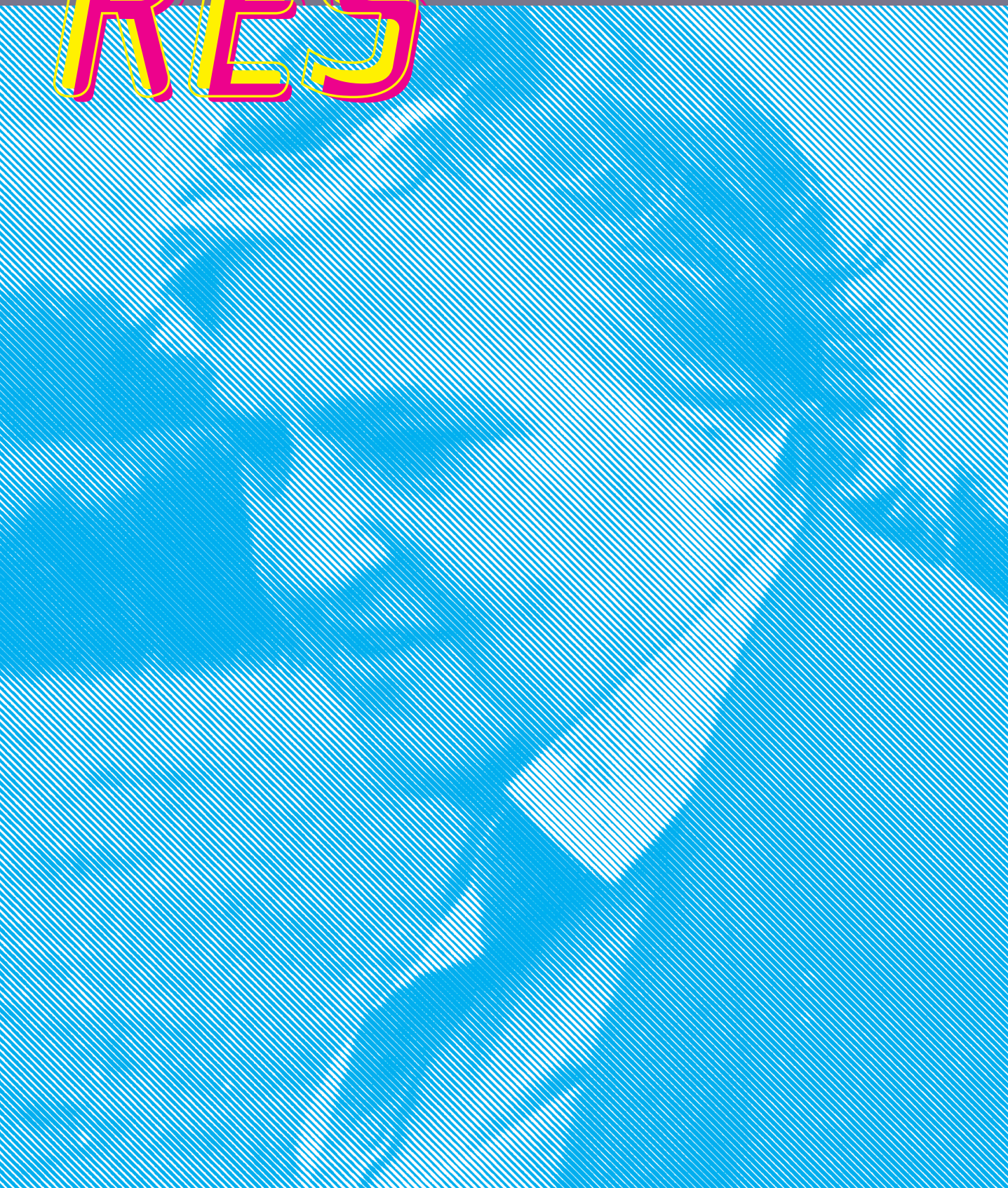


RES

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ETEL ADNAN
SPECIAL ISSUE

Guest Edited by
Hans Ulrich Obrist



Etel Adnan has many parallel realities. Born in Beirut in 1925, Etel Adnan is a Lebanese- American poet, essayist, playwright and visual artist who divides her time between Lebanon, France and the USA.

Having taught philosophy in California for fourteen years, Adnan went on to devote herself to painting and writing. A powerful voice in feminist and anti-war movements, Adnan has published several works of poetry and fiction. Among these are Sitt Marie Rose (1978), a novel set before and during the 1975-1990 Lebanese Civil War; Master of the Eclipse (2009), In the Heart of the Heart of Another Country (2005), and The Spring Flowers Own (1990). Her recent texts include the play Crime D'Honneur, and the extraordinary poem FOG.

When asked by RES magazine to curate an issue, I suggested a monographic issue on Etel with our new interview and many of her works.

Ever since we met for the first time in Paris three years ago Etel and I became friends and started to work on many interviews and projects; from the Serpentine Map Marathon for which Etel wrote, to the Serpentine Park Night to the recent Serpentine Garden Marathon with an evening of reading and music.

HANS ULRICH OBRIST

RECORDED FEBRUARY 25TH 2011, PARIS

CONDUCTED IN FRENCH, TRANSCRIBED AND TRANSLATED BY ALEXANDRA RIEGEL

HANS ULRICH OBRIST Louise Bourgeois' stopped traveling when she had reached her 70s, 80s.

ETEL ADNAN It's not exactly the same for me. I like traveling within Europe, when there are trains. From here to London, to Hamburg... But the planes... For my trip to Greece, this summer, I'll take the plane though.

HUO Oh Greece, your presence at the marathon was brilliant; I've read the text.

EA They were happy, and it worked fine. Greece is still very alive, it's true. – I am going to find « Seasons ». *(brings the book)* And here I have « In the Heart of the Heart of Another Country » in German.

HUO I have not read it yet. Has it just been published?

EA A year ago. There is a new one coming out with another publisher, in 3 months, named "Sea and Fog".

EA « Fog » is just being printed. And this is « Seasons ».

HUO Could you talk to me about « Seasons »? That's in relation to the *Point d'Ironie* you made.

EA I wrote « Seasons » in English, then it was translated into French. I did it for *Point d'Ironie*. How to say.... I like the seasons; it's as simple as that! *(laughs)* « Seasons », I wrote it in California, in Sausalito, where I live, it is very close to the ocean, the nature... For me, the air is like the ocean, like the fish in the ocean, we are in the air, we are in the climate. It affects us constantly – even if we don't stop and don't notice it That's the seasons! It's the ongoing, it's like that... It acts on your skin. But in this poem I wanted to mix... no, not mix... Our thinking is not linear, and is simultaneous to many thoughts, and more and more I like to mix what you call philosophy and what you call poetry. That's the new philosophy in the world! Since Nietzsche, there is no such thing as classical philosophy any more. It's thoughts melting – I speak, and I see this table. Both are melting.

HUO Today it's the table, last time it was the lamp!

EA That's true! It's what's inside of us! It's normal... Thinking is like a kaleidoscope; it takes all at once.



Etel in front of Mount Tamalpais in California
Credit: Simone Fattal Courtesy of the artist

HUO If we speak of « Seasons » Hubert Damisch wrote this superb book, one of my favorites, whose title is « A Theory of /Cloud/ -Toward a history of painting ». It's about history of art and the interest of painters, throughout the centuries, for clouds, while clouds are forms you can't seize. For art history it is a paradox: How can you paint a cloud if a cloud can't be seized? With seasons it's similar, when you write poems....

HUO Look, there is a kind of clouds on the cover.

EA Seems like, yes... It is true, there is a movement! Like clouds floating. -Take your time reading them. – But to talk about how I work: In general, when I am given a subject, I am conceiving it straight away. I am not waiting for it, on the contrary. If I wait, I lose it. For me, it is a small electric shock. When one asks me, « do you want to write about Zaha Hadid? », there is like an explosion in my head, where all I think about her is flooding in, comes to me.

HUO Did you already start?

EA Oh yes. I'd almost say I'm finished – the conception is done. I did it the same day. Well, no, not the same – after I've seen it, after I've visited the work. I was quite impressed. When I left the place and crossed the boulevard, I was tired to death. I've visited all at once. I was exhausted. Because it's coming from everywhere... A real cosmic architecture.

HUO So will it be a cosmic poem?

EA A text. You could call it poetry, but not really... In some sense though, you could say that thinking about Zaha Hadid is already poetry.

HUO And an interesting connection too, as just like you Zaha is very linked to calligraphy.

EA Yes, she knows about calligraphy. And she often perceives her first works as drawings, as lettering – very supremacist.

HUO Which is also true for your texts, as very often they are drawings. Just as the text for *Point d'Ironie* is in fact a drawing.

EA It is made as a drawing, that's what it is. Mind you, writing is already drawing. When you look at a manuscript written in a language you don't know, it is a drawing. Really: To write is to draw! We forgot about that. It's a trace of letters, of drawings.

HUO The first thing I saw of you, which made me discover your *oeuvre*, was at the Abu Dhabi Art fair, three years ago. There was one of your little notebooks. That's where it started. When did you start with the notebooks?

EA In 1964.

HUO Which was the first one?

EA The first notebook was on the poet from Iraq, Badr Shaker Al-Sayyab, a very big poet. He died in 1963. The biggest Arab poet of the 20th century. He was from the South, from Basra. Palm trees and mud. He was translated into English and French. He is the creator of modernity, but modernity is not the point. He is a big poet.

HUO Like the poets that Abdellah Taia cited yesterday, the poets of the announcements. He spoke of the pre-Islamic poets of Arabia whose poems were hanged on walls and trees, and the collective word for those poems is “Mu'allakat”. Are these poets important to you as well?

EA Yes. That poetry is still the most beautiful Arab poetry. There is such a sharpness of perception, such speed, such directness to that poetry that it would be difficult to best it. The poems are ultramodern poems, perception at its purest stage. And it's beautiful to know that they were written on animal hides and exposed in public spaces!

HUO It is interesting what Abdellah told yesterday, that it was like the access to another reality. These poems gave access to a different reality.

EA They are very very contemporary, they are not – exotic. No, no, because there is no religion or ideology behind them, it's purely about love, or life in the desert.

HUO There is a blur between art and life. Art and life are the same seen through these poems?

EA That's right. They are much more contemporary than the Arab poets centuries after. But Sufi poetry is something else. It came later, and it is great poetry too. But Abdellah did not talk about these poets.

HUO It is interesting, as you have the Sufi, after the pre-Islamic poets, and there is Modernity. You have Al-Sayyab ...

EA Mahmoud Darwish is a great poet. I met Mahmoud in 1972. I knew him from 1972 to his death. I even published with him: he translated some of my poems for his magazine “Al-Karmel”. Mahmoud is a great poet. Adonis is a big poet, but up and down, because sometimes... Adonis knows the Arab language so well that its beauty becomes a trap. But Mahmoud is constantly close to his feelings... to the existential. Living was difficult to him. He was a fragile man.

HUO There was something of a battle in him, no?

EA Constantly! He was in a constant sadness. But he reacted – he liked good food, going out, but.... He is a great poet like the Russian poets from before the revolution.

HUO At the same time as being a writer he was a public intellectual.

EA Absolutely.

HUO What is this notion of public intellectual to you? Someone said, when you gain territory, you might lose concentration. That's what the challenge of the public intellectual has always been about: If he starts talking to everybody, will there be a concentration on his work? May you be both?

EA You may be both. Jean-Paul Sartre was a public intellectual. Of course he fell, as they say, into journalism, but I should say... What is a public intellectual? I think it is an intellectual that changes history while he's still alive. Camus is an intellectual, young people referred to him, they referred to Sartre, they were waiting for each word. When I was young, what I learned from this was that one can be moral without being religious. I learned that from Sartre. That's important. Because I did not like religion, so I was looking for something. And Sartre says: You are responsible, not because God wishes so, but because you are human. For me that was very important. That's what Sartre has been teaching to a whole generation.

HUO Did you meet him, Sartre?

EA I once saw him, without meeting one another. I saw him sitting in a café. I did not dare to speak to him. – It's that, a public intellectual. Is Agamben a public intellectual?

HUO I suppose his work could be, I am often citing him. Yesterday Abdellah told me he is now writing in Morocco, with the revolution rising... Since we met last time, the world has been changing!

EA Upside down!

HUO I was very curious if you wrote about that?

EA No... Where could I? The world has lived an overthrow, first because the idea of revolution in the Occident is linked to Europe. For here, it is a revolution raised in the Third World. More than that, from its part we despised most. We knew least. Everyone said: it's a dead world. We say: Egypt is touristic, that's it. And all of a sudden, there is this pacific revolution, not organized by an ideology, like the French revolution was; it's not the intellectuals, like in the Russian revolution. The French revolution was popular, but it was the intellectuals who gave the energy.

