

Between grains of sand(salt)

by Samara Sallam & Kate Sterchi, Olivia Rode Hvass, Ihsan Saad Ihsan Tahir,
Ida Raselli, Hannah Amalie Nielsen, and Abul Hisham

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In the group exhibition *Between grains of sand(salt)*, gas9gallery presents works by seven young contemporary Danish and international artists whose works and multiple voices intertwine as a collective, caring and complex landscape engaging with contemporary crisis – worldly or otherwise. Some are whispering with a quiet sensibility, others are shouting, demanding our attention. Together the works form a pattern of personal, political stories that are non-linear and use fictions in their approach.

Through various media; video, digital weaving, painting, sculpture and ceramics, the invited artists ask us to engage deeper and from multiple angles into stories that reach across time and spaces with new agents and tales. At first glance, the exhibition might resemble dream imagery, fables, or elements from far away spaces, but if you look closer it begins to take form as the world already known. Since ancient times, storytellers have engaged with disjointed timelines, flashbacks, memories, dreams, forecastings, and fantastic elements, in their attempt to capture the multiplicity of humanity, the material world and beyond. Such practices date back to Indian epics, e.g. the Mahabharata, Homer's Iliad, Arabian night tales, and in contemporary times, it is most known from science fiction. In the last decades, this notion of the imaginary as world-building, has further gained credibility within the sciences as a means to counter western knowledge production and make room for new, complex narratives.

With this in mind, the exhibition *Between grains of sand(salt)* presents artists who engage with digging out stories that disappear between the noise, and who look closely at the narratives we are presented with, and from where and whom we listen. We invite you to do the same.

Between grains of sand (salt)

When entering the gallery space, a single channel video, *Sacred Internet in Climatime* (2021), invites us into a transnational dialogue crossing linear time and space. The video presents a diptych of two moving images with subtitles in both English and Arabic. The text becomes part of the image as it leaves the subtitle space and washes into (and remains within and between) the space of the moving images. Located in different countries while making the piece, the artists, Samara Sallam and Kate Sterchi, work with the ocean(s) between them as material for imagining and story-telling. The absence of an actual body throughout the piece both suspends and perpetuates an embodied presence. Like the surface tension referenced in the piece, there is a constant reshaping of where and what is being held in each moment as the video traverses everyday memories, dreams, aliens and homes.

Ida Raselli's sculpture *Baldacchino* (2019), a tall organic form with a dark and grainy texture, grew out of the (eco-)anxiety she felt during 2018, the hottest summer since 1874, and from a longing to reconnect with nature. Through the process of visiting the then dry Danish landscape, collecting and molding clay, Raselli came closer to an existential calmness by experiencing the agency of nature itself. She was not the sole master of the work, but felt the sculpture came alive through a therapeutic and bodily meeting between artist and material. This determined the sculpture's monumental form, which reaches up as a figure in its own right, breaking through concrete as an image of the much needed resistance towards capitalism and western waste culture.

Olivia Rode Hvass shows multiple works, drawings, sculpture and the digitally woven tapestry series *De varme hænder (Hot hands !)* (2023) – a tale of cross-historical rebellion and rituals for environmental and social change, where stick-figures dance in a witchy circle around a burning car, and where mystical figures grow out from the ashes and remains of previous struggles. Through the usage of myths and fairytales, Hvass examines the notion of burning it all to the ground. What and who will remain and prevail after the trials? It is a tale of longing, sorrow and a search for hope, when Hvass presents a large-scale match next to burned butterflies that against all odds are still flying, and by including sunflowers, as a reminder of people's unwavering and burning faith throughout time.

On the ground is Ihsan Saad Ihsan Tahir latest ceramic work *They disappeared behind the sun* (2023), a large, monumental, yellow-brown vessel. The dry clay becomes the backdrop to a mixed landscape of detailed drawings, texts of contemporary slang and proverbs, and abstract paintings, where slipware and scratches have divided the vessel into fields. The imagery presented is a mixture of scenes and elements that reference Tahir's life across Denmark, Los Angeles (US), and Iraq. Painted with a soft baby blue are two men in a warm embrace. Next to them are the bones of an ox skeleton left in the desert, two contrasting images of intimacy and decay. A person is standing up in a boat with an oar and another boat seems to be sailing down stream. Circuiting the vessel are two main texts; the title of the work, which refers to the lost people of the Iraq war(s), and the word STRANGER. With these sayings, together with "Wallah sister, everyone's chasing euros", Tahir invites us to reflect upon relations and care across spaces and generations, and the interconnection of world crises and the power structures that govern them.

