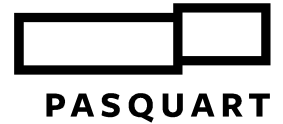


Biel/Bienne, January 9<sup>th</sup> 2022



KUNSTHAUS  
CENTRE D'ART

Press release

## STÉPHANIE SAADÉ

BUILDING A HOME WITH TIME

28.1.-27.3.2022

**Stéphanie Saadé (\*1983, Lebanon) deals in her work with themes such as memory and the individual experience of time, scale and references to place. She subtly influences existing objects with quiet artistic interventions and places them in a loose network of references. They function as personal *objets trouvés* that do not speak language but think it. The artist explores the nature of memory, historicity or the *condition humaine*, using transposition, displacement and metaphor to explore the relationship between the intimate and the universal.**

**The exhibition brings together new and existing works, including sculptures, fabric works, videos, works in glass and a video game, through which the artist develops different narratives around the theme of home. *Building a Home with Time* speaks to the slow process of forming a place, and at the same time the evolution and constitution of being, both of which are tied to each other and inseparable from the passage of time. Often her works place her personal life in scale with a part of completed history, but are also expanded by current events - such as the recent popular uprising, the devaluation of the Lebanese pound, hyperinflation, a global pandemic and a deadly explosion - which link the past and the present.**

The embroidered curtains of *The Encounter of the First and Last Particles of Dust* (2019/2020) are spread across three rooms of the new building, rhythmising the architecture and movement through the space. It is one of the central works in the exhibition, in which the artist, like a cartographer, surveys paths that she covered again and again as a child and teenager. Often, the fine lines of embroidery on the yellowed curtains that came from her childhood home visualise the same routes at different times. They are routes that changed repeatedly over time due to political events in Lebanon, whose distance became shorter or longer and which suggest the time between autobiographical events and history, or the impossible encounter between past and present. From this poetry of the intimate, the artist not only reconstructs her own history and that of Lebanon, but she plays with the temporal and geographical shifts to evoke a sense of disorientation in the face of her personal surroundings. Between the curtains are small works with an often ephemeral presence or works that give the impression that they have just been left there by chance. A key to the family home in Lebanon, stuck in a heap of soil from Paris, where the artist was living when she made the work, as if she wanted to make this tiny piece of land more “homelike”. The work thus enables the impossible convergence of past and present. In another place a minuscule sculpture of pure gold and diamonds is embedded in the floor of the Kunsthaus. Valuable and almost invisible, it can without further ado be walked on unnoticed by visitors.

The continuation of the exhibition in the rooms of the old building combines new and existing works, develops different narratives around the theme of home and traces memories of Beirut. Being at home can have a constitutive effect on the formation of one's own self: The materialisation of being takes place in the home, which enables the narration of the personal story. Things and spaces function as meaningful traces of past events. The pandemic with its lockdowns provided an opportunity to rethink the concept of home. The notion of travel, of distancing oneself from home, changed in the context of being locked in. Other forms were called for, for example travel via the sheer power of the imagination. However, the protective frame of one's own four walls was soon transformed into its opposite for the people of Beirut: After the explosion in the port on 4

August 2020, many lost their homes, fled the country and left their domiciles behind. Home once again became a utopian notion that had to be reconstituted. With personal relics from private living spaces and immediate surroundings, which Stéphanie Saadé takes out of their context and works on artistically, she leaves hints and traces of her own identity, of history, but also of human existence itself in the exhibition space. At one point, we encounter an inconspicuous white baby bib from the Lebanese brand “Apocalypse”, a name which makes us take notice. During the explosion of the 2750 tonnes of ammonium nitrate in the Beirut port dust and dirt were deposited on its white surface. The artist decided to preserve the dust, as well as the fold that formed on the material during the transport of the work from Lebanon to Europe. For Saadé these traces refer to the mass exodus from the country, which she herself had experienced. Or, we find in *Re-Enactment LB/ Jasmine* (2016) the memory of a familiar scent hanging in the streets and courtyards of the houses, where jasmine flowers are dried. Closely related to this is the work *The Smell of Distance* (2016), which does not materialise at all, but consists of the curator wearing a jasmine scent every day for the duration of the exhibition, thus making the scent of the flowers, that had already evaporated during the first days of the exhibition, perceptible again. In *Free Poetry* (2021/22), the traces of fleeting drawings in the dust on the windows of cars and abandoned houses materialise in floating glass objects. Playing with poetics and metaphors that build on stories, history and personal experience, the artist finds a delicate balance between what is ephemeral and what is tangible.

### **A Night in Beirut**

Parallel to her solo exhibition, Stéphanie Saadé is curating an intimate film programme in the foyer of the Kunsthaus with the Lebanese artists Sirine Fattouh (alone and in collaboration with Stéphanie Dadour), Marwan Moujaes, Roy Samaha and Maha Yammine.

### **Curator of the exhibition**

Stefanie Gschwend, Associate Curator Kunsthaus Pasquart

### **Publication accompanying the exhibition**

In the context of the exhibition, a publication with texts by Caroline Cros and Stefanie Gschwend will be published by Verlag für moderne Kunst in April (FR/ENG/DT).

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### **Artist's talk**

Thurs 28.1.2022, 6pm (fr) Stéphanie Saadé in conversation with Stefanie Gschwend.

### **Guided tours**

Thurs 10.2.2022, 6pm (dt) Stefanie Gschwend, curator of the exhibition

Thurs 17.3.2022, 6pm (fr) Laura Weber, art historian

### **Art at noon**

Fri 11.3.2022, 12:15pm (dt/fr) Short tour followed by a lunch snack by Batavia.

CHF 15.-, registration: [info@pasquart.ch](mailto:info@pasquart.ch)

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### **Press tour**

**Thursday 27.11.2022, 10:30am**

### **Opening**

**Thursday 27.11.2022, 6pm**

### **Children's preview**

**Thursday 27.11.2022, 6-7:30pm**

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