

Un-Working the Icon: Kurdish "Warrior-Divas"

Organized by:
Shawna Vesco and **Anne Wheeler**

February 4 - March 4, 2017

Gallery Mario Kreuzberg
Adalbertstraße 4D, Berlin, Germany
Tuesday to Saturday, 3-7 pm

Opening reception:
Saturday, February 4, 7 pm

Featuring work by:
Bryndís Björnsdóttir **Floris Parlevliet**
Nilbar Güreş **Greta Rusttt**
Nadine Hattom **Beri Shalmashi**



Still from *Het Front*, 2016
Screenplay by Beri Shalmashi; directed by Floris Parlevliet

Western media is fascinated by the Kurdish women fighters who risk their lives in the fight against ISIS. Yet the hundreds of headlines and photos reveal little other than a homogenous conception of these women as glamorous gun-toting divas who are the harbingers of an "eastern feminism." In imagining this iconic figure, the gaze of Western media has co-opted the fluidity of identity of Kurdish womanhood, and has subsumed a multiplicity of ideologies, experiences, and subjectivities into a static and totalizing signifier.

The icon of the peshmerga fighter cloaks the terror of war and violence in a romanticized narrative, reduces the complex and multiple realities of women bearing arms to a unified brand of "eastern feminism," and discourages western spectators from learning more about the historical and political contexts that have shaped contemporary Kurdish issues. Rather than furnish its own representations to combat those of the media, *Un-Working the Icon: Kurdish "Warrior-Divas"* instead draws into sharp relief the space that exists between representation and that which is represented. By playing with absence, anonymity, and non-figural renderings of womanhood, domesticity, and femininity, the exhibition's featured artists trouble the operations that result in the iconization of Kurdish women across global media.

Sited in the Kreuzberg neighborhood of Berlin – home to the largest Kurdish population in the diaspora – *Un-Working the Icon: Kurdish "Warrior-Divas"* opens generative conversations about the political, social, and epistemological realities bound up in the mechanisms of identity formation for everyone.

Un-Working the Icon: Kurdish "Warrior-Divas" is a 2016-17 apexart Franchise Exhibition Program exhibition along with *Illegal Kosmonavtika* (Tbilisi, Georgia, June 2017), *A Glimmer of Freedom* (Tarrafal, Cape Verde, April 2017), and *Guis Sou Me Le Mbaou (I Do Not See You at Mbaou)* (Thiaroye, Senegal, November 2016).

Shawna Vesco is a San Francisco-based writer and cultural theorist. **Anne Wheeler** is a New York-based artist, writer, and curator.

For more information please contact Elizabeth.Larison@apexart.org or visit apexart.org/exhibitions/vesco-wheeler.php

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#unworking

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