

Selma Laura Köran, *Total Siege of the Sky*, 2024

My name is Selma Laura Köran. I am a German-Turkish artist who uses an interdisciplinary lens to explore topics such as patriarchal power choreographies, identity, and body politics.

The work I am showing here in the exhibition is called *Total Siege of the Sky*. It is a surrealistic, anti-militaristic video game that deals with the absurdity and performativity of war, in which destruction becomes an end in itself.

From the perspective of a tank, you receive the order—after the clouds have been raining for 99 days and are therefore declared terrorists—to shoot as many clouds out of the sky as possible within one minute.

In principle, there are no classic opponents except for the defenseless clouds. What remains is really just the demand to obey.

All visual elements of the game are modeled from clay and ceramics, animated in stop motion, and later digitized frame by frame. Each individual image deliberately defies the idea of mass production and is intended as a counterpoint to the logic of the arms industry.

I programmed the game with Scratch. This is a game engine originally developed by MIT for children and young people to learn programming. So on the one hand, it's about subversion, and on the other, it's about reclaiming a strongly male-dominated medium.

The tank, a classic symbol of conquest and power, becomes a grotesque figure firing into nothingness. In the installation, the player sits on a tank filled with cotton wool with a long tube protruding from their lap, which is intended to be a very physical metaphor for the patriarchal structure of war.

The work is a direct response to increasing social and political hostility toward pacifist attitudes at a time when silence is expected, nuance is punished, and refusal to reproduce violence is considered treason.

Total Siege of the Sky is very directly related to my wider artistic practice. In many of my works, I examine patriarchal and hierarchical power structures by taking them apart, reassembling them, and deliberately reducing them to absurdity.

I am less interested in individual events than in recurring power choreographies: empty gestures of strength, control, and superiority that are reproduced over and over again, in this work in the context of war, the arms industry, and structural inequality.

Another important reference point in my work is the figure of Athena as the goddess of war and wisdom. This dual role runs through many of my works. I am interested in how violence is historically legitimized by linking it to rationality, strategy, or moral superiority.

Total Siege of the Sky is also about precisely this: the absurdity of these power logics and the emptiness behind them. War does not appear here as a heroic act, but as a senseless, performative action that keeps itself alive.

Formally, I often work with playful, almost soft or childlike materials and aesthetics. This break is central to my practice. It allows me to subvert patriarchal power structures instead of simply depicting them, and to reveal their inner fragility.

For me, Neukölln is much more than just a place—it's a vibe. I like the hustle and bustle on the streets, the feeling that the streets are full of life, that there is a sense of community and cohesion, which I think is more obvious here than in other parts of the city. You can find good food on pretty much every corner, and it's definitely never boring here.