

I Wish To

Be Happy

I Want To

Be Yellow



*I Wish to Be Happy, I Want to Be Yellow**

Curated by Jad Karam

Mohammad Alfaraj
Aminah Al huqail
Dalia Baassiri
Richi Bhatia
Jumairy
Tamara Kalo
Adrian Pepe
Alia Zaal

September 10 - October 26, 2024

*Leaflet cover and exhibition title based on
Richi Bhatia's work *One morning I woke up and saw
papaya's in our garden*, 2023



Mohammad Alfaraj
sisters/brothers, 2024
charcoal on paper
21x29 cm

I Wish to Be Happy, I Want to Be Yellow gathers artists who maintain a visceral and intimate relationship with nature, highlighting the raw, emotive power of the natural world. It explores themes of disembodiment and re-embodiment, presenting nature as fluid and multiplicitous, merging with the human, the animal, and sometimes the mechanical into a new unified form. This exhibition highlights nature's imprint on both the earth and the body.

Psychiatrist Robert Jay Lifton, in his book *The Protean Self: Human Resilience in an Age of Fragmentation*, notes, "We are becoming fluid and many-sided. Without quite realising it, we have been evolving a sense of self appropriate to the restlessness and flux of our time. This mode of being differs radically from that of the past, and enables us to engage in continuous exploration and personal experiment. I have named it the "protean self" after Proteus, the Greek sea god of many forms."

Artists blur temporal boundaries between presence and absence, fullness and lack, past and present, engaging in generative rites that foster creation, fertility, and renewal. Bodies morph, adapt, and redefine themselves, existing in states of transition and transformation; in an ongoing flux of becoming. They embody the power of attraction and interaction, functioning as entities that react and interact with their surroundings. Challenging the notion of "being in the world", the artists use a variety of mediums and schemes to break free - for a moment - from human existence.

The works incorporate ephemeral materials that manifest the impermanence and fluidity of natural forces—food, twigs, ants, flowers, leaves, and candle wax—transformed and integrated into installations, photographs, sculptures, assemblages, collages, textiles, papers and paintings. With an eclectic group of artists, the exhibition aims to remind the viewer of the vulnerability of the body and the weight of the world.



Adrian Pepe

is an Honduran fiber artist based in Beirut, Lebanon.

Fascinated by the anatomical intricacies of both human and animal bodies, Adrian Pepe captures their essence and substance, establishing diverse relationships and juxtapositions. With a playful and performative approach, his works become a sanctum where these two worlds merge, deconstruct, and heal one another.

Nervous Bodies (2024) is a ceiling-to-floor, see-through tulle scroll featuring embroidered replicas of a human silhouette, resembling a frog poised for dissection, flattened as they move down a conveyor belt. Despite the contrasting worlds at play, Adrian has crafted a cohesive texture—yet one figure has leaped from the rack, its escape attempt failed, now lying smashed on the floor with its limbs splayed out.

Nervous Bodies, 2024 (installation view)
Embroidered tulle, colored silicon
(2 pieces)
630x320 cm
256 x 320 cm

@adrian_pepe



Alia Zaal

is an Emirati multidisciplinary artist based in Abu Dhabi, UAE.

Alia Zaal immerses herself in night walks through the landscapes of Abu Dhabi and Dubai, capturing the abundance of her surroundings with vivid, lasting impressions that bridge the mundane and the mystical, as well as the personal and the public.

Using lyrical and expressive strokes, she portrays Ghaf trees—symbols of resilience in harsh conditions—suspended in a liminal space between reality and dreams.

