



ZEHRA DOĞAN
PORTFOLIO

"In the lands of Kurdistan, I grew up in a small house, but full of people – with nine brothers and sisters, a grandmother, a grandfather, aunts, nephews, and cousins. That's why Virginia Woolf's statement about "a room of one's own" has always felt foreign to me. My room of my own was the quilt I pulled over myself at night – always changing, but creating the same effect."

Zehra Doğan

"My first studio was on a mulberry tree, where my father nailed two boards together to create a platform, and I created a special space by surrounding it with curtains and fabrics. We had two mulberry trees at home. Two very strange, giant mulberry trees. When my parents first built the house, they planted two mulberry trees in the garden. As the years passed, the children grew up and got married, so they added a second floor so they could have a home too. But they couldn't bear to cut down the mulberry trees, so the second floor was built surrounding the two mulberry trees. I was born on the second floor. Then we built the third floor, this time with a terrace around the two trees. We built a concrete tub on the terrace and planted fig and grape vines and ivy in it. As these vines and grapevines grew, they wrapped around the entire house, the ivy reaching all the way down to the first floor. It was an incredibly enchanting house. It looked makeshift, but it was a lush green house among hundreds of concrete houses. And very strangely, two giant mulberry trees rose up from the concrete between the houses, all the way up to the third floor. People would come and take pictures of our house. My second studio was the underside of a 12-person walnut dining table that stood in the living room, which I had to move inside as autumn approached. Years later, when my father got a job at the state office in village services, he said, "Civilized people eat at the table with a fork and knife," but my mother considered this incident to be a lack of manners and said, "Those who lose their roots lose themselves " and continued to eat on the floor, saying, "Children, you know, whoever wants to eat with your father can eat at the table, whoever doesn't can eat with me." Naturally, since we all chose the floor, my father got bored and had to eat with us. In this situation, I was the one who benefited. That table became my space. My third studio had no space for painting, but it was under the prison bunk bed. There were laundry baskets underneath, each belonging to two people. They contained pens, notebooks, and books. By pushing those baskets aside a little, I could make room for my paintings. I worked like this for nearly three years."

EXHIBITING ZEHRA DOĞAN

Exhibiting Zehra Doğan's work entails an engagement with a multilayered artistic and political terrain. Her practice cannot be read just as an aesthetic production alone; rather, it operates as a form of testimony, resistance, and counter-archive. The material conditions of her work, starting with the ones created in prison with improvised resources underscore both the resilience of artistic expression under constraint and the capacity of art to transgress imposed limitations. Within an exhibition context, these works invite audiences into an encounter that is affective and political. Doğan creates the capacity to produce knowledge and to question truth through art.



“Light And Fight”, Fondazione MACC, 2025



“Ez Zehra, Ne Poşmanım” (I am Zehra, I Do Not Regret), Maxim Gorki Theatre, 2021.



“Closed eyes can see”, with Matteo Mauro,
Prometeo Gallery, 2024



“Light And Fight”, Fondazione MACC,
2025



"Light And Fight", Installation,
Fondazione MACC., 2025



"Prison N°5", Graphic Book, Installation, S.M.A.K, Ghent, 2023



"Prison N°5"
Prometeo Gallery, Milano, 2021



Padiglione d'Arte Contemporanea, Milano, 2020

"Quando non hai più immagini da cui parlare,
perché non vedi il fuori, non hai libertà,
non hai riviste, non hai accesso a nessun
paesaggio se non il muro, i sogni diventano
un patrimonio essenziale cui attingere."



"Barricade"
Bienal de Pontevedra, 2025



“Unbreakable, I Will Break You Anyway”
Performance & Video, Amna Suraka Museum,
Sulaymaniyah, 2021

ARTIST AS JOURNALIST JOURNALIST AS ARTIST

My involvement in journalism began at JINHA, the world's first news agency staffed exclusively by women, which I also co-founded in 2012. When I was imprisoned in Mardin, I began painting again and writing articles about the human rights violations prisoners were subjected to. I realized that none of my work belongs solely to me. I learned not to control my art. At first, I was allowed to have art supplies, as I was legally entitled to them. Meanwhile, the attention my work received outside had grown. I was now not only an imprisoned journalist, but also an artist imprisoned because of a drawing. However, the obstacles to drawing inside had already begun to increase in 2016. So, I had to find other ways...

Nusaybin, 2015.

Photograph taken for JINHA. Women and children takes part in building improvised structures with limited materials to stand against heavy military vehicles and weapons.





Neighborhood residents hide themselves behind improvised coverings they had made with their own means, against armored vehicles that fired at anything that moved. Nusayin, 2015

In 2015, the Kurdish Women's Movement was conducting Jineology studies at the time, and we, as the Jineology Women's Science Academy, decided to publish a three-monthly women's science journal. I conducted these discussions online because I and other Kurdish women journalists like me, who were working in the conflict zone could not attend the meetings held in Diyarbakır,



Istanbul, 2013. Interview with Peace Mothers Initiative,



Iraq, Duhok, Kurdistan Region, 2013. Survivors of ISIS sexual enslavement.

When I was imprisoned, I never felt alone. It felt as if I were with friends. (At that time, the newspapers Özgür Gündem and Azadi Welat had been shut down.) Among us, an idea took shape: we were being subjected to rights violations, while the mainstream media continued as if nothing were happening. Under the initiative of the female prisoners, we asked ourselves: 'Since our news sources are here, why don't we establish a journalism course?' We taught reporting and journalism, and eventually we prepared the Özgür Gündem prison newspaper. Even from inside, we were able to make our voices heard.

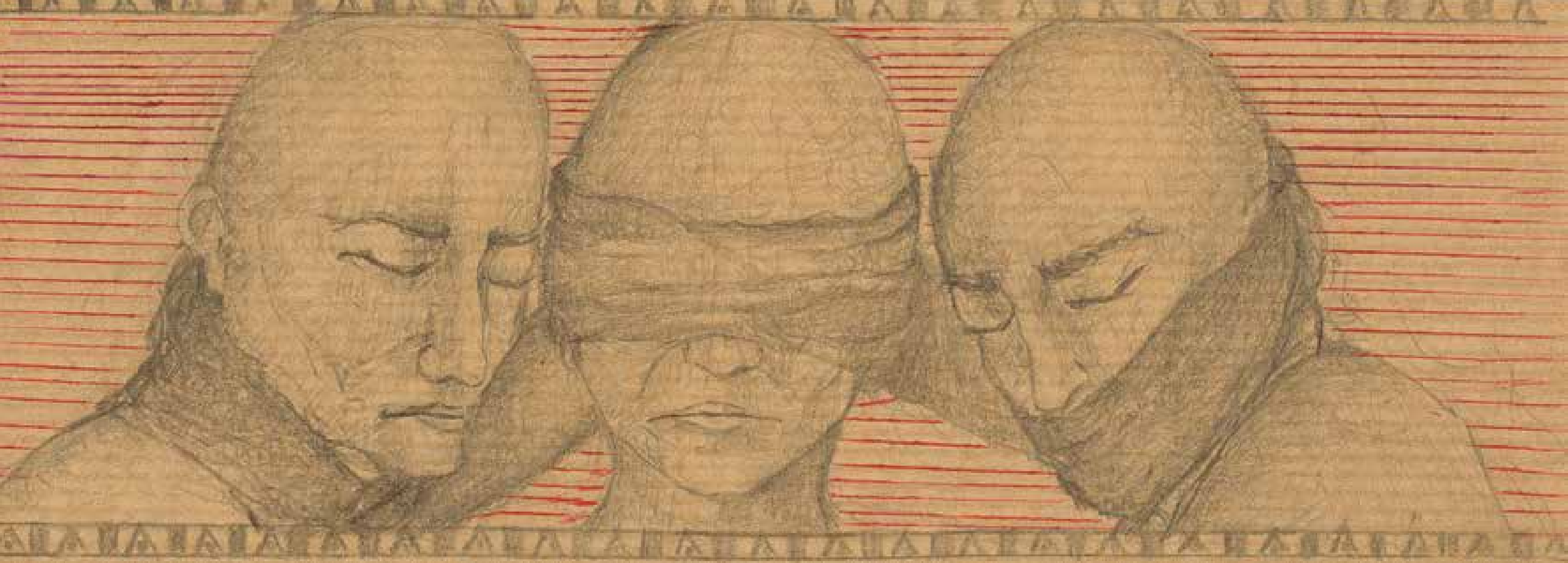
Tarsus Women's Prison, 2019.
The new prison director surprisingly allows us to take the photograph. Ayşe and my cellmates on our last exhibition.



Zehra Doğan was sentenced to 33 months imprisonment for sharing a digital drawing on social media that was critical of the Turkish army's destructive military operations in Kurdish cities in Turkey in 2017. She served part of her sentence in Diyarbakır prison, notorious for torturing thousands of Kurds in the aftermath of the 1980 military coup. In her cartoon book, exhibited as 108 separate pages, Doğan provides a visual account of the persecution of the Kurdish people over several decades, as well as the emergence of armed conflict between Kurdish guerrillas and the Turkish army. She depicts tragic stories of elderly inmates, daily confrontations with merciless prison officers, and the solidarity of imprisoned women in their overcrowded dormitories.

Erden Kosova





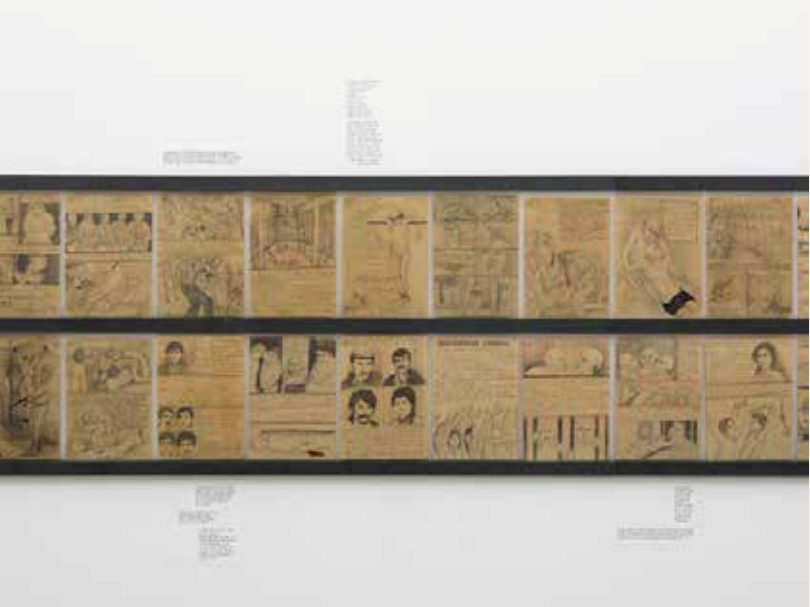
Four months before my release, they transferred me and 40 of my friends from Diyarbakır Prison to Tarsus T-Type Closed Prison. This place was even worse than the one in Diyarbakır. There were serious marks on my friends' backs. One month after my friends began a hunger strike in protest against these abuses, the prison administration stepped back, replaced the prison director, and partially restored some of the prisoners' rights. The new director was very interested in the fact that I was an artist. He kept saying he was a liberal man, not a repressive one. He would visit the cell, ask how I was doing, and ask me for a drawing every time. But I never felt like giving him a drawing.

