

Thinking Like a Mountain

LIN MAY SAEED
GAMEC, Bergamo
May 17 – September 22, 2024

As part of the two-year program “Thinking Like a Mountain”
Artistic Director: Lorenzo Giusti
Associate Curators: Sara Fumagalli, Marta Papini
Head of Magazine: Valentina Gervasoni

Art, Territories,
Community

Two-Year
Program
2024-2025

The GAMEC – Galleria d’Arte Moderna e Contemporanea di Bergamo, in partnership with the Biennale Gherdëina, is delighted to announce the exhibition paying tribute to the work of the artist Lin May Saeed (1973–2023).

Born in Germany to a German mother of Jewish origins and an Iraqi father, Lin May Saeed dedicated all her research to the world of animals and the relationships between human and non-human animals, developing a new iconography of interspecies solidarity.

An activist for the defense of animals, in her “works of hope”—as she called them—the artist does not resort to the depiction of suffering or the overt denunciation of human behavior, but largely dwelling on **images of friendship and spaces of encounter and reconciliation between species**. A hallmark of her research, in fact, is the absence of moral judgments and an attitude of empathy that permeates her graceful works. An example of this is the series *The Liberation of Animals from their Cages*, which depicts men intent on freeing animals from cages in which they are locked up.

Her practice, which ranges from **sculpture to bas-relief, from drawing to cut paper**, focuses on the production of works populated by **animals of various geographical origins, and human figures from stories, fables and myths from ancient Mesopotamia**—such as the Epic of Gilgamesh—**or from the Christian and Islamic traditions**—such as the legend of the Seven Sleepers of Ephesus.

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With inspiration from these sources, **Lin May Saeed creates cross-cultural and cross-species narratives, journeys through time that traverse history only to be projected into an alternative common future.**

Her favorite medium for the creation of her sculptures and bas-reliefs is **Styrofoam**, which the artist discovered during her university studies and never abandoned. Aware that the main component of Styrofoam is derived from petroleum, May Saeed firmly believed that this material could reveal something about the present and human fallibility, while appreciating its characteristics of lightness and manageability that enabled her to work completely independently even on a large scale.

As part of the *Thinking Like a Mountain* project, and in connection with the ninth edition of the **Biennale Gherdëina** curated by Lorenzo Giusti, the **Lin May Saeed retrospective will be presented simultaneously in Bergamo and Ortisei**, with an exhibition spreading between two venues so as to provide a **comprehensive overview of the work of the artist, who passed away in 2023.**

The installation in **GAMEC's Spazio Zero** will focus on animal figures—including dogs, pangolins, panthers, hyenas, calves, and anteaters—and will emphasize the centrality the artist intended to restore to them as opposed to the condition of subalternity to which humanity has relegated them. Represented through life-sized **sculptures and bas-reliefs**, the animals become **outright protagonists in the exhibition space as individuals endowed with their own psychology, and not as objects.**

At the same time, **Ortisei** will present a selection of works in which the relationship between humans and animals is constantly re-examined, thanks to a narrative dimension that draws on myth, fairy tale, and legend. **Depictions of stories that tell of moments of peaceful coexistence and harmony**, in which humans and animals inhabit the Earth in a condition of absolute equality, will prevail.

Accompanying the exhibitions is a **paperback** published by **Mousse Publishing** featuring English, Italian, Arabic, and Ladino-speaking audiences the **fables** originally written in German by May Saeed. Illustrated with a selection of drawings on paper by the artist, the introduction is by Lorenzo Giusti.

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Biographical Notes

Lin May Saeed was born in 1973 in Würzburg, Germany and grew up in Wiesbaden a mid-sized city near Frankfurt/Main. She had a Jewish-German family background on her mother's side and an Iraqi family background on her father's side. Saeed studied sculpture at the Düsseldorf Art Academy under Luise Kimme and Tony Cragg from 1995 to 2001. It was there that she became interested in animal rights, studied the animal rights philosopher Tom Regan and took part in corresponding actions (e.g. protests against the fur trade). She has lived vegan ever since. After moving from Düsseldorf to Berlin, she founded the exhibition space Center in Berlin-Tiergarten in 2003, which she ran until 2009. From 2008 to 2010, Lin May Saeed taught sculpture at the Düsseldorf Art Academy. Lin May Saeed passed away on August 30, 2023 as a result of a brain tumor at the age of 50, two weeks before the opening of her solo exhibition at the Georg Kolbe Museum in Berlin.

Solo shows (selection): (2023) *In Paradise, the Snow falls Slowly*, Georg Kolbe Museum, Berlin; Chris Sharp Gallery, Los Angeles; (2021) *Rami*, Jacky Strenz, Frankfurt/Main; (2020) *Arrival of the Animals*, The Clark, Williamstown; (2019) *Girl with Cat*, Jacky Strenz, Frankfurt/Main; *Lin May Saeed & Max Brand*, What Pipeline, Detroit; (2028) *Biene*, Studio Voltaire, London; (2017) *Djamil*, Lulu, Mexico City. Group shows (selection): (2023) *Der König ist tot, lang lebe die Königin*, Museum Frieder Burda, Baden-Baden; *Spark Birds*, Kasteel Wijlre, Wijlre; (2021) *Eurasia*, MHKA Antwerp; Amsterdam Sculpture Biennale; *Espressioni*, Museo Castello di Rivoli; *La Mer Imaginaire*, Fondation Carmignac, Porquerolles; (2020) *Crack Up – Crack Down*, Ujazdowski Castle Centre for Contemporary Art, Warsaw; (2019) *City Prince/sses*, Palais de Tokyo, Paris; (2018) *Wilderness*, Schirn Kunsthalle Frankfurt; *Class Reunion – Works from the Gaby and Wilhelm Schürmann Collection*, mumok, Vienna; *Metamorphosis*, Museo Castello di Rivoli; (2017) *La fin le Babylone*, KölnSkulptur#9, Cologne; (2016) 9. Berlin Biennale (2016).