HUO Who gave the pace.

EA Here, nobody directed this revolution. It proved that the concept of a people exists. Peoples exist, it is not a metaphor. They really do. And that's new. And this happened where it was least expected. Nobody ever thought it could happen... It was thought Palestine may... But it is not Palestine that changed the Arab world. It's peoples that did not even know they existed, they mattered.

HUO Tunisia and Egypt in fact.

EA Tunisia and Egypt. Who would have thought?

HUO What's the role of Wikileaks and the Internet?

EA Internet made it possible, it was the medium. Internet was the technology that made this explosion possible. But really it was the people; for once the intellectuals only came after.

HUO For example Alaa El Aswany, the dentist-novelist I know well, he raised his voice in Egypt.

EA No, no! They were all flabbergasted, the intellectuals were stunned. They did not have this in their hands. That's good, intellectuals are important, but they don't have the last word. Really good! They get to be human again! *(laughs)*

HUO We are in pure self-organization.

EA Absolutely. Indirectly, it proved that Marxism in some way was right to insist on the people. Even if the people have little or not at all participated in Marxist ideology.

HUO What do you think will come next? There is a chain reaction going on, Yemen, Libya...

EA Nothing is granted; there will be attempts of recuperation, even from the West. The West is sly; it's them who formed, trained the police of those countries. France in the first line. France formed the police of Saudi Arabia, Ben-Ali, who knows: the Gulf, etc. Now that revolution has taken place, they pretend being in favor of this revolution. But the old guard will wake up. Not only the West: China, Russia... The world is a perpetual war, nothing is won for sure. The world changed, it will never be the same. But reaction will adapt to that. Look at Gaddafi and Mubarak, what did they do? They tried to stop the Internet. *It's a perpetual war. But it's a new phase.*

HUO Which brings up again the question of the role of literature, the role of poetry. Which role did poems play in this new system?

EA Poets do always have a role to play by the fact that poetry continues. Not a precise role. The role comes afterwards; it's the readers that define the role. It's not the poet. I don't think Hölderlin thought of everything that has been written on him afterwards – it's simply impossible!

HUO Yes, you once said in an interview that books have 'a life of their own'.

EA A life of their own.

HUO One cannot determinate their fate.

EA No, I don't think there is a precise role. Mahmoud Darwish had a role because he wrote his poetry, and by following this poetry, one created the role. It's not him who creates the role, it's the reader. I do not favor poetry by the way, I believe that everything plays a role, be it positive or negative, sometimes a positive role may even end up being negative... everything has an influence. Even the big criminals have big influences! From my side, I do not favor one human expression more than the others. I believe the world is equilibrating throughout the movements of everything going on.

HUO It is polyphonic?

EA It is polyphonic, every voice counts. Like it or not. Even a voice that is bad today can involuntarily have positive consequences. You do not know.

HUO Gerhard Richter told me once a painting leaves his studio he cannot control what will happen to it. It's like a child that has grown up, you cannot control his life." So, when a poem gets out of here...

EA You cannot even control the impact of a conversation between the two of us! Everything leaves a trace. We talked about traces yesterday...

HUO Abdellah talked of traces... That was beautiful, wasn't it, "the traces when you're in the desert"?

EA I really liked when he talked about traces. EVERYTHING leaves traces, but when you're in the desert, it's much more important, your survival depends on traces. In the desert, trace is life. Or death. But traces are everywhere. Just that in the desert, all is simplified. The caravans, they look for traces, because the wind covers the traces. Traces that survive mean that you will survive. They even know how to read traces. They depend on them. For instance, by looking at a camel's traces, they know if the animal is male or female. Amazing! They know if an animal is female by its trace. The slightest trace tells so much to them, because their life and death depend on it. We on our side depend more and more on abstract information. And in the desert, one depends thoroughly on the human body. In my mother's house, there was no fridge when I was a child. When my mother went out to buy some meat, she would smell it: when the meat was spoilt, she knew we'd be ill. Today we don't use our senses any more to survive. We read expiration dates on our food boxes. *(laughs)* It's true; there is a loss of the senses and their functions in the contemporary world.

HUO More and more contemporary artists appeal to senses – olfactory, tactile...

EA That's all gradually disappearing.

HUO They try to have it come back?

EA That is a bit artificial, maybe to resolve ecological problems we will get back to the normal human body. Through the Greens, ecology will oblige us.

HUO But ecology, says Jeremy Rifkin in his new book, forces us towards a new empathy. The world can only be saved if there is empathy. What do you think about empathy?

EA Empathy is the revolution that took place in Egypt and Tunisia, that's empathy.

HUO So it is a revolution of empathy?

EA Absolutely. Something has been passing from one to the other. Exactly like that: electricity that has built up and has put millions of people into movement. The word 'empathy' is the key.

HUO And do you think a revolution can also happen in Lebanon, or is it unlikely?

EA It's less likely in the Lebanon. The most likely in Lebanon is civil war. This country is so tribal, someone says yes and that's enough for someone to say no. It's blindly tribal. There is no place for empathy; it will be stopped by tribal brainwashing. For the time being at least. But there might be a revolution where you least expect it. In America maybe...

HUO ... or in London or Paris or as Alain Robbe-Grillet wrote, in New York!

EA ... yes. It seems totally impossible, but who can tell? One false word may be enough. But before all that, there was a preliminary movement, which was the fall of the Berlin wall. Everything started from there! There, it was not ideology; it is very close to what happened in Tunis. Don't you think?

HUO Yes, because it was a pacific revolution. In 1989, not a single one died.

EA Pacific and not programmed.

HUO And sudden.

EA It is not intellectuals who made this. No ideological parties either. It was really – an accident. That's the beautiful thing about it.

HUO The chain continues, since yesterday they've been talking about the revolution in Cameroon, it extends to Africa.

EA Yes, there is an encouragement. What Obama said and has not done: «Yes, we can». That's where it comes from! This sentence is very important. Even if it is hypocritical, it is a key sentence. You know, the big American presidents left key phrases: Roosevelt said: All we have to fear is fear itself. Kennedy said: Ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country. And Obama said «Yes, we can». This phrase made his success.

HUO This phrase may become emblematic of our times.

EA Yes. The revolution of the wall... One must not forget about the Berlin wall, it is important! There too, the intellectuals were stunned. I am in favor of the intellectuals, but there is no need to idolize them! They are just one part of the world. An element of it. These spontaneous revolutions have brought out the value of the ordinary human being. That's something the intellectuals sometimes forget.

HUO Common people. It was extraordinary to see how self-organized everything was. For instance, a photographer took photos and showed them to journalists staying in Egypt during the revolution. She made a picture each time she saw someone with a self-fabricated helmet. The variety was extraordinary, like a piece of art.

EA Did you see these photos?

HUO Yes. For instance, many people fabricated helmets with plastic water bottles, others with footballs.

EA So you saw those photos?

HUO Oh yes, on her portable.

EA Was it on the Internet?

HUO No. But look at this variety. That's where you see in fact the whole creativity in this revolution.

EA Yes, it's masses, but everyone has gone there as an individual. It is not a panicked or hysterical movement. The individuals created this mass. It's wonderful. They stayed individuals.

HUO Of course, with Libya, we are in another scenario, that's not a pacific revolution.

EA Nobody knows what Gaddafi will do. I hope that the revolution will succeed, but much more people are dying than elsewhere. Plus I think that part of the army will stick with Gaddafi. When Mubarak realized the army was not going to help him, he gave up.

HUO Do you have contact with poets or writers from Egypt or Libya?

EA Not much. There are no poetry magazines in the Arab world any more... You know, poetry is the favorite form of expression in the Arab world. But between censorship and economical problems, poetry, and intellectual magazines have disappeared. On top of that, the people are dispersed – many Arab poets are no longer in a same place so that they can meet regularly and publish a good magazine.

HUO Like your life, which is a life of '*displacement*'.

EA They are everywhere, and they have not created a magazine on the Internet either.

HUO That's something missing. There should be a platform on the Internet for Arab poetry.

EA They should do it.

HUO Were there interesting poetry magazines in the past? Which one was the most interesting?

EA The most interesting one was in Beirut, in the mid-50s, the magazine SHI'IR, which means 'poetry'. It was a Lebanese of Syrian origin, Yussef el Khal, who had been living in the States, and spoke also English, who founded this magazine. Adonis helped him from the beginning, – he keeps saying he founded it, but that's not the case. Adonis founded a magazine later, *Mawakef*. Yussef el Khal was also a poet; he translated T.S. Elliot into Arabic, *The Waste Land*, and some other American poets.

HUO So he made this magazine? This Yussef el Khal?

EA He was the creator.

HUO Is he still alive?

EA No, he died 15 years ago.

HUO And you, have you participated in this magazine?

EA Oh yes.

HUO What did it look like?

EA It was small. I have some copies here.

HUO Could we have a look at them?

EA I will show them to you. It's extraordinary. That's number 25.

EA Yes. Here is a poem I tried to translate. Ah, and there is a poem by Badr Shaker al Sayyab, which I translated with a friend to make an artists' book. I wrote the translation. So there you have photos, people... That's Sayyab. How handsome he was! But he did not even have to eat. He died very ill, at the end the poets paid for his hospital and such, but it was too late. But Shi'ir is an essential magazine. Look, that's an issue from 1963. *[Goes to get another copy]* When you look for something, you find everything but not what you look for!

HUO Isn't' that wonderful? The bookshelf's overflow!

EA All these are numbers of SHI'IR. – This here is a poem of mine in Arabic translation. It was in 1966, in summer. Each year, or every other year, I used to go to Beirut, from California. Once, I was walking on the streets and there was this art gallery, because Yusuf al-Khal had opened the first gallery for modern painting in Lebanon. He is a multiple creator. He called it 'Gallery One'. So I was in front of this gallery, I entered, he was sitting, I chatted with him in English, and he said to me: «What are you doing?», I said, « I am a teacher and I write». He said « Send me your poems so I can study them.» And he said «You must come to Lebanon to work with us.» He was the first to... As I don't write in Arabic, many Arab poets say: 'Etel is not Arab, she does not write in Arab.' That was always painful to me, it touched me. So Yusuf integrated me into Arab poetry. Before ever reading a line. It changed my life. It is very important. One speaks of identity: an identity is not always a geographic territory. My identity was not wanting to be rejected by Arab poets.

HUO As you told me last time, identity is a choice.

EA Yes. And I wanted the Arab poets to accept me. So, Yussef, without even reading me, accepted me... He has been generous. For me, *the public intellectual* is the generous intellectual; this is what makes him public. The one who wants to discover the others, who is not only interested in his production but who is happy when somebody else produces.

HUO To give the world some tool boxes, in a certain way. The public intellectual – that brings us back to Foucault – gives a *toolbox*.

EA Exactly. For instance, Yussef was a poet himself. But when he discovered a new poet, he was happy. He forgot his poetry. He rarely reminded people that he was a poet himself.

HUO Which brings us back to curating, that's what curating tries to do.

EA There you are. That is a generosity. And the real *curator* has this generosity. This is what makes a public intellectual of him. An intellectual is not only someone who writes, it is someone who is a catalyzer of thinking, of art, who creates History, a part of History: the intellectual History. This requires generosity. That's the word. And he got that.

HUO So you are in the art world and in the world of literature, you have always been in the two worlds. Your work has first been perceived and received in the world of the poets.

EA I wrote poetry very young, but I did not publish, or just one or two things.

HUO Is it *Moonshots*, the first book?

EA Yes. Before, I wrote about the sea, but that was never published. It is somewhere in my stuff.

HUO What book is it?

EA *The Book of the Sea -Le Livre de la Mer*. I made another book on the sea two years ago, funny. – No, but I was known as a painter before. I started painting in 1960, my first exhibition, but in America. But still. The artist's books with Arab poetry, that worked in the Arab world. And I really became a poet during the Vietnam War. I wrote poems against the Vietnam War.

HUO Political activism.

EA That's right. That's how I started writing poetry.

HUO And that's *Moonshots*?

EA No. They are not my best poems, it's poems about the moon, it's *clumsy*. But my real poetry started in 1962, 1963. I wrote against the Vietnam War, by coincidence. When they published it, I thought, 'Well, I am an American poet'.

HUO If *Moonshots* is 'clumsy', which book would you consider your first to be 'valid'?

