

Grey Noise, Dubai

PRESS RELEASE

The Encounter of the First and Last Particles of Dust
Stéphanie Saadé
March 18 – May 11, 2019

The Encounter of the First and Last Particles of Dust is Stéphanie Saadé's second solo presentation at Grey Noise, Dubai. The exhibition features a new central work, which lends to the other recent and older ones. As sometimes the case in her practice, the show borrows its name from an important eponym work presented alongside others.

The material used in the new work *The Encounter of the First and Last Particles of Dust* is nothing less than the actual carpet that covered the floor of the room that Saadé occupied as a teenager in her family home. She went back at the end of the year 2018, teared it off with the consent and help of her father who is still living in the house. 18 trajectories were then embroidered on the carpet; they are the 18 most significant trajectories undertaken by her during her period of occupancy of the room between 1995 to 2001.

This was the last room that Saadé occupied in the family home before moving out, at the beginning of her adulthood. The carpet bears the physical traces of the furniture which was kept in the same position for years: the heavy elements – sleeping, sitting, reading and writing apparatuses – now only guessable, left indelible traces on its soft surface. What went on in the room during its occupancy, but also later, the traces of the travels of the body on it and its use of it, is similarly registered in the carpet's material: wearing, yellowing, stains. Finally, the surface is full, on a subtler and more imperceptible level, with all that happened mentally inside the space: thoughts, feelings, dreams, fears, learning, etc., associated with teenagehood. The room functioned as the shelter, generator and container of all this intimate history, rising and falling back on its absorbing ground.

The time span between 1995 to 2001 coincides, on a broader level, with the period succeeding to the end of the Lebanese war. During that period it had become easier to circulate in Lebanon and many regions, which used to be inaccessible due to the political situation of the country, had become reachable. Other areas had also become accessible in the sense that they had been constructed or reconstructed and now constituted actual destinations. The work *The Encounter of the First and Last Particles of Dust* is linked to the notion of displacement in many different ways: 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. These reminiscences are themselves not considered as fixed moments in time but are associated to motion: trips made but also the movement of memory itself when it travels back in the past. The trajectories are disseminated on the almost square surface of the carpet; the finely embroidered paths contrast with the rough aspect, outline and back of the surface, which welcomes them.

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Further away in the exhibition, a necklace, composed of beads found by chance between 2014 and 2019 (*A Necklace of Found Beads*), hangs on the wall. The necklace is left open: it will only be closed once the number of beads reaches the age of the artist. Each bead has a different size, color and material as it originates from an erstwhile jewel, now permanently incomplete. The delicate little elements often show signs of wearing, from having remained in the street for a while, unnoticed, maybe even trampled – and how many more have forever disappeared in one of the muddy interstices of a sidewalk or the shifting bottom of a river? Did the person who lost a bead notice the loss? Did she look for the missing element? The probability of finding a tiny sphere in the width of a city is as minute as it's mind-blowing: how could it possibly stand out in the immensity? *A Necklace of Found Beads* is assembled gradually and chronologically, forming an uneven calendar, a peculiar abacus. Sometimes nothing is found for months, even for years; the work's completeness is at the mercy of loss, luck and attentiveness ... Picked up in various locations such as Beirut, Paris, Mexico or Amsterdam, we can barely imagine the infinitesimal trajectories that the featherlight beads drew on the ground of these cities, as they rolled away hazardously from the place where they first dropped. They constitute altogether a new improbable ornament, mismatched, but nevertheless bound to form one entity ever after.

Digiprints also relates in its own manner to routes and displacement; the subject of the photograph is the artist's mobile phone's screen, at the exact moment when she reaches the photographer's studio. The phone continues to be used seconds before the shot, which makes the final "composition" perfectly uncontrollable. The frequent manipulation of the communication tool results in it being covered in a thin film of grease. The provenance of the fat – from parts of the body such as cheeks, ears, mouth, hair, hands – attests of a great intimacy with the object; apart from the physical contact with it, and the fact that it is carried on the body (pocket, bag, etc.), it is also a more private device than a computer or a tablet, which can be shared. Coating the sharp design of the technological object, the undesirable organic residue effectively constitutes the essential matter of the work: fingers sculpt the oil layer, and the camera captures the light refracted by this ephemeral relief (this would be impossible on the otherwise strictly flat surface of the screen). Despite their painterly aspect, the recorded strokes are purely functional ones: unorchestrated sweeps made in the course of communicating, researching, or idling. Some manifest movements of the mind, others movements of the body: the daily use of GPS systems to navigate in the city and on wider territories.

Enlarged and fixed on paper, they become independent signs to decipher or appreciate in a more abstract manner. The change of scale emphasizes the human dimension; fingerprints – the stamp of an individual, the pattern of one's identity – forcefully emerge within the cloudy tableaux...

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About the Artist

The work of Stéphanie Saadé (b. 1983, Lebanon) develops a language of suggestion, playing with poetics and metaphor. She shares clues, signs, imageless and occasionally silent trails with us, which interact like the words of a single sentence. It is for the viewer to decipher them, as would an archaeologist faced with traces, fossils, and fragments. This enigmatic quality often stems from the artist's own experience. In her oeuvre, personal experience is invoked exclusively as a universal subject.

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Stéphanie Saadé graduated in Fine Arts from the École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts, Paris, France and attended a post-graduate program at the China Academy of Arts, Hangzhou, China. She was an artist in residence at the Jan van Eyck Academie, Maastricht (2014/2015), and the Cité Internationale des arts, Paris (2015). Saadé is the winner of the 2018 NADA MIAMI Artadia Art Award. She is the 2018-19 recipient of the AFK (Amsterdam Fund for the Arts) 3Package Deal program, a 1 year Interhistoricity scholarship linked to 4 renown institutions of the city of Amsterdam.

She has had solo exhibitions at Parc Saint Léger and Maison Salvan in France. Her work has also been exhibited at Sharjah Biennale 13, Sharjah, UAE / MAXXI, Rome, Italy / MuHKA, Antwerp, Belgium / Kunsthaus Pasquart, Biel, Switzerland / National Gallery of Iceland, Reykjavík, Iceland / Oslo Kunstforening, Oslo, Norway / Ystad Konstmuseum, Ystad, Sweden / Hessel Museum of Art, CCS Bard, New York, USA / Marres, Maastricht, Netherlands / La Traverse, Centre d'Art Contemporain d'Alfortville, Alfortville, France / Museum Schloss Moyland, Bedburg-Hau, Germany / Mosaic Rooms, London, UK / Casa Árabe, Madrid, Spain / Casa Árabe, Cordoba, Spain / La Conservera, Centro de Arte Contemporaneo, Murcia, Spain / Home Works 7, Beirut, Lebanon / Parc Saint Léger hors les murs, Nevers, France / Van Eyck, Maastricht, Netherlands / Le 59e Salon de Montrouge, Montrouge, France / Beirut Art Center, Beirut, Lebanon / Beirut Exhibition Center, Beirut, Lebanon / A.M. Qattan Foundation, Ramallah, Palestine / Qalandyia International Biennial, Qalandyia, Palestine.

Stéphanie Saadé's works are in the collection of MAXXI Rome, Italy and FMAC Paris, France.