



Press release
April 2021

Artist couple occupies Marres during exhibition *Intimate Geographies*

From 6 March until 8 August at Marres in Maastricht, NL

During the exhibition *Intimate Geographies*, by the Lebanese artists Charbel-joseph H. Boutros and Stéphanie Saadé, two protagonists occupy Marres. This artist couple makes sporadic appearances in the homely environment established within the art center and could be mistaken for visitors. The awkwardness of their actions and their behavior makes their presence more salient. What is the purpose of the enigmatic rituals – from making phone calls to napping – that they perform?

Home

Under the influence of the Covid-19 pandemic, the notion of home has been completely disrupted: the office, the studio, the shops, the museum, the restaurants, and the bars have invited themselves inside our houses, either symbolically or virtually. Home is no longer solely the attractive physical and mental space that it used to be; it has also become a space for endless waiting. In the rooms of Marres *Intimate Geographies* presents different experiences and environments, including a landscaped garden full of plants that the couple had in their former house in Beirut, a living room where the two are having a mundane discussion on a couch overlooking a curiously undulating carpet, or a dining room where they have lunch surrounded by embroidered curtains from another time-space. Little by little, as a visitor you will infiltrate their intimate and professional lives.

Stéphanie Saadé:

"We started talking about 'home' as a theme for this exhibition in 2019; before a popular uprising, the Lebanese pound's devaluation, hyperinflation, a global pandemic and a deadly blast ... to cite a few. In short: before 'home' became a new notion. But the concept also evolved while this process was ongoing. We felt it was still valid to explore it, no matter what it would become at the time of our exhibition."

Charbel-joseph H. Boutros:

"Our aim here was to create an uncanny situation, where visitors would wonder if they are in an exhibition or in a home. We intended to blur this limit and came up with the idea of having two protagonists inhabiting the exhibition: an artist couple that lives and works in the house. They are preparing an important exhibition and hence receive phone calls from people they work with, like their



gallerists. These artists are not our alter egos, but of course they are modeled on our experiences and speak our dialogues. The visitors gradually understand that they have entered a home."

Time and memory

The relationship between time and memory is a recurrent theme in H. Boutros' and Saadé's work. Saadé: *"I've always been interested in a playful approach of time rather than the traditional linear one. My works are meant to provide the possibility of bringing back elements of the past and weaving them into the present."* H. Boutros: *"An important component in my installations, sculptures, or performances is what I qualify as charged abstraction: I take a material which could a video, a marble cube, or a shoe and I charge it with a unique experience."*

The Encounter of the First and Last Particles of Dust

Each day during *Intimate Geographies*, the couple has lunch in the dining room surrounded by the artwork *The Encounter of the First and Last Particles of Dust*, curtains that originate from Saadé's family home. They are embroidered with a total of 37 of the most significant routes that the artist traversed in Lebanon from 1995 to 2001. The time span coincides with the aftermath of the Lebanese Civil War. The lines of embroidery depict trips made between her home and those of friends and family members. These stitched patterns in thick seams of string intertwine personal memories with the country's history.

Geography and Abstraction

The entire floor of the living room in Marres is covered with a carpet, which shows peculiar bulges here and there. This artwork, *Geography and Abstraction* by H. Boutros, translates the weight of Marres director Valentijn Byvanck into equivalent concrete cylinders, placed under a carpet. His body mutates into an abstract sculpture, a portrait of a man and an institute. At the same time, it creates a new geography that visitors are invited to walk through and to lie on.

More information and tickets

For more information and booking your ticket, visit www.marres.org.

Note for editors

For more information, interviews requests and images, please contact Renée Schmeetz, Communications manager: renee.schmeetz@marres.org, 06 120 349 75, www.marres.org.