



Willy Aractingi
L'Éléphant et le Singe de Jupiter [The Elephant and
the Ape of Jupiter], 1998
Acrylic on canvas, 130 x 115 cm
Sursock Museum collection
Gifted by the Aractingi family, 2016

LES MONDES DE WILLY ARACTINGI

09.06.17 – 18.09.17

Les Mondes de Willy Aractingi

Opening on Thursday 8 June, 18:00 to 21:00

On view until 18 September 2017

Special Exhibitions Hall, Level -2

Les Mondes de Willy Aractingi is an exhibition devoted to the work of painter Willy Aractingi (1930-2003).

Self-taught, Aractingi has often been labeled as a naive or primitive artist; this exhibition looks to take a more nuanced approach, and features more than 120 works created between 1973 and 2003.

Best known for his gradations of color, Aractingi was also fascinated by tales, fables, and other stories told to children such as Geha, Tarzan, Abla and Antar, Adam and Eve, and by La Fontaine's animals and characters. He depicts a world inhabited by creatures and animals including lions, foxes, crows, monkeys, and brings them to life with as many vivid colors as his palette permits.

Aractingi is in pursuit of his own aesthetic and humor, and plays with variations to obtain several versions of his propositions. Abla's alternately purple, yellow, and green face, framed by a tarbouche or high bun, is transformed with each of these variations.

A parfumeur by trade, Aractingi developed an interest in painting very early in life, but did not receive the support he had hoped for. The frustration he felt was to stay with him and eventually push him to dedicate himself entirely to painting from the beginning of the 1980s. A tireless worker, Aractingi then targeted the masterpieces of literature, both Western – Jean de la Fontaine's Fables, Tarzan King of the Jungle, Sleeping Beauty – and Eastern – Kalila wa dimna, the tales of Geha, the love story of Antar and Abla – aiming to illustrate each story.

The exhibition follows a generous donation to the Sursock Museum in 2016 by the Aractingi family of 224 oil paintings, each one illustrating a La Fontaine fable. This important initiative has allowed the Museum to hold a retrospective of the artist's work. The exhibition brings together over 120 works by the artist completed between 1973 and 2003.

The exhibition is curated by Yasmine Chemali, Head of Collections at the Sursock Museum.

Press preview:

Tuesday 6 June, 12:00 to 13:30

Opening reception:

Thursday 8 June, 18:00 to 21:00

"I know that one day I will be recognized as a great artist — it is a matter of time. If I live long enough and if I manage to leave an important oeuvre. [...] I will work as long as I can to finish the Fables for June '95. It will be the date of my life's work."

Willy Aractingi's family chose the Sursock Museum to receive an unprecedented donation of more than 200 paintings depicting Jean de la Fontaine's Fables.

Aractingi began to paint each of the Fables in 1989. Six years later, in 1995, the year of Jean de la Fontaine's tricentenary, he thought of finishing his colossal work.

But the Fables stuck to his brush as he continued to paint and repaint them until the end of his days. Aractingi had been right: it's his own Fables that brought him the most fame — perhaps he had foreseen it. In any case, he intended for this series to be housed in an institution, not willing to sell or disperse these paintings.

The Sursock Museum proudly welcomes this important work, which is being added to the Museum's permanent collection, and is grateful to the generous contribution of Willy Aractingi and his family.

By offering public access to a corpus as complete and emblematic of an artist of Willy Aractingi's stature, the Museum can carry further its mission of preserving Lebanese modern and contemporary heritage.

Through the work's playful and educational aspect, this exhibition creates bridges between generations and cultures.

