

Handwritten text in Arabic script, partially visible at the top right of the page. The text includes phrases like "سبعة ا'clock", "ثمان ا'clock", and "تسعة ا'clock", which appear to be variations of "seven o'clock", "eight o'clock", and "nine o'clock".

Stéphanie Saadé

The Encounter of the First and Last Particles of Dust

Curated by Anne Davidian

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Text by Anne Davidian

Have you heard about the theory of the apple in a box? Here is a thought experiment, or a playful metaphysical gamble. Imagine placing an apple inside a sealed container. No energy exchange, no interference. Just the fruit, locked in with its collapse –subject to entropy, a slow choreography of decay. Molecules unravel, atoms scatter, structure unknits into particulate chaos.

Theoretical physics leaves us with a strange loophole: within an infinite timeline, every possible configuration of matter must recur. So the apple, pulverised into dust, reappears. Not as a cyclical return or resurrection, but matter reconfigured anew. *Az-Zahr*;¹ chance itself, animates this uncertain throw of the dice: an alternate order, a mode through which matter reshapes otherwise.

Two galleries, facing each other like Borges' mirrors, are set in a museum that was once a house. Doors removed, windows revealed, floors covered. To walk through this exhibition is not to follow a timeline, but to step into time's irregular tempo: circular, granular, disjointed. Your movements draw loops, asymmetries, misalignments. Memory ceases to narrate; it begins to behave like matter –unstable, diffractive, reverberant.

Traversée des états (Crossing States). The floor lifts beneath your feet. It is memory made spatial. A radical gesture of domestic twinning: laying down a familiar playground for the show, paired with the artist's attention to what is often overlooked, mistreated, minor –the humble floor. The walls have vanished; only the marks of thresholds remain. The result is a fragmented geometry of surfaces –tile, terrazzo, carpet– held in simultaneous visibility. A quiet vertigo of impossible vantage.

This is not a replica, but an invocation: the uncanny presence of a quasi-double, a placeholder. The materials are prosthetic. What matters here is not their authenticity; it is the visual logic, the formative rhythm of a terrazzo –imported from Venice and fully naturalised, traversing Lebanese homes and social strata alike, omnipresent; the first abstraction to enter the artist's eye as a child.

The installation sets the pace of displacements and recompositions, a grounding device that holds nothing still. You move, disoriented, through the imprint of someone else's domestic time. The floor itself has crossed states: kitchen to bedroom, carpet over terrazzo, carpet replacing tile, each substitution marking the metamorphosis of a habitat and a country. Fragmented modernity sediments in pattern.

Across the room, in *Traversée des états* (Crossing States), terrazzo panels stand vertically, embedded with compressed debris from Fairuz albums. Lebanon's soundscape reconfigured into image, the auditory into mineral form. If memory is material, then transmutation is its mode of persistence.

The Encounter of the First and Last Particles of Dust lends its name to the exhibition. The curtains pool on the floor, misfitting, testifying to spatial scales they no longer belong to. The embroidered transpositions of cartographic routes are freed from geographical referents and appear like abstract patterns. They enact memory as movement, forming a scaffolding through which a narrative might begin again. Family visits, coastal drives, archaeological detours –mobility regained after war and the curated erasure of its memory. These are re-entries into fractured geography.

The threaded lines interfere with stains, creases, and sun marks on the fabric as personal and collective histories diffract on the same surface. The curtains engage with vertical incisions in the gallery walls –once sealed, now reopened– channeling light, movement, contingency. A reordered field of perception emerges, where memory no longer encloses.

Dust gathers at this junction, settled into the textile over its lifespan at home. A minimal unit of inhabitation, a frictional indicator of the unfinished, dust here is matter in suspension. Measurable

yet defying measure, residual and uncontainable, each particle binds what it touches into a spatial-temporal knot, vibrating across unstable durations. *First* and *Last* are not positions on a timeline, but coexisting intensities that displace chronology into a set of overlapping rhythms.

Elsewhere, *Petits papiers* (Little Papers) collect remnants of lived time, recomposed into an improbable cohesion. The artist's practice is reduced to its minimum, with materials at hand forming, in exile, a new home that is also the studio. "Traces of a civilisation obsessed with not leaving traces," says Saadé. The figure of the chiffonnier – a Parisian ragpicker – hovers here: a counter-archivist gleaming value from what's discarded.

