

# GARDEN OF MEMORY

Etel Adnan Simone Fattal Robert Wilson

An exhibition at the  
musée YVES SAINT LAURENT marrakech  
Fondation Jardin Majorelle

From 14 May to 16 September 2018



*After Jacques Majorelle's Morocco and The Sculptural Dresses of Nouredine Amir, the third temporary exhibition to be presented at the musée YVES SAINT LAURENT marrakech since its opening in October 2017 will be Garden of Memory. All reflect the Fondation Jardin Majorelle's desire to promote art and creativity in Morocco, including works by contemporary artists.*

The exhibition has been conceived as a conversation between three artists: Etel Adnan, Simone Fattal and Robert Wilson. It was inspired by their shared experiences. Together, they create a narrative universe as a setting to interrogate the world in which we live, and to transcribe fragments from life that have led each of them from one country to another, one continent to another, one culture to another, and one language to another.

Adhering to the above vision, *Garden of Memory* weaves links between different events and stories that overlap and intermingle. Morocco, Lebanon, California and Paris are surprisingly, yet naturally, united in this exhibition. Etel Adnan and Simone Fattal spent their lives between Beirut, Sausalito (California) and Paris. Both artists visited Morocco numerous times in the 1970s and 1980s, and contributed considerably to the artistic scene of the country. Etel Adnan and Robert Wilson became friends in 1972 before working together. Etel Adnan wrote the French text for Robert Wilson's legendary 1984 opera *The CIVIL warS*. The close friendship between Pierre Bergé and Robert Wilson, as well as their shared vision, led to the creation of many important works by the stage director.

The exhibition is based on a succession of these shared memories and experiences. They create the foundation, and at times impetus, for the exhibition, but are not its subject. Instead, a non-linear narrative creates a mental landscape, a choreography filled with both immutable and variable elements. The thrust behind it all is a poem by Etel Adnan, "Conversation with my soul (III)", read by Robert Wilson over music by Michael Galasso. In turn, Simone Fattal responds to the poem by manifesting the profound coherence between the various creative elements. Her sculptures – stélai, figures and angels – discretely exalt the capacity for listening and understanding, for perceiving and recording.

The fundamental meaning of this exhibition is not found in the individual works, but rather in the obscure treasure they collectively contain. It is a paradoxical space. It is an act of commitment; a manifestation of friendship and love. The public is invited to savour and feel emotions that have been gathered and condensed by the artists.

In keeping with the spirit of the exhibition, Robert Wilson designed the cover of the book that accompanies the exhibition (co-edited with Koenig Books, London).

#### **Garden of Memory**

Curator: Mouna Mekouar

Exhibition designer: Christophe Martin

From 14 May to 16 September 2018

musée YVES SAINT LAURENT marrakech

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## SHARED LIVES AND EXPERIENCES

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Successive events in different places and cities – Morocco, Lebanon, California and Paris – established the context of the exhibition, and were its catalyst. *Garden of Memory* is built around these different localities, yet transposes them. The artists' experiences in these different places have framed the contours of the exhibition. Although not its subject, they create the foundation of the exhibition, and at times are its impetus.

### **Etel Adnan and Morocco**

During the 1970s and '80s, Etel Adnan would come regularly to Morocco. At the time, she played a considerable role in the artistic scene of the country, although it is little known today. At the end of the 1960s, while planning a film about the fishing grounds off Safi, Etel Adnan met the poet Abdelatif Laabi in Rabat. He invited Etel Adnan to contribute to the literary review he had founded, *Souffles*. She was the only woman to have her work appear in *Souffles*, when an excerpt from her poem "Jebu" was included in a 1969 issue devoted to the Palestinian cause. Several years later, in 1975, she befriended Pauline de Mazières, who in 1971 had founded the Galerie de L'Atelier in Rabat; her gallery became a renowned meeting place for Moroccan artists and intellectuals. It was there, in 1975, that Etel Adnan was given the only exhibition of her *leporelli*. Important elements of her pictorial oeuvre, these Japanese-style notebooks, folded as if an accordion, became the support for the artist's writings, watercolours, poetry and drawings. During this period, she organised workshops at the first art festivals to be held in Asila, in northern Morocco. It was there that she spent time with the artists Mohamed Melehi and Farid Belkahia. Encouraged by the extraordinary people she had met, and by her unique Moroccan experiences, she decided to write a book on the importance of Moroccan artisanship and its future. The book, *L'artisanat créateur: Maroc*, was published in 1983 by Dessain et Tolra / Al Madariss. Its introduction and epilogue are included in the book that has been published especially for this exhibition.

### **Elective affinities: Etel Adnan and Robert Wilson**

Etel Adnan and Robert Wilson met in Beirut in 1972, and worked together during the 1980s. Etel Adnan wrote the French text for *The CIVIL warS*, the renowned 1984 opera by the theatrical visionary, Robert Wilson. *The CIVIL warS: a tree is best measured when it is down* is without a doubt Wilson's most ambitious project to date. This vast musical and multilingual production was inspired by the American Civil War, as well as other historical conflicts, and remains unfinished today. Only three of its five sections were performed, set to music by Philip Glass, David Byrne and Gavin Bryars. Since then, these sections are usually performed as stand-alone pieces.

