

Finally, paper is then slowly pulled along the water, skimming the surface and scraping the edge of the tray.

Ebru Designs

Ebru designs are created by the order and placement of the paint and the way the artist pulls and reshapes the colors.

The basic design in *ebru* is *battal* (stone spread), made by sprinkling paint(s) onto the water surface without any additional design.

Other popular designs include geometric patterns such as *gel-git* (come and go), abstract patterns like *taraklı* (combed), and figurative images such as *çiçekli* (flower).

Some traditional patterns can also be traced to specific *ebru* masters, such as *hatip* (orator) *ebrusu*, named after Hatip Mehmet Efendi, an 18th century preacher at the Ayasofya in Istanbul.

“My favorite
part of
making ebru
is that final
time you **take**
the ebru
image from
water to
paper...”

...when all the
colors come
together in
harmony.”

Hatice Erbas Sorkunlu

“Like in all **traditional arts**,
kat’i has a long **history**...

...with many **shapes**
and **designs passed**
down over the years
to **today.**”

Hatice Erbas Sorkunlu

CUTTING PAPER

KAT'I SANATI

(detail) Hatice Erbas
Sorkunlu, *Kolaj (collage)*
kat'i sanatı (paper-cut)
with mixed ebru, 2019,
mixed media





History of Kat'ı Sanatı

Paper-cut traditions can be found in communities around the world, from the Polish *wycinanki* to the Chinese 剪纸 (*jiǎnzhǐ*), to the Mexican *papel picado*.

In Turkey, the traditional art of paper cutting is known as *kat'ı* (*cutting*) *sanatı* (*art*), and became an established art-form in the Ottoman Empire around the 15th century.

Historically, *kat'ı sanatı* was used primarily as a form of decoration in books, but by the early 20th century, became more uncommon.

Recently, renewed interest in *kat'ı sanatı* has led to a resurgence of artists practicing this tradition, now primarily as a stand-alone, visual art.

Kat'ı Sanatı Materials

As with many other paper-cut traditions, the basic materials are a blade (or scissor) and paper.

In *kat'ı sanatı*, the primary tool is a *nevregen* or *kretuar*, a type of small, sharp blade and plain or colored paper.

As *kat'ı sanatı* works are typically displayed on another paper or *ebru*, a type of paste or tape is used to attach the cut pieces to the backing paper.

This paste was traditionally a mixture of milk, rice flour, and binding paste known as *cirisli muhallebi*.

Making Kat'ı Sanatı

Kat'ı sanatı designs may be drawn or stenciled onto paper, or cut freely and pieced together on the backing.

Stenciled or drawn designs are often used for larger, contiguous designs such as for borders or large visual pieces.

Free cut pieces may be used in composition or *kolaj* (collage) type *kat'ı sanatı*: for example, each petal of a flower might be cut separately and then pieced together, creating a layered, three dimensional piece.

Kat'ı Sanatı Designs


Kat'ı sanatı designs come in a wide range of patterns, but typically fall under three categories: geometric and abstract, calligraphic, or figurative.

Intricate geometric and abstract patterns are the most common designs in *kat'ı sanatı*, emphasizing the repetition of shapes and curves.

Calligraphic designs made in *kat'ı sanatı* follow similar conventions and styles to traditional calligraphy, but use a knife instead of a brush or pen.

Birds, flowers, vines, and other figurative images are also found in *kat'ı sanatı*, and may be cut from one piece of paper or created from multiple pieces as a *kolaj* (collage).

Kat'ı sanatı designs are often also used in combination with *ebru*, either as a border for the *ebru* or as the central artwork.



“As with most arts...
...having **interest
and love** in what
you are making
is essential.”

Hatice Erbas Sorkunlu

Exhibit Checklist

All works by Hatice Erbas Sorkunlu

Hatice Erbas Sorkunlu, *Blue Battal (stone spread) ebru*, 2020, mixed media, 22 3/8 x 15 3/4 in.

Hatice Erbas Sorkunlu, *Red Kaplan Gözü (tiger's eye) ebru*, 2020, mixed media, 21 1/2 x 16 in.

Hatice Erbas Sorkunlu, *Black Kaplan Gözü (tiger's eye) ebru*, 2020, mixed media, 21 7/8 x 16 in.

Hatice Erbas Sorkunlu, *Pink Koltuk Ebrusu*, 2019, mixed media, 22 5/8 x 16 in.

Hatice Erbas Sorkunlu, *Black Kaplan Gözü (tiger's eye) ebru (many circles)*, 2020, mixed media, 22 x 16 in.

Hatice Erbas Sorkunlu, *Red gül (rose) ebru*, 2019, mixed media, 11 7/8 x 19 1/8 in.

Hatice Erbas Sorkunlu, *Pink ortanca (hydrangea) ebru*, 2020, mixed media, 22 1/8 x 16 in.

Hatice Erbas Sorkunlu, *Istanbul Lalesi (tulip) ebru*, 2020, mixed media, 22 3/8 x 16 in.

Hatice Erbas Sorkunlu, *Purple Koltuk Ebrusu*, 2019, mixed media, 22 3/8 x 16 in.

Hatice Erbas Sorkunlu, *Sümbül (Hyacinth) ebru*, 2019, mixed media, 22 1/8 x 16 in.

Hatice Erbas Sorkunlu, *Gelincik (poppy) ebru*, 2019, mixed media, 19 1/8 x 13 7/8 in.

Hatice Erbas Sorkunlu, *Tavus Kuşu (peacock) ebru*, 2019, mixed media, 19 1/8 x 13 7/8 in.

Hatice Erbas Sorkunlu, *Tarz-ı Kadim (old style) ebru*, 2019, mixed media, 19 1/8 x 13 7/8 in.

Hatice Erbas Sorkunlu, *Kaplan Gözü (tiger's eye) and Tavus Kuşu (peacock) ebru*, 2019, mixed media, 19 1/8 x 13 3/4 in.

Hatice Erbas Sorkunlu, *Mustafa Düzgünman Battalı ebru*, 2019, mixed media, 19 x 14 in.

Hatice Erbas Sorkunlu, *Istanbul Lalesi (tulip) ebru with Rumi pattern kat'ı sanatı*, 2019, mixed media, 20 1/4 x 11 3/4 in.

Hatice Erbas Sorkunlu, *Menekşe (violet) ebru with kat'ı sanatı border*, 2019, mixed media, 11 5/8 x 12 1/4 in.

Hatice Erbas Sorkunlu, *Hayat (Life) – Star pattern kat'ı sanatı with şal (shawl) ebru*, 2019, mixed media, 12 5/8 x 11 3/4 in.

Hatice Erbas Sorkunlu, *La ilaha illallah Muhammad Rasulullah (Shahada) – Kufi pattern kat'ı sanatı with gel-git (comes-goes) ebru*, 2019, mixed media, 12 5/8 x 11 3/4 in.

Hatice Erbas Sorkunlu, *Aşk (love) – Çiçek (flower) pattern kat'ı sanatı with taraklı (combed) ebru*, 2019, mixed media, 12 3/8 x 12 5/8 in.

Hatice Erbas Sorkunlu, *Kolaj (collage) kat'ı sanatı with mixed ebru*, 2019, mixed media, 12 3/8 x 12 5/8 in.

Hatice Erbas Sorkunlu, *Ottoman pattern kat'ı sanatı with şal (shawl) ebru*, 2019, mixed media, 19 5/8 x 10 1/8 in.

Text: Edward Y.J. Millar, Hatice Erbas Sorkunlu and Niyazi Sorkunlu

All photos courtesy of the Castellani Art Museum of Niagara University



Council on the Arts

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