

Sirine Fattouh
In the Middle of a Leap into the Void
Curated by Mayssa Fattouh

30 May 2019 – 29 August 2019
Letitia Gallery, Beirut



Sirine Fattouh, *Sleepers series*, 2019. Brass Sculpture coated with silver. 6 x 9 cm
Courtesy of the artist

Letitia Gallery is pleased to present Sirine Fattouh's first solo show in the gallery, entitled *In the Middle of a Leap into the Void*. The show curated by Mayssa Fattouh includes new commissions, light and sound installations, video, sculptures, photography and drawings, around the artist's relationship with dreams and in between states of the conscious and subconscious.

Through a series of drawings, a medium the artist is exploring for the first time, Fattouh illustrates child-like colorful characters, mostly as androgynous self-portraits, rendering snapshots of her vivid night dreams. The curious scenes led her to associations with artists that have been at the forefront of the conceptual art movement such as Duchamp and Manzoni, which she depicts in humorous homages. "Drawing helped me get over much of my anxiety with the city of Beirut and recurrent migration movements with my family during the civil war. I never showed these drawings and I was very happy that they played an important role in this show" says the artist. The interpretation of dreams is as ancient as first civilizations, with traces from the Babylonians with the Epic of Gilgamesh and The Book of Dreams, still preoccupying science, religion, psychology, philosophy and art. "Seeing Sirine at work on her drawings made me understand that it is the key that ties together the body of her recent work and led us to develop more work in the direction of a more intimate and personal exhibition" explains the curator.

Across the gallery space are meticulously crafted variations of silver heads, small enough to fit in one's hand palm, showing an abstracted face, a node to Brancusi's *Sleeping Muse*. Fattouh's *Sleepers* are void of eyes and ears but with a bulging nose and openings for the nostrils and mouth,

as a living breathing organism, appearing as peaceful fragile silver spheres containing well guarded secrets.

Facing them *Beirut Mutations* (2015), a photomontage from assembled film photographs the artist took around her neighborhood, is leaning on a wall. The dominant phantasmagorical black and white image shows an advancing chaotic cityscape consuming itself and its inhabitants with it. Fattouh's representation of the city stems from a place of ambivalence; having lived her childhood during the civil war between Beirut and France and completing her university studies in Paris, the artist returns to the city of her birth, a city that constantly oscillates in contradictions, between softness and violence, euphoria and deep crisis.

A cobalt blue light reverberating from a neon installation with the words Affect/Infect and sounds of a single drum fill the room in an airy presence building an intangible tension floating around. The viewer is probed to relinquish to inner intuition and examining notions of conciliation vs resistance to introspection. The drumming leads us to the end the space behind the landscape, *Another Night in Beirut*, a video iteration of her previous *A Night in Beirut* (2006) where the artist filmed a man in a white robe (El Tabbal) walking solitarily in the night. She manages to see him for the first time after years of hearing the sound of his drum interrupting her sleep during her childhood. This new video showing the same but now aged (Tabbal), this time riding a car, acts as a reminder of the acceleration of time and a mediator between the real and fictional spaces we juggle between within the constructed objects of our fantasy.

Throughout this multidisciplinary exhibition Sirine Fattouh invites visitors to drift together with the artist, in the middle of a leap into the void, as a decisive motive to challenge everyday conformism.

NOTES TO EDITORS

About Letitia Gallery

Letitia Gallery is a contemporary art gallery in Beirut focused on encouraging global engagement with contemporary art in Lebanon. Under the direction of Annie Vartivarian, the gallery has a strong ethos of collaboration and has worked closely with leading international curators from around the world on a project-focused model that looks to nurture the growth of artists from the MENA region as well as showcasing international artists in Lebanon. Letitia Gallery offers both local audiences and international visitors the opportunity to discover international artists and to gain a deeper understanding of the breadth of their practice through public programming that includes: talks, off-site projects, site-specific commissioning and supporting cultural initiatives in Lebanon and the region. Past exhibitions have included presentations by Radhika Khimji (OM), Hatem Imam (LB), Basir Mahmood (PK), Nathaniel Rackowe (UK), Ahmed Badry (EG), and Eileen Cooper (UK).

About the artist, Sirine Fattouh

Sirine Fattouh (b. 1980, Lebanon) is an artist and researcher living between Paris and Beirut. Her work examines the consequences of violence and displacements on people's identities. Fattouh has participate in solo and group exhibitions with Centre Pompidou (Metz), MAXXI Museum (Rome), Fondation d'Entreprise Ricard (Paris), Kaai Studios (Brussels), Beirut Art Center (Beirut), Mucem (Marseille), ZKM (Karlsruhe), l'Institut du monde arabe (Paris), l'Institut Français du Liban (Beirut) and the Thessaloniki Biennale of Contemporary Art, among others. Fattouh holds a PhD in

Visual Arts and Aesthetics from the University Paris 1 Pantheon-Sorbonne (UFR04) and a Master degree from the École Nationale Supérieure d'Arts of Paris Clergy (ENSAPC). She taught Visual Arts at the University Paris 1 Pantheon-Sorbonne and is affiliated with the Research Center in Visual Arts (Institut ACTE UMR 8218). In 2011, she was assistant curator for Middle Eastern Art at the Centre Pompidou in Paris.

About the curator, Mayssa Fattouh

Mayssa Fattouh is a curator and cultural practitioner interested in intersections of art and knowledge production as means of sharing, communicating and hosting work by artists on various themes: broken systems, environmental crisis, motherhood, and other topics that co-constitute human existence. She was recently guest curator at Casa Arabe Madrid with artist Sadik Alfraji for the show *Dark is the Tone of My History*; currently developing a sound art sample program and residency at La Place art space in Barcelona; guest of leading institutions in the Middle East and elsewhere such as Mathaf (DH), Tate Modern (LN), Tamayo Museum (MX), Fondation Boghossian (BR) and filled central roles at Al Riwaq Art Space, Bahrain and Katara Art Center, Qatar. Fattouh's writings appeared in numerous artists monographs and publishing platforms such as Filip Magazine, Ibraaz, Universes in Universe and is the co-founder of the temporary public art platform TandemWorks and an active member of the experimental online journal *continent.cc*.

Exhibition Details

Title: *In the Middle of a Leap into the Void* by Sirine Fattouh

Address: Letitia Gallery, Tour de Saroula, Hamra, Beirut, Lebanon

Website: www.letitiagallerybeirut.com

Dates: 30 May 2019 – 29 August 2019

Opening Hours:

Monday to Friday: 11:00 am till 7:00 pm

Saturdays: 12:00 pm to 5:00 pm

Admission: Free

Facebook: Letitia Beirut

Instagram: @LetitiaBeirut

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