## **Creativity and commitment: Etel Adnan and Simone Fattal**

In 1982, Simone Fattal founded a publishing house, The Post-Apollo Press, in Sausalito, California. As its editor, she oversaw the publishing and distribution of Etel Adnan's work in the United States. Over many years, their collaboration has at times led them in different creative directions, but fortunately they followed one another from Beirut to Sausalito to Paris.

In the book that accompanies the exhibition, an interview with the two artists covers in detail the different chapters of their lives. The bibliography and chronology shown below also bear witness to their collaborative work.

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### **THE EXHIBITION**

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A poem by Etel Adnan, "Conversation with my Soul (III)", provides the framework for the exhibition and sets its rhythm. It constitutes the second half of her latest collection of poems, *Surge*. By combining poetry, sound and sculpture, the exhibition offers the public a unique experience.

#### **A poem by Etel Adnan: "Conversation with my soul (III)"**

What does Etel Adnan's poem tell us? In "Conversation with my soul (III)", the poet reflects on interior and exterior worlds, on perception and landscape, on the environment and solitude. In her poems, Etel Adnan yearns to embrace the rhythms of the universe. She feels connected to the energy that animates the earth. In her eyes, nature – in all its manifestations – is a creative force. Her poems exalt natural phenomena that are difficult to discern, yet influence us, engulf us, affect and transform us. They relentlessly express a form of ecstasy, a cascade of energy, an ascension. A surge!

*Surge*, Etel Adnan's most recent collection of poems, ends with "Conversation with my Soul (III)", and is the fourth volume of the tetralogy that includes *Night*, *Seasons*, and *Sea and Fog*.

#### **An interpretation by Robert Wilson**

For this exhibition, Robert Wilson reads a poem by Etel Adnan over music by Michael Galasso. Wilson interprets the poem by transforming it into a pure aural landscape faithful to his creative universe. His voice conveys the poem's tempo, identifies its colours, explores its depths and provokes emotions. His interpretation provides a distinct rhythm to the exhibition, and generates a dynamic bridge between the poetry of Etel Adnan and the sculptures of Simone Fattal.

## A sculptural group by Simone Fattal

Simone Fattal's participation in this exhibition offers neither a representation of the poem by Etel Adnan, nor a commentary on it. She nevertheless creates an intimate relationship between their work. Fascinated by the ideas of the great Sufi scholar, poet and philosopher Ibn Arabi, Simone Fattal focuses on passages referring to angels in his *Meccan Illuminations (Al-Futûhât al-Makkiyya)*. She inscribes the text on different stelai that are interspersed throughout the exhibition. Instead of focusing on giving form to angels, the sculptures she places along the walls reveal their mission: to listen to every individual – everyone on this earth – and record their words and statements. With this sculptural group, the artist therefore is searching for music that animates our world, which fills everything yet often disappears behind appearances.

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## EXHIBITION BOOK

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To accompany the exhibition, the book *Garden of Memory* has been co-published by the musée YVES SAINT LAURENT and Koenig Books, London

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## A STORY OF ENCOUNTERS TOLD THROUGH DATES

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This chronology is conceived as an itinerary, an inner geography that bears witness, through key dates, to these experiences of shared lives, encounters and artistic friendships—elective affinities that have fostered the works created jointly or individually, by these three artists.

<b>1966</b>	Etel Adnan visits Morocco for the first time
<b>July 1972</b>	Etel Adnan and Simone Fattal meet for the first time, in Beirut
<b>August 1972</b>	Etel Adnan and Robert Wilson meet for the first time, in Beirut
<b>1973</b>	Etel Adnan and Simone Fattal exhibit together at Gallery One in Beirut
<b>1978</b>	Etel Adnan's exhibition at the Galerie de l'Atelier in Rabat
<b>1980</b>	Etel Adnan and Simone Fattal settle in Sausalito (California)
<b>1982</b>	<i>Sitt Marie Rose</i> , written by Etel Adnan, is published in English by The Post-Apollo Press, the publishing house founded by Simone Fattal
<b>1983</b>	Publication of Etel Adnan's book, <i>L'artisanat créateur: Maroc</i>
<b>1984</b>	Etel Adnan writes the French part of <i>The CIVIL warS</i> , a multilingual opera conceived and directed by Robert Wilson
<b>2012</b>	Etel Adnan and Simone Fattal settle in Paris

2016 Simone Fattal and Madison Cox meet for the first time, in Beirut  
2018 *Garden of Memory*: Etel Adnan, Simone Fattal, Robert Wilson  
at the musée YVES SAINT LAURENT marrakech

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## SHARED WORLDS

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From 1982 to 2012, most of the books written by Etel Adnan were published by The Post-Apollo Press, the publishing house founded by Simone Fattal in Sausalito, California. This collection gives meaning to their collaboration during the many years they spent in Sausalito. Such a corpus testifies to their complete faith in poetry and literature as a force of invention and commitment.

