

Yalla Tnam, Yalla. Mounira Al Solh

Say it aloud and it stops being a sentence. Yalla tnam, yalla. Come on, sleep, come on. It is not information. It is a hand on a back, a rocking, a bribe, a morsel of language whose only argument is its rhythm. In Lebanon and in Syria it belongs to a lullaby that almost every child knows, and no child can quite locate, the way one cannot locate the first time one hears their own name. Mounira Al Solh has carried this line throughout her work over the course of years, lengthening and contracting it, negating it, letting it stretch across a room on wire. Nami nami noooom. The extra vowels are not errata. They profess duration, engraved, annotated, written down in time. They are the period the mother holds the note while she waits for her eyes to close.

Al Solh was born in Beirut during a period of civil wars that had begun three years prior. They would officially continue for another twelve. She learned the double bass at the conservatory, painting at the Lebanese University, then more painting in Amsterdam, where she still partly lives. Between two poles, across an expanse gazing across two seas, assembling myriad alphabets, Al Solh has constructed a creative practice out of the interstices of language—the slippages, the errata, the margins, as they unfold outward and are made to travel.

Consider the exhibition's title itself. The words etched and sketched out in front of you. Arabic sounded out in Latin letters. This is not translation but transliteration: the sound survives, the script does not. This is the condition Al Solh works inside and refuses to mourn. In 2008 she co-founded a publication called NOA — Not Only Arabic, to which I was proud to contribute a series of entries on queer nomenclature. In 2013, in Amsterdam, she co-assembled a language school under the same name—a temporary platform to ask what immigration does to a tongue. Her answer, across two decades, has been consistent even if it is unfashionable: languages that are unwilling to mix are languages prepared to die. Pidgin is not the ruin of speech. Pidgin is speech, doing the only thing that has ever kept it alive.

Al Solh writes in dialect, vernacular, puns bilingually, lets Dutch rub up into and massage Arabic, allows a lullaby to arrive in Barcelona and become, briefly, Catalan weather. Nothing here is diluted. Everything is doubled, even if temporarily.

The installation at the center of this exhibition began with a hole.

As a child, Mounira Al Solh—kept awake by the bombardment—was given permission by her mother to cut small holes in her pajamas and then to stitch around them. Not to close them. To attend to them. A puncture and then a slow, ringed, deliberate answer to the puncture: needle in, needle out, until fear had been converted into a repeatable action small enough to hold in two hands. Years later, after the port of Beirut opened the sky above the city in 2020, she returned to the gesture, this time with others.

Women in Lebanon and in the Netherlands, some of them migrants, cut and stitched their own nightclothes and informed each other, while hemming, of the experiences that they had survived. The garments hang on lines, pegged, as if a whole street had done its washing on the same morning. The punctures remain permeable wounds. They are embroidered around in colored thread until they begin to resemble suns, eyes, mouths, cuts that have become ornament.

This is Al Solh's method, and it extends to everything else in the room. The scissors do not stop at cloth. Her paintings are cut too, released from the rectangle or square, their edges following a woman's raised arm, so that the support itself becomes a silhouette pinned to the wall. In *Al Hanin (Girl on a Van 1980's Beirut, 2022)* — nostalgia, longing, the ache with a name — a woman dances on the roof of a Volkswagen van in a Beirut that is being destroyed around her, defiant against the militias and against the men who would prefer her seated. In her drawings, often made in a sprinted, abundant fervor, in colored pencil and ink and whatever

paper is to hand, a naked figure walks toward the sea pulling a suitcase; Nothing is illustrated. Everything is told—seen by us; to be felt, assumed.

Storying, in her hands, is not a genre but a form of custody. She takes the micro-history — the one woman, the one night, the one garment — refusing that it be flattened into the aggregate, into the number, into another news story. She allows myth to seed new ones, and humor to play its errant game: the dark Lebanese joke that arrives at the funeral before the flowers do. Whatever documentary impulse undergirds her materialist phenomenology runs backwards: away from evidence, toward the fantastical, because the fantastical, in Al Solh's experiences of worlding, is where people keep the things that happen to them—held, deeply, in the ridges of their skin.

Our soundtrack is the sound of children. They sing lullabies to their parents. The transmission has reversed. The ones who intended to be soothed are the ones doing the soothing, in Arabic, in Dutch, in whatever creolized mother tongue it turned out to be.

Come on, sleep, come on. The line has crossed a sea to arrive here. It arrives with holes in it, ringed in colored thread, threaded-in, bedded-in, and as you leave, everyone is still singing.