EA I started with « *From A to Z* ». I also wrote in French two poems before « *From A to Z* » "Jebu" and "The Beirut-Hell express". – I don't know if you heard of a Swiss poet, Jean Beguelin? I lost track of him in the 60s. He was a little like Antonin Artaud, a very disturbed boy, very poet. And I had written a poem on Palestine: « Jebu ». I sent it to him, because he had been sending poems against the Vietnam War for the same magazine as I, and he sent my poetry over to Pierre-Jean Oswald, a publisher in Paris. So we did this book, Oswald got into trouble, because they said the poem on Palestine was anti-Semitic, poor guy, when everyone knew he was French-Jewish, and left-wing. It was translated into English and Arabic. It is my first book in French that is totally politic. "Jebu" is a historical/mythical figure that I created out of the fact that before the Hebrews arrived in Canaan/Palestine, the land was inhabited by a canaanite people called the Jebusites. It's in the Bible.

HUO Which publisher was it?

EA *Les éditions Pierre-Jean Oswald*, in Paris, the book came out in January 1973.

HUO And “Jebu” is followed in the publication by another long poem, “L’Express Beyrouth-Enfer”?

EA Correct.

HUO So it is a premonition of the civil war? Nassim Taleb, in his book *The Black Swan*, says his father was a minister, I think. And that for Beirut, being the stable Switzerland of the Middle East, nobody saw coming what happened... What was the sign for you? Of course, poets always have the more sensitive antennae...

EA There was Black September in Jordan, the harsh repression of a Palestinian attempt to take over the country. I am talking of 1970. Though I was living in America, I used to come often to Beirut during the summers and I saw the hatred, I saw the adversary conversations, so pro-Palestinian on one side, so anti-Palestinian on the other. You see? I saw that the Lebanese would try to do the same, try to get rid of the Palestinians living as refugees in Lebanon, and that, as Lebanon was sharply divided on the issue, it would create civil war and destroy the country. That's why I called the book *The Beirut-Hell Express*, like a train that drives to hell. I wrote that in 1970, just after *Black September*. Some five years before the civil war. I sent the poem to Jean Beguelin, who sent it to Oswald, and the book came out in January 1973. With *Jebu* written after 1967, and the *Beirut Hell-Express* written at the end of 1970, I predicted that it was the destruction of the Arabs that was happening. And this small book is totally unavailable, out of print. I explained to you where “Jebu” comes from. Jebu – the city of Jerusalem, and its ancient people, the Jebusites. So I invented the King, Jebu, who comes back to defend Palestine.

HUO So it is a fictional character.

EA But based on history. Today I am for peace, but at the time I was more militant, and I wanted to tell the Israelis “you did not found Jerusalem, it was already founded by the ancestors of the Palestinians, the Canaanites. It's in the Bible.”

HUO *From A to Z* is published and also *Sitt Marie Rose*, one of your classics. I wanted to ask you to tell me a bit about this.

EA *Sitt Marie Rose*, I wrote it in 1976, and it was published in Paris in 1977. Then, in California, my friend Simone started a small press, “The Post-Apollo Press”, in 1982.

HUO So everything changed with Simone's press in 1982.

EA And you know why? In 1982, when the Israelis invaded Lebanon, Simone's mother sent her 10,000 dollars. And Simone said, ‘it may be the last money I get from my family. Maybe the Israelis will keep Lebanon just as they kept Palestine.’ Then she said, ‘it's not much money for the future.’ But she always loved books, and so she published *Sitt Marie Rose*.

HUO Could you tell me about the genesis of *Sitt Marie Rose*? How you got the idea...

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EA I met this woman, Marie Rose Boulos – I saw her, she was not a friend of mine – in a feminist meeting in Beirut. But a simple feminist, that is of the kind 'women should be paid as much for their work as men' etc. But she impressed me, because she was violently passionate. Her name was Marie Rose Boulos. Then, some year after, the civil war started in Lebanon, and we went to Paris. Simone had rented a room, but I was alone in Paris for a while. One day, I bought the newspaper *Le Monde* in the afternoon. And I read four lines: 'Marie Rose Boulos, director of a school for mentally retarded, has been kidnapped by the Phalangists in Beirut'. I knew she was dead. I was so angry. I was alone. There was a mattress on the floor, a table, a chair and my typing-machine. And I wrote this book in one month, off the reel. That's my personality, everything happens right at the start. I am not a poet or a writer who accumulates, quite the contrary. It's when it starts that everything happens in my head. And gradually, it disappears instead of extending. So I always work under an interior pressure. I don't always work – but when I work, there is something exploding inside. That's the way it is. Each one follows his personality.

HUO A very different kind of book, also one of the first with Post-Apollo-Press, is *From A to Z*. Then you wrote *The Arab Apocalypse*.

EA When I wrote this, it took me a *year*.

HUO In *The Arab Apocalypse*, there were some notes and a few drawings. Here, there is a closing cover; one has the impression that it is like the artists' books. Can you tell me about *The Arab Apocalypse*?

EA In *The Arab Apocalypse*, the signs are my excess of emotions. I cannot say more. I wrote by hand, and, here and there, I put a word, I made instinctively a little drawing, a sign. I kept those signs for the printed book. I did not add them. They came during the writing, they're part of it.

HUO And *From A to Z*? It is a series of poems, an encyclopedia.

EA *(laughs)* This is what happened: I was in New York, in a chic apartment, in front of the United Nations. I had a friend, she gave us her keys. She was in Paris. And by coincidence, at MoMA, I ran into a friend of mine from California. A young man who lives in Canada, who had written about the fabrication of the atomic bomb, he was militant in his own style, *against an atomic war*. He had come to New York for a few days, and then there was this nuclear accident at Three Mile Island in Philadelphia. They had radiation leaks. He saw me by chance, we took a coffee, we talked a lot about the atomic bomb, and he said: "Come with me to Philadelphia, we will do interviews".

HUO Wow, that was the idea with the interviews!

EA Yes. He said he was going to take photographs and I would do the interviews. But I told him no, I did not want to approach the nuclear cloud. Then I felt guilty. He said, 'No problem'. He went there, interviewed all those people, made all these pictures, and made a book of it. His name is Robert del Tredici. There is a musician, David del Tredici, that's his brother. Me, I felt guilty, I was afraid of the cloud. The friend in whose apartment I was staying had a grand piano and I had the program of the Japanese Centre on 49th street and 1st avenue, it was very close, I was at 50th street. At the UIN Plaza Towers, I stayed on the 37th floor. In one of the towers... Truman Capote lived there and

Bobby Kennedy – this lady-she was the owner... So, on this grand piano and on the program of the Japanese Centre, I wrote these poems, as if the atomic war had taken place in New York.

HUO All this before Chernobyl...

EA And before the Twin Towers...

HUO It was pre-postapocalyptic...

EA It's true; it was way before the apocalypse. Maybe it is because I see these apocalypses... because my first thought is always explosive. It is not cumulative.

HUO Is that true for the novels and the poetry alike?

EA It is true in my personality.

HUO True for everything.

EA True for everything. To work on a project, I have to get into it immediately, or I lose it. For Zaha Hadid, you see, I took notes the same day as I visited the building, and the day after, and my paper was practically written right then.

HUO As for Zaha Hadid, who is an architect and an urbanist, we could speak of your relation with these disciplines. At a certain point you speak of this idea of being afraid of houses, at the same time you wrote about a woman; that's very connected to Zaha Hadid.

EA « Women are houses ».

HUO Could you tell me about your link to architecture and urbanism?

EA First of all, urbanism is constantly around us. There is no social life without urbanism. So what is urbanism? It is the environment. You can't escape. Even a small village; in the desert a tent is already the beginning of an architecture. And three tents are urbanism. That's our surrounding. So we are constantly influenced – or aggressed, or enchanted –by urbanism. We are in it.

HUO Immersed.

EA Architecture is the individual house. And maybe men as well, in the sense of mankind, but anyway women, because women are houses! They are the houses of the babies; a woman's body is already a house. Biologically.

HUO Louise Bourgeois made 'women's' houses'.

EA I never felt at ease in a house. I am a human being looking for the outside. It brings me back to childhood. My mother was of quite a nervous person, and the house was hers. She made us feel, to my father and myself, that we were but visitors of her home. It was not on purpose, but we lived

at her place, not at ours. And when she cleaned up, we were not allowed to move, we had to watch out not to break anything... We were at her place. So I ran away from houses. I feel well in a café, in a train... For me, houses are windows. When I enter a house, I head towards the windows. I like looking outside. Maybe because, since I have been a child, she's been putting us outside.

HUO You prefer trains to a house, finally.

EA Somewhat, yes. Or cafés. Doing so I am looking for a house. Because it is an instinct.

HUO That's interesting, that is linked to Zaha Hadid's pavilion, which is not really a house.

EA Oh no, that's something else. I am going to write this: It is not a house at all.

HUO Carolyn invited you to Documenta, what are you going to present at Documenta ?

EA I will make some paintings, but I feel like making some video work as well.

HUO That's your project not yet put into film about the sea, no?

EA Yes, I will make it. I wanted to do it for Venice, but it will finally be for Documenta.

HUO Is it finished yet?

EA No. But Carolyn asked me to write a small book. I told her, I do not want to write about painting, because I wrote already "Journey to Mount Tamalpaïs", an essay on my paintings and the Californian nature where I lived most. She then asked me: «What are you concerned about currently?» I said: « That nobody speaks about love in this world. It is a word, it makes you feel uncomfortable, or anxious – or it is commercialized. They speak more easily about pornography than love, am I right?» She said, « Why don't they talk about love?» I said «Because nobody wants to pay the price for love.» I don't speak in terms of money, but there is a price to everything. She said to me « Write about this». I liked that.

HUO Is that the book?

EA The Cost for Love We Are Not Willing to Pay. "I admire this", she said, "write about this".

HUO It is also because you have been working on this bridge between art and literature for so long that we are thrilled that you gave us the title for the seminary. How did you get the idea for this title?

EA It came to me all of a sudden. Because I saw you were interested. Yesterday, by the way, Abdellah understood, a flow got installed. First, physically, this man was sitting beside him, that was already a passage. Which then became intellectual, they chatted. I like this idea of a passage, like passing something, giving, like a document you deliver. It came to me all at once.

HUO The idea of passing something, transferring.

EA Right. We do not pass ourselves, but a message. In the expression « passing something » there is also the idea of confiding something to the other.

HUO Generosity, again.

EA Yes, passage, that can also be transporting oneself. Passing is a donation, giving something.

HUO Just as *Point d'Ironie* is a gift: With Agnes b we print 100,000 copies and give them away for free, it is going to be your publication with the highest circulation.

EA That's true, at present no book whatsoever is issued at 100,000 copies.

HUO It's printed on very thin paper.

EA That reminds me that my first poem, my very first poem in America, was on a paper like that, a folded 4-pager, distributed for free. They distributed poetry for free, I sent a poem, and it was accepted. I've got it here. (*goes and gets it*). I became a poet thanks to this magazine. Look, distributed for free. Just like your paper. It is the S-B Gazette, S and B for the two cities Sausalito and Belvedere, in the San Francisco bay. That's where I wrote for the first time. Here is the poem, look : Against the Vietnam war. « The ballad of the lonely knight in present day America ». – My first American poem. [1963]. And it was the same idea as yours! It is the first poem I have ever written in the US. The publisher was a man who was against the war; he worked for the City Hall of San Francisco. He made this on the printing presses of the City! (*laughs*)

HUO Beautiful. Even the stamp is still there.

EA And here is the date of the year, and the picture. It is from 1963. That means the poem has not been written before. You see the drawing? There is a date.

HUO 1961.

EA That means he took the picture, me I wrote it in 1963. Interesting, no?

HUO It's fascinating! So for *Point d'Ironie* it's poems and drawings related to the seasons of the year, so it is linked to your new book *Seasons*.

EA It is a selection of poems from the book, and translated into French. Written by hand by me.

HUO Last question, in your biography I read that you also design *tapestries*.

EA True, yes.

HUO I never saw it – so you make tapestries?

EA I don't make them, I design them. I have one here. You want to see it?

Art | Basel | Miami Beach

thanks you for a great ten years.

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HUO It is big!

EA It is made with natural dyes, natural colors from plants. You must see it – quite a construction! The Orient and its carpets. I had it from there. I made many of those, and sold them. But it's very expensive to make them. And tapestry is of no interest to architects today.

HUO It became rather exceptional, but many painters make them, no?

EA At the time it was fashionable, today much less so. Less because they are so expensive to make. It's a whole story –with all those different things it's as if you have several lives. And there is one in Beirut. This one has been made in America. The other one in has been made in Aubusson I prefer this. But the man who produced the tapestry you're seeing died, he died young. – I have many drawings for tapestries that have not yet been made.

HUO Non-realized tapestry...

