

Simone Fattal

Fix Your Gaze On Saturn's Rings

31.1. – 22.3.2020

The exhibition features sculptures, drawings, paintings, collages and photographs by the Lebanese-American artist Simone Fattal, spanning from the early 1970s until today. The works are presented in a characteristic non-chronologic installation in which a myriad of narrative threads and layers appear through the juxtapositions of works in different media and on different scales.

Simone Fattal is mostly known for her work in clay and stoneware, glazed in luminous colours or shades of sand and brown. The works visibly exhibit the traces of their own making – barely formed, liminal, but highly suggestive. The many long-legged figures, assorted vessels or architectural ruins relate to her interest in mythology and archaeology, and chart themes such as the ravages of war and recovery. A whole world of memories, ideas and references to history, poetry and contemporary politics is precipitated in the works, which have come to life in close interaction with the sites and experiences that have surrounded the artist. Born in Syria and raised in Lebanon, Fattal studied philosophy in Paris and established herself as an artist at the end of the 1970s in Beirut. In 1982, she moved to California, where she started the publishing venture Post-Apollo Press.

Fattal's works possess a timelessness—at once archaic and modern. First and foremost, they exhibit a profound humanism and a reflection on humanity and its place in the world and in history.

History, memory, politics and the everyday - gallery 1

In this gallery, a large and diverse selection of sculptures is presented; ranging from vessels and steles – looking almost like archaeological finds – to rudimentary standing figures and torsos. A large number of the figures connect more directly to religion, history, literature and mythology. Within Fattal's cast of characters one finds angels, centaurs, heroes and gods. Her sculptures frequently draw on the epic historical texts such as the Sumerian tales, Arabic epics and Sufi mysticism. As symbols and figures, angels can for example be said to predate monotheistic religions and can be found in various religious faiths, as well as in mysticism and poetry, and thus seem to transcend both history itself and the divides

between cultures.

The warriors who also frequently appear are seen by Fattal as “witnesses”, similar to the great Chinese warriors found in the royal tombs, bearing witness to their civilization. Architectural elements such as defence towers and walls, checkpoints, weapons and bunkers point to Fattal's own memories of Syria and Lebanon and adapt the tormented landscape of a region troubled by war and conflict through generations. At the same time, motifs such as garden buildings, animals and food and picnic baskets speak of ongoing everyday life and the rich cultural traditions of the region.

Simone Fattal speaks of history as a continuous movement, and her works seem to embody an overwhelming awareness of history. At first glance her sculptures are reminiscent of ancient artefacts, souvenirs or the idiosyncratic collectibles often found in domestic environments, in which very different objects come together to form a personal story. Indeed, the works contain both personal and historical references to her background in Syria and Lebanon. Deeply passionate about Syria's archaeological culture and the region's history, Fattal has stated that she sees history as having started with Sumer and “never ended”.

Acknowledging our fragmentary thinking about history, and how much we cannot access, Fattal accepts that it is in many ways impossible to have real knowledge of the past. At the same time knowledge is crucial, and much is left out in our education. Fattal's works represent a protest against forgetting, and a reminder of how important historical awareness is in the present; perhaps especially so when we look at the Middle East region at a time of heightened levels of tension and conflict.

In Fattal's many collages, the links between history and the present are especially intensive. In one and the same work one can find elements such as a centaur, Ulysses, archaeological elements, Islamic, pre-Islamic and modern art as well as everyday life and contemporary politics. The collages are made up of source material gathered from postcards, newspapers and magazines, and often include portraits of the artist herself and her own works. The two large works *La Syrie 1* and *La Syrie 2* (both 2014), are a case in point. With a central motif of an historical map,

Curated by

Axel Wieder (director)
Steinar Sekkingstad (curator)

Staff

Åsa Bjørndal (tech),
Stacy Brafield (communication),
Oda Førde Braanaas (prod.),
Dino Dikic (Unge kunstjennere),
Åsne Eldøy (tech),
Michelle Endresen (Unge k.),
Robin Everett (tech),
Lars Hallaråker (tickets),
Linnea Halveg (Unge k.),

Sofia Marie Hamnes (production assistant),
Thea Haug (memembers),
Johanne Hauge Gjerland (Unge k.),
Ragna Haugstad (reception),
Aleidis Houthoufd (prod.),
Jim Hoddevik (tech),
Lisa Holmås (Unge k.),
Arthur Hureau (prod.),
Andrea Grundt Johns (reception),
Sarah Jost (tech),
Kristen Keegan (tech),
Vilja Kjersheim (tickets),
Lene Anette Kolltveit (tickets),

Mai Lahn-Johannessen (program manager),
Caroline Larikka (tours),
Øystein Larssen (reception),
Jakub Lazarowicz (Unge k.),
Annabel Lee (tickets),
Dillan Marsh (tech),
Hilde Marie Pedersen (head of education),
Martin Midtbø Rokkones (tickets),
Tuva Mossin (tours),
Inga Pareliusson Austnes (Unge k.),
Maria Rusinovskaya (curator live programme),

Randine Sanboe (tickets),
Jonas Skarmark (technical manager),
Henrik Skauge (prod.),
Tale Elida Giancotti Søilen (tickets),
Einride Torvik (gallery manager),
Siv Torvik (tech),
Vegard Urne (tech),
Magnus Vedå Wibe (tech),
Vegard Vindenes (tech),
Eric Alvin Wangel (tech),
Maja Zahl (finance og admin.),
Tord Øyen (reception),
Stein-Inge Århus (communication)