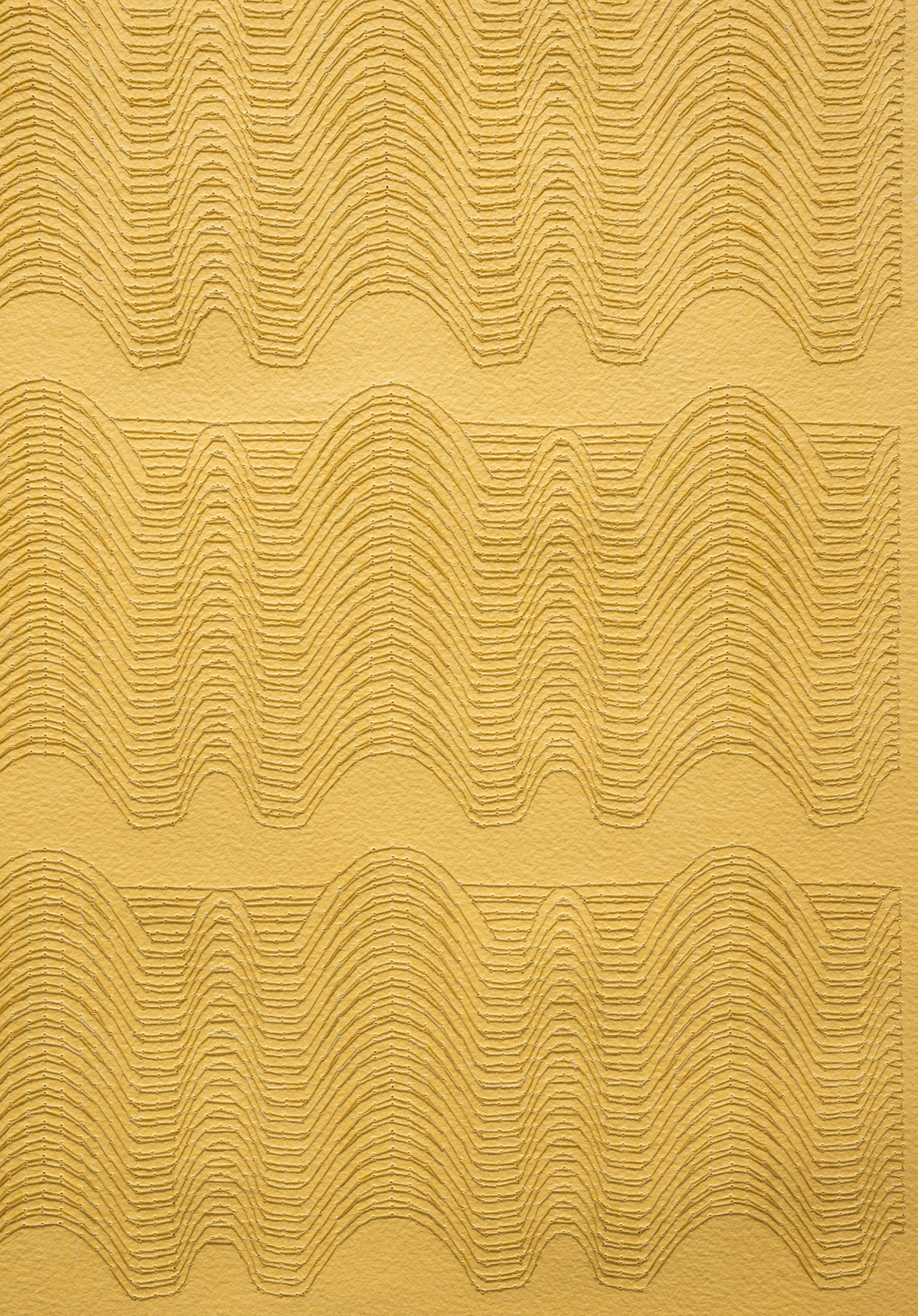
In her paintings, the Ghaf tree stands as a witness to the tumultuous changes of the outside world.

Yas by Night, 2024 (detail)
Oil on canvas
60 x 60 cm

@aliazaal



Alia Zaal, Installation view



Aminah Al huqail

is a Saudi-Greek multidisciplinary artist based in New York, USA.