Zeina Arida
Director, Sursock Museum



Willy Aractingi
 Les Deux Taureaux et une Grenouille [The Two Bulls
 and the Frog], 1994
 Acrylic on canvas, 100 x 100 cm
 Sursock Museum collection



Willy Aractingi
 Les Devineresses [The Fortune-Tellers], 1990
 Mixed media on canvas, 100 x 100 cm
 Sursock Museum collection
 Gifted by the Aractingi family, 2016



Willy Aractingi
 Le Lion [The Lion], 1995
 Mixed media on canvas, 100 x 100 cm
 Sursock Museum collection
 Gifted by the Aractingi family, 2016

Parallel public program

TOUR

Curator's Tour Yasmine Chemali

Saturday 10 June, 16:00 to 17:00 in French, 17:00 to 18:00 in English

Thursday 15 June, 18:00 to 19:00 in French, 19:00 to 20:00 in Arabic

Free admission

Join curator Yasmine Chemali for a tour of Les Mondes de Willy Aractingi, exploring the main themes and ideas behind the exhibition.

Yasmine Chemali is the Head of the Collections at the Sursock Museum.

FAMILY PROGRAM | PERFORMANCE

Origins of a Fable with Collectif Kahraba

Saturday 10 and Sunday 11 June, 20:00 to 21:00

Museum esplanade

Free admission

A performance for all ages.

The first fable may have even been modelled from clay. The central element will be clay in layered sheets, in piles, in blocks, in bas-relief, modelled live, and so on, giving life to figures and spaces. It is from and through this raw material that the two interpreters (Eric Deniaud and Aurelien Zouki) will build the genealogy of fables and their origins. Drawing inspiration from the exhibition Les Mondes de Willy Aractingi, the piece combines live sculpture and drawing, movement, object manipulation, and sound creation.

The development of Origins of a Tale was supported by the Swiss Embassy in Lebanon and the French Institute in Lebanon, and has received grants from Focus Liban (French Institute– Zoukak Company) and from Masrah al Madina – 20th anniversary grant.

Collectif Kahraba is a performing arts company comprised of artists and technicians from different backgrounds, who believe that art is a trajectory towards openness and dialogue. Since 2007, Collectif Kahraba has presented ten different performances that brought together various disciplines, including, theatre, puppetry, shadow theatre, and contemporary dance. The collective has also initiated a multidisciplinary, free festival, "Nehna wel Amar wel Jiran," which held its fourth edition in 2015, bringing together more than 40 artists and over 5000 spectators. Collectif Kahraba are also at the helm of the Hammana Artist House, a new art residency space located in the village of Hammana.

FAMILY PROGRAM

Wild Things: A Mask-Making Workshop with Junk Munkez

Saturday 17 June, 11:00 to 13:00 | Saturday 8 July, 11:00 to 13:00

Ages 6-12. Children must be accompanied.

LBP 10,000 per child. LBP 5,000 per additional child.

Tickets can be booked through our website : www.sursock.museum

Create a mask using colorful and patterned textiles, cardboard, and origami techniques. In this participatory workshop, children will enter a fantasy world with an oral storytelling session of the Fables de la Fontaine. After choosing their favorite fables and characters, kids will draw an initial sketch of their mask and fabricate it. They will also be able to take their custom mask home.

Lea Kirdikian is a product designer with an avid interest in recycled materials. Xavier Baghdadi is an imaginative animator/illustrator. They teamed up to collaborate on an upcycling initiative called Junk Munkez, joining forces to conquer the local trash heaps through colourful eco-friendly products with eco-conscious ethics.

Sursock Museum

The Nicolas Ibrahim Sursock Museum is a modern and contemporary art museum in the center of Beirut first opened in 1961, with a mission to collect, preserve, and exhibit local and international art.

Through our collection, archives, exhibitions, and public programs, we aim to produce knowledge on art practices in the region and explore work that reflects on our contemporary moment. Our goal is to support local art production, to provide a platform for encounter and experimentation with art and ideas, and to inform and challenge different audiences in new and unexpected ways.

Open daily from 10:00 to 18:00

Late opening on Thursdays from 12:00 to 21:00

Closed on Tuesdays

Admission to the Sursock Museum is free of charge.

<https://sursock.museum/>

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