EA Plenty of tapestries... But I did realize many and sold them. Sold, gone. When you look at it, between Simone and me, we have four professions: We make art, we write, she has a publishing house, she is a sculptor. We never have enough space.

HUO But it's fantastic you have all these parallel realities, no? *(laughs)*

EA That's life, one does things.

HUO I wanted to ask about “Jennin”. I found this book and we have never talked about it.

EA It was written during the invasion of Jennin, in the West Bank, by the Israelis. I lost my head and I wrote it just like that. I was sad, about the lost houses... I wrote that poem in two days. As I said, I write under impulse, in anger – a mix of emotions.

HUO It was a moment of big destruction.

EA Of big destruction. Of despair!

HUO And In the Heart of the Heart of Another Country?

EA No, that took several years. Each part was published at separate times. The second text was written 25 years after the first.

HUO It is almost another A to Z – there is the church, home, politics, again like in an encyclopedia.

EA Yes, it's like a biography in some way.

HUO So many thanks. What a magical interview!

Untitled, c.1995-2000, oil on canvas, 22.5x30cm



Untitled, c.1995-2000, oil on canvas, 32.5x41cm



Untitled, c.1995-2000, oil on canvas, 40x50cm



Untitled, c.1995-2000, oil on canvas, 40.5x50.5cm



Untitled, c.1995-2000, oil on canvas, 20x25cm



Untitled, c.1995-2000, oil on canvas, 45.5x54.5cm

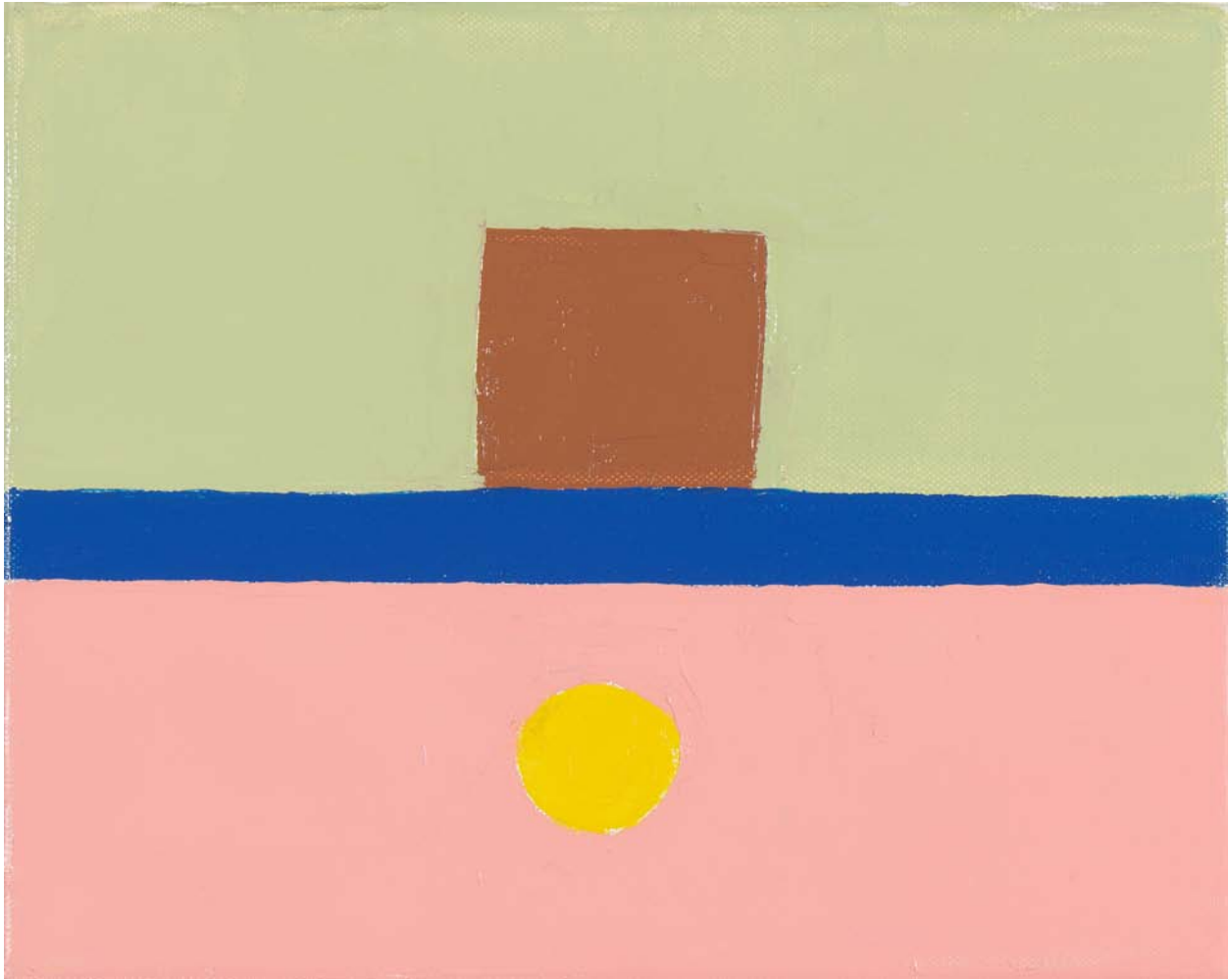


Untitled, c.1995-2000, oil on canvas, 45.5x54.5cm

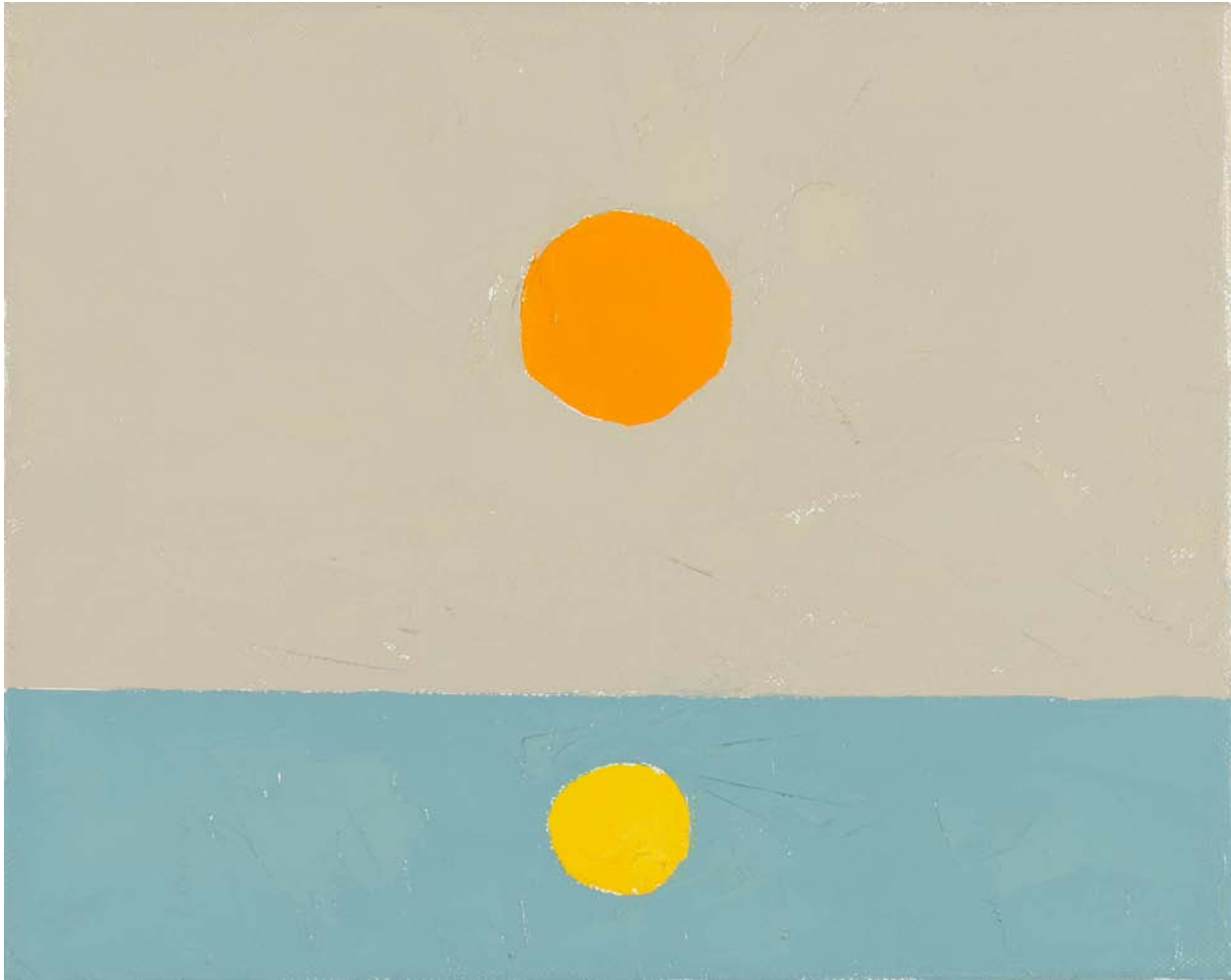


Untitled (Beirut), 2010, oil on canvas, 25x35cm





Untitled (Beirut), 2010, oil on canvas, 24x30cm



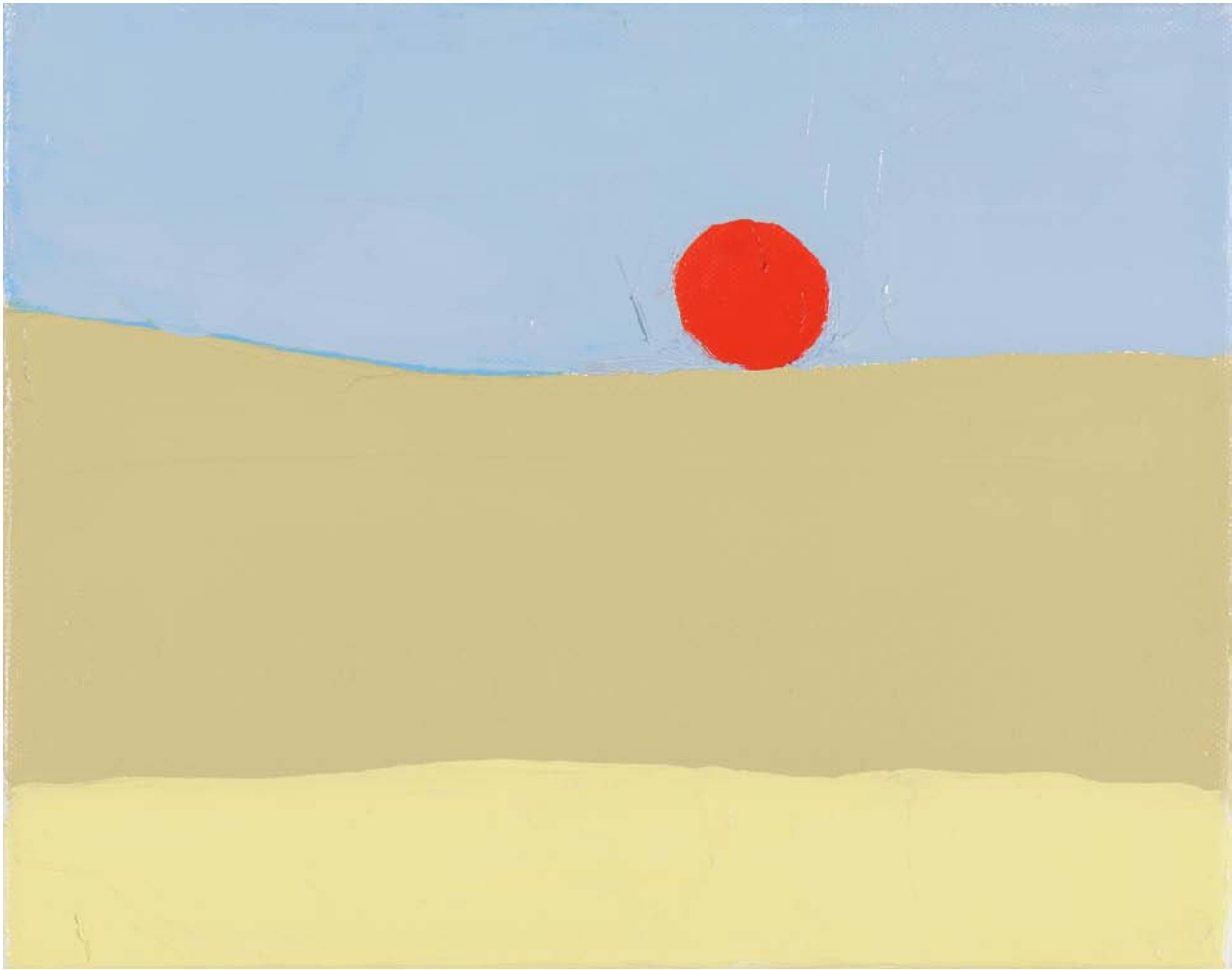
Untitled (Beirut), 2010, oil on canvas, 24x30cm