Aminah Al huqail commits to papermaking with food waste, using discarded skins, shells, and pits.

Layers of Skin Strata (2023) is made from chickpea skins, collectively peeled to make hummus. This work reflects the communal actions central to Arabic foodways, where shared repetitive tasks naturally foster dialogue around the table.

In another series, *Bedforms*, Aminah explores the concept of leisure through sunbeds—commercial plastic items designed for lounging. Sunbeds became an ubiquitous motif in the artist's life and landscape: the ones found in Saudi compounds' culture, the refuge of Lebanese beach clubs amid instability, in Greece's surging tourist economy post-2009 crisis, and even their absence from New York's public beaches. The title refers to the geological "sea stacks," mimicking natural patterns while their uniformity and methodical repetition illustrate the tension between these artificial constructs and the landscapes they reshape.

Bedforms, 2023 (detail)

Hand-embroidered cotton on cotton rag paper
78.6 x 59.8 cm

@minamiinah



Aminah Al huqail, *Sea Stack* (2024), Installation view



Dalia Baassiri

is a Lebanese visual artist based in Beirut, Lebanon.

In her work, Dalia Baassiri operates like an alchemist, blending inherently fragile elements such as leftover candles wax, charcoal from nargilehs, shreds of wall plaster, and paint to construct tree trunks. These materials, often remnants of the everyday, are transformed into complex representations of nature, particularly the trees of Beirut, merging different perceptions that cannot be easily separated.

Dalia's ongoing series, *When the Season Returns*, is an evolving process of layering and overlapping textures, weaving through the fabric of both material and memory. It is an act of collecting and preserving, where light elements take on deeper significance.

When The Season Returns XIX, 2023 (detail)
Acrylic, graphite, paraffin wax (post-Harissa Prayers) and varnish on canvas
41 x 64 cm

@daliabaassiri



Dalia Baassiri, *When The Season Returns XXIV* (2024), detail



Jumairy

is an Emirati multidisciplinary artist based in Dubai, UAE.

Jumairy's work explores memory, identity, and transformation.