No archives, no narrative arc. In *Word Count*, language, measured and stripped of interpretive weight, becomes spatial rhythm: words are intervals, as if inscribed by a metronome attuned to linguistic irregularity. In a numerological maneuver, the artist recodes the poem into an alternate register. Meaning recedes. What remains is a pre-poetic state, before meaning congeals.

It has been said that catastrophe interrupts narrative continuity. Saadé works from the breach, inventing compositional logics within disorder. Each work sets its own conditions of unfolding. Durations migrate into spatial arrangements, units of time take shape. Measures are transposed into the scale of lived experience, private arithmetic takes place of random choice.

This material is fragmentary, familiar, acutely present. Saadé offers cues: titles, factual notes, yet these touchpoints remain oblique. Nothing settles into story. A method of narrative oscillation, held between what cannot be told and what refuses to disappear.

Her gestures lean closer towards notation. As in concrete poetry, the force here lies not in what is said but in how each element claims its space. More than simple inscriptions, they are sites of attention, where the political is an undertow.

Finally, *It is...*, or the grand calligram. Each second of an hour is inscribed by hand, letter by letter, over the course of months, forming a circular movement. The wrist tires, the line drifts, blurs, bearing the ache of repetition. A 0.5° deviation per line gradually grows into a spiral of instability. The title trails off. This is not clock time.

The calligram enacts friction: its rhythm binds minutes, hours, war, love, waiting, longing. Time weighs, thickens the line, interrupts the gesture. Measure gives way, and another temporal register begins to surface. Time here is not merely conceptualised, but physically negotiated. Duration condenses into lived substance. Not a flow, but a bruised density.

Saadé does not rely on universal measures. She performs a situated, bodily temporality, each second an abrasion. Writing becomes time itself.

At the end of the loop, or maybe its beginning, you see *Golden Memories* – a luminous obstruction that diffracts memory and reroutes nostalgia. And at last: *Scarred Object*, bearing the seam of its cuts and the strength of their reassembly.

In Italo Calvino's *Invisible Cities*, Zaira remembers not through tales, but through the city's fabric: the distance between a lamppost and a hanged usurper's feet, the rips in a fish net, the curve of a gutter holding the memory of both a fleeting cat and a bomb that destroyed it. Memory is absorbed, a wave soaking into stone.

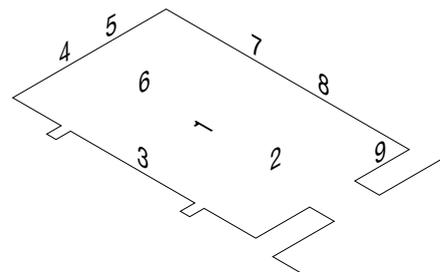
Saadé's works too are carriers of lived time. But she moves further. These are acts of transfiguration. Traces, fragments, dislocated times and disjointed spaces do not resolve, yet they retain agency. They persist. And because catastrophe seeks to erase, what persists matters.

1. From Andalusian Arabic الزهر, *az-zahr* ("die, game of dice"), named after the Arabic زهر, *zahr* ("flower") because the winning face of the die bore a flower.

Works in Twin Gallery 1 (left)

- 1. Traversée des états [Crossing States], 2025**
Terrazzo tiles, ceramic slabs, carpet, concrete (site-specific installation)
Supported by Blatt Chaya and Marm Group
A part of the floor of the artist's childhood home in Lebanon is reproduced at 1:1 scale using the same materials. The original wall locations are filled with cement, allowing visitors to freely cross the different rooms without obstruction.
- 2. The Encounter of the First and Last Particles of Dust, 2020**
Used curtains (x2), embroidery, 190 cm (w) x 320 cm (h) each
Courtesy of the artist and galerie Anne Barrault
The curtains from the common areas of the artist's family home in Lebanon are embroidered with the 37 most significant paths taken between 1995 and 2001, from the installation of the curtains until the artist's departure from the house.
- 3. Petits papiers [Little Papers], 2022**
Pieces of paper, glue, cardboard, 14.8 x 21 cm each (x7)
Courtesy of the artist and Marfa' Projects
All the small pieces of paper collected by the artist in daily life (labels, tickets, business cards, handwritten notes, stickers, packaging, tape, artwork scraps, the artist's daughter's drawings, etc.) are preserved and assembled.
- 4. Traversée des états [Crossing States], 2024**
Terrazzo panel, 90 x 120 x 2 cm
Courtesy of the artist and Marfa' Projects
A terrazzo panel is inlaid with shredded vinyl, cassette, and CD fragments from Fairuz's album Jerusalem in My Heart (1972), arranged in chronological order from bottom.
Detail on back
- 5. Traversée des états [Crossing States], 2024**
Terrazzo panel, 90 x 120 x 2 cm
Courtesy of the artist and Marfa' Projects
A terrazzo panel is inlaid with shredded vinyl, cassette, and CD fragments from Fairuz's album Mais el Rim (1975), arranged in chronological order from bottom.

