

SELMA SELMAN

Ophelia's Awakening

ChertLüdde / Hauptstr. 18, 10827 Berlin

7 September - 9 November 2024

Chert
Lüdde



PRESS TEXT

On the occasion of Berlin Art Week, ChertLüdde is pleased to present Selma Selman's first exhibition at the gallery titled *Ophelia's Awakening*. Transforming the gallery into a scrapyard of discarded cars and appliances, Selman reimagines Hamlet's Ophelia as a self-emancipated figure using herself as the painted subject. Car doors, washing machine fronts, a bathtub and hoods from old Mercedes vehicles litter the gallery as repurposed canvases, which have been painted with self-portraits and poems from the artist's ongoing series, 'Letters to Omer'.

"DEAR OMER / WOMEN LIKE ME CRY A RIVER / DRINK IT, AND THEN BUILD A BOAT / IN WHICH THEY MAKE PLANS / TO BE BORN AGAIN" is read on one of the car hoods. On another work, the artist depicts herself gazing beyond an absent figure that holds her close—a single, bloody tear bisects the composition. These scrap metal paintings subvert conventional femininity and fragility associated with Ophelia, transforming pain and trauma into powerful symbols of resilience and strength. Unlike the passive portrayals by William Shakespeare or John Everett Millais, the artist's Ophelia is defiant and self-determined. Selman's reinterpretation is of a woman who awakens to reclaim her agency and rewrite her own narrative.

The actor in her own video work *Crossing the Blue Bridge* (2024), Selman shows herself escaping from danger. She retraces her mother's steps during the Bosnian War, on the day of a ceasefire when she shielded her child from the sight of the corpses that laying on the bridge. Through integration of self-portraiture and biographical elements, the exhibition adopts a cross-sectional approach, distancing the figure of Ophelia from traditionally Eurocentric origins.

The gallery is also perfumed with the pungent scent of gasoline, an artwork

VERNISSAGE

7 September 2024,
6 - 9 pm

PERFORMANCE

"Letters to Omer"
13 September 2024,
8 pm

Portrait of Selma Selman
by Fabian Landewee

titled *The Most Dangerous Woman* (2024), which was also featured in the artist's recent solo exhibition *Flowers of Life* at the Schirn Kunsthalle Frankfurt (on view until the 15th of September, 2024). This provocative aroma, combined with the scrap metal pieces, deepens Selman's exploration of identity and heritage. Her family's work in scrapyards reflects the economic crisis in Bosnia-Herzegovina and the global forces that impact Roma communities. By using waste materials in her art, she gives value to things that would otherwise be discarded, and challenges perceptions of the labor her family does for a living.

On Friday, September 13th at 8 pm, Selma Selman will also be performing a poetic reading of *Letters to Omer* in which she addresses her intimate feelings and desires to a fictional character named Omer.

BIOGRAPHY

Selma Selman (b. 1991, Bihać, Bosnia and Herzegovina) graduated in 2014 from the Department of Painting at the Academy of Arts in Banja Luka, and defended her MA at Syracuse University, New York State in 2018 in the field of Transmedia – visual and performing arts. She was also a resident of Rijksakademie from 2021 to 2023.

Her works embody the struggles of her own life as well as her community, and employs a variety of media such as performance, painting, photography and video installations. Selman defines herself as an artist of Roma origins, not a Romani artist, a subtle yet critical distinction in the work. Her pieces are often inspired by her personal history, her family's lifestyle and the background she comes from, exploring issues of child marriage, women's role in Roma communities and education. Selman's aim is to break down the prejudice which keeps pushing down her community to the lowest common denominator, denying its right to self-expression. She utilizes her personal background as a lens through which she can understand the universal human condition and its idiosyncrasies. Selma is the founder of the organization *Get The Heck To School* whose aim is to encourage and empower Roma girls around the world facing poverty and social exclusion.

Her work is currently exhibited at Hamburger Bahnhof – Nationalgalerie der Gegenwart, Berlin and Schirn Kunsthalle, Frankfurt. She has also participated in exhibitions at: Autostrada Biennale, Prizren (2023), documenta 15, Kassel (2022), Manifesta 14, Prishtina (2022), Kunstraum Innsbruck (2022), MO Museum, Vilnius (2022), Ludwig Museum, Budapest (2022), Kasseler Kunstverein, Kassel (2021), National Gallery of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Sarajevo (2021), acb Galéria, Budapest (2021), Queens Museum, New York (2019) and Maxim Gorki Theater, Berlin (2017).

PRESS MATERIAL

IMAGES

[Download Selected Photos](#)
*Available for distribution

ADDITIONAL MATERIALS

[VIDEO: Flowers of Life, Schirn Kunsthalle Frankfurt](#)

[VIDEO: RBB Interview](#)

[CATALOG: Selma Selman - Flowers of Life, Distanz](#)

INFORMATION

"Ophelia's Awakening"
Selma Selman
07.09 – 09.11.2024
Admission free

Opening hours:
Tuesday – Saturday
12 pm – 6 pm

PRESS CONTACT

Nina Hanz
nina@chertluedde.com

CHERTLÜDDE

Hauptstrasse 18,
10827 Berlin
+49 (0)30 35512054
info@chertluedde.com
www.chertluedde.com