

## **Press Release**

Marwa Arsanios  
*Matter of Alliances*

Exhibition and Discourse Program  
Opening on Friday, February 17th at 6 p.m.

Artist talk with Marwa Arsanios on February 18th, 3 p.m.  
Duration: February 18th to April 16th, 2023

With *Matter of Alliances*, HdKV presents Marwa Arsanios' first solo exhibition in Germany. It focuses on the artist's interdisciplinary approach dedicated to ecofeminist and decolonial practices.

Arsanios' cross-media installations—which include film, textile, print, drawing, collage, furniture, and archive materials—are based on extensive periods of travel and research. The Lebanese artist, born in 1978, focuses on grassroots organizations concerned with ecology, land distribution and agriculture, community building, feminist politics, and radical democracy.

At the center of the exhibition is the ongoing project *Who Is Afraid of Ideology?* which began in Iraqi Kurdistan in 2017. It shows strategies of resistance by women defending their right to land and water in places such as Northern Syria, Lebanon, and Colombia. Their survival depends on protecting their environment. Yet, the state continues to discredit the activists systematically and deprive them of their rights.

The engagement with local agents of these networks defines the artist's work. She highlights figures like Djamila Bouhired, an icon of the Algerian independence war, and other women in Arabic speaking countries to counter the mainstream portrayal of women in that part of the world as automatically oppressed. Her work calls on us to recognize that groups constructed as *weak* in Western discourses can be self-sustaining creators of progressive strategies. While Western industries and lifestyles are the primary cause of the climate crisis, innovative alternatives are being developed by those most affected. Indigenous groups, local initiatives, and self-organized communities fight to protect their environment against international corporations and political repression. With their resistance, they demonstrate how a crisis can birth creative action.

Arsanios marks a new aesthetic perspective within the discourse shaped by Gayatri Spivak, co-founder of postcolonial theory, in her 1988 essay *Can the Subaltern Speak?*. At the same time, the artist expands the critique of the Eurocentric discourse to include alternative narratives of the Anthropocene: how can a new feminist and ecological consciousness contribute to its transformation? It is about time that we replace the paralyzing concerns about the end of the world with innovative and alternative models of care for the planet. How can human destruction of nature open up new fields of action?

In Arsanios' own words: "In light of the urgency on the climate change issue, and while governments and corporations have been ignoring it for decades now without wanting (most often) to take any responsibility on the matter, women farmers have been mobilising their means and knowledge to carry out the work of repair. I believe this kind of resistance front to climate change should be enhanced, learned from and worked with intensively."

Curated by Søren Grammel and Mehveş Urgan



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Marwa Arsanios, *Have You Ever Killed a Bear? or Becoming Jamila* (still), 2014. Video.  
Courtesy of the artist and mor charpentier.

### Marwa Arsanios

Marwa Arsanios (\*1978) lives in Berlin and Beirut. Her works were most recently on view at the documenta fifteen (Kassel) and The Mosaic Rooms (London). She graduated with an MFA from the University of the Arts, London (2007). Afterwards, she worked as a research assistant in the Department of Fine Arts at the Jan Van Eyck Academie (2011-12). Arsanios is currently a PhD student at the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna, and teaches at the Dutch Art Institute. Selected solo exhibitions: at the Contemporary Arts Center, Cincinnati (2021); Škuc Gallery, Ljubljana (2018); Beirut Art Center (2017); Hammer Museum, Los Angeles (2016); Witte de With, Rotterdam (2016); Kunsthalle Lissabon, Lisbon (2015); Art in General, New York (2015). Selected group exhibitions: documenta fifteen, Kassel (2022); 5th Mardin Bienali (2022); 11th Berlin Biennale (2020); 2nd Lahore Biennale (2020); Kunsthalle Wien, Vienna (2019); 1st Sharjah Architecture Triennial (2019); SFMOMA, San Francisco (2019); 1st Warsaw Biennial (2019); Nottingham Contemporary (2017); Ludwig Museum, Cologne (2016); New Museum, New York (2014); 55th Venice Biennial (2013); 12th Istanbul Biennial (2011). Screenings: Cinéma du Réel, Paris (2021); Rotterdam Film Festival (2021); Film Fest, Hamburg (2020); Walker Art Center, Minneapolis (2017); Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris (2011, 2017); International Film Festival Berlin (2010, 2015); e-flux storefront, New York (2009). Prizes: Georges de Beauregard International Award, FID Marseille (2019), Pinchuk Future Generation Art Prize (2012). Scholarships: Stuttgart Akademie Schloss Solitude Scholarship (2014), Tokyo Wonder Site, Tokyo Arts and Space (2010).





Marwa Arsanios, *Who Is Afraid of Ideology? Part 4, Reverse Shot* (still), 2022. Video. Courtesy of the artist and mor charpentier.



Marwa Arsanios, *Who is Afraid of Ideology? Part I* (still), 2017. Video. Courtesy of the artist and mor charpentier.