

For Simone Fattal's second solo show at Karma International, entitled *Paintings and Sculptures*, the artist presents a selection of paintings, watercolours, and sculptures.

The paintings were created while she lived in Lebanon before leaving for California in the early 1980s. The abstract works capture the peaks of Beirut's Mount Sannine submersed in colour, portraying Lebanese landscape that's essential to commemorating the memory of her time there. Consisting of vivid, biomorphic shapes, they also display a sense of mysticism that can be attributed to Fattal's interest in Sufi poetry and writing.

She further explores this mysticism in the black oxide words painted on volcanic lava stone. Phrases in Arabic appear as bold, black, and loosely written letters, such as the verse from the Quran *Nour Ala Nour* translated as "light upon light" or "Illuminated Letters", featuring disconnected Arabic letters. Such forms of expression are significant to her oeuvre and the examination of spirituality and identity in her work.

Through an on-going usage of watercolours since the 1970s, Fattal delves into the memory of her childhood in Damascus. The series comes from an investigation into a phenomenological understanding of objects, and how history and nostalgia are imbued on paper. Featuring colourful and abstracted fruits, flowers and gardens, the images narrate the preeminent role these elements play in entertainment and outings in Arab culture. As she navigates through lush gardens, she simultaneously connects to the bountiful ideas of how celestial Paradise is described in the Quran.

Her utilization of sculpture, too, references structures of experience and consciousness – as a means to inject symbolic relics into a particular environment, as well as to reflect upon Lebanese culture in dialogue with the role of poetry and literature in society. The chthonic figures express an interest in archaeology, combining the forces of war, lost history, and memory, and fulfil a biographical need to comment on today's political climate in the Middle East.

In this exhibition, Fattal's role as an artist exploring various mediums of painting and sculpture come together in one surge to decipher narratives of memory, politics of war, culture and spirituality. These themes coalesce and allow us, as spectators, to understand the importance of history as a whole, as she says, "history is made everyday."

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