

# Esther Schipper

Cemile Sahin

## IT WOULD HAVE TAUGHT ME WISDOM

September 16 – October 30, 2021



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Esther Schipper is pleased to present **It Would Have Taught Me Wisdom**, Cemile Sahin's first presentation with the gallery. Her new installation creates an environment in which text and image are entangled: it is composed of colored plexiglass panels with digitally printed collaged elements, forming a sculptural structure, set against a wallpaper representing the signing ceremony of the Sèvres contract. In both the imagery and its underlying narrative, the new work draws on the artist's research into the treaties of Sèvres (1920) and Lausanne (1923) and their ongoing impact a century later. A major motif is a digitally reconstructed 3D model of a porcelain statue—an *écritoire*, or inkwell, above which the goddess Minerva sits enthroned—which was the centerpiece on the table where the Sèvres treaty was signed.

The work's title, **It Would Have Taught Me Wisdom**, is taken from a quote attributed to Prussian king Wilhelm II's about the coveted Minerva sculpture, which was the starting point of Sahin's non-linear research into the treaty of Sèvres. It was the last of the treaties reordering nations, redrawing borders, and redistributing territories after World War I. The Ottoman Empire was forced to give up 80% of its prewar territory, and although it was never ratified, the harsh conditions of the contract continue to echo as a traumatic event in Turkish politics, instrumentalized in nationalist rhetoric to this day to symbolize an external threat to the integrity of the Turkish state. Sahin is currently developing a series of films about both treaties, and their lasting repercussions for the region.

Cemile Sahin's artistic practice operates between film, photography, sculpture, and literature. Freely deploying different media, without privileging one or the other, her work embodies today's synchronicity of image- and text-based communications. Integrating images into her books and text in her image-world, Sahin moves with extraordinary agility between words and pictures, between still and moving image, between text as form, sign, and symbol. Deliberately elliptical and fragmentary, her work's narrative strategies draw on an episodic format of narration established by contemporary TV series and internet videos. In her practice, Sahin acknowledges the subjectiveness and codedness of all storytelling, and its instrumentalization by the media. Her works find

a giddy rhythm in the knowing use of the dynamics of these processes, sweeping away her spectators to unexpected, and sometimes uncomfortable realizations, among them that the writing of history is, and always has been, determined by constantly shifting perspectives.

Cemile Sahin was born in Wiesbaden, Germany, in 1990. She studied Fine Arts at Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design in London and at the Universität der Künste in Berlin. The artist lives and works in Berlin.

Sahin's debut novel **TAXI** was published in 2019, followed by her book **ALLE HUNDE STERBEN** in 2020, both of which are integral parts of her artistic practice. For **TAXI** Sahin was awarded the Alfred Döblin-Medaille. In 2019 she was awarded the ars viva 2020 prize for Visual Arts. The same year she was a fellow of the JUNGE AKADEMIE at the Akademie der Künste Berlin. In 2021 Sahin received the AArtist in Residence-Stipend, awarded by the German Foreign Ministry in cooperation with the LVBG, the Association of Berlin Galleries.

The artist's exhibitions and projects include: **Arbeit am Gedächtnis – Transforming Archives**, Akademie der Künste, Berlin (2021), **Laboratory of Contested Space / Art & Truthtelling**, Akademie der Künste, Berlin (2020); **ars viva 2020**, Kunstverein, Hamburg (2020); **Where the Story Unfolds**, Akademie der Künste, Berlin (2020); **Studio Berlin**, Berghain, Berlin (2020); **ars viva 2020**, Galerie für Zeitgenössische Kunst, Leipzig (2019); **Tell me about yesterday tomorrow**, NS-Dokumentationszentrum, Munich (2019); **Kurdisches Filmfestival**, Babylon Cinema, Berlin (2019), and **Die Kant**, Uferstudios, Berlin (2017).

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With the support of

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