Omar Kholeif

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Installation detail, *Yalla Tnam, Yalla*, 2026, Bombon Projects, Barcelona



Installation view, *Yalla Tham, Yalla*, 2026, Bombon Projects, Barcelona



Detail of the installation, Nami Nami Nooom, 2023, Fundação de Serralves — Museum of Contemporary Art, Porto, Portugal

Nami Nami Noooom, Yalla Tnaaam is a collaborative installation that has continued to grow through the contributions of women and girls in the different places where it has been presented. The artist began by sewing her own pyjamas together with those her daughter had outgrown. Later, she invited groups of women to embroider together, sharing the process and creating a space for connection and the exchange of stories related to war, fear and motherhood.

The installation also includes a sound piece featuring lullabies performed by girls, thereby reversing the traditional role of the lullaby sung to them, as well as a video that further expanding the narrative and emotional dimensions of the installation.

Over time, the installation has expanded to incorporate new lullabies created in collaboration with children in the different languages and cities where the work has been exhibited.

The artist would like to express her gratitude to everyone who has contributed to this collaborative process. In addition to her own pyjamas and reused garments, some of the participating women also chose to contribute their own pyjamas.

Embroidery

Shamia Ali Saleh, Chopi Attah, Soheila Attardimaj, Mhired Beyene, Hamere Dajene, Asma Ibrahim, Hagush Kbreab, Ria Lammers, Jihan Manla Mohammad, Saleha Rahem, Niaz Rashid, Dorine Ruter, Fartoon Shaban, Selam Welday and Wijkcentrum Waterkracht, Zutphen; Esra Altmiş, Nihâl Altmiş, Yildiz Çimen, Hatice Doğaner Atay, Zeliha Gigi, Kamila Hakimi, Qammar Kakar, Arifa Khalil, Mürvet Kösen, Shakila Mohammadi, Sabera Pijwand, Aysel Yazici, y Stichting Ik Wil, Eindhoven. Sitt Souad el Bitar, Líbano

Lullabies

Samira, Jameel & Loubna Farhan, Sadé Peter, Ava & Leah Kat, Carminho Páscoa, Francisco Duarte, Maria Amaral y los niños de Escola de Miranda do Douro, Rodrigo Carção, Gonçalo Marcos, Clara Martins, Martim Alves y Paulo Meirinhos. For this exhibition at Bombon, Mel Moreu and Nina Lyons Daviu are brought into the project.



Detail of the installation, Nami Nami Nooom, 2023, Fundação de Serralves — Museum of Contemporary Art, Porto, Portugal



Detail of the installation, Nami Nami Nooom, 2023, Fundação de Serralves — Museum of Contemporary Art, Porto, Portugal



Detail of Nami Nami Nooom, Yalla Thaaam, 2023

Installation

Variable dimensions

The following series of paintings reflects the artist's immersion in popular Arabic music of the 1970s and 1980s. In a Lebanon devastated by war, these ubiquitous melodies filled the gaps between news bulletins, while the continuous sound of the radio travelled through the air from one shelter to another. The habit remained, and while painting, Al Solh keeps music constantly playing in the background. The result is a new series of striking and exuberant paintings that convey a sense of immediacy and urgency, questioning the intersection between artistic production and political upheaval, the contexts in which works are created and interpreted, and the role music plays in our collective memory. What begins with the lyrics of an iconic song often ends as a mixture of personal moments scattered across the canvas.



Girl on Van 1980s Beirut, 2022

Acrylic on canvas

84 x 110 cm



Caught by the full Moon, After a Shout 2023. Oil on canvas 70,5 x 121,5 cm



Head on tank and errant faces, 2022. Acrylic, charcoal and oil on cut-out canvas, mounted on wood. 97 x 48 cm



The Burial, 2026

Oil, charcoal and collages paper on canvas

215 x 196 cm



The Burial, 2026 (Detail)



The Burial, 2026 (Detail)



Untitled (Donkey Roads, 2024
Acrylic, charcoal and oil on cut-out canvas, mounted on wood.
173 x 116 cm



Untitled (Donkey Roads), 2024 (detail)

The Baalbek kite 2023

Ink, acrylic, oil and collage paper on canvas

100 x 70 cm





Ashmahan: ya toucour cou ka ka...2023
Ink, acrylic, oil and collage paper on canvas.
100 x 70 cm

The following drawings explore and expand upon reflections on dreams, memory, and the ways in which personal experiences and fragments of the past are carried, transformed, and represented across time and space.