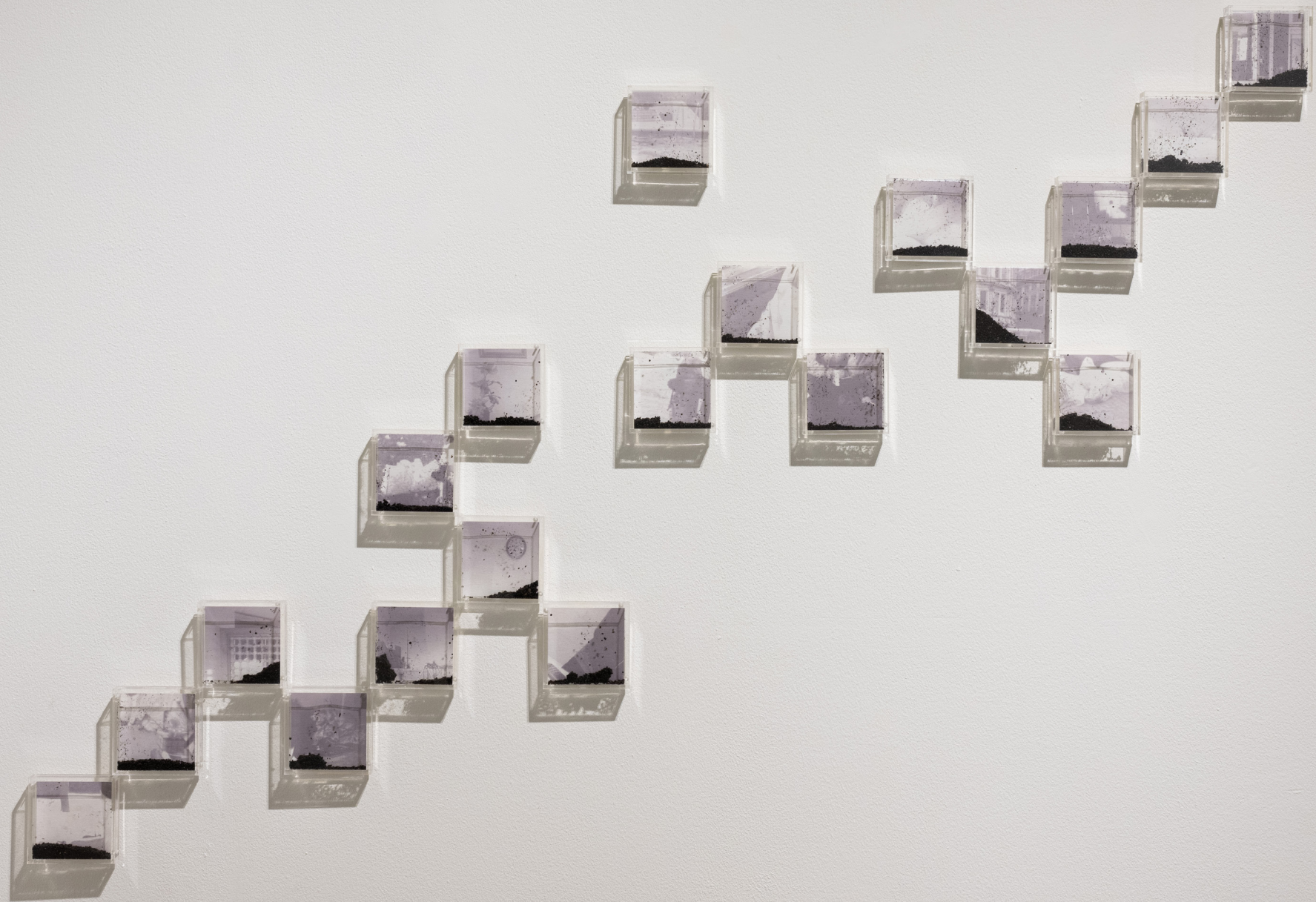
Uncertain Past, Uncertain Future (2013) examines memory's fragility through 20 prints boxed with piles of dead ants. Their death symbolizes the fading and distortion of these recollected memories.

Ab Ovo (iii) (2024), the third in a series of self-portraits created once every decade, captures a pivotal moment in the artist's life. Inspired by the Latin "Ab Ovo Usque Ad Mala," it marks the start of a new cycle. Here the ants suggest the symbiosis between artist and art.

Sanguis/Tempus (2024) further develops these ideas, blending the symbolism of blood and time in a series of five red paintings. The intensifying reds reflect an ongoing spiritual and physical transformation, where the artist's essence may be embedded within the medium itself, symbolizing sacrifice and the relentless march of time.

Sanguis/Tempus, 2024 (detail)
ink, water color and acrylic on canvas
Set of 5 works
13 x 13 cm

@jumaiiiiiiry



Jumairy, *Uncertain Past, Uncertain Future* (2013), installation view



Mohammad Alfaraj

is a Saudi multidisciplinary artist
based in Al Ahsa, KSA.

Mohammad Alfarraj maintains a continuous dialogue with nature and his environment. As a multifaceted artist and poet, his work often explores themes of environmental vulnerability, reflecting on the human form and nature. Born in a palm oasis in Al Ahsa, Saudi Arabia, Mohammad uses the palm trees to draw connections between the human's emotions and the natural world.

In his series of burnt palm charcoal drawings titled *Brother and Sister* and *You Could Be Me and I Could Be You*, the trees are casted by their shadow in various forms, navigating through grotesque, swirling, contorted, and other imagined representations of emotions—joy and sorrow, shared dreams and disappointments, love and kindness, and the “dream of a bright tomorrow”.