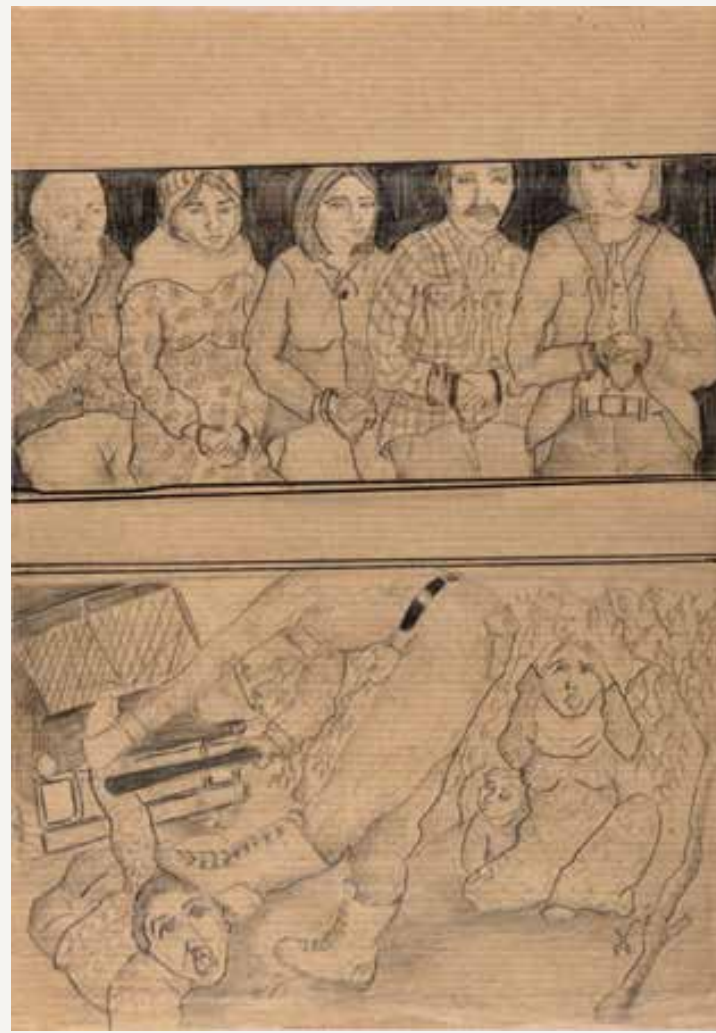
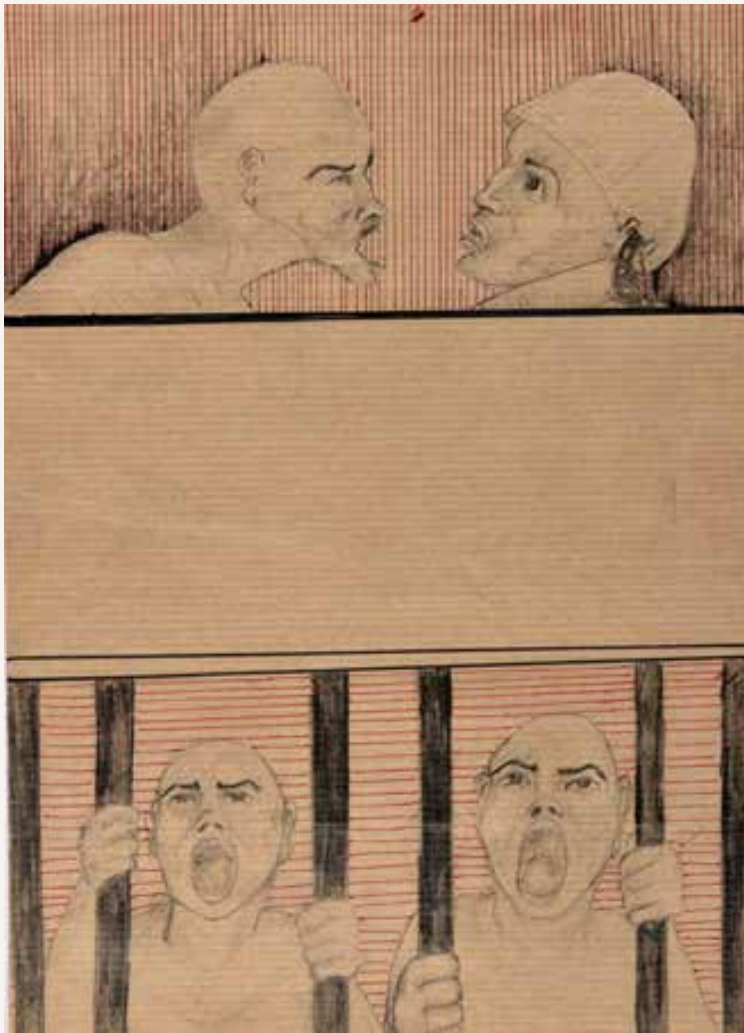
One day, the director said, 'Unfortunately, I have orders from above and can no longer provide you with painting materials, but I will allow you to exhibit the paintings you have already made under your own conditions—provided, of course, that they do not contain political content.' This meant I could take everything I had created outside, except for comic books. I had only one month left of my sentence, and I had planned to spend that final month drawing pictures as souvenirs for my friends. We decided to exhibit the paintings I had made for them.

“Hidden Drawings”, Frac Lorraine, Metz, 2023



“To
Tell
Your
Own
Story”





“Xêzên” Selected Pages
From The Graphic Book Prison N°5

The Hidden Drawings (in Kurdish: Xêzên Dizî), were created with charcoal pencils on 103 sheets of letter paper sent by a friend to Doğan during her jail term (2018–2020). Her works were smuggled out of the prison by an intermediary; they depict stories of other female political prisoners and the human rights abuses inflicted on them by Turkish prison officials.

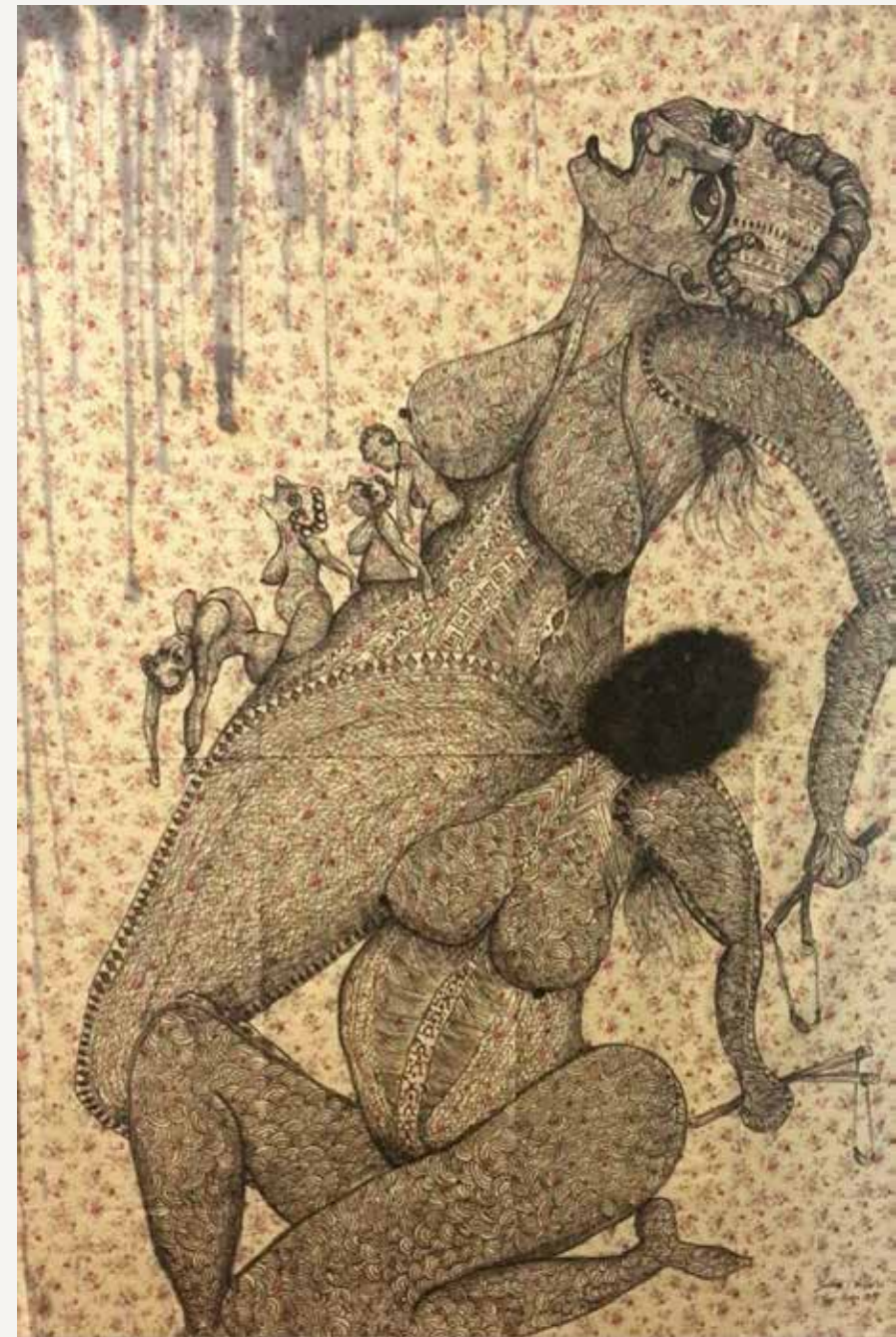
After the state of emergency was declared, they restricted everything even more. For example, there are no red or black pens, only blue ball-point pens. Yes, when you try to create art inside, you encounter many obstacles, but there is also a tradition there. Even though all books have been confiscated, people write on pieces of paper, copy book pages, and share them with each other to read. They write their own books again.

Untitled, Rollpoint pen on newspaper, Diyarbakir Prison 2017





Untitled, From Clandestine Days, 163 x 113 cm. Acrylic on newspaper, 2017.



"Terrorist"
Felt pen, hair on fabric.
Tarsus Prison. 2019



“Witnessing from a prisoner’s standpoint has helped preserve, sustain, and deepen my connection to reality”.

Newspapers served as both a surface and an archiving tool for me, during my time on the run and later in prison. I created an archive by selecting headlines and news stories that I couldn’t express, or that the state tried to erase by claiming ‘it did not exist in the first place’. I layered new images on top of them. During my time as a fugitive, I turned my friend’s living room into a workshop. Actually, it can’t really be called a workshop; I made a space for myself in their rooms. I spread newspapers on the floor and worked. I didn’t bother anyone, and no one bothered me. This was somewhat unauthorized but also developed with mutual consent. Yes, they were annoyed that I was making a mess, but on the other hand, they found this form of production compelling. When I didn’t have a surface to paint on in prison, the newspapers once again served as my surface.

“Untitled”, Casa Testori, Milan, 2022



Untitled, From Clandestine Days, Acrylic on newspaper, 2017.



Italy, 2019
Performance at Brescia Museum.



Untitled, "Clandestine Days" 2017, Italy



“Hewş” (Courtyard), 86X66 cm, 2018

Today is a “disgusting” day.

The calendar shows a disgusting day. A warm day, buried in the womb of history, suspended above, anaesthetising the brain at every turn with its constant mechanical sound... The guard half-opens the door and calls out, “Let Zehra Doğan come, the chief guard wants to speak to her.” Asking myself, “What crime have I committed this time? Which drawing did they find problematic again?” I walk out the door with Meral, the representative of our quarter. The chief guard was waiting in the hallway. He started speaking with a relatively polite attitude, saying, “I don’t know how to say this... don’t mind me, please excuse me, but apparently you are making drawings with blood, is this true?” he asked, with patriarchal embarrassment. On his own, he was censoring the word menstrual and settling for the word blood.

I answered him, showing that there was nothing to be excused or resented. “Just don’t do it,” he replied. “The prison staff is disgusted, and they are afraid of catching germs.” The guard who was with him confirmed, “Yes, it’s disgusting.” This unexpected obstacle caught me unprepared. As the owner of this “disgusting business,” with a sense of responsibility,

But I continued to make art with whatever materials I could find, which became essential in helping me confront the painful reality of my wrongful imprisonment.