Untitled (Studies for her flee), 2025. Drawing on cotton paper. 76 x 57 cm



Untitled (Studies for her flee), 2025. Drawing on cotton paper. 76 x 57 cm



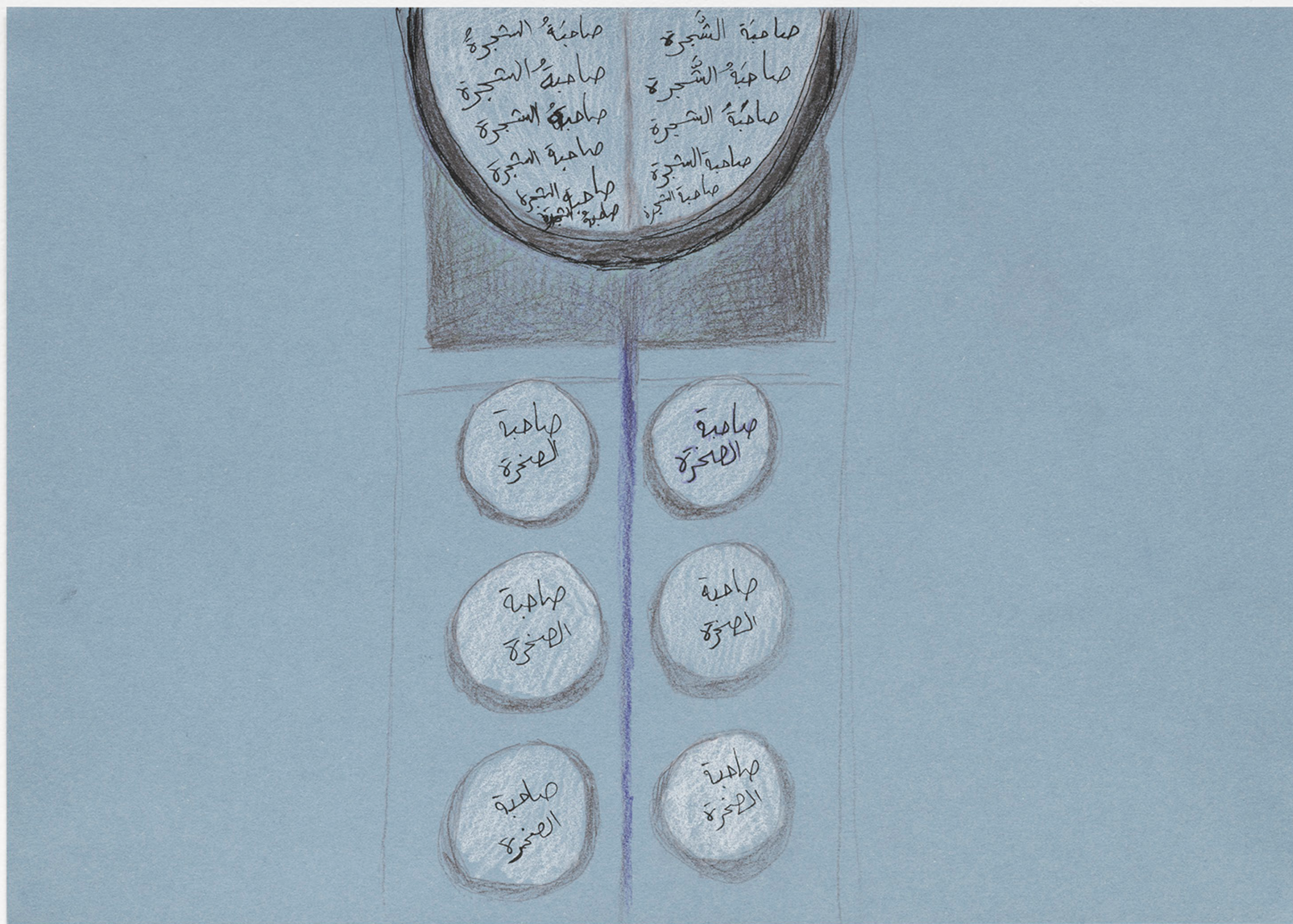
Untitled (Studies for her flee), 2025. Drawing on cotton paper. 76 x 57 cm



Untitled (Studies for her flee), 2025. Drawing on cotton paper. 76 x 57 cm



Untitled (Studies for her flee), 2025. Dibujo sobre papel de color. 29,7 x 42 cm



Untitled (Studies for her flee), 2025. Drawing on cotton paper. 76 x 57 cm



Untitled (Studies for her flee), 2025. Drawing on cotton paper. 76 x 57 cm



Untitled, 2025. Drawing on coloured paper. 21 × 29.7 cm21 x 29,7cm