

Petzel

LEYLA YENIRCE

Eye Level

October 30 – December 14, 2024
35 E 67th Street

Petzel is pleased to present an exhibition of new paintings and a musical album by Kurdish-born, Berlin-based artist Leyla Yenirce. The show marks her debut solo exhibition in New York and first time showing with the gallery. *Eye Level* will be on view from October 30 to December 14, 2024, at Petzel's Upper East Side location at 35 E 67th Street, Parlor Floor. Combining portraiture of female Kurdish freedom fighters and archival material with the spectral sonic landscape of her music project *Rosaceae*, Yenirce explores archives of resistance alongside cultural, spatial, and structural systems of dominance.

Using oil paint, acrylic spray paint and silkscreen ink on canvas, the paintings in *Eye Level* include printed motifs depicting female Kurdish freedom fighters using binoculars to survey the land and sky, except for one fighter, who sits and reads a book. While she reads in *Fireball*, the Sumerian language appears as cuneiform in *Gold*. The Sumerian script, familiar to the artist through her Yazidi background, signals the written word, while her brushstrokes evoke associations of inscription or signature.

Additionally, Yenirce layers blueprints of F-16 fighter jets, used extensively by Turkey in conflict with these women fighters, and Google Earth views of the controversial Ilisu Dam project, built and finalized by Turkey in 2018. Mapping tools of ruin, the images relate to each other in various ways: while the jets are used to control the area where the women operate from above, the dam has flooded about 200 villages from below, as rising water levels overflow the banks of the Tigris River and submerge regions where people have lived for millennia. As the artist states, only between the earth and the sky, "on eye level, can these women exist."

Amid these found materials, the artist places an image of herself as a child, sourced from an old VHS tape documenting her cousin's wedding. Yenirce's layering of this home video represents the artist's relationship with Kurdistan, her country of birth, as mediated through mass-circulated images of feminist resistance. Yenirce creates complex compositions which fuse signposts of war with geographies of displacement, a vantage point both from afar and from within.

Yenirce also debuts a new album, *Souvenirs*, which the artist composed under her music project *Rosaceae* during a residency in Paris in January 2024. During her stay, the artist visited the Sacré-Cœur cathedral in Montmartre, overlooking the city. Yenirce was reminded of the construction of the Ilisu Dam and the subsequent flooding in her home region, as the artist's family had to exhume and relocate their ancestral tombs to the tops of neighboring mountains. Through *Souvenirs*, the artist imagines a space in which the listener can convoke with the dead, where the living are long gone. Yenirce shapes sound through recorded vocals, field recordings, and ambient instrumentation. The album cover includes a self-portrait of the artist en route to her brother's wedding, once again layering the artist's personal archive with larger geopolitical realities.

The album was written and produced by the artist with additional vocals by Shira Lewis, mixed by Anders Fallesen and mastered by Rashad Becker. The vinyl copy includes a text written by Mazlum Nergiz.

The vinyl copy of the album is available at the Petzel Bookstore.

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About Leyla Yenirce

Leyla Yenirce (b. 1992, Qubîn, Kurdistan) is currently based in Berlin, Germany. She is a cultural theorist, filmmaker, musician, painter, performer and installation artist, combining all the aforementioned mediums in her artistic practice. Yenirce's willingness to transcend the boundaries of set disciplines enables the artist to unite what is often mutually exclusive: feminism and war, pop culture and genocide, genuine longing and detached irony.

Having graduated from the Hamburg University of Fine Arts, Yenirce's first solo exhibition *SO MUCH ENERGY* took place at the Kunsthaus Hamburg in 2022. In 2024, her video work *Being Strong is Hard* was screened at the International Film Festival Rotterdam. The artist will also participate in group exhibitions at Museum Folkwang, Essen. Among other notable institutions, Yenirce has exhibited at the Kunsthalle Münster (2024); Haus der Kunst, Munich (2023); Galerie für Zeitgenössische Kunst, Leipzig (2023) and Halle für Kunst Lueneburg (2022). Yenirce is one of the recipients of the 2024 *Kunstpreis Berlin* and 2022 *ars viva Prize*. In addition to numerous other scholarships and prizes, including *Federal Prize for Art Students*, Bonn (2021), the *Playground Art Prize*, Nuremberg (2021) and the *Hamburg Music Prize* (2019), Yenirce has been part of various group exhibitions, including *Video Digest #1*, Moltkerei, Cologne (2023), *Gallery Weekend Festival*, Studio Mondial, Berlin (2023), *Kein Schlussstrich Festival*, Kampnagel, Hamburg (2021), *Paradise*, Kurdish Film Festival, Berlin (2020) and *Hi Ventilation*, Kunstverein Harburger Bahnhof, Hamburg (2019).

Her work is held in the permanent collection of the Mudam, Luxembourg, Detroit Institute of Arts Museum and Kistefos Museum, Norway.

Petzel Gallery is located on the parlor floor and third floors of 35 East 67th Street New York, NY 10065. Gallery hours are Tuesday through Saturday from 10:00 AM–6:00 PM. For press inquiries, please contact Karolina Chojnowska at karolina@petzel.com, or call (212) 680-9467.