

A kiss on the eyes NİLBAR GÜREŞ Gözlerinizden öperim



THE TÜRKİYE PAVILION AT THE 61ST INTERNATIONAL ART EXHIBITION – LA BIENNALE DI VENEZIA PRESENTS “A KISS ON THE EYES”

The Türkiye Pavilion at the 61st International Art Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia presents **A Kiss on the Eyes** by **Nilbar Güreş**, celebrated for her poetic, critical, and witty engagement with cultural symbols, social inequalities, and questions of identity across a diverse array of media.

Curated by **Başak Doğa Temür**, the exhibition brings together selected works from different periods alongside new productions, spanning sculpture, installation, painting and mixed-media works on paper and fabric. Moving across these media, A Kiss on the Eyes foregrounds Güreş's material and conceptual approach, in which textiles, everyday objects, and organic forms are not only formal elements but carriers of personal and collective histories.

A Kiss on the Eyes takes its cue from the Turkish phrase *gözlerinizden öperim*, a common closing remark often used to end a letter or conversation. Here, the phrase is rethought as a mode of relation, one that suggests proximity without possession, care and respect without hierarchy.

The Türkiye Pavilion is commissioned by the **Istanbul Foundation for Culture and Arts (İKSİV)** and realised under the auspices of the **Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Türkiye** with the contribution of the **Ministry of Culture and Tourism**. The Pavilion is sponsored by **Borusan Otomotiv** and **Trendyol Art**, with additional support from airline partner **Turkish Airlines** and production support from the **SAHA Association**. The **Vehbi Koç Foundation** provides publication support for the exhibition catalogue.

The Inauguration of the Türkiye Pavilion

The official inauguration of the Türkiye Pavilion took place on **Wednesday, 6 May 2026**, at the Sale d'Armi, Arsenale with the participation of **Elif Çomoğlu Ülgen**, Ambassador of the Republic of Türkiye to Rome; **Zeynep Selvi**, Culture and Tourism Counselor at the Turkish Embassy in Rome; and **Mehmet Özöktem**, Consul General of the Republic of Türkiye in Milan, alongside **Pietrangelo Buttafuoco**, President of the Venice Biennale, and **Andrea Del Mercato**, General Manager of the Biennale.

The inauguration also hosted senior executives from **Borusan Otomotiv** and **Trendyol Art**, the sponsors of this year's pavilion, as well as the supporters who contributed to Türkiye's permanent venue at the Biennale and this year's exhibition. Guests included İKSİV Tulip Card members and prominent figures from the international press, the art world, and academia.

Ambassador of the Republic of Türkiye to Rome Elif Çomoğlu Ülgen commented on the exhibition, stating: *“I am delighted to witness the strengthening presence of our country at the International Art Exhibition of the Venice Biennale with each passing year. Under the auspices of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the collaboration of Ministry of Culture and Tourism and through the disciplined and dedicated efforts of the Istanbul Foundation for Culture and Arts (İKSİV), Türkiye has been proudly flying its flag at its long-term venue in the Venice Biennale since 2014. I am deeply grateful to all the institutions and individuals who have contributed this meaningful support on behalf of our country at the Biennale, which is globally recognized as a prominent exhibition of culture and art.”*

Yeşim Gürer Oymak, Deputy Director General of İKSV, shared her thoughts: “As İKSV, we are honored to be the commissioner of the Türkiye Pavilion at this very important international art event. In the Türkiye Pavilion, Nilbar Güreş and curator Başak Doğa Temür create a language of subtle yet powerful gestures, one where intimacy becomes a form of resilience. The exhibition resonates deeply with the spirit of the Venice Biennale’s theme, *In Minor Keys*. I thank Nilbar Güreş and Başak Doğa Temür, and all of the team members who have worked tirelessly over the past months to bring this exhibition to life. We extend our deepest gratitude to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Culture and Tourism for their continuing collaboration. And we also thank our sponsors Borusan Otomotiv and Trendyol Art, as well as all corporate and individual supporters and sponsors for their strong and generous support throughout the process.”

