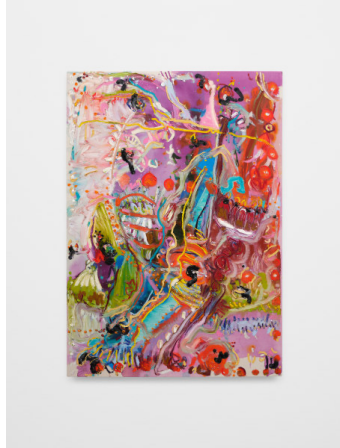


# ALTMAN SIEGEL

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Hiba Kalache  
*Embodiment*  
January 16 – February 1, 2025

Altman Siegel is thrilled to present an exhibition of new paintings by Hiba Kalache. This suite of paintings finds its origins in the *Kalīla wa-Dimna*, a book of fables dating back to the 13th century. Though the text was first composed in Sanskrit, titled *The Panchatantra*, in the year 200 B.C., it has been translated numerous times throughout the millennia. From Sanskrit to Persian, from Persian to Arabic, and more. Here, Kalache has translated the ancient text and illustrations yet again, through the act of painting.

These folk stories engage universal human themes with animal protagonists and narrators. Each story contains ancient wisdom and powerful political subtexts that remain relevant today. The strength of storytelling has been used over the centuries as both entertainment and propaganda, often to support those with power. Masked in childlike playfulness, these tales are as sly as the two jackals that romp within their pages. In these tales, the Lion is always the leader, always feared, and always obeyed. The enduring power of these associations can be traced up until and through the present moment. Bashar al-Assad's chosen name, for instance, translates to Lion in Arabic.

Channeling the frenetic energy within these stories, Kalache breaks away from her allegorical source material in pursuit of abstraction. These works are uncompromising in their anguished search for the inexplicable. For Kalache, the painterly process grounds the body in the present moment and also propels ravenous curiosity.

These compositions often begin on a horizontal plane. They are sprayed with water, and like seeds in a garden they grow. A layer of ink is laid down, then oil, and then in a subversive act, more water and ink. The resulting interaction of oil and water mirror the friction and tension these compositions provoke. From mind to body, and from hand to thought, Kalache's tireless approach is rooted in inherited movements. The traditions of cooking, crocheting, and other hand crafts were passed down to Kalache through her female relatives. Decades later those same gestures burst forth, with uncontrollable force onto the canvas.

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Kalache's primary focus in the studio is the pursuit of creating fearless, unrestricted, muscular works. Vibrant and intense in color, these pieces are part of a continuous whole, a ceaseless, breathless marathon of painting with the final outcomes serving as a pure conduit for Kalache's uninhibited spirit.

Kalache's work has been the subject of solo exhibitions at Lyles & King, New York, New York; Saleh Barakat Gallery, Beirut, Lebanon and The Running Horse Contemporary Art Space, Beirut, Lebanon. Group exhibitions include Institut du Monde Arabe, Paris, France; Consulate General of France in San Francisco, San Francisco, CA; Villa Romana, Florence, Italy; Beit Beirut Museum and Urban Cultural Center, Beirut, Lebanon; Newcomb Art Museum at Tulane University, New Orleans, LA; The Boghossian Foundation, Brussels, Belgium; California College of the Arts, San Francisco, CA; and the San Jose Museum of Art, San Jose, CA.

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