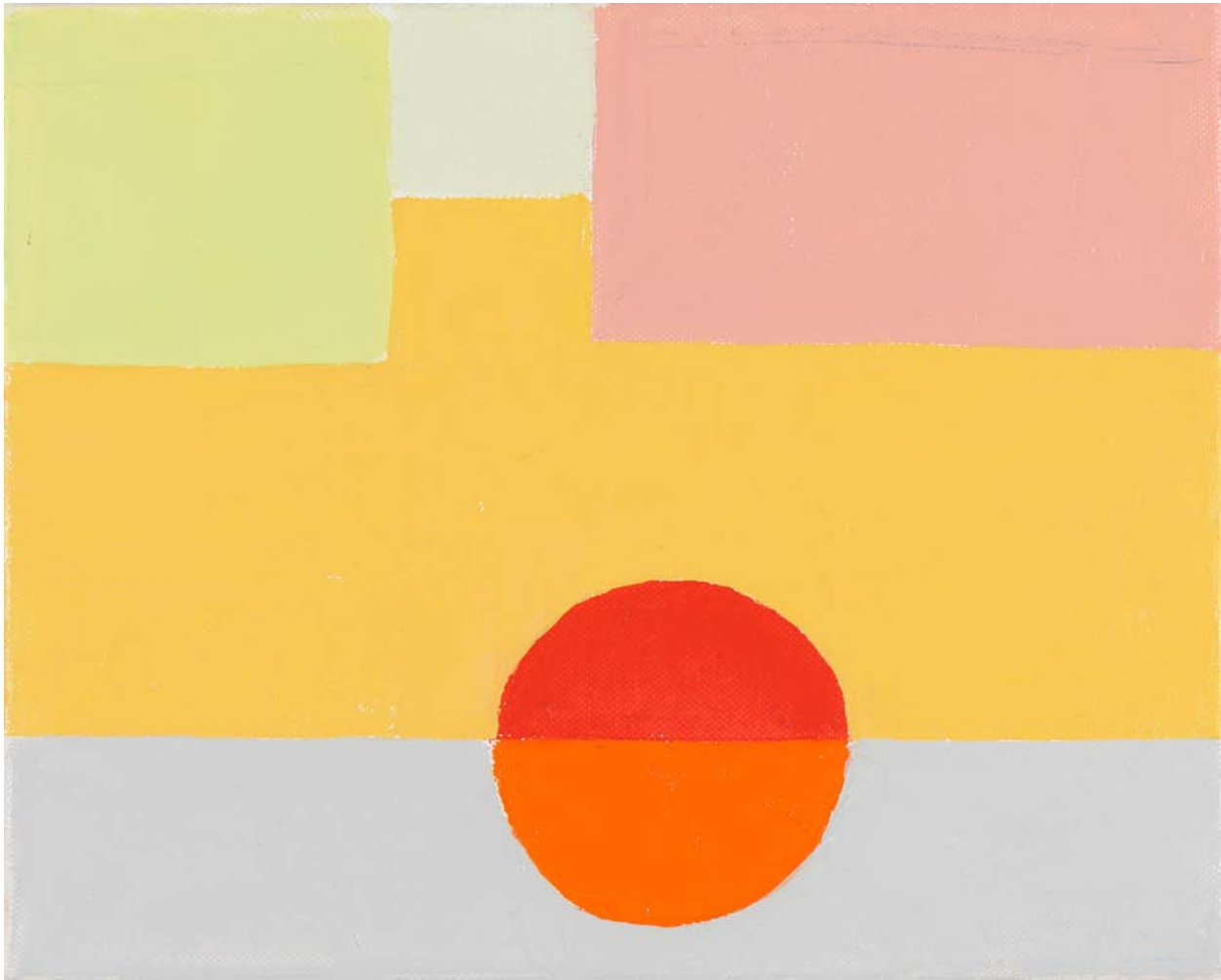
Untitled (Beirut), 2010, oil on canvas, 24x30cm



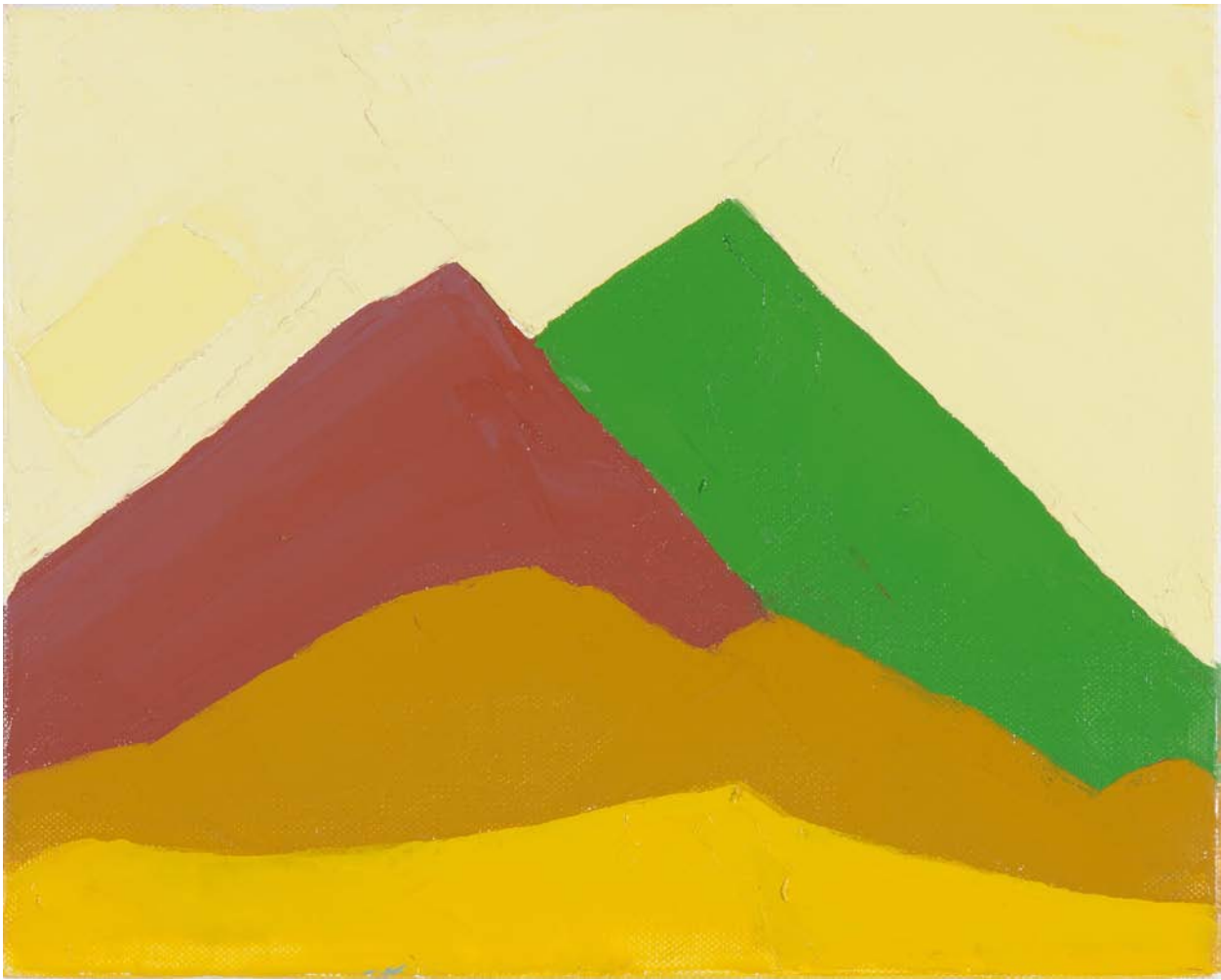
Untitled (Beirut), 2010, oil on canvas, 24x30cm



Untitled (Beirut), 2010, oil on canvas, 24x30cm



Untitled (Beirut), 2010, oil on canvas, 24x30cm



Untitled (Beirut), 2010, oil on canvas, 24x30cm



Untitled (Beirut), 2010, oil on canvas, 20x25cm



Untitled (Beirut), 2010, oil on canvas, 20X25cm



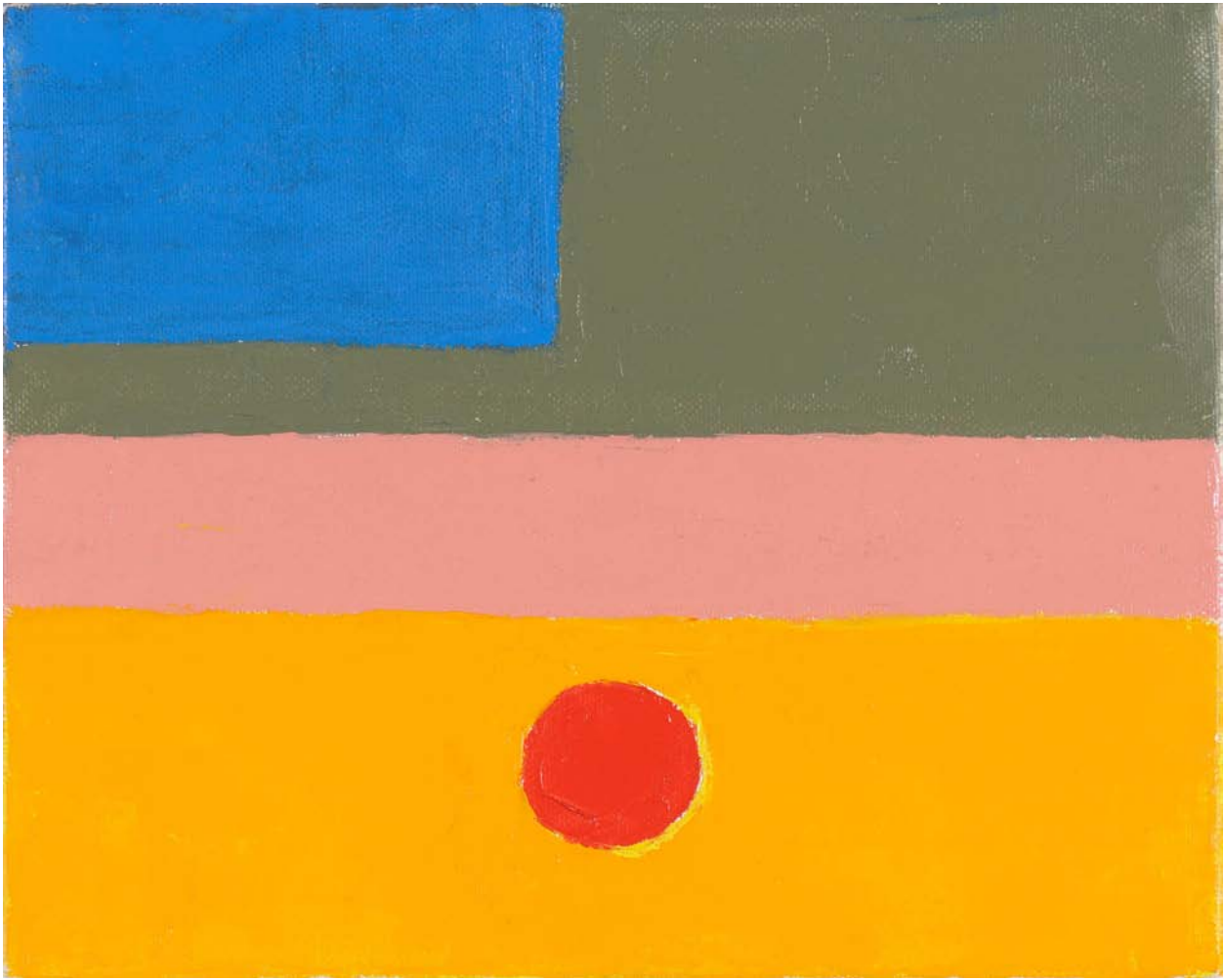
Untitled (Beirut), 2010, oil on canvas, 20X25cm