"MY BLOOD IS A COLOR"

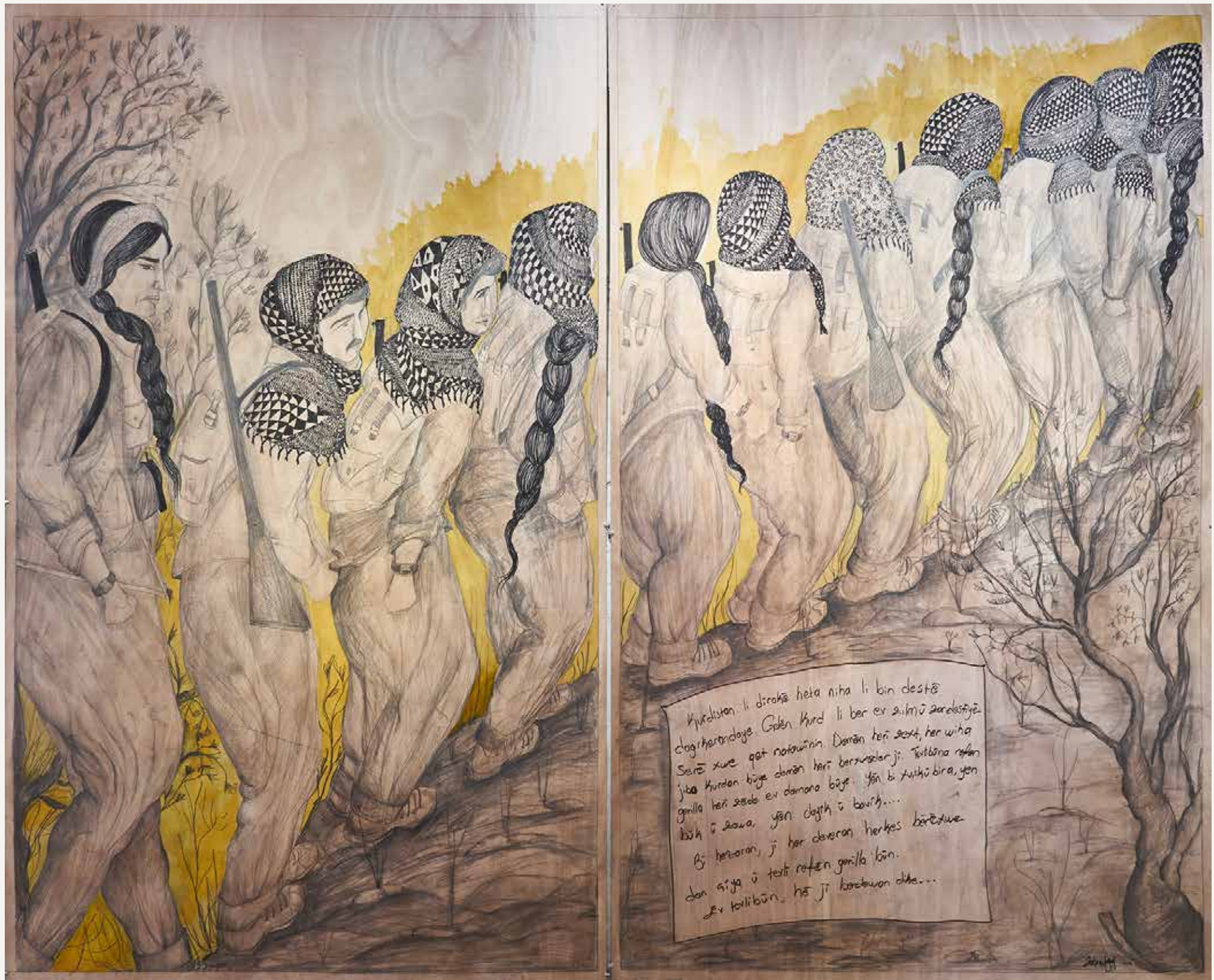
Dear JINHA,

I woke up far from all of you for another day in jail today, which is a place of great comradeship. This town where the wind carries the arid dust of Mardin, rich with its historical past, is a place favorable to dreaming. It is the birth town of Mani, who travelled across the land to teach the truth, and who spread his message through his canvasses.

It is also the city of Shahmeran. Being here, even as a prisoner, gives me strength. Yes, being held captive in my own land is hard for me, but as soon as I entered here, I found myself surrounded by 45 women filled with wisdom, women who have become goddesses. When I saw the spark in their eyes, I understood that the most important space for struggle is this one, pressed between four walls. Once I realized that each woman I spoke with held in her heart a formidable history of resistance, I was able to draw strength from them. During my first prison stay, I was crushed at being so far from my work and from JINHA, then I realized that this was the place where the most important news was happening. This is where a journalist must be, to inform the public of each injustice committed here. Who knows, maybe that is the reason why I'm here.

During the interrogation following my arrest, the interrogators kept asking me, with their masculine mentality: "Why do you do this work? Why do you cover the news? Why do you draw?" In fact, when we began our work at JINHA, the heiress of women's resistance, we took up our pens with this cry: "we will write without thinking about what men will say about it". And while we were writing, we learned that "when women begin to write, the image of the men in the mirror starts to fade". This is why I felt no need to answer them. Even behind iron bars, they could not take away my best weapon against the oppressors: my pen and my paintbrush.

I'm aware that I have this right thanks to the sacrifices of many wise people before me, and I know it cannot easily be taken away. I don't feel isolated from society, nor from JINHA. I see myself now as a prison reporter for JINHA, and this makes me feel proud. We constitute the media arm of the women's struggle for our freedom, and that is why prison is one of our main battle fields. "A free life must be an infinite reality." And I think that this is where I can best see this infinite reality. I see a jail holding so many wise people as a great school of thought. During my incarceration, in particular, I realized how important my profession is.



Kurdistan li dirêha hefa nîha li bin destê
dagherindage. Gêlên Kurd li ber ev zilmê serdestiyê
Serê xwe qat nakawînin. Daman her sext, her wîha
jiba Kurdan biçe daman herî berxusdar ji. Tebîna refên
ganîla her seke ev damana biçe. Yên bi xûşî bira, yê
bûh û lawa, yê dagh û bawîh...
Bi heroran, ji her devaran herkes berêxue
dan gîya û terti refên ganîla bin.
Ev tollibûn, he ji kerkûwan dîte...

“Prison N°5”, Graphic Book, Mixed media on marine plywood, 250h x 153w cm



“Dilan 2”, Interaction Napoli, Italy, 2024.

WOMEN SOLIDARITY

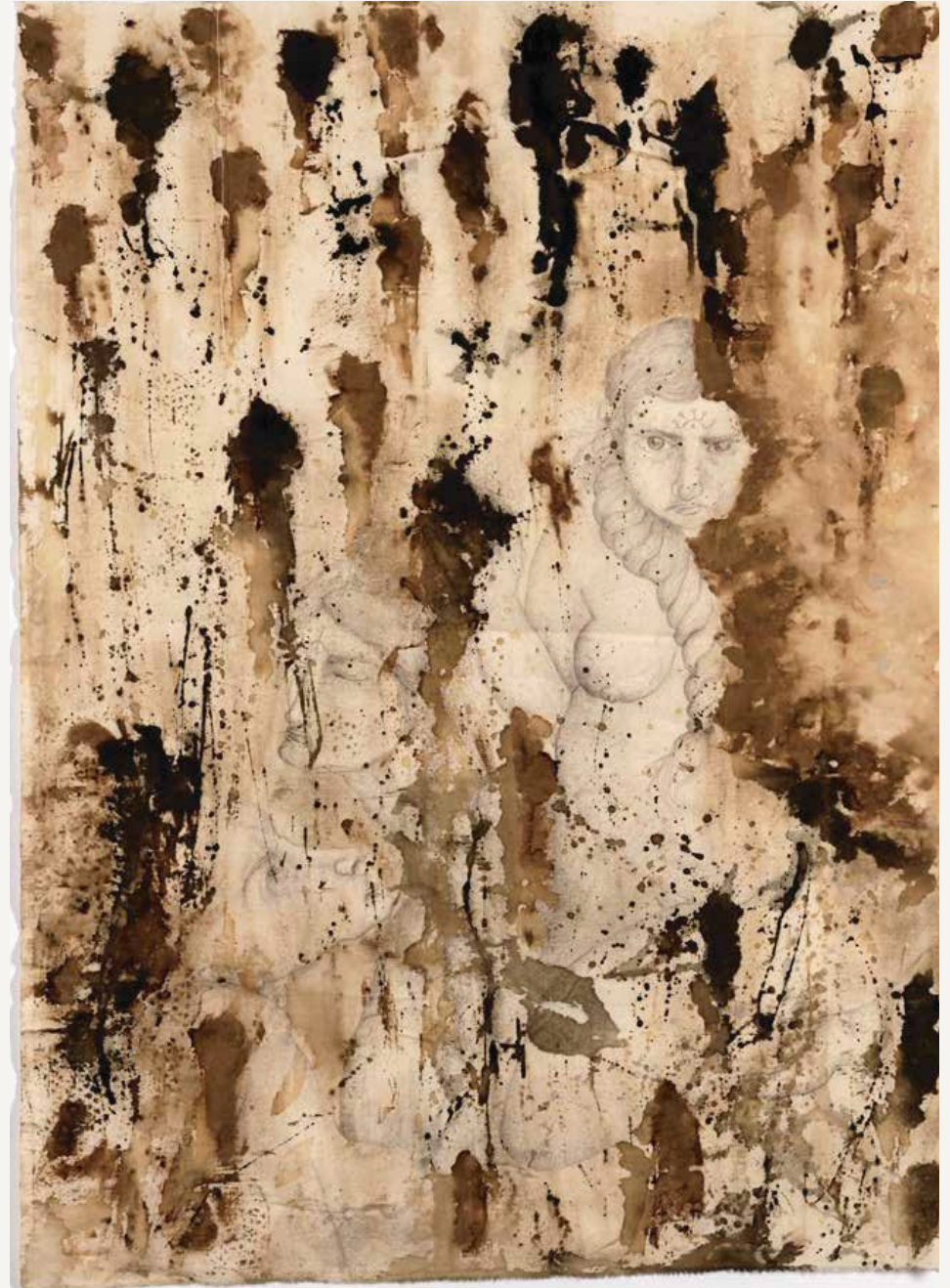
This is what it means, being a woman in the patriarchal system. For the past five thousand years, we have been cursed, considered as disgusting. This is an imperative of monotheistic religions, this cursing of the seed from which it comes, the ovaries...In Judaism, among others, when a woman has her period, she must not touch anything, eat in a different plate, sleep in another bed, and even to avoid the loss of abundance to the household, she is put outside the house. Someone who touches her is considered soiled. At the end of her period, she washes, washes her clothes, breaks the plate and after making offerings, returns to the house. In Islam, things are no different. The woman who has her period cannot pray, bow down, fast. She cannot enter the mosque. The foods she cooks cannot be eaten, the ones she touches are spoiled. Judaism, Christianity, Islam, such is the hostility of patriarchal religion toward women. It's about locking up, cursing.



“Beyonde”, Prometeo Gallery, Milan, 2021



"Kriminal"
61x50 cm. On skirt lining, ballpoint pen. Diyarbakır Prison, 2018.



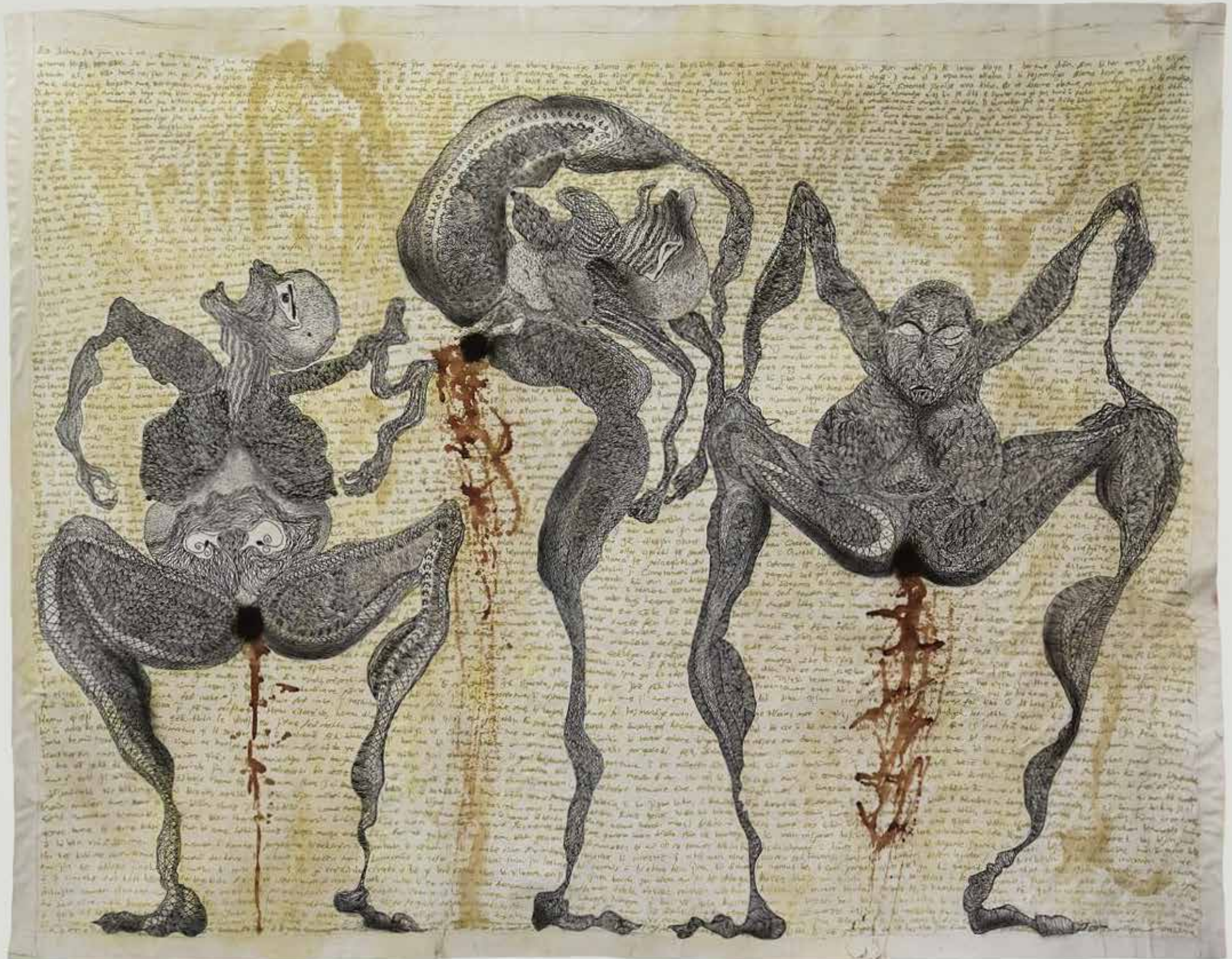
"Henna Woman" Skirt, henna, coffee, cumin, tea, cigarette ash, black cabbage, Tarsus Prison, 2019.