In Hannah Amalie Nielsen's two monotypes and ceramic mushrooms, tales of connectedness, collaborations and relations are in focus. The prints are layered with a self portrait etching, patterns of engraved family owned crochets, and painted with abstract colorful brushstrokes reminiscent of psychedelic experiences for healing. The knots of the merge on the woman and the knitted threads represent the tangible and intangible material that bonds us across spheres, times and generations. These can be objects, memories, and skills, handed down from mother to daughter. Furthermore, the ceramic mushrooms are created as a collective practice between Nielsen and her mother, growing out of her interest in the Fungi as a symbol of the magical, female creation and the language attached to this throughout history – both healing, nurturing, but also wild and poisoning.

In Abul Hisham's diptych painting *Ripples and Waves* (2020), multiple men swim around in heavy waters among pink flowers, fruits and animals. Some are embracing their fellow bathers, holding cats, being fed by a bird, and others are exercising and looking into the waters through goggles. In one part of the diptych a man has picked up a human skull, studying it and reciting a speech in front of a group of devotees. A recognisable image of Man's scientific engagement with life and death and the creation of knowledge through shared tales. However, on the other part of the work, multiple men are diving into the waters in various directions, in a somewhat frantic, searching state. In *Recitation five*, Hisham has painted a broken graveyard where a snake has curled up around the remains. An image of nature taking over after human demise. With a pattern of a hundred incense sticks and stripes, Hisham makes an offering to recitation of past memories through generations.

In his work Hisham combines modern elements from Indian comics and personal everyday scenes with historical imagery such as south asian Mughal painting from the 1600, creating non-linear narrative, where words, actions and relations create ripples that go beyond time and space.

The exhibition *Between grains of sand(salt)* is not a story away from the real – but a search for new knowledge of our actual world and the future we are working towards. We thank the artist for their participation. We are immensely grateful and in awe of their work.

Biographies

Samara Sallam (b. 1991, PS) is MFA from the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts, Copenhagen (2022), and BA from the Funen Art Academy. She has studied visual arts at L'école Supérieure des Beaux-arts, Algeria, and journalism at Damascus University, Syria. She is further trained as a hypnotherapist and in the process of writing about magic in storytelling. She has exhibited at Museet for Samtidskunst, Roskilde, PS44, PLADS art space Aarhus.

Kate Sterchi (b. 1988, USA) received her MFA from Funen Art Academy in 2017 (Odense, DK). She now lives and works in Marfa, TX (USA) where she continues to work in collaborations and with artist-run spaces. She is instigator, curator, and participant in an upcoming exhibition and publication with Shed Shows in Austin, TX (USA), and will also have a solo exhibition with Matteo Cantarella gallery in Copenhagen, DK this coming October 2023.

Ida Raselli (b.1986) has a BA and an MFA from the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts (2019 / 2023) with a Specialization in Art, Writing and Research, and a BA in Sociology from the University of Copenhagen (2012), where she studied at both La UBA in Buenos Aires, and Global Platform in Kathmandu. Raselli has exhibited at platforms such as Til Vægs, Opgør and På den Anden Side, and has been part of the artistic garden collective Plantasia and art ship Illutron. In 2023 she was granted by the Poul Erik Bech Foundation and Vibedehusfonden for her degree work.

Olivia Rode Hvass (b.1995) (she/her, they/them) is BA from The Jutland Art Academy (2021) with a masterclass and scholarship in TC2-weaving with professor Corrie van Eijk-Doktor, NL. Hvass has previously exhibited at artist run spaces Archway Nightlands Connector, Ladder Space, and at Kunsthall NORD, CANTINA and latest at Kunsthall 6100 and Kunsthall Aarhus. In 2023 Hvass will exhibit at Sydhavn St., 00.00 in Seoul, South Korea and at Rønnebæksholm in 2024. In 2023 Hvass also received the Danish Arts Foundation's work grant.

Ihsan Saad Ihsan Tahir (b.1995, currently residing in DK) is currently enrolled in the MFA program at the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts, Copenhagen. he has previously exhibited at Kunsthall Ved siden af, Forårsudstilling at Charlottenborg, at gallery Marie Kirkegaard, All all all and Kunsthall Aarhus.

Hannah Amalie Nielsen (b. 1993, DK) is MFA from the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts, Copenhagen (2023). She has exhibited at Kunsthall Kongegården, Parkhuset, Nykøbing Sj., Skjold Contemporary, Alice Folker Gallery, Alt_CPH 2020 and at Chart Kunsthall Charlottenborg.

Abul Hisham (b. 1987, IN) is BFA from College of Fine Arts Thrissur, Kerala, MFA from School of Fine Arts, University of Hyderabad, Hyderabad and is currently finishing his residency at Rijksakademie, Amsterdam (2023). He has exhibited at Galerie Mirchandani + Stienrucke, Mumbai, at the Royal Painting Prize show 2022, Royal Palais Amsterdam, at Jameel Art Center, Dubai, Gallery Martin Van Zomeren, Amsterdam and March Jancou Contemporary, Switzerland.