

WORDS AND PLACES: ETEL ADNAN

Kent and Vicki Logan Gallery

April 17, 2013 to June 29, 2013

Featuring works by Etel Adnan, Chris Marker, Rabih Mroué, and the Otolith Group, with selected articles from the *Al-Safa* newspaper archive.

Words and Places: Etel Adnan is an exhibition produced by the graduating class of the Graduate Program in Curatorial Practice at California College of the Arts with the support of the Wattis Institute for Contemporary Arts.

Words and Places: Etel Adnan is the first large-scale institutional exhibition of work by the Lebanese writer, poet, and painter Etel Adnan, spanning six decades of her artistic practice. Born in Beirut in 1925 to a Christian Greek mother and a Muslim Syrian father, Adnan has spent her life between places—Beirut, Paris, and the Bay Area—negotiating their different cultures and languages, as well as her distinctive position among them. This experience of displacement deeply informs her work, which similarly ranges between mediums and formats. Her work has recently been included in *dOCUMENTA (13)* (Kassel, Germany, 2012) and the *Serpentine Gallery Map Marathon* (London, 2010).

The exhibition explores Adnan's complex negotiation between verbal and visual forms of expression. Some of the featured paintings include elements of geographical specificity—for instance a series of paintings of Mount Tamalpais, just north of San Francisco, a place that she says “orients” her—whereas others are ambiguous paintings of envisioned “non-places.” Adnan's *leporellos*, or folding books, offer a compelling fusion of written texts and painted or drawn images. Their unique design is intended to accommodate narrative, and they connect the immediacy of her gestural paintings with the extended durations of her writings.

The exhibition also includes selected articles written by Adnan for the francophone daily newspaper *Al-Safa* (these appear courtesy of Adnan and the Bibliothèque nationale de France) as well as film

and video works by Chris Marker, Rabih Mroué, and the Otolith Group that relate directly or obliquely to Adnan's practice. Marker's eerie footage of sculptures at the fringe of the San Francisco Bay; Mroué's confluences of destruction and construction, future and past in an unspecified city; and the Otolith Group's portrait of Adnan reading her own poetry in her Paris home: all present a melancholic counterpoint to Adnan's work, deepening the exhibition's logic of place and displacement.

The accompanying publication, titled *The Ninth Page: Etel Adnan's Journalism 1972-1974*, collects and translates some of Adnan's contributions to the *Al-Safa* newspaper. The articles document the rich cultural scene of Beirut on the brink of civil war, a political cataclysm addressed with great force in Adnan's landmark books *Sitt Marie Rose* (1978) and *The Arab Apocalypse* (1980). These writings have an immediacy that is distinct from the rhythms of her poetry and prose. The publication also includes newly commissioned essays that respond to Adnan's journalism and its fraught sociopolitical context.

A schedule of accompanying public programs will include poetry readings, workshops, film screenings, and lectures, each intended to promote dialogue between Adnan's practice and the Bay Area's poetry, writing, film, and art communities. Screenings of films by Rania Stephan and Simone Fattal will engage issues of place and female identity in the Middle East. By animating and enriching the exhibition concepts, the programming series will actively address the exhibition's ties to its specific place and time while also responding to relevant international concerns. For a schedule of these programs, please visit the **Wattis calendar**.

The graduating class of the Graduate Program in Curatorial Studies has created a **website** for the exhibition *Words and Places: Etel Adnan*.

About CCA's Graduate Program in Curatorial Practice

Founded in 2003, CCA's Graduate Program in Curatorial Practice offers an expanded perspective on curating contemporary art and culture. Alongside traditional forms of exhibition making, this two-year master's degree program emphasizes the momentous impact over the last half-century of artist-led initiatives, public art projects, site-specific commissions, and other experimental endeavors that take place beyond the confines of established venues. It is distinguished by an international,

interdisciplinary perspective, and it reflects San Francisco's unique location and cultural history by placing a particular importance on the study of curatorial and artistic practices in Asia and Latin America.

Image: Etel Adnan, *Untitled* (2013). Courtesy of the artist and Callicoon Fine Arts, New York.
Photo by Chris Austin.

All installation images from *Words and Places: Etel Adnan* were photographed by Johnna Arnold.

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