



Institut des
Cultures d'Islam

Press Release

Exhibition from 20 January to 30 June 2024

Aurélia Zahedi

La Rose de Jéricho

CONTENT

From 20 January to 30 June 2024, the ICI — Institut des Cultures d’Islam presents *La Rose de Jéricho*, an exhibition by Aurélia Zahedi.

Embracing drawing, sculpture, photography, painting, installation and performance, Aurélia Zahedi has been developing for several years a body of work devoted to the Rose of Jericho, a plant said to be immortal, blown here and there by the wind, and blooming thanks to the rare and precious rain that makes the desert blossom. In Palestine, alongside the Bedouins of Nabi Moussa, the artist composes a protean narrative exploring the myths of the Rose, in a land torn apart by human madness. In the intimate atmosphere of the ICI’s hammam, the exhibition highlights the power of the imaginary against oblivion, at a time when beliefs, orality and memory oscillate between emergence and obliteration.

The exhibition is accompanied by a multidisciplinary events programme that includes Aurélia Zahedi’s Rose Ceremony (combining botany and poetry), a conference on the access to water on the West Bank, a film featuring young Palestinian women, a literary teatime, tales and a concert to coincide with Ramadan, a film screening and art workshops for children.

Detailed information on the website: www.ici.paris

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Media partner of the exhibition

Les Inrockuptibles

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Cover Page

Vase lacrymatoire
Blown glass sculpture, 37 x 7 cm
© Aurélia Zahedi, ADAGP, Paris, 2023

Exhibition from January 20th to June 30th, 2024

Aurélia Zahedi

La Rose de Jéricho

For thousands of years, this mythical plant concealed in the folds of the desert has stirred the imagination of those who encounter it or look out for its traces. Although humble and modest, nestling low to the ground, the plant is associated with resurrection and the sacred. It is said to be immortal, nomadic, a healer and women's ally. Aurélia Zahedi set off in its footsteps in 2016 and has continued her quest ever since, trying to determine if this plant is indeed intrinsically connected to Jericho, the city whose name it bears. Travelling across the *Sahra' charq al-Quds* in Palestine (the desert to the east of Jerusalem) alongside the Bedouins of Nabi Moussa, Aurélia Zahedi listens to the silence and embraces the diversity of perspectives, composing a protean narrative made up of several voices.

Three botanical species share the name of Rose of Jericho. But does a genuine one actually exist? It is said that this revivifying plant emerged in the cradle of the world's oldest city (and the one with lowest elevation). Located near the Jordan River, Jericho boasts a multitude of canals and a wealth of different cultures and yet the eponymous Rose grows amidst the sand and rocks, only blooming in contact with the rare and precious rain that makes the desert blossom. This plant is the eyes and the ears of the desert, its subtle pulse, and the repository of stories threatened with disappearance. When awakened from its dormancy by the rain, its dry, curled branches unfurl, its leaves turn green and its protected seeds are dispersed. At the heart of disputed borders, the Rose becomes a storyteller, sharing the turbulence of a land torn apart by human madness. Its shadow reveals the moral, physical and symbolic suffering of an entire population as we are invited, through poetry, to take the measure of a stifled identity.

In the hammam of the ICI – Institut des Cultures d'Islam, Aurélia Zahedi's Roses of Jericho come to life, distilling their testimonies through occasional ceremonies and a selection of works produced over the last five years, some of which have never been exhibited. Navigating from the earth to the sky, and from the scorching sun of the day to the guardians stars of the night, the exhibition points to the connections between the plant, its territory and its landscapes. It reminds us of the power of the imaginary in contexts of constraint or even inner exile, and at a time when beliefs, orality and memory oscillate between emergence and obliteration.

– Clelia Coussonnet

Biographies

Artist



© Sylvain Lubac

Aurélia Zahedi graduated from the École Supérieure d'Art d'Avignon in 2011 and continued her studies at Villa Arson in Nice until 2013.

From 2016 to 2017, she took part in the "creation and globalisation" Offshore post-diploma research programme in Shanghai (China). She received the Nopoto Prize in 2018 for *La Rose de Jéricho*, as well as a grant from the Institut français within the framework of an international project supported by the region of Nouvelle Aquitaine, in France. In 2021, she received a Fanak Fund travel grant designed to encourage the mobility of artists from the Middle East, as well as an Ekphrasis grant from ADAGP. She co-founded the Maison Auriolles residential research centre in 2018.

In addition to exhibiting in France and abroad, Aurélia Zahedi has taken part in several artist residency programmes. Over the years, she has also developed her skills in the field of exhibition design and curatorship, which she has applied both to her own exhibitions and those of other artists. Her research has led her to speak at conferences, whereas her practice allows her to illustrate her publications and publish her texts.