Hakan Tiftik, CEO of Borusan Otomotiv, sponsor of the Pavilion, noted: “As Borusan Otomotiv, we consider this sponsorship a significant milestone in our more than 40-year engagement with art. This support represents a natural extension of Borusan Group’s long-standing commitment to culture and the arts, as well as the strong and authentic relationship that the BMW brand we represent in Türkiye has established with the art world. We will continue to build on this deeply rooted heritage, shaping our vision in culture and the arts with a long-term and strategic perspective.”

Çağlayan Çetin, President of Trendyol Group, sponsor of the Pavilion, added: “We are proud to support the Türkiye Pavilion at the Venice Biennale as part of our commitment to strengthening the global visibility of Türkiye’s artistic voice. Through Trendyol Art, we set out with the vision of making contemporary art more accessible and empowering young artists, while bringing Türkiye’s artistic production to the international stage. We see the Venice Biennale as an important milestone that reflects our global vision and marks the beginning of a long-term journey.”

A Kiss on the Eyes

A Kiss on the Eyes, Nilbar Güreş’s exhibition at the Türkiye Pavilion, brings together different strands of the artist’s dynamic and diverse practice. Celebrated for her poetic, critical, and witty engagement with cultural symbols, social inequalities, and questions of identity, Güreş has built a substantial body of work spanning photography, video, collage, and textiles. In recent years, her practice has increasingly expanded into three-dimensional forms, leading to this exhibition conceived for the Biennale Arte 2026 which will showcase a series of large-scale sculptures and installations. Created through an intensive, collaborative process in Istanbul, these works were produced between December 2025 and March 2026 with sculptors, metalworkers, tailors, and craftspeople. Treating material not only as a formal element but also as a carrier of memory and labour, these new works will be presented alongside selected pieces from earlier periods of the artist’s practice.

In her curatorial statement, Başak Doğa Temür introduces the exhibition with the following words:

“The exhibition unfolds through spatial relationships rather than a linear narrative. Works remain close to the ground, lean, hang, or hover. Instead of guiding the viewer from one work to the next, the exhibition invites them to slow down and become aware of their own bodily position in relation to the space and to others. Moving through the exhibition becomes a negotiation between distance and proximity, vulnerability and resistance.”

Such an approach characterises Nilbar Güreş’s work across multiple media, drawing on lived experience to address questions of gender, migration, and belonging. Her practice is shaped by situations marked by displacement, racism, xenophobia, and discrimination based on religion and belief, not as distant subjects but as conditions that structure everyday life. She often focuses on moments where social norms and power relations become visible through bodies, relationships, and acts of looking. Materials such as textiles, garments, domestic objects, and organic forms play a central role in her work. These materials carry personal and collective histories and are altered through gestures of care, humour, and resistance. Intimacy and political tension exist side by side, allowing vulnerability to appear without connotations of passivity.”

The curatorial statement by Başak Doğa Temür is available at turkiyepavilion26.iksv.org

Publication

A bilingual (Turkish and English) publication will accompany the exhibition, co-published by **İKSV** and **Mousse Publishing**, with the support of the **Vehbi Koç Foundation**. Alongside essays by Başak Doğa Temür and Franz Thalmair, closely engaging with the artist's practice and the exhibition, the book includes a selection of poems by Margaret Atwood, Joy Harjo, Etel Adnan, Bejan Matur, Diya Ciwan, Sappho, Birhan Keskin, Audre Lorde, Jîla Huseynî, and Avedig Isahakyan—chosen for their resonance with the exhibition's themes of displacement, memory, and plurality. Offering layered readings of Nilbar Güreş's imagery, the texts in the book situate *A Kiss on the Eyes* within the continuity of the artist's practice. The poems in the selection, in turn, foreground concepts such as displacement, memory, fragility, discrimination, plurality, and relationality, in line with the themes of gender, migration, and belonging, which are central to the artist's practice.