"Kanlı Bir Gün", 21 x 30 cm. On letter paper, turmeric, pencil, Diyarbakır Prison, 2018



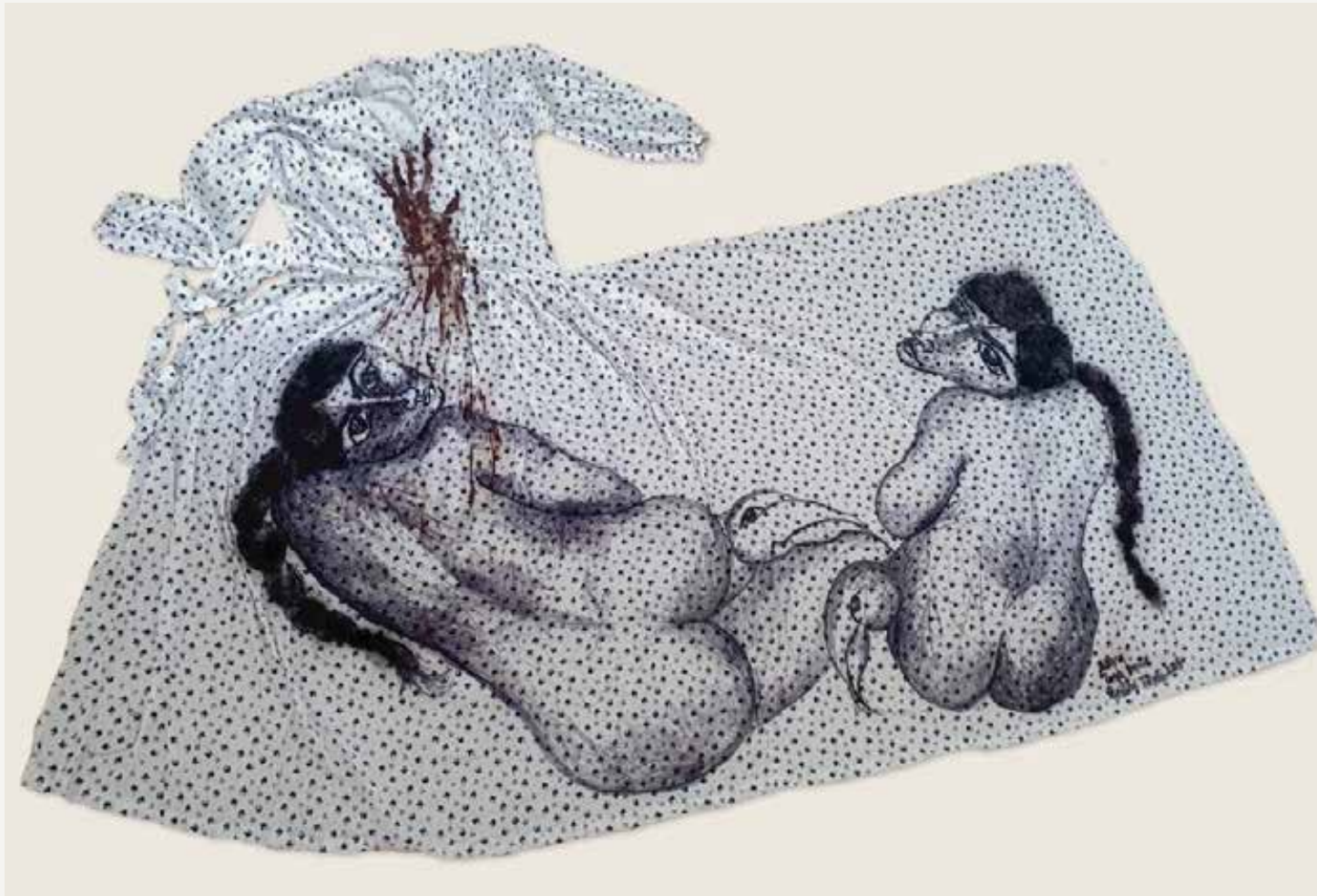
"It's Not Where I Am, But How I Feel", On letter paper. turmeric, pencil, Diyarbakır Prison, 2018



"The Red Army In My Pants 2"
164 x 205 cm. July 2020 Angers.



“Untitled” 45h x 255 cm. Felt pen, coffee on clothes.



Toqa Lanetê (Overflowing of the malediction)
230 x 135 cm. Tarsus prison 2018.

“My mom and sister would always come up with new ways for me to do art in prison. I think it was one of the most effective methods. My mother would bring her own dresses for closed visits, saying they were clean clothes. I would paint on them, sew them one by one, and then hand them over to the guard to be returned to my mother with the dirty laundry at the next closed visit. That week, my mother would bring another dress, saying it was clean. The following week, I would paint on it again and hand it over to the guard, saying it was ‘dirty.’”



"Tutsaklığın Sarmaşıkları" (Ivies of Captivity)
On towel, ballpoint pen, tea. 148 x 117 cm. Diyarbakır, 2018,



"Bird Women"
On sheet, ballpoint pen, 150x142 cm. Tarsus Prison, 2019.

EZ ZEIRA
NE POSMIVIM





For Ayşe, 3 years old, imprisoned with her mother, in Tarsus prison. Ayşe was constantly asking us for a pretty dress. I thought of using bedsheets to make her one... We dipped the sheet in javel water to lighten the color. We measured the little one, cut the fabric and sewed a custom-made dress. A friend's pullover provided the thread to stitch the embroidery. After which, I did drawings of the child prisoners...

“Ayşe'nin Elbisesi” (Ayşe's Dress)

Dress sewn with prison sheets, Tarsus prison, 2019.



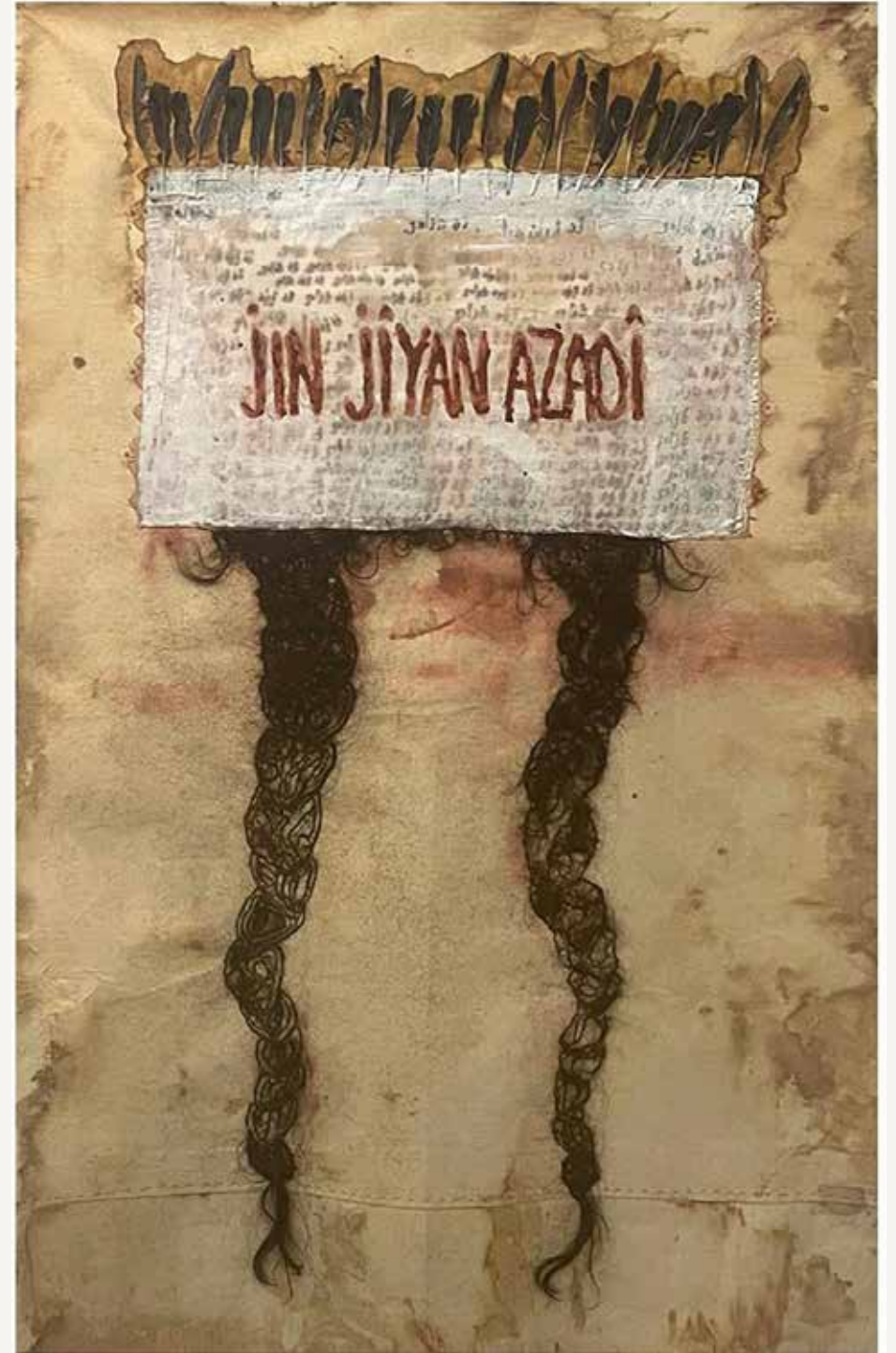
"Gözlerimin Sarmaşıkları", Diyarbakır Prison, 2018.



"An Angel Descends On Babel", 153X148 cm. 2021



“Caught Between Borders”, 148 x 106 cm. Berlin, 2022



“Jin Jiyān Azādī”, Berlin, 2023.



This lament (Xeribi) is a song sung to a woman named Sorgul. It describes one of the massacres of the Yazidis by radical Muslims. Like Kurdish Dengbeji, klam, payizok, şin, qawal, loti and many other musical modes, Xeribi is the oldest Kurdish singing style. This song, sung by women, can only be sung in the cemetery. It is forbidden to sing it at home or anywhere else. This is because cemeteries are considered to be the last home in the body of the soul, which will come back again through reincarnation. In the last farewell here, the hair, which is consecrated as a memory, is cut and tied to the gravestone, and their forbidden history is told for the last time with Xeribi. Xeribi is not an expression of grief after a death, but the unwritten truth and forbidden history that women have recorded in their memories, spoken again through the body. That is why the meaning of Xeribi is homelessness.