Clelia Coussonnet is an independent curator, researcher, facilitator, writer and editor. She is interested in how visual cultures address political, social and spiritual issues in different, or complementary, ways to other disciplines. The main concern of her curatorial practice is to consider how knowledge, understood in a broad, inclusive sense, is formed and how it is transmitted, reinterpreted, updated, and used to inform alternative modes of acting and being in the world. She enjoys setting up interdisciplinary projects outside of traditional art circuits and in spaces that are little or not used to host cultural projects.

Her research has been revolving around botanical politics and power structures, investigating political imprints on plants, circulation and resilience in exhibitions such as *Effet de Serre*, Farah Khelil in a renovated greenhouse in the Parc du Belvédère, Tunis, Tunisia (2021); *Planted in the Body*, MeetFactory, Prague, Czech Republic (2021); *Ground Control*, Bildmuseet, Umeå, Sweden (2020); *Leave No Stone Unturned [Remuer la terre]*, Le Cube, Rabat, Morocco (2019) and *Botany under Influence*, apexart, New York, USA (2016).

As a ramification, she has been diving into riverine and marine environments considering liquidity, toxicity and contamination, and how pollutants get superimposed. Projects include *Breaking Water*, CAC Cincinnati, USA (2022); *Spoiled Waters Spilled*, Les Parallèles du Sud Manifesta 13, BNM, Marseille, France (2020) and *Au loin les signaux, al lou'lou'*, Anse du Pharo shipyards, Marseille, France (2017).

Guest curator



© Courtesy Clelia Coussonnet

Visuals



صلاة نسرين La prière de Nesrine (3)
Paint on paper, gold leaf, 53 x 34 cm, 2023
© Aurélia Zahedi, ADAGP, Paris, 2023



Vase lacrymatoire
Blown glass sculpture, 37 x 7 cm, 2023
Photo credit: Maurine Tric at ICI - Institut des Cultures d'Islam
© Aurélia Zahedi, ADAGP, Paris, 2023



La Rose de Jéricho (video still)
HD colour video with sound, 24"37', 2023
© Aurélia Zahedi, ADAGP, Paris, 2023



Relique de la Rose de Jéricho - Eau de la mer Morte
Blown glass sculpture, water and salt from the Dead Sea, 24 x 5 x 7 cm, 2018
© Aurélia Zahedi, ADAGP, Paris, 2023



Réveil de la Rose de Jéricho Series
 Ink drawing, 33 x 41 cm, 2018 to present
 © Aurélia Zahedi, ADAGP, Paris, 2023



Herbier de l'ancien cimetière musulman de Jéricho, detail
 Sculpture, glass, plants, 100 x 50 x 188 cm, 2019
 Photo credit: Tanguy Beurdeley at the Crypte d'Orsay
 © Aurélia Zahedi, ADAGP, Paris, 2023



PATIENS QUIA AETERNA, Glass ceremony chest, detail
Selaginella lepidophylla (Hook. & Grev.) Spring,
 32,5 x 32,5 x 167 cm, 2018, FRAC Limoges
 © Aurélia Zahedi, ADAGP, Paris, 2023

The ICI – Institut des Cultures d’Islam



The ICI is a contemporary arts centre located in the Goutte d’Or neighbourhood of Paris. Its rich programme of exhibitions, concerts, conferences, film screenings followed by debates, workshops and events organised for children develops awareness of the wide variety of practices that comprise Islamic civilisation and their vitality in contemporary culture.

From Africa to Asia via Europe and the Middle East, the many cultures of Islam are a source of inspiration for artists of every origin, whatever their loyalties, beliefs or nationality. By sharing their perspectives, the ICI fights prejudice while presenting the latest cultural developments from all over the world.

The ICI also offers language and art classes, as well as themed visits of the Goutte d’Or.

All the activities on offer take place in one of two buildings*, each of which has exhibition spaces and classrooms. The Rue Léon site also has a patio, an open-air stage and a restaurant (La Table Ouverte), whereas the Rue Stephenson site boasts a hammam. The first floor of the latter is home to a uniquely organised prayer room run by the Grande Mosquée de Paris in respect of the 1905 law on the principle of secularity.

*Exhibition spaces at the ICI are divided between these two buildings located respectively at 19 Rue Léon and 56 Rue Stephenson (Paris 18th). From September 2023 to June 2024, the Rue Léon site will be closed for renovation. The hammam at ICI Stephenson will host the exhibitions during the building work.

www.ici.paris

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