

## Grey Noise, Dubai

Press Release

Where Eyes Rest  
Stéphanie Saadé  
September 19 – November 3, 2022

*"The weight of walls closes all the doors."*<sup>1</sup>

Stéphanie Saadé's third solo exhibition at Grey Noise, *Where Eyes Rest*, is articulated around a new body of works that leads the viewers' engagement through experiences negotiated at different stages of life. Saadé often uses personal objects which testify of their elasticity as they physically mutate or change shapes and sizes in order to translate the new time-spaces that they correspond to. Worn curtains, blankets, toys, books ... map geographical and temporal situations drawn from her immediate surroundings. A postcard of the Eiffel Tower, sent on September 2, 2022 from Paris, where the artist currently resides, to her own address, reads: *"Today I felt like a change in perspective"*. The sentence, address, stamp and postmark are on the image side of the card instead of its back. The post office in Paris seemingly agrees to play the game since the unusual card is sent and reaches despite. Written in a moment of hesitation, the sentence on the piece of cardboard takes another meaning in the exhibition context: the public is invited, through the show, to shift their perspective.

In *Alphabet*, an alphabet is written by different people encountered during a walk at the Jardin des Tuileries in Paris on June 09, 2022 between 16:27 and 16:58. The letters shaped by each person: Thomas (letter a), Bastien (letter b), Stéphanie (letter c), ... carry the trace of their individualities while forming a whole; it ties together strangers that however shared a common experience: that of being in the same garden at the same time on the same day. *Re-Enactment FR/ Eiffel Tower (2022)* is an Eiffel tower presented dismantled, as seen in a Parisian kiosk, which takes an unexpected erotic connotation. These 3 performative works draw from the artist's current life in Paris.

Others reflect and map the past periods of childhood and teenagehood, evoke brotherhood or motherhood, and connect the different periods together. In *Stéphanie Saadé (2022)*, covers and pages of youth or schoolbooks with the artist's name handwritten on it by her mother or herself, are presented as ready-mades. The similar-looking handwriting connects differently with the illustrations or titles of each book, which seem to have been signed and appropriated.

*Construction Blocks (2022)* is a game of colourful wooden shapes that belonged to the artist and her brother as children, inlaid in mother-of-pearl with their current geographical coordinates. The coordinates' numbers, letters and signs are scattered individually onto the single shapes' surfaces, making the reading of the locations impossible. Displayed on the ground, the elements are now reminiscent of playful tools used to learn the alphabet and the numbers.

*Stage of Life (2022)* similarly uses objects from the past, modified to correspond to a current situation: blankets belonging to the artist and her brother, used during their adolescence, are cut into strips and sewn to correspond to their current respective bedrooms' perimeters. Coming from the rooms that they occupied in the family house in Lebanon (for Saadé, also the room where the curtains of *The Encounter of the First and Last Particles of Dust* are issued from), the blankets' new shapes now materialise the shapes and sizes of the rooms that they currently live in, apart from each other.

*The Encounter of the First and Last Particles of Dust (2019)* is a set of four embroidered curtains coming from the room that the artist occupied as a teenager in the family house in Lebanon; they are embroidered in silver with the 18 most significant trajectories that she went through during her period of occupancy of the room: 1995 to 2001. The fabric of the curtains bears the physical traces of its use and their surface and its faded flowery pattern is full, on a subtler and more imperceptible level, with all that happened mentally inside the space: thoughts, feelings, dreams, learning, etc. Their time span also coincides, on a broader level, with the period succeeding to the Lebanese Civil war, where it had become easier to circulate in Lebanon. The memories attached to the embroidered trajectories intertwine personal stories with the country's history of that particular time; their number, 18, evokes the majority, the moment when one legally reaches full freedom of mobility, echoing the freedom of movement reached inside the Lebanese territory. The pieces using intimate objects contribute altogether in reconstituting the family house virtually. The house expands in space and time as each modified item from it travels to be exhibited, stored, collected, etc., settling in new temporary or permanent houses.

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<sup>1</sup> Paul Éluard, *Poésie ininterrompue*, 1946, in *La Terre et les rêveries du repos*, Gaston Bachelard, 1948 (translation by the author)

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The exhibition in its entirety walks the viewer through the consecutive ages of life; *Pyramid* (2022) is formed out of bodies and t-shirts of all available sizes (0-3 months to XXL) sewn together, embodying the growth process. The exhibition also accompanies the viewer through the recent events that have struck Lebanon and the world. In *Where Eyes Rest* (2020), the artist's hand is filmed interacting with a fallen hair, tracing lines, abstract shapes and what could be letters with it, the hair taking the aspect of a graphite line and the work becoming a drawing in motion. Incepted during the first confinement due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the film shows the befriending of a fallen hair, which becomes an event since no other events are taking place in the city. This "event" also takes place inside the house, the only remaining existing place since the city has been cancelled (all doors shut and a limited circulation and access to the outside). The work additionally addresses the notion of residue, central in the artist's oeuvre, where materials already worn and stained are used, bearing solely a sentimental value, but whose tired material could easily make them topple on the side of trash. Here, a bodily residue, usually discarded, comes to the forefront and acts as the central protagonist in the film. Also made with fallen leftovers, a perfect circle joins 3 hairs by the artist, her mother and her daughter. The perfectly abstract drawing (*Family Circle*, 2022) evokes notions such as motherhood, legacy, transmission, cycles, etc., linking the 3 women at this ever-evolving stage of their journeys.

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### About the artist

Stéphanie Saadé

b. 1983, Lebanon / Lives and works between Beirut, Paris and Amsterdam

Stéphanie Saadé was born in 1983 in Lebanon. She lives and works between Paris and Beirut. She graduated in Fine Arts from the École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts, Paris and was an artist in residence at Van Eyck, Maastricht and Cité des arts, Paris.

Saadé had solo exhibitions at Centre Pasquart, Parc Saint Léger, Maison Salvan and Museum Van Loon, as well as a duo exhibition at Marres House for Contemporary Culture. She has exhibited collectively at Sharjah Biennial 13, Shrajah / Jameel Art Center, Dubai / MISK Art Institute, Riyadh / Saudi Art Council, Jeddah / Home Works 7, Beirut / Punta della Dogana, Venice / MAXXI, Rome / MOCA, Toronto / MuHKA, Antwerp / Fondation d'Entreprise Ricard, Paris / La Criée, Rennes / National Gallery of Iceland, Reykjavík / Oslo Kunstforening, Oslo / Ystad Konstmuseum, Ystad / Hessel Museum of Art, CCS Bard, New York / Mosaic Rooms, London / Beirut Art Center, Beirut / A.M. Qattan Foundation, Ramallah.

Her works are in the collections of MAXXI Rome, Centraal Museum, Utrecht, FMAC Paris, Barjeel Art Foundation, Sharjah and Saradar Foundation, Lebanon.

Her first artistic monograph titled, *Building A Home With Time* was published by Verlag für moderne Kunst following her solo exhibition at Kunsthaus Pasquart, Biel, Switzerland, with a text by Caroline Cros and an interview by Stefanie Gschwend.