Growing, 2024

Charcoal of burnt palm trees on paper
21 x 29 cm

@mohammadalfaraj



Richi Bhatia

is an Indian multidisciplinary artist
based in Dubai, UAE.

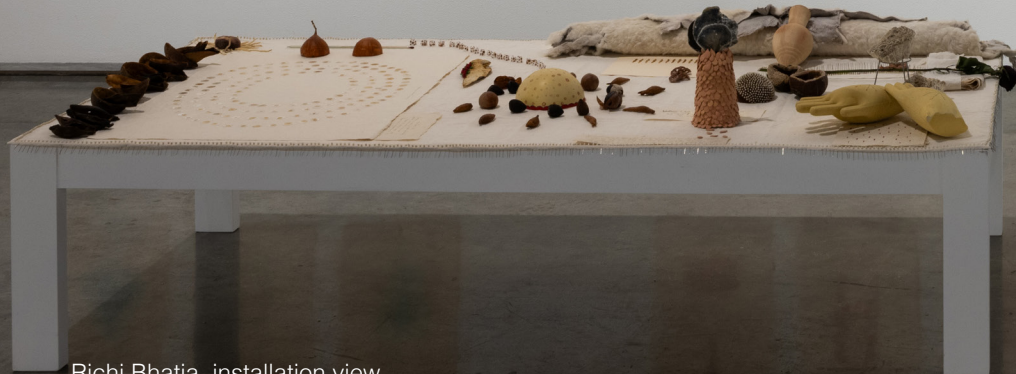
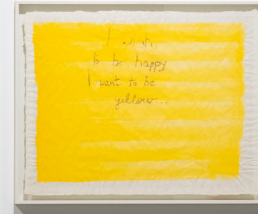
Richi Bhatia's walks to the fish and meat market are like a ritual, where she absorbs its roar and confusion. She observes the unseen forces often surrounding food, plants, corpses and their ongoing transformations.

Materially specific but intentionally ambiguous, her work, *Assemblage Bed One* (2014-24), displayed on a table-bed, looks like an aesthetic laboratory of found and mutated objects. Here, decaying organic materials—such as dried anchovies, a rose, and dental plaster—are refined with time and punctuated with pearl pins.

In her three sets of drawings, a body is depicted through fractured views, reflecting the idea that everything changes, everything flows, and images are formed in movement.

Assemblage bed I, 2014 - 2024 (detail)
surgical slides, coffee stains, passion fruit
skin, thermometer, quote from Aki Sasamoto,
dry edible anchovies, rose pierced with pearl
headed pins, a local fish from Baroda called
Jhipta ornated with kitchen made cornflour
clay, cotton thread on rice paper, industrial
plaster, photo ink, dry coconut and metal pins
Bed size: 190 x 90 cm

@richikbhatia



Richi Bhatia, installation view



Tamara Kalo

is a French-Lebanese multidisciplinary artist based between Riyadh, KSA and Beirut, Lebanon.

Deeply inspired by the various places and spaces she inhabits, Tamara Kalo navigates through these different contexts in a constant state of flow. In her search for meaning, Tamara focuses on the significance of change and impermanence of home.

