



Zeinab Saab, *Visual Decadence*, 2020-22

**New York, NY** – On Thursday, March 23rd from 6–8 pm, CUE Art Foundation opens *الفكرة ذكري / A thought is a memory*, a group exhibition curated by **Noel Maghathe** and organized as part of CUE’s 2023 open call for curatorial projects. The exhibition received curatorial mentorship from **Sara Raza**. It will remain on view at CUE’s gallery space at 137 West 25th Street until May 13, 2023. Attendance during gallery hours (Wed–Sat, 12–6 pm) is free; no reservations are required. The opening reception is free and open to all; [RSVPs](#) are encouraged.

## About the Exhibition

*الفكرة ذكري / A thought is a memory* is a group exhibition curated by **Noel Maghathe** that brings together works by four artists: **Zeinab Saab**, **Kiki Salem**, **Nailah Taman**, and **Zeina Zeitoun**. These artists, who all have lineages that trace to the so-called Arab world, draw upon their varied backgrounds in ways that both celebrate and subvert inherited identities. Through sculpture, photography, collage, animation, and painting, they embrace playful ways of making that are highly personal, often collective, and that position fluidity and rootedness as complementary rather than opposing forces in the building of selfhood, community, and culture.

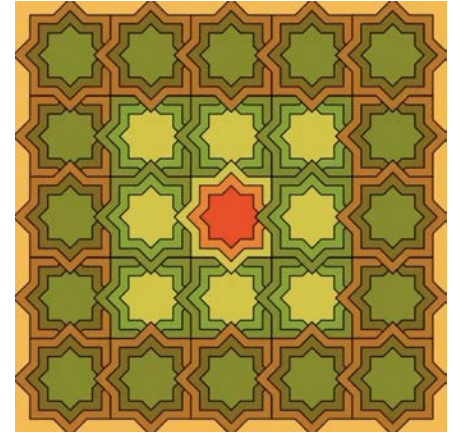
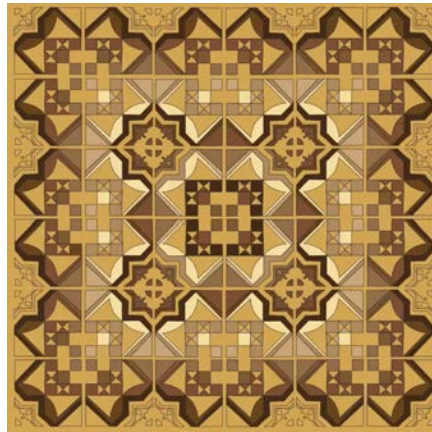
Memories often serve as the source material for our personal and shared histories. The late philosopher and artist Etel Adnan, in her 2016 collection of prose and poetry, *Night*, wrote: “Is memory produced by us, or is it us? Our identity is very likely whatever our memory decides to retain. But let’s not presume that memory is a storage room. It’s not a tool for being able to think; it’s thinking, before thinking.”

*A thought is a memory* asks us to consider: what happens when memories are disrupted by displacement, migration, and political upheaval? What does it mean to be both grounded by and freed from the stories of our ancestors? Through explorations of geometry, color, light, and material, the four artists in the exhibition present works that reimagine their hybridity as Arab Americans.

Zeinab Saab’s paintings indulge in experimentations with color, opening up portals to aspects of their young self which may have been lost while navigating constructs of gender, patriarchy, and tradition. Kiki Salem’s digital animations evoke patterns from textiles designed by her/their ancestors in Palestine and motifs from the architecture they inhabited, using new technologies to reconfigure material traditions. Nailah Taman’s sculptural works visualize symbols from Etel Adnan’s *The Arab Apocalypse*, attempting to connect to an otherworldly “un-language” and access its shared knowledge. Taman’s textile piece transforms an unfinished tablecloth embroidered by their *taeta* (grandmother) into a shelter, threading together practices of their elders with discarded materials that encapsulate a queerness they weren’t able to share. Zeina Zeitoun uses collage and film to piece together images from her visits to Lebanon, grasping for fragments of seemingly ephemeral memories and re-organizing them to construct moments she can savor beyond time.

The works presented in *A thought is a memory* weave together ephemeral and kaleidoscopic stories. These four artists layer experiences that are simultaneously personal, familial, communal, and political, and that are often eschewed in mainstream discourse about place—or viewed through a lens that ascribes fixed narratives to mutable notions of identity and community. Through their work, they proudly claim new spaces, rituals, and language that transcend boundaries of time and geography. “If I didn’t remember that I am, I won’t be,” wrote Etel Adnan. “Reason and memory move together.”

Read more about the exhibition and see additional images at [www.cueartfoundation.org](http://www.cueartfoundation.org).



Kiki Salem, (L-R): *FOLLOW THE LEAD(ER)*, 2022; *Wudu*, 2021; *What is Destined For You Will Come Even if it is Between Two Mountains*, 2021

### About the Artists

[Nailah Taman](#) (b. 1993, Minnesota) is a nonbinary Egyptian American multidisciplinary artist + abolitionist organizer based in Minneapolis, MN. They graduated from the University of Minnesota in 2015 with a BA in Visual Arts, and are a member of PF Community Studios in Minneapolis. Their work explores energetic accumulation, tactility and texture, and mental illness and language, often emerging in sculptural forms. They are an avid collector of objects deemed precious by their own criteria. Find them on Instagram at [@everything\\_coming\\_up\\_roses](#).

