

Olivia Sterling

Jelly

7 MAY–14 JUNE 2026

DIRIMART PERA



Perhaps more lies?, 2026
Acrylic on canvas
51 x 51 cm

Dirimart is pleased to present *Jelly*, Olivia Sterling's first solo exhibition with the gallery, marking the artist's inaugural presentation in Istanbul. Inspired by poetic traditions that pair muses with fruit, Sterling reflects on a romantic tendency to imagine muses as consumable sources of artistic production. The exhibition centres on the intense and affirmative associations carried by fruit, love and dark colours, while situating these images within a framework that considers how they are transformed, fragmented and reconfigured through shifting power relations.

Olivia Sterling's practice renders visible the racial tensions, power structures, and dynamics of consumption embedded within familiar moments of everyday life. Constructed through scenes involving food, the body, and stains, her works suggest that relationships between individuals often carry implicit hierarchies and processes of objectification. At first glance, these images appear playful and exaggerated; however, they reveal underlying microaggressions and structural inequalities. The letters that appear within the compositions extend beyond simple colour markers, forming a system that exposes how race is constructed through language and how arbitrary these classifications can be. In doing so, the viewer is confronted with their own processes of categorisation.

At the core of Sterling's visual language lies a conceptual framework centred on food, emotion and colour. Colours that are dense, vivid and charged with desire – like the juice of a ripe fruit – initially carry a sense of positivity and intensity. Over time, however, these qualities are manipulated, fragmented, and crushed, gradually separated from their origin and reduced to more controlled, diminished forms. This process reveals how love and colour function not only as emotional expressions, but also as political and ideological tools, exposing how what is strong and abundant can be systematically weakened and reconfigured.

The exhibition takes its title, *Jelly*, as a conceptual and sensorial counterpart to this transformation. The associations the word evokes in English – flexibility, fluidity, and a bodily, almost grotesque structure – resonate directly with the surfaces in Sterling's works. This jelly-like quality suggests a space that is unstable and open to intervention, allowing for a reflection on the fragility of identity, the body, and desire. At the same time, the word's subtle association with comedy intersects with the exaggerated, and at times, absurd gestures within the works, drawing the viewer into an experience that oscillates between attraction and discomfort.

The Turkish equivalent, *jöle*, further extends the cross-cultural resonance of the title and renders it more open-ended. In this sense, *Jelly* becomes not only a title, but a metaphor that encapsulates the logic of the exhibition: the dissolution of what is dense, the fluidisation of what is fixed, and the continuous reconfiguration of the body, desire, and colour within structures of power. As meaning shifts across this fluid surface, the exhibition also suggests how ideological frameworks can be dissolved and reassembled.



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In Sterling's world, jelly becomes more than a foodstuff; it emerges as a fragile condition in which identity, desire, and social conventions exist in perpetual flux, always on the verge of dissolution, while also acknowledging a transgression through the transformation of fruit into jelly, revealing how power distils, manipulates, and dilutes human life into something artificial.

Sterling's multi-layered visual language makes visible how desire and identity are transformed within systems of power in *Jelly*, which can be seen at Dirimart Pera from 7 May to 14 June 2026.

Olivia Sterling (b. 1996, Peterborough) earned her BA in Fine Art from the University of Derby in 2018 and her MA in Painting from the Royal College of Art, London in 2020. Her solo exhibitions include *Jelly*, Dirimart Pera, Istanbul (2026); *Pity the Meat!*, East Gallery, Norwich University of the Arts, Norwich (2026); *Your Cheeks Are Wine*, Meyer Riegger, Basel (2024); *Manslaughter*, Guts Gallery, London (2022); *Dinner With a Show*, Meyer Riegger, Berlin (2022); *Yowl*, Nevven, Gothenburg (2022); *Episodes*, CCA Goldsmiths, London (2021); *White Bread*, Cob Gallery, London (2021); and *It Clings like a Leech*, Guts Gallery, London (2020). Selected group exhibitions include *I'm so gay for you*, miłość gallery, London (2025); *The Arcadian Dream*, Spurs Gallery, Shanghai (2024); *Rage Comics*, Huxley Parlour, London (2023); *Out Here*, Steve Turner Gallery, Los Angeles (2023); *Saints and Sinners*, Guts Gallery, London (2023); *The Object Stares Back*, Tube Culture Hall, Milan (2023); *Touch-A-Touch-A-Touch-A-Touch Me*, Berntson Bhattacharjee, London (2023); and *London Grads Now*, Saatchi Gallery, London (2020). Her residencies include HQI Summer Residency, London (2020) and Extended Contexts, National Trust Ilam, UK (2016). Olivia Sterling lives and works in London.

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