

Press release

Vivian Suter

Snake Nights

and

Elisabeth Wild

LISL

15 November 2025 - 7 February 2026

Opening 14 November

Karma International is proud to present two new exhibitions: *LISL* by Elisabeth Wild and *Snake Nights* by Vivian Suter.

In 2007, Elisabeth Wild, then in her seventies, left Switzerland to join her daughter, Vivian Suter, who in 1983 had made her home in Panajachel, a small town that lies on the lake of Atitlán in Guatemala. It was not the first time she had moved: born Elisabeth Pollak, Wild left Vienna with her family in 1938, fleeing the Nazis, and settled in Buenos Aires in 1939, where her daughter Vivian was born in 1949. Wild's husband, Augustus, owned a textile factory for which Wild designed patterns (one of which is included in *LISL*). In 1962, due to the worsening political climate in Argentina, with antisemitism looming, the family left for Basel, Augustus Wild's hometown.

Following her mother's passing in 2020, Vivian Suter continues to live and work in Panajachel.

In the 2000s, Wild began making collages—at first occasionally and in small groups, then regularly, even daily. At a small table in her house, she leafed through and cut the pages of magazines on interior decoration, lifestyle, fashion, cosmetics, and art. She searched for motifs and colors, isolating and arranging them into collages that never exceeded A4 size. In the early years of her practice as a collagist, she would also make drawings based on collages. These drawings, juxtaposed with collages they represent, appear in Wild's exhibition, shown publicly for the first time. The show also features one of her oil paintings from her time in Argentina, where she produced studies from nature, portraits, and genre scenes, which gradually gave way to the surrealist, symbolic compositions she created primarily during her years in Basel.

The title *LISL* originates in an unusual work by Vivian Suter, likewise part of the exhibition. With blue felt-tip pen and paint, on a white sheet of paper with additional strips of paper glued onto it, Suter wrote down several versions of her mother's name: from top to bottom, *Elisabeth Wild* (on a smaller piece of paper glued to the sheet, visible in a clearing on a bright green background of many brushstrokes), Elisabeth (below, on the white edge of that piece of paper), *Leopoldine* (Wild's middle name she disliked-hence painted in blue and underlined in green, positioned slightly to the right and half a line higher than "Pollak"), and again *Elisabeth WILD* at the bottom of the

page, with “WILD” underlined in green. A thin and small metal stick protrudes horizontally from the upper right part of the collage-drawing, glued between two layers of paper and extending from the name “Wild,” reaching slightly beyond the edge of the sheet. The work functions like a map, where proximities, names, and colors correspond to some reality of the terrain mapped. Here, another kind of mapping is performed by the daughter—of her mother’s name, reflecting the story of her life.

Vivian Suter (born Viviana Aidé Wild) keeps painting in Panajachel, a daily practice as well: climbing up the slope to the studio perched on it, slightly above the house and the garden—or rather, the entire estate is a garden, inhabited and full of converging points, constantly changing as new plants appear while some others decay, and new buildings are added. Her current exhibition of paintings at Karma International, *Snake Nights*, borrows its title from a poem-montage composed of Suter’s handwritten and transcribed notes in Spanish, German, and English, published in the catalogue for her major exhibition *Disco* at the Palais de Tokyo (“Disco” being the name of Suter’s dog; the show started at MAAT, Lisbon and has now travelled to Carré d’Art in Nîmes).

The flyer for *Snake Nights* (like that for *LISL*, designed by Teo Schifferli) features a fragment of a 1950s tourist map of “Southern Mexico,” depicting the Old and New Maya Empires between Campeche Bay and the Gulf of Tehuantepec as a backdrop for air routes marked with red lines and airplane icons. The map also bears the names of ancient peoples of the Americas printed in red on their ancestral territories: Totonac, Zapotecs, Olmecas, Aztecs, Mixtecs, and Maya. The Spanish colonizers killed many of them and subjugated those who survived. The map once belonged to the Greek modernist painter Nikos Hadjikyriakos-Ghika (1906-1994), who used it during his travels in Central America, undertaken at the invitation of a U.S. government sponsored international cultural exchange program, thirty years before Suter arrived and fifty years before her mother joined her.

The oppression of Indigenous peoples in Guatemala continues to this day, new acts of violence occur, and discrimination and suppression of Indigenous languages, ways of life, and rights persist. As across Guatemala, Indigenous activists around the lake of Atitlán form networks of resistance, and Indigenous artists speak out against the precarious state of things through their work.

The display architecture for *Snake Nights* was designed by Tokyo-based architect Hiroyuki Kimura, following his display concept for Suter’s presentation in the loggia of The Okura Museum of Art as part of *What Is Real?*, an exhibition curated by Adam Szymczyk for Art Week Tokyo (5-9.11.2025). The wooden display structure was built by Stahl-& Traumfabrik AG.

- Adam Szymczyk