- 6. Building a Home with Time, 2020**
Wooden beads, thread, variable size
Courtesy of the artist and Marfa' Projects
A necklace is composed of 2832 beads, corresponding to the number of days between the artist's birth and the official end date of the Lebanese war.
- 7. Autocollants [Stickers], 2024**
Children's sticker residues, cardboard, 86 x 42 cm (framed)
Courtesy of the artist and Marfa' Projects
Residues of the artist's daughter's stickers and adhesive dots are reused and arranged into a composition.
- 8. Scarred Object, 2013**
Aluminium bar, 2 x 2 x 100 cm
Courtesy of the artist and Marfa' Projects
A metal bar is cut into equal parts and then welded back together to reconstruct its original shape.
- 9. Golden Memories, 2015**
Vintage photograph, 24-carat gold leaf, 10 x 15 cm
Courtesy of the artist and Marfa' Projects
A childhood photograph of the artist is covered with gold leaf.



Works in Twin Gallery 2 (right)

1. **Traversée des états [Crossing States]**, 2025

Terrazzo tiles, ceramic slabs, carpet, concrete
(site-specific installation)

Supported by Blatt Chaya and Marm Group

A part of the floor of the artist's childhood home in Lebanon is reproduced at 1:1 scale using the same materials. The original wall locations are filled with cement, allowing visitors to freely cross the different rooms without obstruction.

2. **The Encounter of the First and Last Particles of Dust**, 2020

Used curtains (x2), embroidery,
190 cm (w) x 320 cm (h) each

Courtesy of the artist and galerie Anne Barrault

The curtains from the common areas of the artist's family home in Lebanon are embroidered with the 37 most significant paths taken between 1995 and 2001, from the installation of the curtains until the artist's departure from the house.

3. **Word Count**, 2022

Book page, permanent ink, 14 x 23 cm

Courtesy of the artist and Marfa' Projects

Each word of a poem is measured in centimetres with its size written below.

4. **Il est... [It is...]**, 2025

Permanent ink on cardboard, 29.7 x 42 cm

Courtesy of the artist and Marfa' Projects

The 12 hours of a day are handwritten. Each sentence is tilted according to the time it indicates.

5. **Il est... [It is...]**, 2025

Permanent ink on cardboard, 29.7 x 42 cm

Courtesy of the artist and Marfa' Projects

The 60 minutes of an hour are handwritten. Each sentence is tilted according to the time it indicates (here from one o'clock to one fifty-nine).

6. **Il est... [It is...]**, 2025

Permanent ink on cardboard, 29.7 x 42 cm

Courtesy of the artist and Marfa' Projects

The 60 seconds of a minute are handwritten. Each sentence is tilted according to the time it indicates (here from twelve o'clock and one minute to twelve o'clock and one minute and fifty-nine seconds).

7. **It is...**, 2024–25

Permanent ink on cardboard, 250 x 250 cm

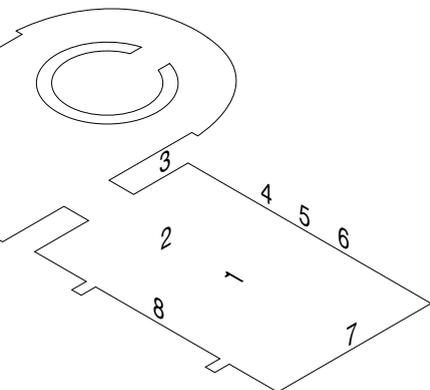
Courtesy of the artist and Marfa' Projects

The 3600 seconds of an hour are handwritten. Each sentence is tilted according to the time it indicates (here from twelve o'clock till twelve o'clock and fifty nine minutes and fifty nine seconds).