1982 *From A to Z*. Sausalito: The Post-Apollo Press  
1982 *Sitt Marie Rose*. Translated (from the French) by Georgina Kleege.  
Sausalito: The Post-Apollo Press  
1985 *The Indian Never Had a Horse & Other Poems*.  
Illustrated by Russel Chatham. Sausalito: The Post-Apollo Press  
1986 *Journey to Mount Tamalpais*. Illustrated by the author. Sausalito:  
The Post-Apollo Press  
1989 *The Arab Apocalypse*. Translated (from the French) by the author.  
Sausalito: The Post-Apollo Press  
1990 *The Spring Flowers Own & The Manifestations of the Voyage*.  
Sausalito: The Post-Apollo Press  
1993 *Of Cities & Women: Letters to Fawwaz*. Sausalito:  
The Post-Apollo Press  
1993 *Paris, When It's Naked*. Sausalito: The Post-Apollo Press  
1997 *There: In the Light and The Darkness of The Self and of the Other*.  
Sausalito: The Post-Apollo Press  
2003 *In/Somnia*. Sausalito: The Post-Apollo Press  
2008 *Seasons*. Sausalito: The Post-Apollo Press  
2012 *Homage to Etel Adnan*. Sausalito: The Post-Apollo Press

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## BIOGRAPHIES

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**Etel Adnan** (b. 1925, Beirut, Lebanon): Etel Adnan is a poet, essayist and visual artist who divides her time between Lebanon, France and the USA. She retired from a permanent teaching position in the late 1970s and now devotes herself to her art and writing. A powerful voice in feminist and antiwar movements, Adnan has published numerous works of poetry and fiction, including *Sitt Marie Rose* (1978), *The Arab Apocalypse* (1989) and *Master of the Eclipse* (2009).

**Simone Fattal** (b. 1947, Damascus, Syria): Simone Fattal is a sculptor and the founder of the Post-Apollo Press. Launched in 1982 in Sausalito, California, the publishing house was dedicated to innovative and experimental literary works. In 1988, she returned to artistic practice after enrolling at the Art Institute of San Francisco. Fattal's oeuvre encompasses sculptures, ceramics, collages and paintings. In 2013, she released a movie, *Selfportrait*, which has been shown worldwide in many independent movie festivals.

**Robert Wilson** (b. 1941, Waco, Texas, USA): Since the late 1960s, Robert Wilson's productions have decisively shaped the look of theatre and opera. Through his signature use of light, his investigations into the structure of simple movements, and the classical rigor of his scenic and furniture design, Wilson has continuously articulated the force and originality of his vision. Wilson's close ties and collaborations with leading artists, writers, and musicians continue to fascinate audiences worldwide.

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## Regarding the Fondation Jardin Majorelle

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The Fondation Jardin Majorelle, established in 2001, is a non-profit Moroccan institution (decree No 2.11.647 of 4 November 2011). Its own resources are used to ensure the conservation and functioning of the garden. Since 2011, the Jardin Majorelle belongs to the Fondation Pierre Bergé – Yves Saint Laurent, a non-profit French organisation. The garden welcomed more than 900,000 visitors in 2017, including tourists and Moroccan citizens and residents. It is open every day of the year and has over 170 employees on its team. By appointment, the garden opens its doors without charge to Moroccan elementary school students. The foundation's earnings are entirely reinvested in Morocco to finance cultural, educational or social projects.

The foundation's resources were used to establish the Berber Museum in December 2011. They have also made possible the new musée YVES SAINT LAURENT marrakech, whose doors opened to the public on 19 October 2017.

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## Regarding the musée YVES SAINT LAURENT marrakech

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Fifteen years have gone by since Yves Saint Laurent's last runway show at the Centre Pompidou and the closing of the couture house that bore his name. Fifteen years during which the memory of its creator was kept alive and nourished via projects undertaken by the Fondation Pierre Bergé – Yves Saint Laurent, whose mission is to ensure the conservation of a unique heritage and the prestige and reputation of the couturier's lifelong work.

Over forty years, Yves Saint Laurent never ceased developing a style that was unique to him. His garments belong to the history of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, accompanying every aspect of the liberation of women. The pea coat, trench coat, 'smoking', pantsuit and safari jacket became indispensable elements of every modern woman's wardrobe. At the same time, Yves Saint Laurent was the last of the *grand couturiers*; nostalgic for an age when haute couture played an important and luxurious role. His magnificent evening dresses are often homages to artists, authors, playwrights and the fashion of other epochs. The two recently opened museums – one in Paris and one in Marrakesh – dedicated to his work reveal the extent to which Yves Saint Laurent was a leading artist of his age. Located a stone's throw away from the Jardin Majorelle – acquired by Pierre Bergé and Yves Saint Laurent in 1980 – the musée YVES SAINT LAURENT marrakech is housed in a new 4,000 m<sup>2</sup> building designed by the architectural firm, Studio KO. It is more than just a museum: centered around a 400 m<sup>2</sup> permanent exhibition hall designed by Christophe Martin and showcasing the iconic fashion work of Yves Saint Laurent, the museum also includes a hall for temporary exhibitions, a library with over 5,000 volumes, an auditorium, bookshop and terrace.

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