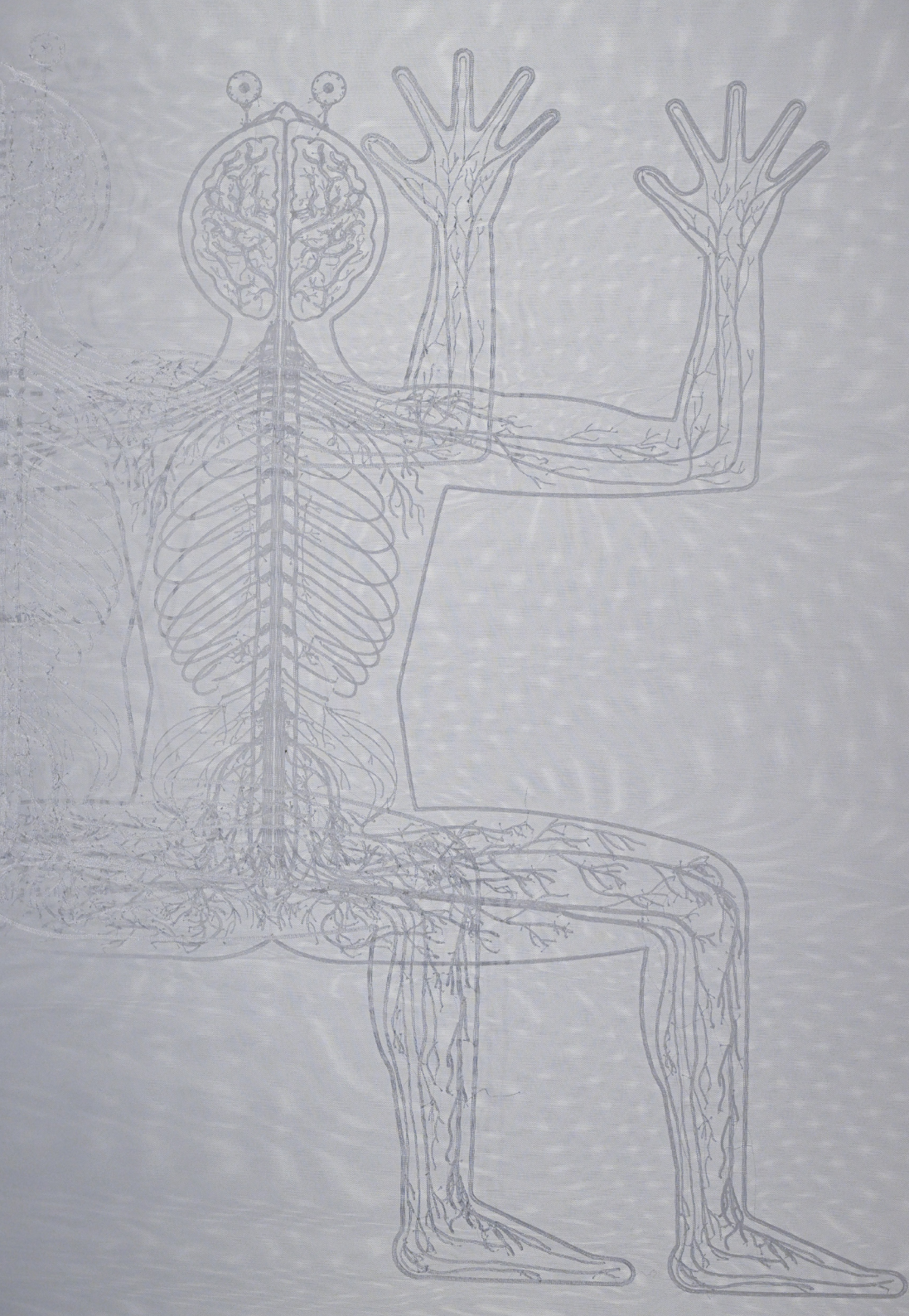
Folds Unfolding is a series of photographs where the edges are dissolved, draped or collapsed, such as the featured built elements of her childhood compound in Riyadh.

Transience resurfaces in *Current Sea*, an abstract silk tapestry in the shape of a undulating river bed where the stream of water is no other than a dilatating Lebanese bank note.

Olive Leaves Memory is a 2-meter-long folding book, where each page is embedded with the tangible leaves of the artist's backyard trees or captured through photogram. During a time when much violence is perpetrated, every part of the book pays tribute to this tree who can outlive generations.

Current Sea, 2024 (detail)
Silk on cotton - No.5
90 x 150 cm





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Visuals: Christian Sleiman
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Adrian Pepe, *Nervous Bodies*, 2024 (detail)

