

Nilbar Güreş

Nilbar Güreş is a painter, photographer, sculptor, video- and performance artist dealing with the body in its broadest sense. She relates the human figure to the social and gendered contexts by which it becomes marked and defined. With a lucid eye for the symbolic in the everyday and a vast knowledge and appreciation of the artisanal and material culture of Turkey, her country of origin, Güreş is confronting questions of cultural identities and concomitant, essentially patriarchal, social and political norms by inventing subversive scenarios with a highly sensual and provocative stance. Her inventive scenarios and narratives are ambiguous, often both witty and with a tragic or melancholic underside. Güreş is a visual poet with a partisan engagement in emancipatory, feminist and queer issues.

Nilbar Güreş was born 1977 in Istanbul. She studied Fine Arts at the Marmara University, Istanbul, and at the Academy of Fine Arts, Vienna. She is the winner of the Professor-Hilde-Goldschmidt-Prize (2013, AT), the Otto-Mauer-Prize (2014, AT), and the BC 21 Award (2015, AT). She lives and works in Vienna and Istanbul.

Blank Space, 2019

Material: Satin, Kunstleder, Stickerei / satin, imitation leather, embroidery
2-teilig, Maße je 245 x 74 x 1,5 cm / two parts, dimensions 245 x 75 x 1,5 cm each

Blank Space is an architectural element connecting two spaces. Consisting of two parts it is half double door/half curtain that people are passing through. One side is made of shiny salmon-pink satin and resembles the typical heavy quilt used in Turkish homes and an essential part of the traditional dowry of women. The soft and luring surface of this quilt like material strongly evokes the sensuality and intimacy of the body and even its fleshy inside. The reverse side shows imitation leather in the colour of light skin referring to the outside of the body. On both parts of this curtain like leather surface and in proportional relation to the human figure Güreş has placed a nipple, formed by light coloured fabric and sewn by hand onto it. Yet, below the two nipples the "skin" has been cut and partly removed leaving large and significant double crescent shaped openings. These "wounds" then became roughly sutured by black thick thread resembling vertical bars thereby revealing what's underneath: Pink fabric with a children's pattern, cute yellow chicken just having slipped out of the egg. In the area between the nipples stubbles of unduly new hair have grown, black setaceous thread stitched through the leather. *Blank Space* is about a trans man whose breasts have been taken off. Güreş chose the underlying image of the new born chicken as a symbol for the birth of a person who has reached his right and desired identity. But *Blank Space* is also ambivalent, as the title itself. It is not only about the trauma of this personal transition, it touches the subcutaneous vulnerability of the (gendered) body generally.