



Press release — March 2022

LE CANTIQUÉ DES OISEAUX KATIA KAMELI

exhibition from 21 May au 28 August 2022



From 21 May to 28 August 2022, La Crieé centre for contemporary art is presenting *Le Cantique des oiseaux*, a choral exhibition and new production by Katia Kameli, in which the artist proposes a variation, composed of musical ceramics, watercolours and a film, on the famous text of the same name by the Persian poet Farīd-ud-Dīn 'Attār. With *Le Cantique des oiseaux*, Katia Kameli continues her inter-cultural journeyings and initiates direct contact with clay, a new material for her.

Le texte d'Attār (1174-1248) chante le voyage d'Attār's text (1174=1248) sings of the journey of thousands of birds in search of the fabled bird Simorgh, a central figure of Persian mythology. This symbolic spiritual journey of initiation takes them through the seven successive valleys of Desire, Love, Knowledge, Plenitude, Oneness, Perplexity, Denial and Annihilation. Guided by the hoopoe, symbol of wisdom, only thirty birds reach the end of the journey.

Kameli gradually became interested in this major Eastern text through French translations: firstly that of Henri Gougaud, then that of Jean-Claude Carrière and finally the recent one by Leili Anvar, from which she has borrowed her title.

With this reworking of Attār's text, the artist continues her exploration of the narratives, their successive translations, their flow and their evolving depth and multiplicity of meaning.

She is also interested in the spiritual dimension of Attār's story, in the inner quest that unfolds through the figure of the bird, an animal that links the earth to the sky and whose language we find both so familiar and so mysterious.

Kameli's translation of the *Song of the Birds* is sensual and multi-sensory. It is expressed in a series of ceramics, which take the form of some of the birds in the poem: the hoopoe, the peacock, the nightingale, the heron, etc. These sculptures are also musical instruments. Their singing can be heard in the accompanying film, activated by a procession of musicians, as well as in the performances, which set the exhibition space resonating.

Watercolours, some of which served as preparatory drawings for the ceramics, complete this allegretto. Their inspirations are multiple, from Persian miniatures to Minoan sculptures, via Valentine Schlegel and Asger Jorn. Made on paper of different sizes, some are surrounded

by clay frames; they are at the crossroads of scholarly and popular art. Like the sculptures, they have to do with the birth and memory of gesture.

With *Le Cantique des oiseaux*, Kameli proposes a new experience of translation – from one work to another, from one art form to another, from one medium to another, from the inexpressible to the visible – resulting in both gaps and interminglings.

«We don't invent anything,
we always reinterpret in another language.»

— Katia Kameli

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curator: Sophie Kaplan

production: The installation *Le Cantique des oiseaux* was co-produced with the ICI (Institut des Cultures d'Islam) in Paris. It will be presented there as part of the double Katia Kameli solo exhibition in 2023 at the ICI and at the BétonSalon art centre.

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As is often the case with Kameli, this new production is the outcome of several collaborations: with the ceramists Émile Degorce-Dumas and Marie Picard, and with musicians for the composition and activation of her sculptures.

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Katia Kameli was born in 1973.

She lives and works in Paris.

Katia Kameli is a graduate of the École Nationale des Beaux-Arts in Bourges and has completed the post-graduate course «Collège-Invisible» at the École Supérieure d'Arts in Marseille. Her work has found visibility and recognition on the international art and film scene.

She recently had a solo exhibition at the FRAC Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur, Marseille, *Elle a allumé le vif du passé*, (2021). She is one of the curators and artists of *Europa, Oxalá*, Mucem, Marseille; Fondation Calouste Gulbenkian, Lisbon; Royal Museum for Central Africa/AfricaMUSEUM, Tervuren, Belgium.

She is a member of the editorial board of La Crieé's review *Lili, la rozell et le marimba*, for which she has proposed a series of interviews with artists and historians. These interviews shed light on her sensitive, closely documented relationship with the histories and cultures she explores.

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