

Ayşe Erkmen

I still insist

9 SEPTEMBER–4 OCTOBER 2025

DIRIMART LONDON



I still insist I, 2025
wooden panel
250 x 125 cm

Dirimart is proud to present *I still insist*, the inaugural exhibition by Ayşe Erkmen at its new London gallery. The exhibition brings together seven new and recent works by Erkmen, conceived in response to the gallery's relocation to London. These works explore what a physical move of a gallery implies – both aesthetically and conceptually – in a new environment and before a new audience.

In her practice, Ayşe Erkmen takes the physical environment as a point of departure, repositioning existing structures in her distinctive style to prompt viewers to reflect on the space itself. The contemporaneity of her work stems from its ability to reveal what already exists – seen anew through subtle shifts in form and context. 'I want everything I do to be considered sculpture,' Erkmen states. Yet, her practice is not defined by a search for specific materials or forms. Instead, her work emerges from the spaces she engages with and the gestures she has refined over the years. Exhibition spaces become sites of play, where she draws on the history or the architectural features of the space to create sculptural moments, encounters, states, and objects. 'I feel most successful when I bring as little as possible to the space,' she adds.

The titular work, *I still insist* (2025), is an installation relocating the wooden structure once hidden behind the plaster walls of Dirimart's Istanbul gallery into its recently opened London space, suggesting an ongoing move in. These wall pieces – constructional elements once used to support displayed artworks – are transformed by Erkmen into the artworks themselves. In referencing the gallery's impact on transforming its surroundings in a broader sense, Erkmen also invites over a sound piece, *Dolapdere* (2017), in which the names of the displaced and transformed businesses around the gallery's Istanbul space are faintly voiced. This is accompanied by *Dolapdere, the movie* (2025), a new short film offering a visualisation of those very streets, the original context of both the installation and the sound work. This gesture, an invitation to remember, is echoed in *Scrolling* (2021), a video piece where the audience is invited to watch Erkmen scrolling through her own archive of past works on a computer screen – as though she is going through to create a new one. Erkmen also repeats one of her gestures for this exhibition, wrapping one of the existing columns in the space with fabric ribbons bearing her name. *Ribbons* (2025), a homage to her tailor grandmother, is a gesture that bridges the practices of garment making and sculpture. It also serves to question what it means for the art world when the artist's name, once the marker of authorship, is overused.

At the entrance of the gallery, *Circles on Circles* (2025), silver works depict Erkmen's fascination with the material through a series of various sculptural forms. In her ceramic works *Weight to Form* (2025), she engages with the medium by bypassing traditional steps in ceramic making and focuses instead on the initial gestural marks made in a ceramic studio – emphasising the marvel of technicality.

The works in *Refrain* question humanity's desire to dominate nature and its disorientation within the very systems it creates. Returning with a silence too heavy to be ignored, they reveal what has been repressed. In *Refrain*, nature no longer appears as a silent backdrop but as a sequence of cycles – like the endlessly repeating frames of a film strip – resounding as the echo of a suppressed voice.



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Each time Erkmen exhibits in a white cube gallery, she confronts the fact that such spaces are predominantly designed to flatter paintings – posing unique challenges for any conceptual artist to insert their ideas. Rather than resisting this reality, she instrumentalises it as a material, as a silent, structural collaborator. In *I still insist*, Erkmen brings together works that interrogate the sculptural object through unconventional means, taking into account the architectural and environmental context of Dirimart's new setting in London. She hence ignites the flow of thoughts about what a gallery space means – architecturally and sociologically – within its broader context.

I still insist by Ayşe Erkmen will be on view from 9 September to 4 October 2025 at Dirimart London.

Ayşe Erkmen (b.1949, Istanbul) graduated from the Department of Sculpture, Mimar Sinan University in 1977. In 1993, she participated in the DAAD International Artist Residency Programme in Berlin. Erkmen worked as the Arnold Bode Professor at Kassel Art Academy in 1998–1999 and as a lecturer at Frankfurt Städelschule in 2000–2007 and at Münster Kunstakademie in 2008–2016. Among the international exhibitions Erkmen participated in are the 2nd, 3rd and 13th Istanbul Biennial; the Turkish Pavilion at the 54th Venice Biennale; Manifesta 1, Shanghai, Berlin, Gwangju, Sharjah, Limerick, Scape, Ichihara, Aichi biennials, and the Folkestone and Echigo-Tsumari triennials. Her recent shows include *I still insist*, Dirimart London, London (2025); *Emre & Dario, Grotto*, Berlin (2025); *Hochstapler, Kira A*, Princess of Prussia Foundation, Berlin (2025); *I Insist*, Dirimart Dolapdere, Istanbul (2022); *Beethoven Bewegt*, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna (2020); *Whitish*, Arter, Istanbul (2019); *Kıvrakım Ripple*, Dirimart Dolapdere, Istanbul (2017); *A*, SMAK, Ghent (2016); *Une histoire, art, architecture et design, des années 80 à aujourd'hui*, Centre Pompidou, Paris (2014) and *Ayşe Erkmen: Intervals*, Barbican Centre, London (2013). Erkmen participated in the Skulptur Projekte Münster 2017 with a project titled *On Water* and in the first edition of the Yorkshire Sculpture International 2019 with her project *three of four*. In 2020, she is granted the prestigious triennial Ernst Franz Vogelmann Sculpture Award, the first woman artist receiving it. Ayşe Erkmen lives and works in Berlin and Istanbul.

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