



Etel Adnan & Simone Fattal

Voices without borders

27 August 2023 – 1 January 2024

Maschinenhaus M1 / M1 VideoSpace

Curator: Sébastien Delot

Voices without borders is an intimate dialogue between the artists Etel Adnan and Simone Fattal, two important voices from the Arab world. The exhibition at the KINDL reflects the multidisciplinary nature of the individual and joint oeuvres of both artists, who were also life partners, and offers insights into their artistic and literary work. The title of the exhibition, *Voices without borders*, reflects the artists' deep relationship with literature. With Adnan and Fattal, the KINDL is presenting accomplices in feminist, political, and artistic engagement who acted with a sense for radicality and belief in the power of words. The exhibition for the first time brings together an extensive group of paintings, fanfold works, tapestries, graphics, and sculptures by both artists. The lives and works of these two polymaths are also highlighted in a showcase on Fattal's publishing house The Post-Apollo Press and in two documentaries by Marie Valentine Regan and Deena Charara in collaboration with Etel Adnan in the M1 VideoSpace.

Etel Adnan (1925 in Beirut – 2021 in Paris) was a poet, painter, and philosopher and is an important figure in Arab modernism. Her life was shaped by her childhood in a multicultural family and later, as a philosophy student in Lebanon and then in Paris and the San Francisco Bay Area, also by travel, especially to Mexico and North Africa. Since her childhood, she was fascinated by writing and poetry. Beginning in 1952, she taught philosophy for twenty years at Dominican College in San Rafael, California, where she discovered the medium of painting. Mount Tamalpais, which she could see from her apartment, quickly became her main subject. Throughout her life she tried to grasp its essence in her painting, and she circled this theme in her literature and painting in endless variations. The boundaries between language and painting became increasingly permeable for her, and in response to the Algerian War she detached herself from the language of the colonial power France: "I didn't need to write in French anymore, I was going to paint in Arabic." In the medium of fanfold works, Adnan brought together painting, calligraphy, and poetry, and in the book *Arabic Apocalypse* she integrated graphic symbols into the literary text. Another topic covered in the exhibition is the significance of space and space travel in Etel Adnan's thinking and work.

In 1972, Etel Adnan and Simone Fattal met in Beirut and began a lifelong partnership. In 1980 they left the country due to the Lebanese Civil War and moved to California.

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. Raised in Beirut, she studied philosophy at the Sorbonne in Paris before returning to Lebanon, where her paintings were shown in numerous exhibitions. In 1982, Fattal founded the publishing house The Post-Apollo Press to publish Etel Adnan's novel *Sitt Marie Rose*, which Adnan wrote in 1978 in response to the horrors of the civil war; today it is a classic of anti-war literature. With The Post-Apollo Press, she became one of the most important supporters of contemporary poetry. Between 1982 and 2018 she published over 60 works by authors and poets from the Arab world, the United States,

and Europe. Originally at home in the medium of painting, Fattal approached sculpture in California and developed a rich oeuvre of ceramic sculptures, prints, and collages with references to Sumerian mythology, ancient Egyptian formal language, and philosophy.

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.

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