"Untitled", 2018



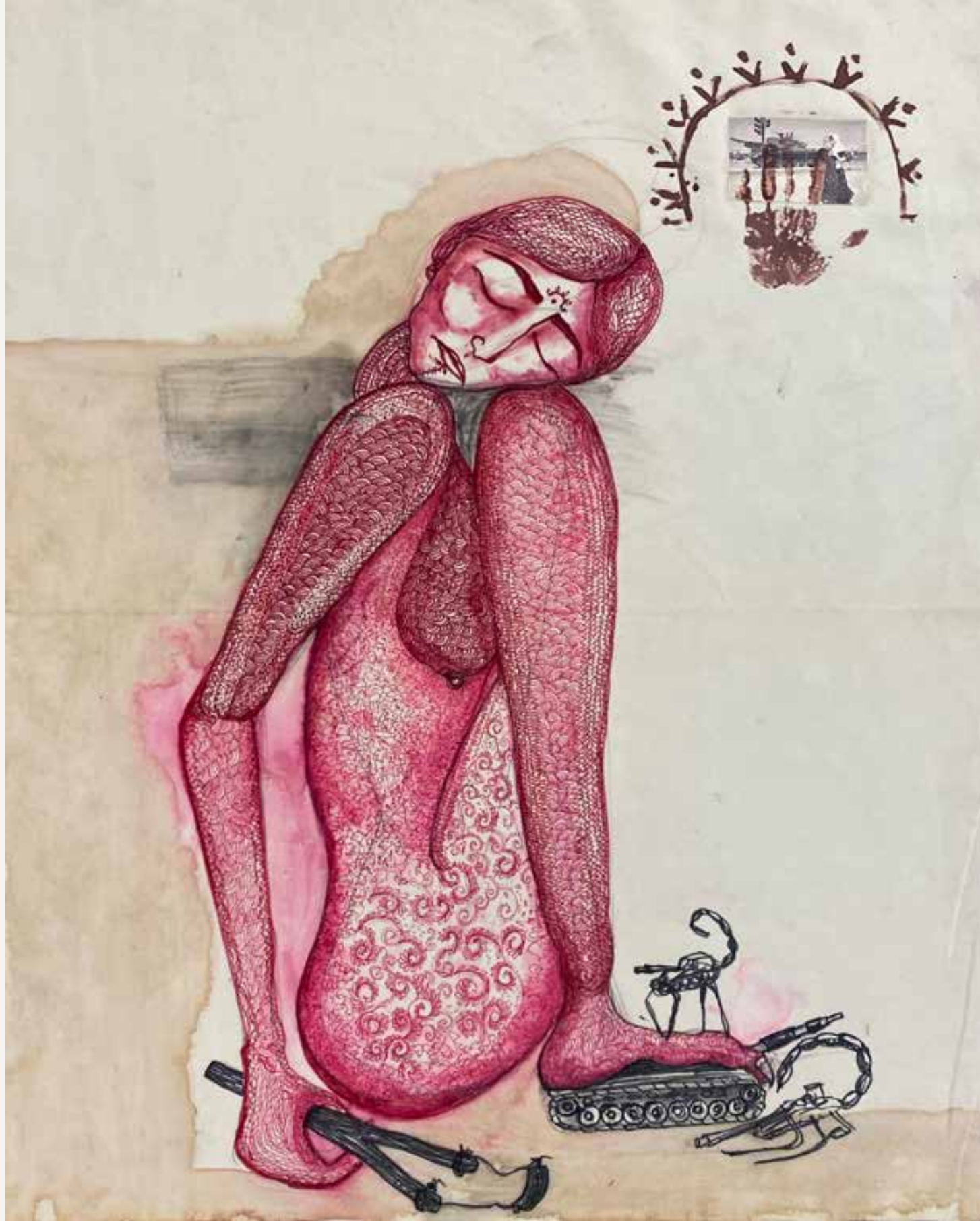
Untitled,
150h x 108w cm. 2022.

R e s i s t a n c e



Zehra's Brushes

The administrations of Diyarbakir and Mardin Prison prohibited all artistic material. These brushes were made with the hair of my imprisoned friends and the feathers of the birds nesting in the barbed wire of the airing court.

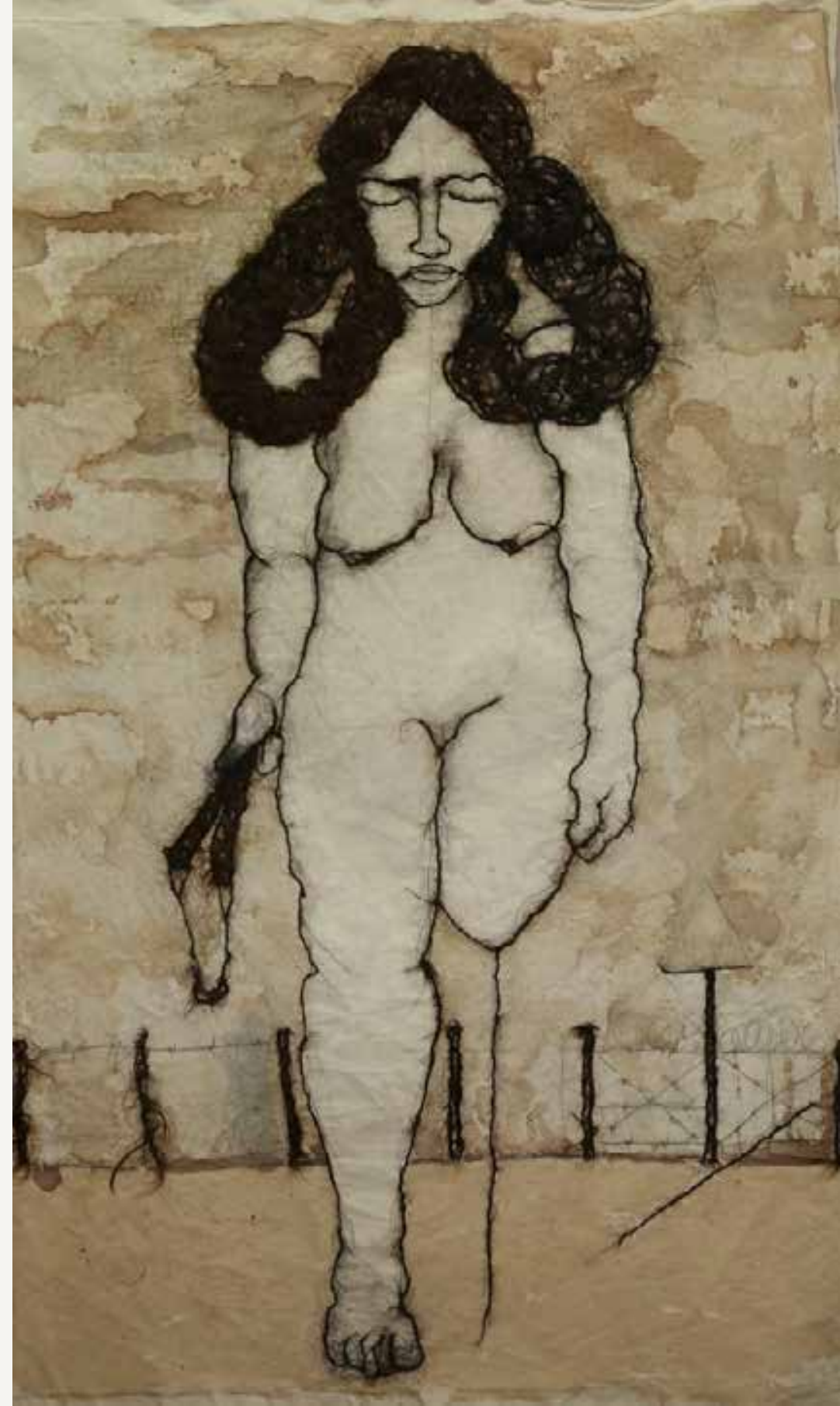


Untitled, Mixed media on fabric, 139hx107w cm. 2022

Caught Between Borders

“...Today I am back in Europe. I can no longer even go to this country, which has become just as dangerous for me and in which I still feel a sense of familiarity. The Turkish state has now cancelled my passport and I am officially a refugee in Europe. But I still do not have the right to travel. I have been stuck in Berlin for a year now. Like a border violator, each of my steps is caught in the tangled barbed wire of this fragmented planet. In spite of everything, I have to be strong, I cannot reveal my weaknesses, even to myself, otherwise I would collapse. Wherever I go, I cannot get rid of the feeling that I come from another planet, as if I have been teleported. But it is as if my roots, the traces and imprints left in the country where I was born, are constantly calling to my nerve endings and pulling me toward them...”

Untitled, 149 x 93 cm.
Prometeo Gallery, Milano.





Untitled, 147 x 155 cm. 2023

Untitled, 103 x 75 cm,
2023.

Untitled Works
Water paint on paper, Mardin Prison, 2016





"DORŞİN"
120x120 cm. Acrylic on canvas. 2016,
Mardin.



"Ruhumun Sarmaşıkları" (Ivies Of My Soul) 62 x 45 cm. On kraft paper, water paint, Mardin, 2016



Barricade

Barricades are fortresses erected to survive and defend one's spaces. A central form in the history of revolutions, they are a powerful symbol of major uprisings, not only on a physical level but also on a metaphorical one. The barricade is a defensive architecture born from the simple repurposing of available objects – chairs, armchairs, bags, stones, trees, wheels, doors – which were not created for that purpose. Taken separately, each of these objects carries a different meaning; but once assembled, they become a unified form of resistance and one of the most striking images of social struggles.





"Barricade"
Bienal de Pontevedra, 2025



"Din Hapishanesi" (The Prison of Religion) 69 x118 cm.
Prayer rugs, prison sheets, ballpoint pen, Diyarbakir Prison, 2018

While in prison, I told myself "yes, truthfully, outside also I was sentenced to this bed. If I don't rid myself of this perception, once liberated, this bed will pursue me. I will be a prisoner of this bed, like one who is bedridden for life." When I was incarcerated, I saw myself and my friends as witches blowing on knots. As if we were cursed and thrown there.. Accursed women objecting and struggling for women, being forced to regret their actions. I remove myself from this bed by refusing to be their incubator. I stand letting my blood drip down and saying "I am Zehra, I get up from this bed without any regret.



"Xwebun", Souleymaniyeh Iraq, December 2021, .



Video 12:09 mn
Venue: Amna Suraka Museum, Sulaymaniyah
2021

**Unbreakable,
I will break
you anyway**

Every representation of reality runs the risk of a deformed reflection. When described in words or stylized by the artist, violence and war become reflected shadows the cavern's inhabitants must decipher. Spectators know nothing other than the shadows from the fire lit by the artist against the walls of their protecting cavern. Reality made up of reflections and mechanical sounds reaches them only through representations, even if these throw light on it. Death brought on by an armored car, violence through oppression are nothing but images for them. As a teenager, the artist threw stones at them. "You resist me, but I will break you anyway, my resistance will be stronger than you are."

“Hey soldier; you can’t make strip search. I’m already naked”



“Other Voices, Other Rooms”, Installation, Feminine underwear, ballpoint pen, hair. Zurich, 2020



"Sînor (Border)", 2020



"Kalashnikov", 2020



“Shahmaran2”, On carpet, acrylic, felt-tip pencil. 2021 Lucca, Italy.

“This is the story of Shahmeran, half human, half snake”

Her story is that of a love for a man, the historical symbol of the dominant civilisation, by Shahmeran, shah of the snake clans, who lives seven floors below ground, guardian of the wisdom of natural life, for thousands of years, refusing to submit to the world of men. In those months of the hot Mesopotamian summer, the story of Shahmeran was one of the most special ones that my mother also told us every night on the roof of our little house, whose door was adorned with a painting of the creature.





"Neynik (Mirror)", On carpet, acrylic, felt-tip pencil. 2020 Lugano, Italy. Prometeo Gallery. Private Collection.




Shahmeran is the story of non-gendered and matriarchal women. The snake clans described in the story are the "Siti," the goddesses of the inhabitants of "Paradize," which monotheistic religions later called paradise. They are those who, on the Zagros Mountains, try to protect themselves from the macho filth of civilisation. Shahmeran is the healer of a mountain tribe called "snake's zeal, viper's face," a group cursed as Nephilim (fallen angels) and considered corrupters of the souls of men.

Shahmeran is the story of women's self-defence against the violence of the patriarchy that targets them. It is a call for a life of peace, freedom, and gender equality, a call that flows from the roots of the tree of life.



"Şahmeran Zelal"
On fabric, mixed media,
Diyarbakir prison, 2018.

"Şahmeran 5"
Mixed media on carpet, 2022.



I realized that the paradise described by the hodjas as ‘a place of beauty, peace, and amusement’ was a place I did not want to be. The paradise they described frightened me even more than hell. It was a garden filled with men reclining in leisure on the banks of rivers flowing with wine, with thousands of houris at their service. According to the hodjas, if we managed not to fail in serving our husbands and kept them satisfied, we would be granted entry to paradise and remain with them. As ‘good men,’ they would be entitled to 70 houris each, and we would be allowed to be the chief houri. Thus, even in paradise, I would not be freed from my obligation to serve a man, and I would be in competition with 70 houris, each awakening his desires in the usual fantasy of being the first to explore new pleasures. This was the only reward for the long list of duties I was expected to perform on earth.