8. **مفتوح العينين، مغلق العينين [With Eyes Open, with Eyes Closed]**, 2024

Permanent ink on cardboard, 21 x 29.7 cm

Courtesy of the artist and Marfa' Projects



About the Artist

Stéphanie Saadé (b. 1983, Lebanon) lives and works between Beirut, Paris, and Amsterdam. She graduated from the École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts, Paris, and completed postgraduate studies at the China Academy of Arts in Hangzhou. She was an artist-in-residence at the Jan van Eyck Academie, Maastricht (2014–2015), and the Cité Internationale des Arts, Paris (2015). In 2023, she was selected for the *Accélération* residency at the Centre Pompidou, Paris. The works created during this residency were acquired and exhibited in the museum's permanent collection.

Her solo exhibitions include Pakt (Amsterdam, NL), Kunsthaus Pasquart (Biel, CH), Museum Van Loon (Amsterdam, NL), Parc Saint Léger (Pougues-les-Eaux, FR), Maison Salvan (Labège, FR), and a duo show at Marres, Maastricht (NL). She has participated in group exhibitions at leading institutions such as the Centre Pompidou (Paris, FR), Punta della Dogana (Venice, IT), Sharjah Biennial 13 (UAE), Hessel Museum (New York, USA), MUCEM (Marseille, FR), MuHKA (Antwerp, BE), MOCA (Toronto, CA), Fondation Pernod Ricard (Paris, FR), Jameel Art Center (Dubai, UAE), Villa Empain (Brussels, BE), Het Noordbrabants Museum ('s-Hertogenbosch, NL), Centraal Museum (Utrecht, NL), Mosaic Rooms (London, UK), Poush (Aubervilliers, FR), Beirut Art Center, and Home Works 7 and 9 (Beirut, LB).

Her first monograph, *Building a Home With Time*, was published following her exhibition at Kunsthaus Pasquart.

Her works belong to major art collections including the Centre Pompidou (Paris, FR), Museo MAXXI (Rome, IT), CNAP (FR), FMAC (Paris, FR), FRAC Franche-Comté (FR), Centraal Museum (Utrecht, NL), Barjeel Art Foundation (Sharjah, UAE), and the Saradar Collection (Beirut, LB).

About the Curator

Anne Davidian is a curator and researcher exploring alternate social imaginaries, with a focus on non-oppressive communal forms. Her recent projects include *How to Hold Your Breath*, 2024, Asian Art Biennial (National Taiwan Museum of Fine Arts), *Gharib*, Armenian Pavilion, 59th Venice Art Biennale; *What Makes an Assembly?* (Sternberg Press, 2022), a cross-disciplinary publication on practices of assembling across histories and geographies, as well as collaborations with Centre Pompidou and LE BAL in Paris. She is currently curating the opening festival for the new Almaty Museum of Arts, launching in September 2025.

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Intern: Fengyue Lu

Exhibition design: Mind the gap

Arabic translation: Dima Hamade

French translation: Bruno Barmaki

Copyediting: Fatma Cheffi

The artist would like to thank Karina el Helou, Anne Davidian, Fatma Cheffi, Marwan Rizcala, Maissa Maatouk, Betabat, and the entire team at the Sursock Museum for their support and collaboration.

Special thanks also go to Em Sherif Art Foundation, Blatt Chaya, Institut Français, Marm Group, Marfa' Projects, Commercial Insurance, Tinol and all the generous sponsors.

The artist is further grateful to her representing galleries – Marfa' Projects, galerie Anne Barault, Akinci gallery, Grey Noise gallery – as well as to the Saradar Foundation, Mario Saradar, Dina Saradar and Sandra Dagher. She would also like to thank Joumana Asseily, Laetitia Zalloum, Karim Chaya, Ghaith & Jad, Lama Zouein, Claire Tater, Fengyue Lu, Léane Aupeix, Michèle Paulikevitch, Joe Saadé, Léa Saadé, Patrick Saadé and Noa Saadé Hage Boutros for their invaluable support.