Untitled (Beirut), 2010, oil on canvas, 20X25cm



Untitled (Beirut), 2010, oil on canvas, 20X25cm



Untitled (Beirut), 2010, oil on canvas, 20X25cm



Untitled (Beirut), 2010, oil on canvas, 25x20cm





All other images courtesy of Sfeir-Semler Gallery, Beirut & Hamburg

The Mona Lisa, also known as La Gioconda or La Joconde, is a sixteenth-century oil painting painted on a poplar wood panel by Leonardo da Vinci in Florence, Italy during the Renaissance period. The painting was acquired by the French government and is held in permanent display in Louvre Museum in Paris with the title, "Portrait of Lisa Gherardini, the wife of Francesco del Gioconda." The painting displays a sitting woman, though a mystery as to the true identity of the woman still remains. The ambiguity of the subject's facial expression, the monumentality of the composition and the peculiarities in the atmosphere of the landscape have all contributed to continuing interest about the painting. The painting has become widely known, caricatured, and researched, and is considered to be one of the most prominent pieces at the Louvre Museum. Leonardo da Vinci began working on this painting in either 1503 or 1504 in Italy's city of Florence. Da Vinci's assistant, Francesco Melzi, wrote, "... After toiling over it for four years, he left it unfinished...." This was not unusual behavior for Leonardo, who often left his works unfinished in his life. He intended to continue working on this particular painting for three years after his trip to France, and he did. Da Vinci was invited to France by King François I, and continued working on the painting there. This progress was directly related to Leonardo's assistant Salai, who would become one of Da Vinci's heirs. King François bought the painting for 4000 écus and displayed it at Chateau Fontainebleau under a glass pane. The painting was later moved to Palace of Versailles, and, following the French Revolution, it was moved again to Louvre. Although the painting was kept in a safe for a short time and placed in the Tuileries Palace, the painting eventually returned to Louvre. During the Franco-Prussian War in 1871, it was carried to the "Brest Arsenal," the French military zone. There has been much speculation regarding the scenery and the subject of the Mona Lisa. Da Vinci, for example, is thought by some to have painted only the best features of the subject. The painting was found to be at 21st century standards. Several eastern art historians, for instance, Yukio Yoshida, have suggested that the landscape must have been inspired by the art of Chinese artists, however, this claim was severely contested for lack of evidence. Until the nineteenth century, there were no concrete theories to explain the mystery of the Mona Lisa painting, but then the emerging Symbolism movement gave way to a stream of ideas about the symbols considered to be found in the painting; in 1867 critic Walter Pater claimed that the painting depicted secret feminine symbols. Mona Lisa is associated with Lisa del Giocondo, who was a member of Gherardini Family and the wife of merchant Francesco del Giocondo. The painting was thought to have been commissioned for the birth of Mrs. Giocondo's second son, Anrea. Yet the identity of the sitting lady in the painting was not finally determined until 2005, thanks to a note written by Agostino Vespucci found at the library of Heidelberg University. Other experts had proposed many other women as the subject of the painting. Although Da Vinci's mother, Caterina Buti del Vacca, was among the proposals, most experts claimed this argument to be unlikely. Other suggestions were the Duchess of Milan, Isabella of Aragon, Cecilia Gallerani and Duchess Costanza d'Avalos (said to be La Gioconda). These are only some of the countless suggestions made as to the identity of the subject. Dr. Lillian Swartz from the Bell Laboratories alleged that Mona Lisa was a self-portrait of Leonardo. Her allegations were backed by the results concluded by digital analyses made on the resemblance of Leonardo da Vinci's face and the subject's facial features. It was also proposed that the woman in the painting was named by da Vinci. These suggested identities were estimated according to the proposals made by Giorgio Vasari in his biography of Da Vinci. The allegations are based on a sentence written in the biography by Vasari: "Leonardo undertook the painting for Francesco del Giocondo, his wife." (in Italian: "Prese Lionardo a fare per Francesco del Giocondo il "tratto di mona Lisa sua moglie"). After Da Vinci's death, the painting was owned by Leonardo's assistant Salai, who named the painting "La Gioconda" in his personal papers. Da Vinci initially used a pyramid design for the painting; the woman was to be composed roughly in the shape of a pyramid. The folded hands of the painting's subject were to form the corners of the pyramid. Her chest, neck and face at the top of the pyramid are much brighter than her hands. Certain light actually shows that a geometrical drawing lies underneath the painting. Da Vinci painted a regular sitting lady in his painting, although at that time painting a sitting lady was not a common practice. Da Vinci clearly demonstrated a distance between the sitter and the observer. The armrests function as a border between the observer and the sitter. The woman in the Mona Lisa painting has become a part of art history due to the "ambiguous smile" on her face. The secret of the Mona Lisa smile was solved with the help of a three-dimensional laser. Mona Lisa's mystery smile was declared to be the smile of a mother recently given birth to a child. Experts at the National Research Council of Canada have drawn up a report after a 3D colored laser scanning of the painting upon the request of the Louvre Museum management. The research revealed that Mona Lisa had covered herself from the neck below with an extremely thin or transparent veil, worn at the time by soon-to-be or new mothers. Experts say that the painting was made in dedication to Mona Lisa's birth of her second son. Using an additional infrared reflection technique, the experts recognized that the subject was not wearing her hair loose, but up in a bun. Until then it had been thought that her hair fell on her shoulders. The hair bun surprised art historians, because tying up one's hair in such a manner would indicate a woman of bad virtue. It is thought Mona Lisa had good social standing and was the wife of a silk merchant. Further, Da Vinci's painting had not revealed any brush marks. The painting has an extremely thin layer of paint in one single place. No fingerprints have been found on the painting, yet certain experts believe that the artist painted the work with his fingertips. Despite these mysterious aspects of the painting, some experts suggest that the painting does not in fact include any enigmas, as was suggested in the novel The Da Vinci Code, but that the work merely manifests the skill of Da Vinci. Leonardo Da Vinci was born out of wedlock in Anchiano near the town called Vinci. He was the child of young notary Messer / Ser (meaning Master) Piero da Vinci and possibly a farmer's girl, Caterina. Da Vinci's real name was Leonardo di ser Piero da Vinci meaning "Leonardo the son of Master Piero from Vinci," when modern naming customs had still not prevailed in Europe. The artist signed his works as "Leonardo" and "da Leonardo" (i. Leonardo). The use of "Da Vinci" as a name, which was popularized by Dan Brown's bestselling novel The Da Vinci Code, is wrong. Although the fact is not backed by concrete evidence, Leonardo's mother Caterina is considered to be a Middle Eastern Jew working under his father Piero. His father married his first wife, Albiera, in the same year Leonardo was born. As a baby, Leonardo was taken care of by his mother. When his mother was forced to marry another man and moved to a nearby town, Leonardo moved to his grandfather's house, which Leonardo's father rarely visited. At times, Leonardo went to his father's home in Florence. He was accepted into the family because his father had no children from his first marriage, but he received no love from his family members except for his uncle Francesco. Leonardo lived in Vinci until he turned 14, and then went to Florence in 1466 with his father after his grandparents died one after another. He had no chance of being admitted by a university since admission of illegitimate children was forbidden. Leonardo drew skillfully even when he was a little child. When his father showed Leonardo's drawings to the famous painter and sculptor Andrea del Verrochio, Verrochio accepted Leonardo as an apprentice. Leonardo's training in anatomy and the human body began with this apprenticeship. Verrochio insisted that his pupils comprehend anatomy. During his apprenticeship, Leonardo seized the chance to work along famous artists like Lorenzo di Credi and Pietro Perugino. He not only learned to paint in the workshops, but also to play the lute, which he was very skilled at. He left Florence in 1482, and was commissioned by the Duke of Milan, Sforza. In a letter written to the Duke but never sent, Leonardo explained how he could build bridges, weapons, ships, bronze, marble and clay sculptures, in what has been called the most extraordinary application letter of all time. Leonardo worked for the Duke of Milan for seventeen years until the city was conquered by the French in 1499. He not only engaged in making paintings and sculptures and organizing festival for the Duke, but he also made buildings, machinery and weapon designs. He focused on works of architecture like building churches, castles and chimneys, as well as on nature, mechanics, geometry and flying machines. He carried out anatomical work and trained students between 1485 and 1490. His field of interests was so wide that he often failed to complete the job at hand. Between 1490 and 1493, he grew accustomed to recording his ideas and drawings in a notebook. These drawings and papers were collected in museums and private collections. One of the collectors, Bill Gates, collected all of Leonardo's writings on hydraulics. Leonardo left Milano in 1499 and began looking for a new nation, and traveled in Italy for sixteen years. He had several commissions, most of which he left unfinished. It is said that he began working on Mona Lisa, known today as one of the best paintings in the human history, in 1503. After he completed the painting, he carried it with him on all his trips. He returned to Florence upon the news of his father's death and struggled with his siblings for the right to inheritance, but this fight was to no avail. Only his beloved uncle left all his estates upon Leonardo. In 1506, Leonardo met the 15-year-old son of a Lombard aristocrat, Count Francesco Melzi. Melzi became his favorite pupil and remained with him until Leonardo's death. The young man, known Salai, whom Leonardo accepted as a pupil at the age of ten in 1490, also remained with Leonardo for thirty years, but failed to make any significant work of art. Leonardo lived in Rome between 1513 and 1516, and took part in several projects developed for the Pope. He had continuing interests in the anatomy and physiology fields, however, the Pope had forbidden him to work on corpses. Leonardo's interest in the human body was based on his observations for figure sketches. He had found that observing the external of the body was insufficient to draw faithfully all its living parts and movements, and wanted to comprehend the inside of the body and perceive the relationships between bones, muscles and tendons. As his anatomy works began to take up more and more of his time, it became a whole field of interest in itself. He approached the human organism as an excellent machine whose operating principles were open to his curiosity. Articles by Galen, the physician who paved the way for the era's medical science, barely satisfied his curiosity. He began to ask all the questions that popped in his mind. Leonardo clarified what he saw by drawing. His drawings in cross-sections, elaborate viewpoints, and various angles made the details of anatomy come to life. His drawings are extremely explicit despite the fact that certain details are faulty. For his drawing of a baby inside its mother's womb, he did not perform a dissection on a human corpse, but instead observed cows and adapted the results for human anatomy. When the Pope prohibited Leonardo from dissecting human corpses, Leonardo began examining cattle hearts to continue his research on the circulatory system. Born as an illegitimate son, Leonardo was therefore deprived of the education privileges entitled to nobles. Unable to get his hands on classical Greek articles in the first years, he embarked on a re-discovery of his surroundings with an unquenched curiosity and fierce intelligence, and seized the opportunity to develop his own perspective on all subjects due to an approach he called "tabula rasa." Leonardo drew attention with his skill and natural talent for drawing, and proved to hold a unique talent in the completeness of his art. A general evaluation of Leonardo's drawings from his first years to last years seems to suggest that he was looking for the secrets of life through these observations of objects and organisms. Certain drawings and notes in his notebooks reveal that he was the first person to perform autopsies with a scientific and systematic approach. He examined the ways of human beings and all living creatures, especially birds, according to his curiosity about flying, as well as the functioning of "machines." He then observed the effects of old age on these organisms and managed to draw conclusions on cause and effect relationships - for instance, the consumption of rich foodstuff clogged arteries in the course of aging - almost five hundred years ago. Sigmund Freud wrote, "The truly great Leonardo remained a child in his life in multiple ways; actually, we might say that great men could keep a part of their childhood alive. He remained playful even when he was grown up, another reason that he seemed awkward and puzzling in the eyes of his contemporaries." Freud suggests that Leonardo never gave up his childish and inquisitive perspective. The artist directed his powerful gaze, penetrating beneath the masks people put themselves with, frequently directed towards his fellows of the same sex. His scrutinizing, dissecting and undeterred curiosity and passionate view characterized the people of Renaissance Italy into an unforgettable "gallery of types." A large group of these human drawings were sketches made for necessary figures to realize certain compositions, and for portrait commissions. Another group were the sketches of portraits of citizens of Renaissance Italy: Florentines, Romans, Milanese, people from the artist's social milieu, employers, their wives, papacy workers, the faces of all beautiful, ugly, old, young people - men and women from all classes of society. Renaissance Italy at Leonardo's time was a crumbling with disruption, corruption, and war. While he was looking for a pattern, Leonardo brought his engineering talents and expertise for weapons and war machines forward in application letters where he listed his qualifications. It is no surprise that in such an atmosphere, Leonardo's male subjects drew attention with their creepy, aggressive and grotesque features in human portraits. The earthliness of the beauty of the female subjects depicted in the portrait commissions and religion-themed paintings are found to be extremely idealized. Important exceptions to this conclusion are of course Portrait of a Grottesque Old Lady, thought to be copied by Francesco Melzi from Leonardo in 1490-91, and Grottesque Female Sketches estimated to be painted around 1492. However, in general, one can say that the women in his paintings, such as the Mona Lisa, The Madonna of the Carnation, Annunciation, Portrait of Ginevra de' Benci, Virgin of the Rocks, Portrait of an Unknown Woman, The Virgin and Child with St Anne, and Portrait of Cecilia Gallerani (only with an ermine), have all been idealized with smooth and radiant complexions and fully symmetric and geometric facial proportions. One cannot assume that the women rulers and other powerful men of Italy married much younger women than themselves, and consider the models of Leonardo's models were young and beautiful women. The inner organs of the human being in Leonardo's anatomy drawings are more closely interconnected than they are in reality, this reflects his concept or belief in the deep complexity of human nature. Leonardo believed that all parts of the body had emotional functions. For example, tears came directly from the heart, the center of all feelings. According to this idea, one can say da Vinci gave expression to the faces of the people he observed according to his opinion of them and to the role he gave them.

