



NEW RELEASE

## Samet Durgun *Come Get Your Honey*

Essays by Amrou Al-Kadhi and Marianne Ager  
 Interview by Prince Emrah  
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### A story about the LGBTQIA+ refugee and asylum seekers in Berlin

»What if photography is more about 'listening' than seeing?« *Come Get Your Honey* uses this question as a compass to tell a story about the LGBTQIA+ refugee and asylum seekers in Berlin. It is the artist's journey of weaving bonds at eye-level with individuals through vulnerability, friendship, and joy. Samet Durgun strives to depict each individual as complex human beings in their wholeness, trying to establish a new home in a foreign country and an extremely polarized political climate.

#### Artist Statement by Samet Durgun:

*I am an artist living in Berlin who »became« German as a first-generation immigrant. I was born in Turkey, and my great-grandparents arrived in the Ottoman Empire (today's Turkey) from the Caucasus as refugees. I am agnostic, queer, and I was raised by a single mother. So it was hard for me to feel at home or safe, and I have a lifelong pursuit of self-realization despite challenges.*

*I wanted to express my urge to be understood by telling stories of people I felt close to. A few years ago, I became friends with gender-nonconforming, trans\*, and queer refugees and asylum seekers in Berlin. I have a deep respect for people whose identities are so intricate and layered that the struggle and the power of resistance become invisible to those who have access to anything they don't: having a family, job, education, physical or mental safety, language, or wealth.*

*With that deep respect, I ask, »what if photography is more 'listening' than seeing?« On a meta-level, this question resists the standard narratives of both LGBTQIA+ and refugee identities, whose stories are often told under the microscope of agony either by surgically exploring their body from the »outsider gaze« or romanticizing their struggle. My approach is about embracing and appreciating the complexities, striving to depict individuals in their wholeness, and looking at each other »at eye-level.« The work reflects my relationships and my impression of their stories. Thus, it is very subjective after all.*

**Samet Durgun** (b.1988) based in Berlin, is German with a Turkish migration background and of Abkhazian descent. He holds a BA

from Bogazici University, Turkey. As a first-generation immigrant and self-taught artist in Germany, he was recently a guest student at the College of Fine Arts Berlin (UdK), participating in *Common Ground*, a support program for artists who fled or immigrated to Germany. His artworks are shown in local and international exhibition venues, including the Berlin Museum of Photography.  
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#### From the essay by Amrou Al-Kadhi:

*Like the people in these photographs, I am myself a queer person living in a land far away from where I first started. Originally raised between various countries in the Middle East, I now live in London, and identify as gay, non-binary and Muslim. Inhabiting identities that are at their heart intersectional and straddling various social groups, I know what it is like to live in the in-between. Of feeling a hunger to be accepted, but a fight not to be assimilated; of revelling in the potency of living on society's fringes, whilst also yearning for social visibility; of coming from a background that was intolerant of my queerness, yet entering a country that is dismissive of my racial identity and heritage. It is, in effect, like living forever on a tectonic fault line at constant risk of an earthquake, of feeling as if you're flying on a plane that might never land. The tension is both chaotic and empowering – for whilst existing in a liminal monad between various social spaces is tiring, it's also the place with all the potential. It exists outside defined social binaries, powerfully disrupting heteronormative structures, fragmenting an oppressive gaze in a way that can liberate ourselves from damaging narratives.*

*Samet Durgun's powerful photography honours the potential of the in-between, celebrating its boundlessness in a way which situates queer refugees and asylum seekers within their own space, into which we are invited to observe – never claim. The tensions between visibility and invisibility are potent in this respect, with Durgun using light to articulate this interplay to spectacular success.*

**Amrou Al-Kadhi** is an established screenwriter, having written episodes for *Little America* (Apple TV), *The Watch* (BBC America), *Hollyoaks* (Channel 4), and several TV shows and feature films currently in development. They have a BA, MA and M.Phil in the History of Art from the University of Cambridge, with a special focus on queer performance art. They recently contributed artwork and an essay as part of the *Kiss My Genders* exhibition at the Hayward Gallery (2019). Their book, *Life as a Unicorn* (2020), was awarded the Polari First Book Prize and a Somerset Maugham award. Amrou's drag show, *Glamrou: From Quran to Queen* (2020), was supported by the British Arts Council, and continues to tour. Their short films have premiered on BBC4, Nowness, PBS, the BFI and Peccadillo Pictures, amongst others.