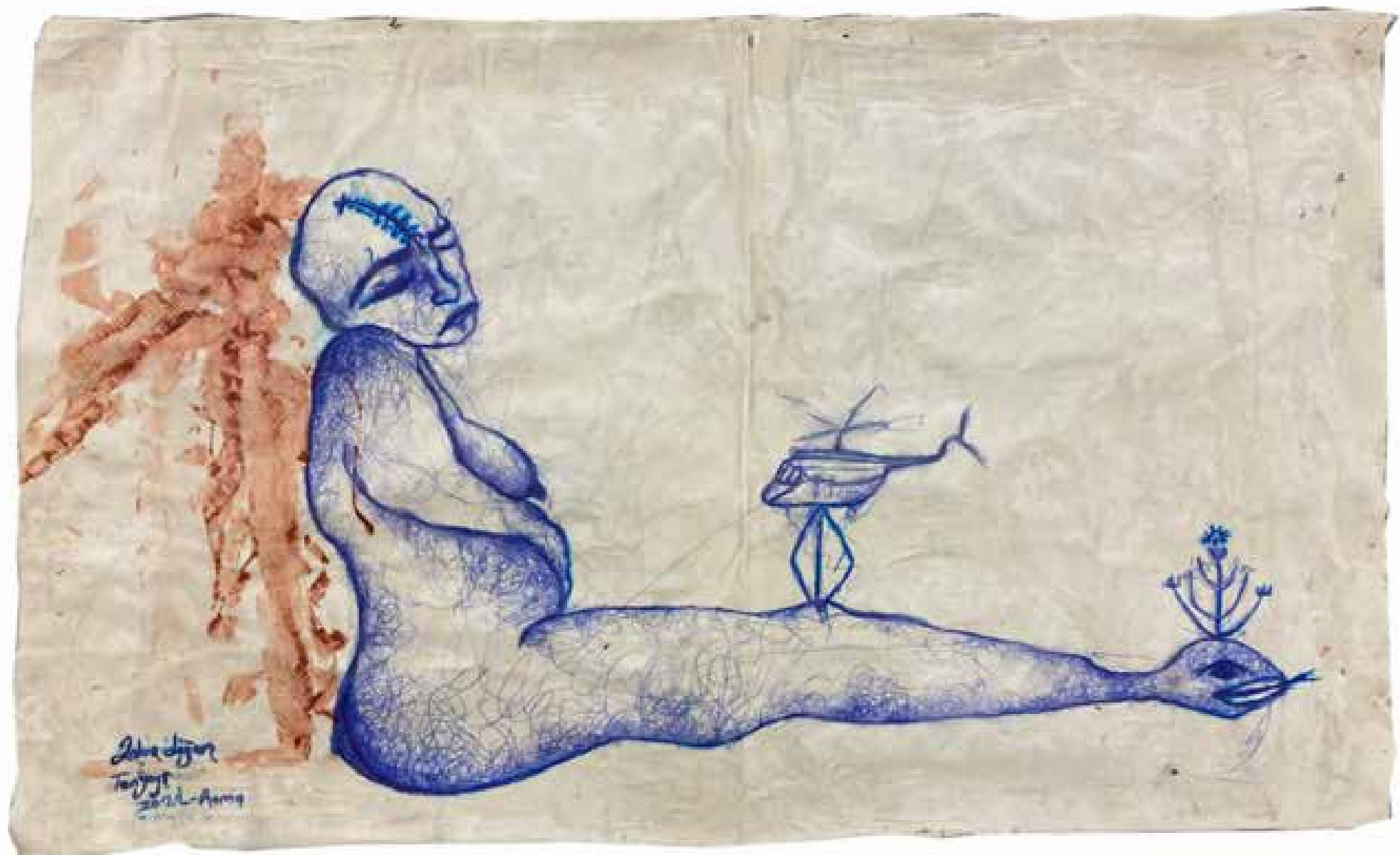


"Untitled", Pencil, turmeric, cigarette ash, and coffee on shirt fabric, Diyarbakır, 2018.

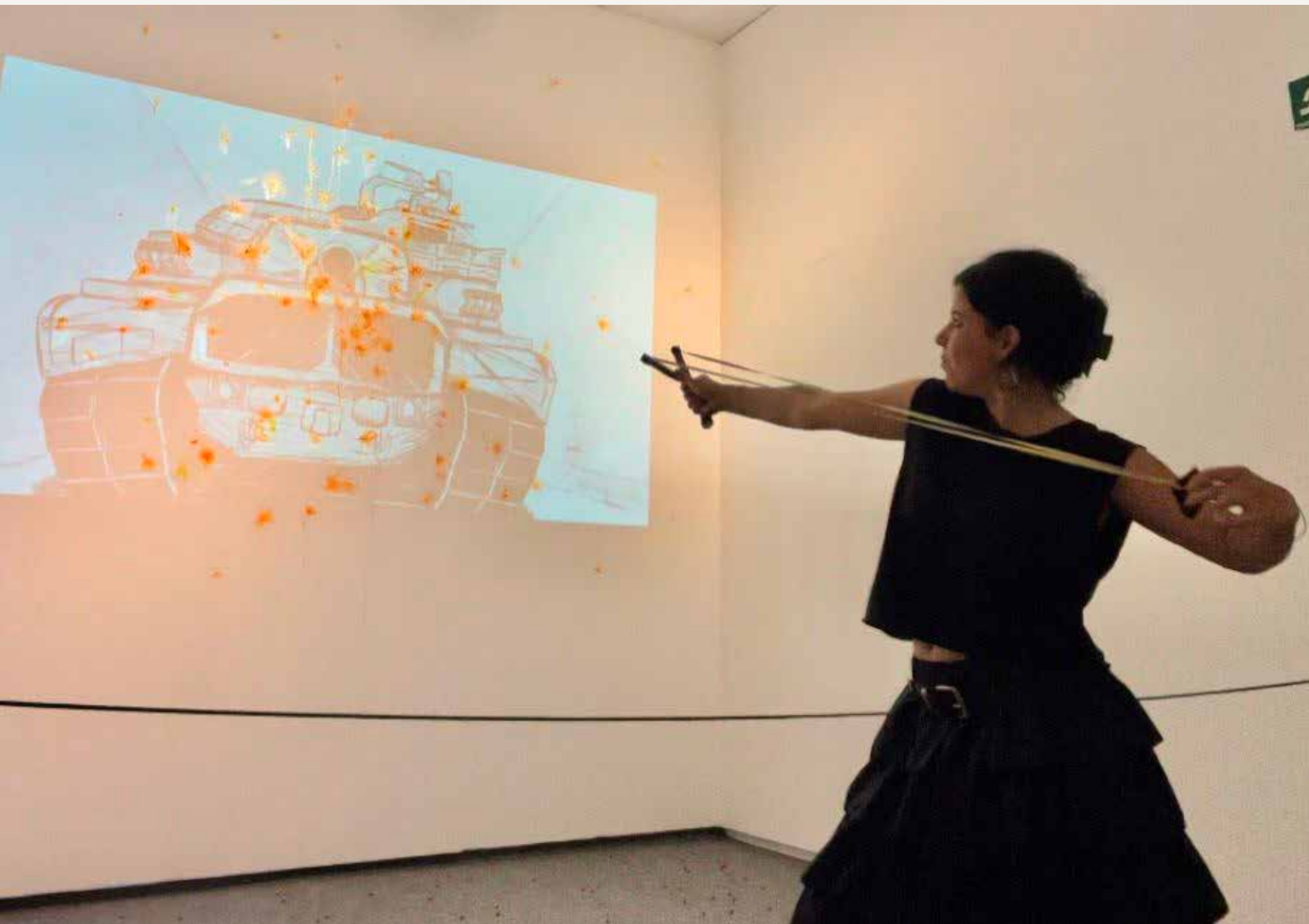
"Efrin" (Afrin), On skirt fabric, dog rose, coffee, bleach water, ballpoint pen, Diyarbakır, 2018.



“Light And Fight”,
Fondazione MACC, 2025



“Tenyayî”, Mixed media on fabric, 81h x 133w cm. 2022



Çetelastik:
“Çete”: gang;
“lastik”: elastic.
“The elastic gang”...

“Çetelastik”, Installation, Pontevedra Biennial 2025



"Biz" (Us)
77 x 102 cm. On the mattress lining, coffee, cigarette ash,



Back side of "Biz" (Us)





"The Pencil is a Key", Group exhibition
Drawing Center, NY 2019-2020.



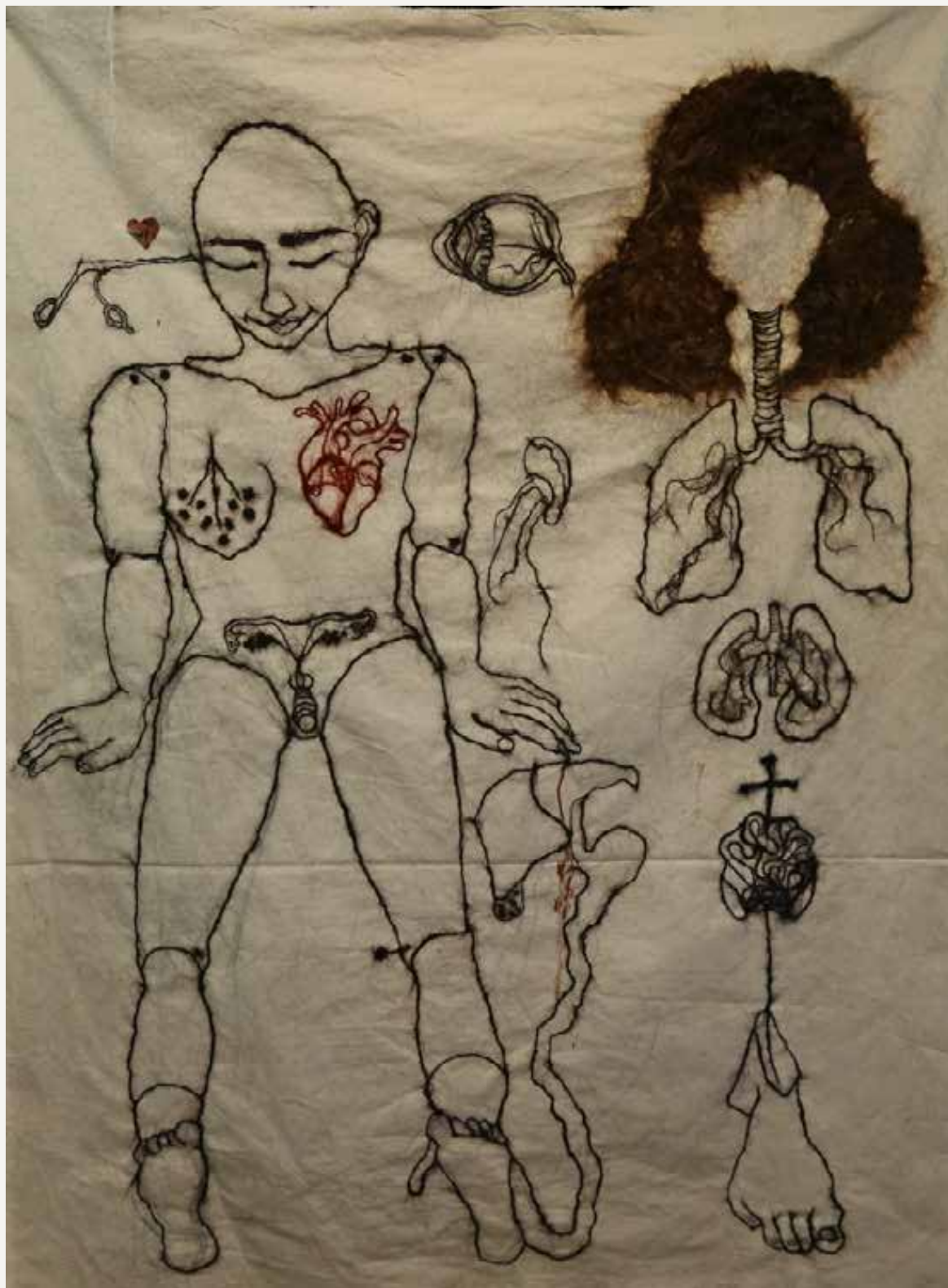
"Found Items", Tate Modern, 2019



"Sarmaşıklar 1" (Ivies 1)
Tea, ballpoint pen on sheet, 109 x 105 cm. Diyarbakir
2018.



Untitled, 80 x 117 cm.
2024



Untitled, 15 x 82 cm.
2024

“As I greeted my family members for the last time and said goodbye, this was about the last piece of advice my parents gave me face to face: “Who knows when we’ll see each other again? You’ll be alone now. You’ve always been alone, but this time you’re really alone. You’re leaving for a continent you’ve never seen, for a life you’ve never known. And maybe you’ll never come back to your country, or find us when you do. Life goes on. A new battle, a new war begins for you, and this continent will be your biggest prison. Since you can’t go back to your house, it will be an open-air prison where you will be locked between borders...”



These blue tarps stretched out and taking the wind served to protect the people from the snipers. Their life and their freedom depended on them.