In addition to being available to biennial visitors at La Biennale bookshops at the Arseale and Giardini, the publication can also be found at selected art-focused bookshops worldwide. Online sales will be available via moussemagazine.it/shop/.

The graphic design of the project and the book is undertaken by **İpek Erdöl**, with editorial work by **Hazal Yonca Birincioğlu**.

Project Team

Textile Works and Soft Sculpture Production: Terzihane, Bi Değişik Dikiş Atölyesi (Ayşenur Arslanoğlu)

Macramé: Nuriye Kılıç

Assistant: Sıla Ümmetoğlu

3D Modelling and Sculpting: StudioM (Serkan Ağırçöl)

Metal Fabrication: Özgün Ali Büyükişık, Erin Yeşildere

Metal Polishing: Burak Çizer, Berat Çizer

Editor: Hazal Yonca Birincioğlu

Graphic Design: İpek Erdöl

Lighting Consultant: Korhan Şişman

Web Developer: Kayhan Yalınkılıç

Installation Team: Tosetto Allestimenti

Nilbar Güreş

Nilbar Güreş (b. 1977, Istanbul) received her B.A. in Painting from the Faculty of Fine Arts at Marmara University and completed her M.A. in Painting and Graphics at the Academy of Fine Arts, Vienna, followed by further studies in Art and Textile Pedagogy at the University of Applied Arts, Vienna.

Honoured with the **Outstanding Artist Award for Photography** and a **Research Grant** by the Austrian Ministry of Arts and Culture in 2023, Güreş has also been the recipient of numerous prestigious awards, including the **Hilde Goldschmidt Prize (2013)**, the **Otto Mauer Award (2014)**, the **BC21 Art Award** by Belvedere Contemporary (2015), the **De'Longhi Art Projects Artist Award** at the London Art Fair (2018), and the **Prix Maud Mottier (2021)**. In 2012, supported by the Austrian Ministry of Arts and Culture, she participated in the International Studio & Curatorial Programme in New York as an artist-in-residence.

Her multidisciplinary practice, spanning 25 years, encompasses photography, video, film, painting, performance, sculpture, installation, and mixed-media collages on fabric. Beginning with the personal and biographical, her works expand to address broader issues, with particular sensitivity to themes of social injustice, gender roles, and cultural identity. Through research, documentation, and witty figurations, she poetically subverts conventions.

Nilbar Güreş currently lives and works in Naples, Vienna, and Istanbul.

Nilbar Güreş's solo exhibitions include: *Velvet Stare*, Arter, Istanbul, Türkiye (2025); *Space Uncurated #1*, MLZ Art Dep, Trieste, Italy (2024); *JUNCTIONS*, Kunstforum Montafon, Schruns, Austria (2024); *ATEM*, Vienna, Austria (2021); *Sour as a Lemon*, Pasquart Kunsthaus, Biel, Switzerland (2021); *Breasts by Rose*, Vortic Art, London, United Kingdom (2021); *Tell Me*, Kunstverein Reutlingen, Reutlingen, Germany (2019); *Lovers*, Badischer Kunstverein, Karlsruhe, Germany (2019); *Erzähl' mir.*, Kunstverein Reutlingen, Germany (2019); *Overhead*, Lentos Kunstmuseum, Linz, Austria (2018); *JesuitenFoyer*, Vienna, Austria (2014); *FO.KU.S – Foto Kunst Stadtforum*, Innsbruck, Austria (2014); *Pink Is The New Black*, Osmos, New York, United States (2013); *Self-Defloration*, Künstlerhaus Stuttgart, Germany (2011); *Nilbar Güreş, Undressing*, MuseumsQuartier, Vienna, Austria (2011); *Nilbar Güreş: Window Commission 2010*, INIVA Institute of International Visual Art, Rivington Place, London, United Kingdom (2010), and *Unknown Sports, Indoor Exercises*, Salzburger Kunstverein, Austria (2009).