From the interview by **Prince Emrah** with Samet Durgun:

Prince Emrah: *I am so excited to have a chat with you about your book! Let's jump right into it. How did you end up connecting with a circle of LGBTQIA+ refugee and asylum seekers?*

Samet Durgun: *On International Workers' Day, you had a gig at an open-air festival in Kreuzberg. A few hours before the show, you introduced me to your friends with whom you used to share a dorm. I was mesmerised by each individual and the stories that they shared with me that day. The relationships grew over time, friends were introduced to other friends.*

PE: *Did you have a plan to make this book back then already?*

SD: *I did not have any plans to make this book or even 'a book', but I had an idea that could be translated into images. I wanted to express my urge to be understood by connecting with people I felt close to. I have a deep respect for people whose identities are so intricate and layered that the struggle, power of resistance and resilience become invisible to others. As you know, my forebears are refugees from the Caucasus. I grew up as an ethnic minority, an agnostic and a bullied queer kid raised by a single mother in Turkey. As much as I am aware of the unique challenges that your community faces and our stories aren't identical, I felt the solidarity with people as a queer person at the intersection of multiple identities with lived experience.*

**Prince Emrah** (she / he) is a professional belly dancer, a dance trainer, a beauty and wellness student, a make-up artist, a DJ and an occasional drag queen based in Berlin. A few years ago, she arrived in Berlin as a refugee from Turkmenistan and is of Kurdish and Azerbaijan descent. Since then, he has built an impressive artistic career in Berlin's performance art scene and be-

yond. Emrah is the mother of an artist collective called *House of Royals*, which provides a space for BIPOC LGBTQIA+ asylum seekers and refugees from countries such as Syria, Palestine, Malaysia, Libya and the like.

From the essay by **Marianne Ager**:

*Strömholm and Goldin. Two different photographers, two generations. Both depicting queer life from the inside and both doing long-term projects. Together they underline the importance of time, patience and participation when it comes to creating expansive, intimate, nuanced portraits of individuals in a community. We are reminded of the fact that excellent photographic narratives are about so much more than mere technique and composition. These projects are basically also stories about how it is possible to go out in the world and create a family of your own when the biological one for some reason or another cannot be there for you. In the process, Strömholm and Goldin have created important historical documents mapping the conditions in certain decades and certain cities. They become prisms of the time they were made in.*

*With Come Get Your Honey, another important chapter in queer photography is being created which contains all of the above – and then some. Samet Durgun is the next generation.*

**Marianne Ager** works as a curator of mainly photography and film at Kunstmuseum Brandts in Odense, Denmark. She has produced a number of critically acclaimed exhibitions ranging from a group show on war photography to the first large-scale, retrospective exhibition about Danish silent film superstar, Asta Nielsen. Apart from curating, Marianne enjoys looking for new international talents and has worked as a juror and portfolio reviewer for Fotografiska, Stockholm; Riga Photography Biennial; and the Helsinki Photo Festival. She is an experienced and passionate art communicator and has given talks at numerous conferences, events and festivals.

#### Exhibition

*Seen By #15. Nothing Ever Happened (Yet)*  
Museum für Fotografie, Berlin, Germany  
21.05.–25.07.2021

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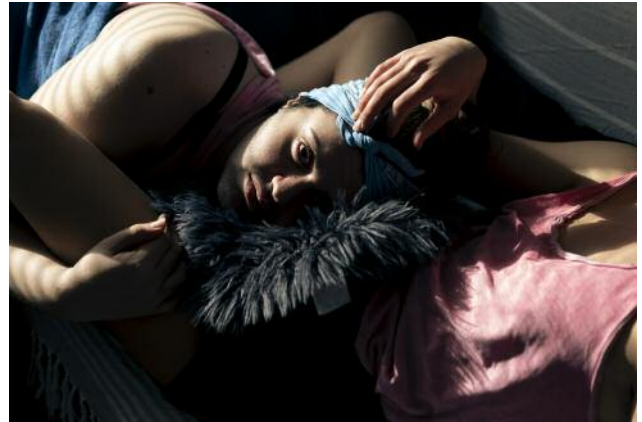
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