[Zeina Zeitoun](#) (b. Arlington, Virginia) is a New York City based artist, photographer, and photo editor born in America and raised in between the US and Lebanon. She was born to two Lebanese immigrants, and is the youngest of three strong and courageous daughters. During her formative years, Zeina realized that her passion for visual arts could be combined with her natural need for activism and education. She now creates personal bodies of work across multiple mediums that document familial and self discovery. These bodies of work hail from the many complicated corners of being a Lebanese-American woman living in the US. Her creative storytelling has recently morphed itself into collage, using an ever-growing archive of home photos, videos, songs, poems, collected artifacts, objects hoarded throughout the years, and more.

[Kiki Salem](#) (b. 1995, Al-Bireh, Palestine) is a St. Louis-based multidisciplinary artist, designer, animator, writer, educator, lover, learner, and overall bad bitch. Through various mediums, with textiles at the focus, their practice covers topics of escapism, occidental assimilation, orientalism, experimental visual pattern development, linguistic hybridization, and the Palestinian question. More recently they have taken their knowledge and use of traditional patterns and reimagined them as large scale murals featured in the Midwest and Middle East. Kiki is a member of the Screwed Arts Collective in St. Louis. Their wearable collection, Punk Ass Arab ([@punk\\_ass\\_arab](#)) can be found on Instagram.

[Zeinab Saab](#) (b. Dearborn, Michigan) is currently based in Portland, Oregon. Their current work focuses on exploration of the inner child through color theory and the grid. They received their BFA in Printmaking from Bowling Green State University in Bowling Green, OH in 2015, and completed their MFA in Printmaking at Northern Illinois University in DeKalb, IL in 2019. Their work has been exhibited nationally and internationally in San Francisco, St. Louis, Detroit, New York, California, Dubai, New Mexico, and Hawaii among other places, and is held in several permanent collections, including Emory University, The Bainbridge Museum of Art, Zayed University in Dubai, UAE, the Arab American National Museum, and the University of Iowa’s Special Collections Library.

## About the Curator

[Noel Maghathe](#) is a queer, mixed Palestinian-American performance artist and curator. They create and perform with queer functional tools to navigate the world, and their practice centers on their Palestinian heritage. Through their work, Maghathe seeks to educate audiences about the pain of occupation and their yearning for their country while also delving into the deeper dimensions of personal identity beyond surface-level labels. Maghathe values connecting with other Palestinian and Arab artists in our homelands and in the diaspora.

Maghathe holds a BFA from the Art Academy of Cincinnati, where they were awarded the Stephen H. Wilder Traveling Scholarship in 2017. In 2022, they exhibited their work at the Cincinnati Contemporary Arts Center, Pancake House Gallery, Maelstrom Collaborative Arts, and more. Maghathe was also selected as Curator-in-Residence at Wave Pool, where they curated *Amid*, an international Palestinian art exhibition. Currently based in Cincinnati, Ohio, Maghathe continues to create work in their studio.



Nailah Taman, *Etel's Sigils*, 2022



Nailah Taman, *Plushieglyphs*, 2021

## About the Mentor

[Sara Raza](#) is an award-winning curator and writer specializing in global art and visual cultures from a post-colonial, post-Soviet perspective. She is the author of *Punk Orientalism: The Art of Rebellion* (Black Dog Press, London 2022). Raza has curated for the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum (New York), Mathaf: Modern Arab Art Museum (Doha, Qatar), and the 55th Venice Biennale, among others. Formerly, she was the Guggenheim UBS MAP Curator for the Middle East and North Africa at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, and Curator of Public Programs at Tate Modern, London. Sara holds a BA and an MA, both from Goldsmiths College, University of London, and pursued studies towards her PhD at the Royal College of Art, London. She lives and works in New York City, where she teaches MA courses at the New York University and the School of Visual Arts.

## About CUE Art Foundation

CUE Art Foundation is a nonprofit organization that works with and for emerging and underrecognized artists and art workers to create new opportunities and present varied perspectives in the arts. Through our gallery space and public programs, we foster the development of thought-provoking exhibitions and events, create avenues for mentorship, cultivate relationships amongst peers and the public, and facilitate the exchange of ideas. For more information about CUE, visit [www.cueartfoundation.org](http://www.cueartfoundation.org).

## Credits

الفكرة ذكري / *A thought is a memory* curated by [Noel Maghathe](#) with curatorial mentorship by [Sara Raza](#), featuring artists [Zeinab Saab](#), [Kiki Salem](#), [Nailah Taman](#), and [Zeina Zeitoun](#). Graphic design by [Daleen Saah](#). Catalogue essay by [Sarah Aziza](#), mentored by [Dina Ramadan](#). Presented by CUE Art Foundation, 2023.

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**Support**

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Zeina Zeitoun, *Wajih Zeitoun*, 2023



Zeina Zeitoun, 2020, *يا ببي خدني مشوار*