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O désert de Syrie monte, par
ses jeunes empereurs à l'époque
tranchante de Rome! Son sel
s'est fondu dans l'Euphrate.
Plus loin, au Nord, le printemps a
planté des
vergers. Des
frénétiques
au vent. Les
recourent
couloirs
l'air pour voler.



fleurs
chuchotent
oiseaux
à des
d'air à même

leurs ombres proviennent de l'âme.
Il est nécessaire de ne pas rester
immobile. L'histoire mange encore
la pourriture. La brume ne se
lève pas. Le voyage est de la famille.



Saisons.

Elle a détruit le printemps à venir.
Description de la perte: bouteilles
alignées, un fond de vin. Parfois,
dox
œil.
poison. Et il pour
l'impossibilité de
démultipliée par



l'amour
des

barmaid.

météorologiques

Tôt le matin.

d'autre pour combler
le cerveau. le courant

on le détourne au

on entend voler

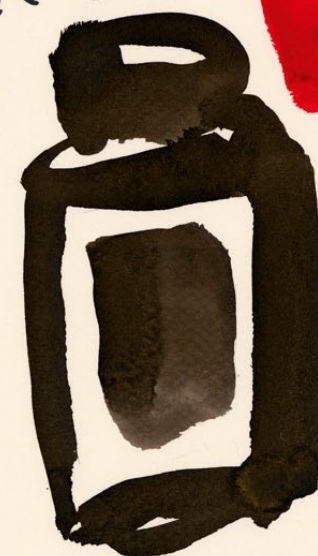
mouche. C'est

miroirs. Une

les actualités

postées

Rien



parce, mais
crépuscule.
une

Peut-on briser la mémoire comme
on brise la pierre par la pierre?
la mémoire at-elle
pour fonction de décomposer,
puis de ramasser les
morceaux et de les
rassembler, mais

jama is

Un
est-il

Un

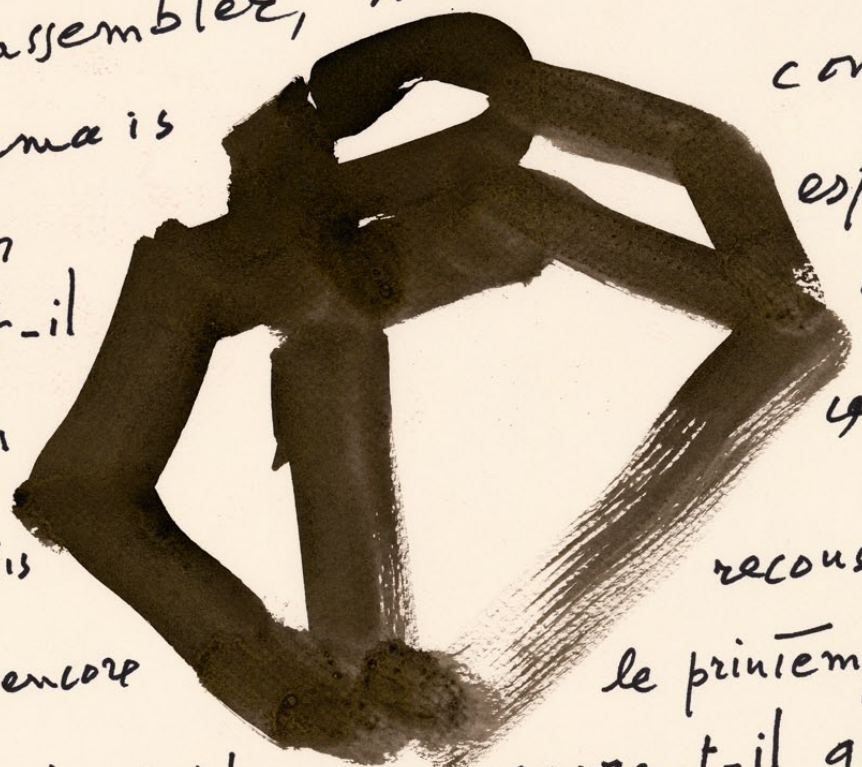
mais

il encore

de la Californie, saura-t-il que

la
représente
la pénétration

des
yeux
par les
arbres en fleurs?



maladroite
ment
comme avant?

esprit fracturé
démultiplié?

cerveau affairé

recousu aimera-t.

le printemps du nord

musique seule
la pénétration

yeux
arbres en fleurs?



Tout. Mais ça recommence.

SEASONS - SAISONS.

Il y a des écritures imperceptibles.
la forme triangulaire de
l'amour s'applique à la vision.

poussée d'être.
la
pression



s'applique au temps. le plie. la
combe se transmet à l'âme qui
tente de s'extraire de l'abîme en
redoutant de tomber plus bas encore.
la Grèce vole à la rescousse.

Ce n'est pas la Terre qui est en
expansion mais le pouvoir, et il arrive
qu'ils se déchaînent. En se consumant, il
consumera
cette planète turbulente
jusqu'aux volcans.



laisserons-nous, en
quittant nos chambres
une forme privée
de corps?
d'esprit? l'esprit
serait-il plus

omniprésent que la chair? Si oui,
ils ne sont pas homogènes
mais étrangers,
quoiqu'interdépendants.



Peu-on se fier à la réalité. Il y
a des trous dans lesquels on tombe
pour mourir ou commencer à vivre.

L'esprit voyage à la vitesse de la lumière. Sans doute, encore plus vite. le théorème n'est pas long. les objets font ressortir l'infini de la vie.



pour tout,

l'Être, est phénomène; il ne peut donc se penser. la pensée est aussi, dans son rapport à lui, et en elle-même, un phénomène. c'est un événement magnifique.



Le printemps comme l'amour est dangereux. Et l'amour survit aux amants.



Une saison pour Dionysos, enfant-dieu né avec un défaut, existence d'élocution. Doit son existence à l'orient. Son ascendance née dans le sang. Chaque coucher de soleil reproduit

sa naissance.

ciel!

la

Il ne

l'Être, Tragique.

a mangé du poisson.

Dieu se fait violer

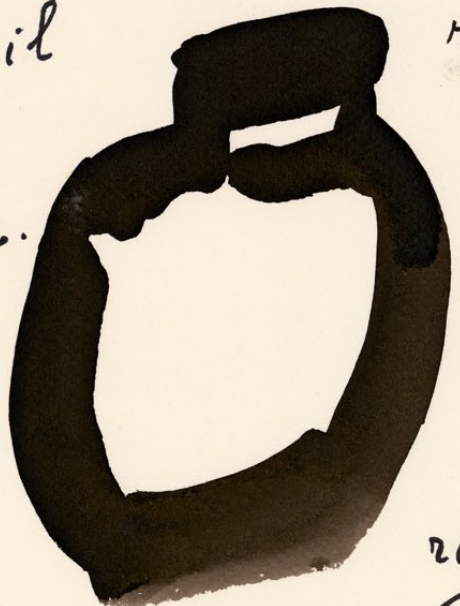
par femmes démentes,

sa

perdue résonne dans les montagnes

tapissées de neige. Zeus vieillit.

Son petit-fils agonise.



Regardez le son langage: dans à l'imperatif.

reste rien de

Quelqu'un

jeune

des

virginité



POEMS FROM 'FOG'

ETEL ADNAN

When the mind stares at itself what does it see? A vanishing blur? The inner demon's return?

Every moment a starting point, thinking on the move, traveling. Is thinking pandemic?

The universe could have taken myriads of roads other than the one it took; it's exiled too. "Indigo horizon pure whole unbroken sight seeing it", thinks, says and writes" Leslie Scalapino, a cup of coffee in her hand.

Not seeing rivers is also another way of dying. Hours are lining up in cinematic motion.

Plants are eager to break rank. The sage and the verbena have grown taller than the rest. Patients are scared, dreaming to escape.

Trees are imitating the government by always bending under the slightest pressure. We're prisoners of the concept of disaster.

The pubs have closed. The alleys are impracticable. A stream by the road, singing, a streetlight fading in the fog. Mind staggers over its productions. Ideas, foggy, love, impossible.

All there's left to do is to listen, over the radio, to a base-ball game. We have ran out of taboos. Killing has become a big bore.

Birds fly in the great emptiness which is their heart's repetitive desert. Skies, waves on waves move directly into one's hand. An eclipse can bring illumination to the soul.

After debilitating ecstasy, the twilight. Sirens are sending warnings against an impending flooding. Let's stay within the coming night.

All the bulbs are in position, and functioning. There's nothing special to report. At least for a while, Earth will remain a planet.

Does this cold body collaborate with the pain it feels, or is it obliged to bear it?

The beauty experienced was an illusion. All it did was accelerate that particular heartbeat that records our fall.

Cold+cold is an algebraic equation: the snow's whiteness traps the line of blood that's running through life's fire.

To turn over in one's bed is often like changing hemispheres. We reached the possibility of immanence but it's not sure that the species will transcend itself.

The lassitude will linger, in the body, in the weather. The weather is the lover. A whole range of red mountains is lit by the sinking sun, and has become an immense electro-magnetic system.

You and I met on the day of Creation. The cataclysm is still in us. We may come back as grass, be eaten. A trail will remain, a path, the next storm.

A fog, massive, sumptuous, is stronger than the passage of a thousand angels. Recurring.

Love burns like coals in a long stormy night.

Grass grows short of flying. The roots' resilience, the pressure. Adding days on days.

Living on the moon may well turn out to be worse than being where we were. An emptiness with no future.

Here, we hear the future knocking on the windows. That's not a thing to be dismissed.

In sadness there's more energy than in this affirmative existence. This routine.

A ghost arrived with a handful of roses. "No other flower is a flower", he said. He left them on a table and quit; the more the place darkened, the more they glowed.

A smell of iodine pervades the sea. Salt in the air. The past drifting with the breeze. The faraway Sierra Nevada is giving signs of restlessness, and the coastline is shifting aimlessly.

The desert is an open uranium pit. Deliriums mushrooming. You will contemplate death, says the Book of Revelation.

Is making love mentally to a dead lover making love to death? Does it come from the desire to rupture time and create a chasm into which one will fall and find the lover intact, although not breathing?

Then, at a certain hour, everything will smooth out. The horizon moves forward in softness, then fades. In the process we lose our way to a dream.

Rupture of one's veins. Blood flowing "inland". Death's meaning revealed as lack of shelter, of light.

Love: cosmic absolute black center radiating...

Girls who witnessed the mother's suicide never trust the world. No man will later attract them, no woman will keep them. Once in a while they will establish with the night secret relations that no one else could ever imagine.

I'm listening to something that wasn't meant to be heard ...

Measuring light's intensity is akin to figuring out an ancient Hopi's attraction to his habitat. We cover trees with crowns, and try to convince mountains that they are sacred Indian chiefs. The Colorado river has stories to tell.

The fog is licking the ground and stretching over the hills. Slowly, crawling higher. Picking up light at its edges. Moving. Nature not keeping archives.

I want the glaciers of the highest mountains to share my miseries. I want a sudden spring.

To be is to have been and intending to be. It's not dissimilar to driving a car. Everything we do is in analogy with what we are.

To take pleasure in the void is an operation of erasure, a denial of the ocean's power, or one's preparation for the time when ocean will engulf all that there is.

A sky without a single cloud isn't necessarily blue – it can be sheer light. We wish not to disappear before having had at least one illumination. But illumination is like that sky, with no shadows, no mercy.

So what about fog? Total fog is total illumination. We're driving with no visibility down a winding and steep hill, toward army barracks, then to the ocean. It's not sure we will make it. But the fascination is fatal. It's fused with the world.

Poetry is metaphysical. We're searching for ways to see, to arrest, to tell, in the great passion for the eternal flow.

And eternity may disappear too.