Her group exhibitions include: *Empowerment*, Mumbai, Pune, Delhi, Kolkata, Bangalore (IN); Colombo (LK) (2025); *Forms of the Shadow*, Secession, Vienna, Austria (2024); *The Cynics Republic*, Palais de Tokyo, Paris, France (2024); *Delinking and Relinking*, Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven, The Netherlands (2023); Biennale Bregaglia, Switzerland (2022); *Mixed Up With Others Before We Even Begin*, Museum of Modern Art Vienna - Mumok, Austria (2022); *Afterglow*, Yokohama Triennale, Japan (2020); *Drawing Biennial 2019*, Drawing Room, London, United Kingdom (2019); *Imagined Communities*, 21st Contemporary Art Biennial Sesc_Videobrasil, São Paulo, Brasil (2019); *A Pillar of Smoke*, 49th Rencontres d'Arles, Arles, France (2018); *The Way Beyond Art*, Van Abbe Museum, Eindhoven, The Netherlands (2017); *The Future Is Already Here – It's Just Not Evenly Distributed*, 20th Biennale of Sydney, Australia (2016); *South by Southeast. A Further Surface*, Guangdong Times Museum, Guangzhou, China (2016); *Istanbul: Passion, Joy, Fury*, MAXXI, Rome, Italy (2015); *Rainbow in the Dark*, Malmö Konstmuseum, Sweden (2015); *Cappadocia Struck*, Contemporary Art Programme Cappadox, Uçhisar, Nevşehir, Türkiye (2015); *How to (...) things that don't exist*, 31st Bienal de São Paulo, Brazil (2014); *Ghosts, Spies and Grandmothers*, SeMA Biennial, Mediacity Seoul, Korea (2014); *AGITATIONISM*, EVA International Ireland's Biennial, Limerick City, Ireland (2014); 6th Berlin Biennale, Germany (2010) and *What Keeps Mankind Alive?*, 11th International Istanbul Biennial, Türkiye (2009).

Başak Doğa Temür

The curator of the Türkiye Pavilion, Başak Doğa Temür, took part in the founding of Istanbul Modern, santralistanbul and Arter in the early 2000s, when Istanbul's museum and cultural landscape began to rapidly expand. Between 2010 and 2020, she was a member of Arter's curatorial team and the artistic programme board, contributing to exhibition coordination and management, publications, and the realisation of new productions.

Her experience also includes part-time teaching at Istanbul Bilgi University in the Film and Television, as well as Visual Communication Design programmes. She has served on advisory boards and juries including the Türkiye Pavilion Advisory Board (2017–2019), BASE 2018, the CultureCIVIC: Arts and Culture Support Programme – Art Production Grants, and the pre-selection jury for the Berlin Senate's Istanbul–Berlin Residency Programme.

She has curated exhibitions including; Altan Gürman: A Retrospective (2019, Arter, Istanbul); Rosa Barba: The Hidden Conference (2019, Arter, Istanbul); Ali Mahmut Demirel: Isle (2018, Arter, Istanbul); Šejla Kamerić: When the Heart Goes Bing Bam Boom (2015, Arter, Istanbul); Fatma Bucak: Yet Another Story About the Fall (2013, Arter, Istanbul); Mat Collishaw: Afterimage (2013, Arter, Istanbul); Nevin Aladağ: Stage (2012, Arter, Istanbul); Patricia Piccinini: Hold Me Close to Your Heart (2011, Arter, Istanbul); and Transfer Turkey–NRW (2005–2007, Santralistanbul, Istanbul), co-curated with Emre Baykal.

