

Sarkis

Five Icons Framed in Edirne-style Wooden Ornamentation

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DIRIMART DOLAPDERE



IK.311, *Afife*, July 2025, 2025
(detail)

Custom-made dye and fingerprints
on the mirror in an 18th–19th-
century Edirnekari frame
184 x 97 x 5 cm

Dirimart is pleased to announce Sarkis's new solo exhibition at the gallery, *Five Icons Framed in Edirne-style Wooden Ornamentation*. A continuation of the artist's long-standing research on memory, time, and space, this exhibition refers to *Angel of War*, a solo exhibition consisting of a single artwork that presented in 1989 at Maçka Art Gallery, Istanbul, as well as to the icons he created during that period using watercolour and the act of touch as a formative gesture. During this period, Sarkis began using his fingerprint as a painting tool – an idiosyncratic technique that converges, in this exhibition, with his deep interest in the Basilica of Santa Croce in Florence, Italy.

The exhibition takes its starting point from *Edirnekâri* (Edirne-style wooden ornamentation) frames dating from the 19th and 20th centuries, which incorporate architectural elements originating from Anatolia and Damascus. Sarkis transforms the surfaces of the mirrors placed within these original wooden frames by directly touching them with specially produced paints, applied with his fingertips. Through this intervention, he constructs a surface that bridges the historical legacy of the frames with the present. Thus, the mirror becomes more than a reflective surface; it acquires a new existence as a vessel of memory.

In these new artworks, Sarkis explicitly references the abstract and restorative approach taken in the restoration of the Cimabue's Crucifix after the devastating flood at Santa Croce in 1966. In that restoration, missing colours were completed using pointillist brushstrokes, and losses were not concealed. Restoration experts detected the pigment particles dissolved in the floodwaters at a microscopic level, separated them through evaporation, and reconstructed the missing areas using the same compositions. Adopting this approach, Sarkis undertakes a meticulous research process to renew the paint – faded over time – on the Edirne-style frames, utilising contemporary materials, while preserving period-specific visual qualities, thereby rendering them part of a contemporary rebirth.

The Edirnekâri frames, bearing traces of two centuries of history, arrived at the gallery in 2024 with faded paint surfaces and altered textures. Sarkis collaborated with the Nanotechnology Research and Application Centre (SUNUM) of Sabancı University to conduct chemical analyses of the paints originally used on the frames. These analyses revealed the differences between the pigments used in the 19th and 21st centuries, particularly noting the shift from materials such as lead – which are no longer in common use – to new formulations. Based on these findings, Sarkis partnered with Cadence Art & Hobby Paints to produce custom-made paints for the exhibition. These specially developed paints harmonised seamlessly with the mirror surfaces and enabled the restoration of the original vibrancy and freshness of the colours of the Edirne-style frames. Sarkis's use of fingerprints on the mirrors' surfaces functions not only as a painting technique but also as a form of touch, testimony, and mnemonic trace. These works neither faithfully replicate the past nor wholly embrace the new; instead, they exist in a temporal in-between space where past and present coexist.

The frames from Edirne and Damascus are not just architectural artefacts but witnesses to time itself. Edirne-style ornamentation, as a carrier of cultural dissemination and aesthetic memory within the Ottoman domain, connects the visual language of the past with the sensory experience of the present. The mirrors in the



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exhibition invite viewers not simply to see themselves, but to reflect on the act of seeing. The fingerprint impressions Sarkis creates with his team offer neither portraits nor direct reflections: each icon becomes a moment suspended in the scene of memory, where time stands still but meaning moves. Like performers, they are poised to encounter the viewer. Inspired by different female names evocative of 18th- and 19th-century Edirne's multicultural life, these icons are not merely objects but vessels of multi-layered cultural heritage, tactile imagery and reconstructed memory.

Five Icons Framed in Edirne-style Wooden Ornamentation becomes a memory stage, where Sarkis materialises time through fingerprints, paints, frames and reflections – layering different temporalities one atop another. The exhibition will be on view at Dirimart Dolapdere from 3 September to 12 October 2025.

Sarkis (b. 1938, Istanbul) graduated from the State Academy of Fine Arts. He held his first solo exhibition at Istanbul Art Gallery in 1960. He moved to Paris in 1964. Sarkis' works have been exhibited at prestigious institutions, including Centre Pompidou, Paris; Guggenheim, New York; Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris; Kunst-und Ausstellungshalle, Bonn; Louvre Museum, Paris; Bode Museum, Berlin; Fondazione MAXXI and Kunsthalle Düsseldorf. In 2015, he represented Turkey at the Turkey Pavilion of the 56th Venice Biennale. His recent solo exhibitions include *Future Lies Ahead 1993–2023*, Daejeon Museum of Art, Daejeon (2023); *85 Screams: After Munch*, Dirimart, Istanbul (2023); *7 Tage 7 Nächte*, Kunsthalle Baden-Baden, Baden-Baden (2023); *ENDLESS*, Arter, Istanbul (2023); *Çaylak Sokak*, Arter, Istanbul (2019); *Mirror*, Dirimart, Istanbul (2017) and *L'ouverture*, Istanbul Modern, Istanbul (2009). Among the significant exhibitions and biennials he participated in are the 6th Mardin Biennial, Mardin (2024); the 2nd, 4th, and the 14th Istanbul Biennials, Istanbul (1989, 1995, 2015); the 10th Lyon Biennial, Lyon (2010); the 2nd Moscow Biennial, Moscow (2007); the 3rd Shanghai Biennial, Shanghai (2000); the 4th and 8th Sydney Biennials, Sydney (1982, 1990); documenta VI and VII, Kassel (1977, 1982) and When Attitudes Become Form, Kunsthalle Bern (1969). Additionally, in 2015, he participated in the group exhibition at the Armenian Pavilion of the 56th Venice Biennale. Sarkis' works are part of major collections, including Centre Pompidou, Paris; MAMCO, Switzerland; and Istanbul Modern, as well as various private collections. Sarkis lives and works in Paris.

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