So mind has its own black holes that swallow tumultuous rivers, mountain ranges, galaxies, as well as toys, trees and memories... we have to follow the weather.

Muddy lakes are swelling across the sky.

From what appears to what's hidden and from what's hidden to what appears: always on the road.

The storm withdrew after closing the door. On which side of the door were we? The question is: can fire be controlled?

The sea has taken measure of her nature. She's a flat mercurial metal today, as she was yesterday. Herself a sign.

When you walked the deserts of the Andes amid their lakes of salt you searched for fresh water. The possibility of losing your mind left you then indifferent.

In certain areas of the world countries are made to explode by remote-control. It used to be said "by divine will". It was easier to resist God's decisions than today's super-powers.

It's because God moved within Himself that He let the world be. Where does this lead us to? To the need of a God that doesn't die? But Nature moves the world and dies without dying and includes us all its processes.

How to find the road that rises gently toward its own horizon so that the sky touches the earth with no physical contact and no commotion? How to reach that stage where to know anything would be superfluous?

Though thinking is inseparable from life, how wonderful to have it suspended, neutralized, not in a kind of sleep but in the most acute form of awareness.

When the sun goes down, a chill descends with it, and spreads. Sometimes gas from one star hits another star's surface and undergoes nuclear fusion.

There's no use telling that absence is heart of existence when someone dies. The dead don't come back the way we knew them and no divinity – even when out of its season – has ever done anything to make things different from what they are.

I opened the drawer and freed a bunch of flowers. My eyes followed their journey to the top of a hearse, and saw the fog leap over the Bridge – there was nothing to be seen over the ocean, not even the ocean.

Earth is wandering. Moon's round eye dreaming. The fields are on fire. We're entering the heart of strangeness.

Thinking helps the flowering of the body... the sun attracts it, - then when there's a drought on the land, a mortal accident... thinking dies.

The red sun is taking possessions of Brittany's pink granite.

My fever burned for a hundred years over the lands of an unnamed planet bigger than this one.
In Europe's narrow streets young men do not anymore harbor dreams of conquests.

In pain, even. A thin gray and luminous ribbon cuts through a canyon. Then its flow increases; it's now a torrent. The mist is boiling. The temperature has fallen.

There's a moment to the moment. We're in the world.

We fear violence, but more feared is its absence. So heavy is the world becoming. Heavy in the soul.
A few laps in the ocean will bring the rest.

There's what I will erase, and what will be erased, this chestnut tree that will disappear, that fog that's already melting into air, and surely this planet, and further what's not yet discovered, everything on its way out...

If only thinking could get as impenetrable as darkness, wash off what it pretends to know, die to itself, and land somewhere with no space nor time, as pure presence...

Verbs are not agreeable to Being because the latter enjoys its seclusion. Hypnotized, we free ourselves by shifting our energies on different matters, unless, like Cézanne – and only Cézanne – we paint apples ad infinitum.

As an answer to stagnation we demolish; for lack of love, we take the car on an outing, and not believing, we speak of religion.

There's no dissolution of space, it seems. But we die. No explanation makes sense. Darkness doesn't cover what's not there.

So spring's vitality will be contagious, at least for a while. We have not created the seasons, but they rule the numbers by which we live.

We fear love, supreme terror lying at truth's deepest layer.

Like an onion that you peel ring after ring, ending on a void, your "identity" turns around a hole... but if a tree is, I am, - for each, a destiny.

Transparencies within obscurity: in objects, empty space, or ideas. Sometimes we break their inner walls to uncover their mystery, but to remain in the dark.

When everything alive will have disappeared, the great expanses of sheer rock under a pitiless sun will start to show that they too have an inner life.

They administered electro-shocks to the poet. They could as well have beaten his brain with base-ball bats. They reduced him to a haggard and confused wounded tiger. We used to go from café to café in search of him. Whenever we found him, we gave him cigarettes.

Poetry had already burned his brain, but differently. It had enlarged his pupils. Though reading his works aloud in the streets, we were ill at-ease as we had a little money, and he had none.

In the Orion nebula the Herchel special observatory revealed the imprints of organic molecules such as water, carbon monoxide, hydrogen, cyanide, methanol... o impatience!

We're sliding inexorably toward a new rapport with nature: would the trip to Mars alter the way we shoot birds?

The rosebush in the remaining garden will remain equal to itself, but would our sense of smell respond?

Still, we're going into the deep sky. We monitor hydrogen's particular radiation when heated by the birth of new stars and detect photons escaping and being intercepted by clouds of interstellar gas and dust. We're getting ready.

In the mean-time empires are crumbling. Earth has become too small for the energies that are being unleashed. As revolutions have lost their appeal, mega-storms are in the making, involving weather, matter, and destruction.

Better to stay in the shade, where memory weakens more easily.

Better even to stay awake till the early hours of the day so to have the luxury of refusing light.

It rains. It rains. Visibility is decreasing. It's raining stones. The sun is lying in the vicinity of the horizon. We're probably walking on its rays. The times are demanding attention. People are staying in.

Having walked miles in thick fog I ran into the most luminous vision of a new kind of darkness in which the mind resides uninterruptedly and from which it proceeds. (water starting a river).

The pursuit of the surrounding fog may well be the pursuit of the mother.

Walking now on a dirt road: there's some grass, here and there. Patches of snow, far from each other. The ground is reddish. Some thorns. Stones all over. Lines of small bushes. We're in Death Valley.

In the yard, a tree is showing the first leaves of the season. I feel neither related, nor a stranger. Just looking.

We need the world's wildness – without which we'll be mud.

Today, in the coldest place in the universe, (a couple of degrees above absolute zero), 2 beams of protons collided at CERN, Geneva. They approached, at a tiny scale, what happened in the first split seconds after the Big Bang.

How can one, under a splendid sun, and with intimate news about the universe, be desperate?

On one hand, yourself, only your self. On the other, the ocean, immense, given to itself, and probably to you.

Pergolesi's *Salve Regina*

In all innocence the fog is touching the tip of the trees. The forest is silent. It doesn't mind its invasion by such a light substance. Lighter than a dance, than a hand.

This stepping out into the fog – this sudden coolness of the face, this diffused environment... the body responds, then lets go.

The sum total of all human sufferings is civilization too.

Away from the ecstatic zone, it's not train or fog that falls on their eyes, but blood. To each his/her tormentor, to each his/her victim.

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ETEL ADNAN

Come along, my
fog, foggy
sky,
sky not disappeared,
(and fog),
because
of foghorns

O angelic
figure once
beloved
-not even
dust today,
do not fear
this morning,
where I
awoke

Come along
this road
gentle wind
be careful,
the years
have
gone

Listen, spirit,
ocean, friends
have left
for where there's
no space,
no scratches,
a window
left alone

Don't worry
my love
fog is no
sign, no
message,
just a passing
cloud

Nobody is coming
this night of
obscurity

The hill is descending
into that
night
as slowly
as ever

We forgot the
warning,
soft grass
underfoot,
the fear,
always fear

Days move,
like we do,
they're thrown away
down here
where we live

Sweet angels take
us by the hand
when we walk
to the beach,
the beach mesmerizes

Allow me o God
in whom I don't
believe
to finish this
line, this
early evening

I return to the
fog because
it is
me,
it has a magnitude
that humans
lack,
it covers
spaces

How lonely
can one
become,
thinner than
a dream,
as planted
as a
tree

Blood is
no perfume
but in some
cities it
flows freely

Yes, the fog
is ominous,
faithful
companion,
unifier of
concepts

Movies live
fast,
they end, then
return,
we are a
screen,
nothing else

A year of railroad
tracks,
of earthquakes,
the will is tired

Death moves in
like a soft
wind
between
layers
of dread

You hover above
my impoverished
nudity
but we can't return
to where we
started

In a city stressed
by the light
unredeemable,
a lover
weighs,
on the body,
on memory

The sea is not
deep enough to
contain the hour
that just went
unnoticed

we are undone by
beauty's effect on
the arteries,
it's carnivorous
essence,
its solitude

my soul,
nights are long when you're
sleepless,
forget that you
inhabit my limbs,
try to
survive

Don't worry,
sit down, my
soul,
I'll close the
door

Fear me not,
I may leave you
soon,
which of us will descend
first into
hell?
we're at a loss

The fog has entered
my nostrils
in this blind street

Not a single leaf
is left over my heart to
be peeled off,
everything is
expendable

Devastating for the
spirit, always,
is the next wave

Let the fog in,
the one coming from you
and
covering
my soul
with your substance,
your destiny

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This second edition invites European galleries that have been open for less than seven years.

EXPERTS FORUM

A platform open to the public, centred on collecting and other issues of interest for the art sector.

PROFESSIONAL MEETINGS

Meetings aimed at art world professionals, to be held during ARCOMadrid 2012, where curators, museum directors and critics can exchange views and projects and interact with participating galleries.

FIRST COLLECTORS

Bespoke consultancy service for would-be art collectors at ARCOMadrid 2012.

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Madrid

Sit in front
of me, sit,
we're used to see
through the
dark

In the nights of
her absence
my body
was waiting,
for her
soul

We knew fog over
matter,
in stupefaction,
my body was at odds
with yours,
breaking down

We can't make up
for lost time
how can we?
you're no more

This thing that I am
-dear soul-
will decompose,
we know,
where would you go
then?
happiness came from it,
not from
divinities

There's malady in
the air
the waters are temporarily
exalting
the
world

The coffin went
down
the alley,
death is simply the
end of
meaning

As my body thinks
painfully
what's left for you,
if not this love,
so ancient in
difficulty,
o why?

I want to take you,
my soul,
to the
largest rivers

Listen-think
how fast that
river
was

the rock is
granite
heated,
cut,
gasping for
air

lines of cockroaches
leaving the basement
for our beds

the father holding
a burning
rod
teaching
punishment

The fog is
moving in with
force

Her body will not
return to mine
and I will not return

The multiplicity of
the love and the lie
has been
the knife of
my undoing,
pieces,
distributed
along the road

It rains on my
brain
fear has settled

O my soul, am
I you?
when I'm talking to you
it's because I think you
will listen,
knowing you might not...

but the involvement with
you is
fatal

every window thinks of
itself as being an
opening

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ETEL ADNAN is a poet, writer, and painter. Most of her books have been translated in many languages.

Poems of hers have been put to music for many festivals by musicians such as Gavin Bryars, Henry Treadgill, Tania Leon, Annea Lockwood, and Zad Multaka.

She has written many plays, performed in San Francisco, Paris, Dusseldorf, and Beirut.

She collaborated with Robert Wilson on his opera “Civil war5”. Etel Adnan has works in private collections as well as in the Royal Jordanian Museum, the Tunis Modern Art Museum, the Sursock Museum in Beirut, the Institut du Mondde Arabe in Paris, the British Museeum in London, the World Bank Collection in Washington D.C., the National Museum for Women in the Arts, Washington D.C.

A tapestry designer, she has tapestries in public spaces and private collections. Slides of her tapestries are in the permanent files of the Contemporary Crafts Museums of New York and Los Angeles.

HANS ULRICH OBRIST is Co-director of the Serpentine Gallery in London. Prior to this he was Curator of the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris from 2000 to 2006, as well as curator of Museum in progress, Vienna, from 1993 to 2000. Obrist has co-curated over 250 exhibitions since his first exhibition, the Kitchen show (World Soup) in 1991: including 1st Berlin Biennale, 1998; Laboratorium, 1999; 1st & 2nd Moscow Biennale, 2005 and 2007; and Indian Highway, 2008-2011.

Accompanying Obrist's curatorial projects are his editorial accomplishments; these include the writings of Gerhard Richter, Louise Bourgeois and Gilbert and George, and he is the editor of a series of conversation books published by Walther Koenig. Obrist has contributed to over 200 book projects, his recent publications include 'A Brief History of Curating', The Conversation Series (Vol. 1-20.), and 'Ai Weiwei Speaks'.

The Marathon series of public events was conceived by Hans Ulrich Obrist in Stuttgart in 2005. The first in the Serpentine series, the Interview Marathon in 2006, involved interviews with leading figures in contemporary culture over 24 hours, conducted by Obrist and architect Rem Koolhaas. This was followed by the Experiment Marathon, conceived by Obrist and artist Olafur Eliasson in 2007, the Manifesto Marathon in 2008, the Poetry Marathon in 2009 and the Map Marathon in 2010. 2011 marks the launch of the Institute of the 21st century, a website for the interview project. In March 2011, Obrist was awarded the Bard College Award for Curatorial Excellence.

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COVER (detail)
Etel in front of
Mount Tamalpais
in California.
Credit: Simone Fattal
Courtesy of the artist



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