The Advisory Board for the Türkiye Pavilion

In order to ensure that the Türkiye Pavilion exhibitions independently reflect the diversity and current ideas in Türkiye's contemporary art and architecture scenes, İKSV determines the invited curators, artists, and architects through structured selection processes. For the International Art Exhibitions, selections are made upon the recommendation of an advisory board. **The Advisory Board for the Türkiye Pavilion** in 2026 includes art historian and academic **Dr. Ceren Özpinar**; curator, writer, and academic **Chus Martínez**; curator **Öykü Özsoy Sağnak**; and curator and writer **Ulya Soley**.

The Türkiye Pavilion at the Biennale Arte

As the commissioner of the Pavilion, İKSV brings together institutional and individual support each year to provide the necessary resources for the invited artists and architects to develop their works under the best possible conditions. The Türkiye Pavilion at the Biennale Arte 2026 is realised through the initiative of İKSV and the support of Akbank, Akfen Holding, Fusun-Faruk Eczacıbaşı, Oya-Bülent Eczacıbaşı, Emin Hitay, Feride-Güney İkiz, İpek Ilıcak Kayaalp, Dilara Altinkılıç Kutmangil, Uludağ Beverage, the Z. Yıldırım Family, Burcu Acartürk Yıldız, and Turgut Yılmaz. Root Karaköy Hotel / Sub Karaköy is providing accommodation support.

İKSV has been coordinating the Türkiye Pavilion since 2007, and since 2014, the Pavilion has a permanent venue at the Sale d'Armi, Arsenale, thanks to the initiative of İKSV and support of 21 sponsors for a 20-year period from 2014 to 2034. The individuals and institutions that have enabled Türkiye to secure a long-term venue at the International Art and Architecture Exhibitions include Akbank, Mehveş-Dalınç Arıburnu, Berrak-Nezih Barut, Ali Raif Dinçkök, Vuslat Doğan Sabancı, Fusun-Faruk Eczacıbaşı, Oya-Bülent Eczacıbaşı, Nesrin Esirtgen, Eti Gıda San. ve Tic. AŞ, Garanti BBVA, Ahu-Can Has, Öner Kocabeyoğlu, MAÇAKIZI, Tansa Mermerci, Rana-Erol Tabanca, SAHA Association, Taha Tatlıcı, Sinan Tara, Vehbi Koç Foundation, the Z. Yıldırım Family, and Yıldız Holding AŞ.

Istanbul Foundation for Culture and Arts (İKSV)

Istanbul Foundation for Culture and Arts (İKSV) is a non-profit cultural institution founded in 1973 with the sole purpose of enriching Istanbul's cultural and artistic life. Every year, the Foundation organises highly anticipated festivals of *Music, Film, Theatre and Jazz*; the *Istanbul Biennial* and the week-long *Filmekimi*. It hosts cultural events and artistic performances in various disciplines throughout the year at its home venue *Salon İKSV*, located at the Nejat Eczacıbaşı Building. İKSV also offers a creative events programme for kids and teenagers at *İKSV Alt Kat*.

İKSV organises *the Türkiye Pavilion* at the International Art and Architecture Exhibitions of *La Biennale di Venezia*. Conducting studies and drafting reports with the aim of contributing to cultural policy development, the Foundation also supports artistic and cultural productions by presenting festival and encouragement awards, commissioning works, taking part in international and local co-productions, and the artist residency program at *Cité Internationale des Arts in France*, as well as the İKSV Young Artist Fund, supporting artistic productions and international mobility of young artists.

Since 2023, with financial support from the European Union, İKSV also continues an extensive project called *Ortaklaşa: Culture, Dialogue and Support Programme*, which aims to promote dialogue and collaboration between local governments and Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) operating in the field of culture and arts in Türkiye.

Further information: turkiyepavilion26.iksv.org
High-resolution images: www.iksvphoto.com/album/s212phtm
Video: drive.google.com/drive/folders/1WW5ZRut4-vYIKzkJ8zVprpVpEVNxAz1G?usp=drive_link
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