

# Etel Adnan & Simone Fattal

## Voices without borders

27.8.23 – 1.1.24

Curator:  
Sébastien Delot

*Voices without borders* is an intimate dialogue between the life partners Etel Adnan and Simone Fattal, two important voices from the Arab world and accomplices in feminist, political, and artistic engagement, who acted with a sense for radicality and belief in the power of words. The exhibition reflects the multidisciplinary nature of their individual and joint oeuvres and offers insights into their artistic and literary work. For the first time, the KINDL is presenting a comprehensive selection of paintings, Leporellos, tapestries, prints, and sculptures by the two life partners in a joint exhibition, including many works that have never been shown before. The lives and works of these two polymaths are also highlighted in two documentaries by Marie Valentine Regan and Deena Charara in collaboration with Etel Adnan.

The title of the exhibition, *Voices without borders*, reflects the deep connection to literature that the two artists shared. In 1982, Fattal founded The Post-Apollo Press (1) to publish the English translation of Adnan's novel *Sitt Marie Rose*. The publishing house soon made Fattal an important supporter of contemporary poetry with diverse connections to the Arab world, Europe, and the United States.

Adnan's discovery and use of Leporellos beginning in the mid-1960s allowed her to combine two essential elements of her artistic identity: literature and painting. She drew on the Arabic tradition of calligraphy and was thus able to free herself from the language of the colonial power: "I didn't need to write in French anymore, I was going to paint in Arabic." (23, 24)

Adnan's *Arab Apocalypse*, a cycle of 59 poems, was published in 1980 in French. The Artist's book is a reaction to the upheavals of the Lebanese Civil War. She incorporated small drawings into the text. In addition to excerpts from the manuscript of her own translation into English, the alphabet that she developed for the work is on view here (20, 22).

The exhibition shows Adnan's drawings from the 1960s (5 - 10), the wallpaper work *Le Soleil Toujours* (33), two tapestries recently created after designs from the 1960s (11, 25), and a series of small-scale paintings (3, 4, 19, 26 - 32, 39 - 41), thus exemplifying the use of a variety of different media.

In her artistic work, nature and the universe are central motifs to which she devoted herself throughout various phases of her life. Adnan once described the Earth as a "cosmic manifestation". Mount Tamalpais, which held a deep, almost spiritual significance for her, often features in her works.

Fattal also used various media for her artistic expression. While she initially focused on painting, she turned to sculpture during her time in California and developed a rich body of work of ceramic sculptures, prints, and collages with references to Sumerian culture, ancient Egyptian forms, literature, and philosophy (17). She shapes the human body as a fragment in clay (18), and she also uses this earthly material when giving form to a fleeting natural phenomenon with her *Clouds* (34 - 38).

In the context of the first comprehensive monographic exhibitions in Germany on Etel Adnan's work, the Lenbachhaus in Munich and the Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen in Düsseldorf, in cooperation with the KINDL, developed a comprehensive publication on her work, with texts by Sébastien Delot and Simone Fattal, among others, edited by Sébastien Delot, Susanne Gaensheimer, and Matthias Mühling, and published by Hirmer in Munich.

#### Discursive Programme

20.9., 19:00

Tour with Mirjam Thomann in German

22.11., 19:00

*We became cosmic. Multidisciplinarity in the life and work of Etel Adnan & Simone Fattal.* Panel conversation with Rasha Salti and Jina Khayyer, moderated by Nanna Heidenreich, in English

25.11., 14:00

Curator's tour with Sébastien Delot in English

Etel Adnan (1925 in Beirut – 2021 in Paris) was a poet, painter, and philosopher and is an important figure in Arab modernism.

Selected solo exhibitions: K20, Düsseldorf (2023), Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (2022), Lenbachhaus, Munich (2022), SFMoMA, San Francisco (2018), Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern (2018), UNAM, Mexico City (2017), Institut du Monde Arabe, Paris (2016), Haus Konstruktiv, Zurich (2015), Mathaf, Doha (2014).

Selected group exhibitions: Castello di Rivoli, Italy (2017), MoMa, New York (2017), Sharjah Biennial 12 (2015), Istanbul-Biennale (2015), Whitney Museum of Modern Art, New York (2014), dOCUMENTA 13, Kassel (2012).

Simone Fattal (\*1942 in Damascus, lives in Paris) is an artist, translator, and publisher and has moved throughout her life between painting, sculpture, and poetry.

Selected solo exhibitions: TBA 21 Academy, Venice (2023); Whitechapel Gallery, London (2022); ICA Milano (2021); Bergen Kunsthall (2020), MoMA PS1, New York (2019), ); Musée Yves Saint Laurent Marrakech (2018, with Etel Adnan, Bob Wilson); Sharjah Art Foundation (2016).

Selected group exhibitions: Venice Biennale (2022); Biennale de Lyon (2022); Berlin Biennale (2022); Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris (2021), Mudam Luxembourg (2019).



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