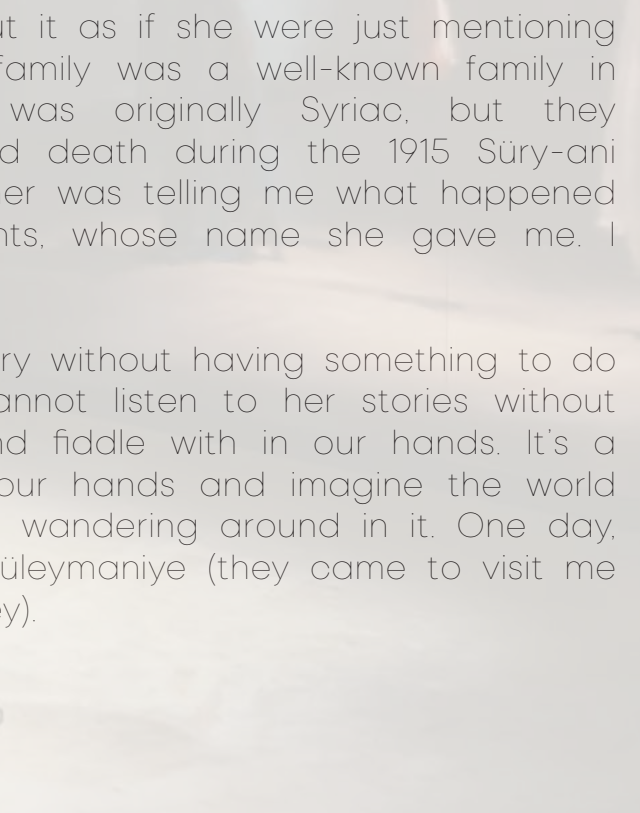
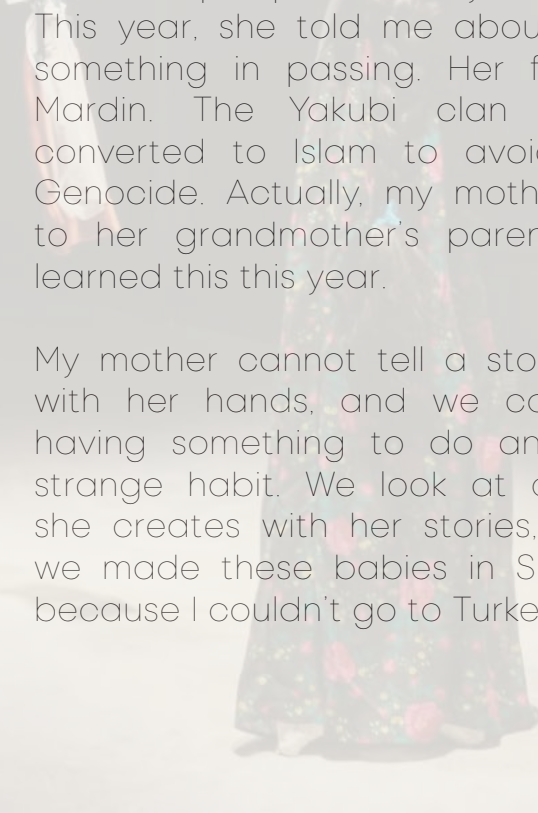
“Henasedayîn” (Exhale), Nusaybin, 2016
Video, 7:00 mn

Collaborations

While I was in prison, my mother made two dolls from two old branches she had collected in the garden. She cut pieces from her own dresses and dressed the dolls in them. One was me, one was her. For the doll that wasn't me, she sewed it using my hair that I had saved and that she had kept at home. My little niece Havin also made a similar doll, sewing my hair onto her doll. They made themselves a toy Zehra. They freed Zehra, who was imprisoned in their own minds. They didn't accept that I was inside; they always put me in the corner of a room as if I were always at home. As if none of this had ever happened, as if I were always free and by their side...

The reason she made these dolls was actually because telling the story was difficult for her in a way. She only tells stories while doing some-thing. She focuses on her hands and tells the story that way. She would tell stories about Armenian women who were forcibly converted to Islam in our village, saying she learned this from her grandmother. How did Nensi know all this, and how come this story was told from the women's perspective? My mother is a devout Muslim woman... This year, she told me about it as if she were just mentioning something in passing. Her family was a well-known family in Mardin. The Yakubi clan was originally Syriac, but they converted to Islam to avoid death during the 1915 Süry-ani Genocide. Actually, my mother was telling me what happened to her grandmother's parents, whose name she gave me. I learned this this year.

My mother cannot tell a story without having something to do with her hands, and we cannot listen to her stories without having something to do and fiddle with in our hands. It's a strange habit. We look at our hands and imagine the world she creates with her stories, wandering around in it. One day, we made these babies in Süleymaniye (they came to visit me because I couldn't go to Turkey).





My mother's dolls

Solo exhibition, Prometeo Galery,
Milano, 2021.



Mehdi Rajabian Project

The following images were made for a joint peace project with Iranian artist Mehdi Rajabian in 2019..





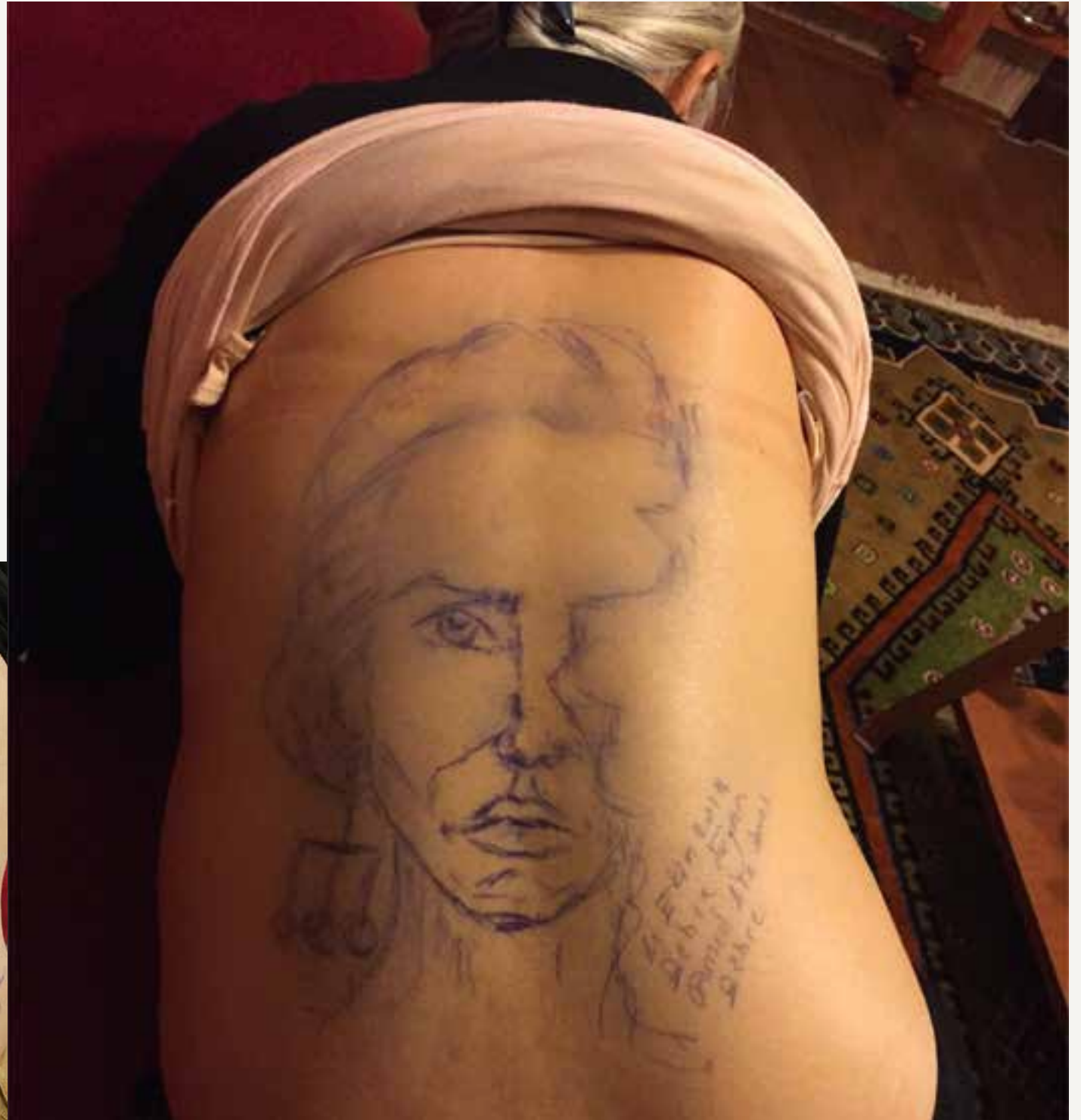
“Newroz”, Video.
Mountains of Qandil, 2023

When Zehra began this graphic account in 2017, she was in prison, deprived of all art supplies, of all paper products allowing her to envisage realizing such a book project. As with all the other creations he undertook in a clandestine manner in a gaol environment, she took advantage of everything she could get hold of in Diyarbakir's prison N° 5 and, in this case, of the opportunities offered by the partial freedom consisting of correspondence with the outside world. With complicit assistance from her friend Naz Oke, she used the reverse side of letters written on large sheets of one of her favorite supplies, a wrapping paper sent to her on an almost daily basis.

“Naz’s support was crucial in choosing materials that took on a different form due to the ban on art supplies in prison. In particular, Prison Diary - comic book (I couldn’t decide on a name) came out thanks to Naz, and she sent me enough paper not only for the comic book but also for other projects. Naz and I had never met face to face before coming to Europe. We met because she interviewed me about what was happening in Nusaybin for Kedistan. And then I was arrested. When I was arrested, she started sending me letters. Naz is also an artist and was thinking about how the prison could be transformed in a different way, trying to create breathing spaces for us, and succeeding in doing so. When I was released from prison and held my first exhibition, a new arrest warrant was issued.”



“When I was in prison, this was one of the first methods I thought of when they first banned my materials. I would quickly draw a picture with a ballpoint pen on the bodies of my released friends. When they went home, they would photograph the pictures I had drawn on their bodies for me.”



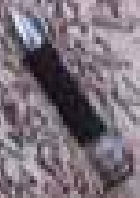


Özgür Gündem shuts down on August 16 2016, following a tough police raid, journalists and editorial staff are placed in detention. An act of solidarity and active resistance occurs at the Mardin women's prison and the detainees, Zehra Dogan among them, decide on September 12 2016 to publish '1 of Özgür Gündem, illustrated and entirely drawn by hand. The news and feature stories drawn from the prison news (the only news to which they have access) include several articles on the women prisoners, the pressures and violations of rights to which they are subjected in jail. Among them, Nûdem Durak, Roj Çem Partizan, Merge Polat, Öznur Değer, Diljîn Dînç.

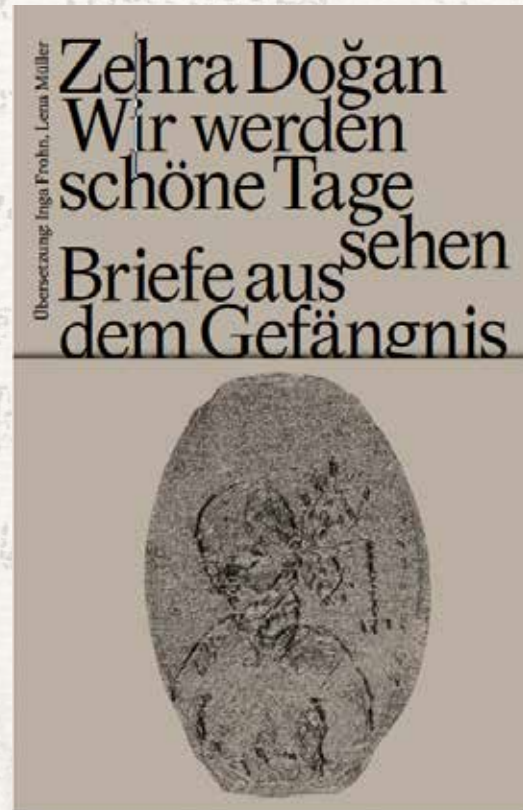
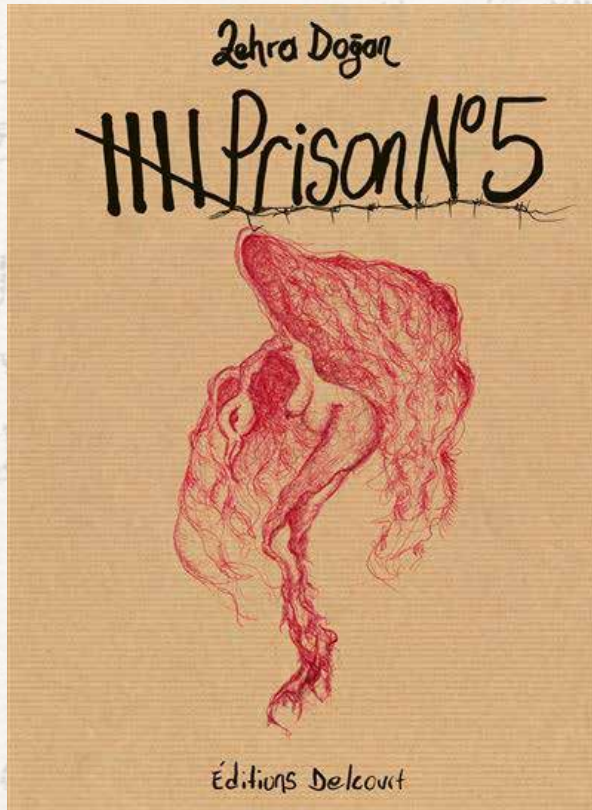




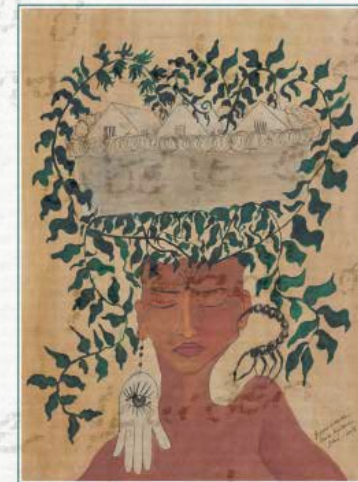
PROVINCES ASIA TIQUER
SANDUNYI SWINDE



Publications by Zehra Doğan



ZEHRA DOĞAN



AWARDS AND RECOGNITION

2024, ColophonArte Prize was awarded to the artist represented by Prometeo Gallery, Bologna, Italy.

2021, Prison n°5, selected in list of best graphic books 10 of the year 2021 by Il Manifesto.

2021, Prison n°5, selected top list of 15 best comics of 2021 by Wired Italy.

2021, Power 100 – Most influential people in 2021 in the contemporary artworld.

2021, Atomium Awards : “Le Soir Prize” of the comic strip of reportage 2021, for her graphic. novel Prison n°5, published in 2021 by Editions Delcourt.

2020, Power 100 – Most influential people in 2020 in the contemporary artworld.

2020, Carol Rama Award, by Artissima 2020.

2020, 14th Edition of the Festival of Feminine Excellence in Genoa, Italy, she receives the Hypatia Award for International Feminine Excellence.

2019 Exceptional Courage in Journalism Award of the May Chidiac Foundation, Lebanon.

2018, honorary member of PEN International

2018, International Women’s Media Foundation’s Courage in Journalism Award

2018 May, Spring of Press Freedom Prize by Deutscher Journalisten Verband (The German Journalists Association)

2017, Rebellion’s Artist in the World 2017 award bestowed by the Global Investigative Journalism Network (GIJN).

2017, Freethinker Prize, along with Masih Alinejad, an Iranian journalist.

2015 Metin Göktepe Journalism Award for her work about Êzidî women escaping from ISIS captivity.

2012 Hazal Peker, the Special Jury Prize, in Kurdish journalism, Musa Anter Kürtçe for her work entitled “Li Rojava welat emanetê jinên kurd in” (In Western Kurdistan, the country is entrusted to Kurdish women). Lorem ipsum

EXHIBITIONS & PERFORMANCES

2025, Light and fight – Luce e lotta nelle opere di Zehra Doğan“, Museo d’Arte Contemporanea di Calasetta, Fondazione MACC, Sardegna.

2025 Pontevedra Art Biennial, Pontevedra, Italy.

2025 Fragments of Reality. Berlin – Tricity, group exhibition, State Art Gallery, Sopot, Poland.

2025 Miart, Milano, Italy.

2024 2025 January, “Closed Eyes Can See.”, with Zehra Doğan and Matteo Mauro, Prometeo Gallery, Milano, Italy.

2024 2025, “Figures”, a group exhibition featuring works from the Laura and Luigi Giordano collection, SPA, Spazio Per Arte, Ollegio, Italy.

2024 Art Verona 19th edition, prison works, group show, Verona, Italy.

2024 Art Genève, Switzerland.

2024 Miart, Milano, Italy.

2024 Biennale Interaction Napoli, “l’Altro e l’Alterità” (“the Other and Otherness.”) Chiostro di S. Caterina, Napoli, Italia.

2024 Malta Biennale.

2024 ARCOMadrid, Madrid, Spain.

2024, Arte Fiera, Bologna, Italy.

2024 Meno Parkas, 10 Kurdish artists. Kaunas Pilnas Kultūros, Lithuania.

2023 49 Nord 6 Est Frac Lorraine, group exhibition “Comment se raconter” (To tell your own story), “Prison n°5”, Metz, France.

2023, ArtVerona, Verona, Italy.

2023 MUCEM group exhibition “Les Maternités de A à Z” (Maternities from A to Z), Marseille, France.

2023 Miart, Italy.

2023, “Observatory on Deculturalization”, organized by the Zaira Oram collective, OXYD Kunsträume, Winterthur, Switzerland.

2023, “Progetto Genesi” (Genesis Project) Itinerant group exhibition. Curator Ilaria Bernardi. Italy.

2023, Investec Cape Town Art Fair, Cape Town, South Africa.

2023, Arte Fiera, Bologna.

2023, Art Genève, Switzerland.

2022 – March 2023, “Kurdystan – Oblicza trwania”, Leon Wyczółkowski District Museum in Bydgoszcz, Poland.

2022, “Paroles, corps et graphies”, performance for the opening of the Human Rights Week of the University of Geneva, as part of the festival les Créatives. Geneva, Switzerland.

2022, Artissima Fair, Torino, Italy.

2022, ArtVerona, Verona, Italy.

2022, the group exhibition “Rojava – Binxet”. Curator Barış Seyitvan, as part of the Kurdish Film Festival, Babylon, Berlin, Germany.

2022, “Intemporale”, Prometeo Gallery, Milano, Italy.

2022, the Museum of Contemporary Art of Calasetta, group exhibition, “War is sweet to those who have never experienced it”. Fondazione MACC in collaboration with Prometeo Gallery, curated by Efsio Carbone.

2022, “Prison n°5”, collective exhibition “Splendid Isolation”. SMAK, City Museum for Contemporary Art, Ghent, Belgium.

2022, “Prison n°5” for the exhibition “En la selva eau mucho por hacer”. Curated by Maria Barrios. Museo de la Solidaridad Salvador Allende, Santiago, Chili.

2022, “Established” Fiera Internazionale d’Arte Moderna e Contemporanea, Miart 2022, Milano, Italy.

2022, “Segni di me. Il corpo, un palcoscenico”, six artists relate to Carol Rama. Casa Testori, Novate Milanese, Italy. A cura di Rischa Paterlini con Giuseppe Frangi.

2022, Art Basel OVR, Zehra Doğan, “Prison n°5”.

2021, Collective exhibition of “Xwebûn”, women artists collective founded by the Academy of Jineology. Kareem Chawshin gallery, Sulaymaniyah, Iraq.

2021, “Other rooms, other voices”, collective exhibition, Criminal Police Department Mühleweg, curated by Adam Szymczyk Zurich, Suisse.

2021, Individual exhibition, “Zehra Doğan: Prigione N°5”, Prometeo Gallery, Milano, Italy.

2021, Collective exhibition, “Fractured Spine”. Curated by Nistiman Erdede. Photobastei, Zurich, Switzerland.

2021, Collective exhibition, Miart, International Fair of Modern and Contemporary Art, Milano, Italy.

2021, Collective exhibition “El grito de la verdad” (The Cry of Truth), Cruce, Madrid.

2021, Individual exhibition “Prison n°5”, 5. Berliner Herbstsalon 2021

2022, “Stronger Still”, Kiosk, Maxim Gorki Theatre, Berlin.

2021, Collective exhibition “Danae revisited”, Villa Brandolini, Pieve di Soligo, Italy.

2021, Individual exhibition “Il tempo delle farfalle” (Time of the Butterflies), dedicated to Patria, Minerva, Teresa Mirabal, curated by Elettra Stamboulis, PAC Pavilion of Contemporary Art, Milano, Italy.

2021, Investec Cape Town Art Fair, Cape Town, South Africa.

2021 “Fashion is a verb: Art Performance and Identity“, Willam Peterson University Galleries, New Jersey, USA.

2020, “Hassas Müdahale”, collective exhibition, Kiraathane İstanbul Edebiyat Evi, Istanbul, Turkey.

2020, Art Basel, collective exhibition “OVR: Miami Beach”.

2020, Individual exhibition “Nehatiye Dîtin / Görülmemiştir”, curated by M. Wenda Koyuncu and Seval Dakman, Kiraathane İstanbul Edebiyat Evi, Istanbul, Turkey.

2020, Collective exhibition “Art in Protest” by Human Rights Foundation (HRF). Virtual gallery, New York, USA.

2020, Individual exhibition “Beyond”, and performance Prometeo Gallery, Milan. Italy.

2020, Collective exhibition. Collection of the San Patrignano Foundation. Palazzi dell’Arte Rimini – PART, Italy.

2020, Collective exhibition on censorship “Línies vermelles. La censura en la col”, with the digital work “Nusaybin”. La Panera Art Centre, Barcelona, Spain.

2020, “Xêzên Dizî” (The Hidden Drawings), Berlin Biennale, Germany.

2020, Group Show, “A volte penso che...” (Sometimes I think...), Ex Church of San Matteo, Lucca, Italia.

2020, Zehra Doğan pays homage to the city of Brescia, in Italy, with a large mural artwork for coronavirus resistance.

2020, Ravenna Festival, Italy, two performances during the “Roads of Friendship” concerts, with the Kurdish singer Aynur Doğan, the Giovanile Luigi Cherubini Orchestra and the Syrian Expat Philharmonic Orchestra (SEPO) conducted by Riccardo Muti. Curated by Elettra Stamboulis.

2020, she begins a wall newspaper project entitled “The Hard Times” with a first issue dedicated to George Floyd, on a wall around Parc Rosa Parks in Paris, France.

2020, Nassauischer Kunstverein in Wiesbaden individual exhibition, “To each Age its art –To Art its Freedom”.

2020, Individual exhibition, Peace Forum 2020 in Basel, Switzerland.

2019, Collective exhibition, “Speaking Across Mountains: Kurdish Artists in Dialogue”, Middle East Institute (MEI) Art Gallery, Washington, United States.

2019, ndividual exhibition, “Avremo anche giorni migliori. Opere dalle carceri turche” (We shall also know better days. Works from Turkish prisons), as part of the Brescia Peace Festival. Curated by Elettra Stamboulis. Santa Giulia Museum, Brescia, Italy,

2019, Individual exhibition “Œuvres évadées” (Escaped works), Galerie de l’Espace des femmes – Editions des femmes, Paris, France.

2019, collective exhibition, “The Pencil is a Key – Drawings by Incarcerated Artists”, Drawing Center, New York, United States.

2019, installation “Ê Li Dû Man” (What is left behind), Tate Modern, London, Great-Britain.

2019, Rennes Opera House, France, individual exhibition “Les yeux grands ouverts” (Eyes wide open).

2018 “Kurdish Art Fair” 2nd edition, collective exhibition, London, United Kingdom.

2018, Individual exhibition “Les yeux grands ouverts” (Eyes wide open), Tour Saint Aubin in Angers, France,

2018, Individual exhibition “Festival des Autres Mondes – Zehra Doğan” (Festival of the Other Worlds – Zehra Doğan), Pays de Morlaix, France.

2017, Individual exhibition, “Les yeux grands ouverts” (Eyes wide open), Festival de cinéma de Douarnenez, France.

2017, Individual exhibition “141”, Diyarbakır, Turkey.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Priggioni n°5 appears in La Repubblica’s newsstand collection, “Mondo Graphic Novel”, dedicated to the 20 national and international graphic novels deemed most representative of the 21st century, in June 2023.

Zehra Doğan “Wir werden auch schöne Tage sehen. Briefe aus dem Gefängnis“. Spector Books, February 2022.

Zehra Doğan, “Avremo anche noi dei bei giorni”, Fandango, February 2022.

Zehra. La ragazza che dipingeva la guerra”, (Zehra. The girl who painted the war) by Antonella De Biasi, illustrated by Zehra Doğan, Mondadori, 8 juillet 2021.

Prigione N°5”, Zehra Doğan, graphic novel. Becco Giallo, Avril 2021.

“Prison N°5”, Zehra Doğan graphic novel, Delcourt, translated and adapted by Naz Oke, Daniel Fleury, March 2021.

Zehra Doğan “Avremo anche giorni migliori. Opere dalle carceri turche” (We shall also know better days. Works from Turkish prisons) by Elettra Stamboulis, Art Catalogue, Skira Publishing.

“Nous aurons aussi de beaux jours : écrits de prison” (We shall also know better days: prison writings), Zehra Doğan. Translated by Naz Oke, Daniel Fleury, Editions des femmes, October 2019.

“Les Yeux grands ouverts”, (Eyes Wide Open) Zehra Doğan. Translated by Naz Oke, Fage Editions, July 2017.

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