



Samara Sallam

*A Speaking
Puddle of Blood*



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Samara Sallam
A Speaking Puddle of Blood
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O—OVERGADEN
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INTRODUCTION

It is a great pleasure to introduce this publication as a companion to Samara Sallam's solo exhibition *A Speaking Puddle of Blood* at O—Overgaden. Since 2021, O—Overgaden has, with the generous support of the Augustinus Foundation, published a monographic series in conjunction with our large-scale solo exhibitions, aiming to expand the conversations around each show and produce new, offspring material.

In this particular case, writer, curator and director at Konsthall C in Stockholm, Mariam Elnozahy, has contributed an essay on the mythology and folklore inherent in Sallam's works, and artist Theodor Nymark has written a text on art speak and art language versus the metaphysics and atmospheres of art. A warm and heartfelt thank you to both contributors. I wish to thank the whole team at O—Overgaden for their efforts in realizing the exhibition, as well as the graphic design team at fanfare for their always dedicated work, and of course not least the artist, Samara, for generously sharing conceptualizations and co-thinking with all of us, through both the exhibition and this publication.

Sculptor and hypnotherapist Samara Sallam employs language as not only a tool of communication, but a force that moves and alters our worlds and bodies. Creating carefully crafted physical objects, her work commands transcendence and contemplation—seeking meaning in a world of violence by outlining liminal spaces between the magical and the real.

For O—Overgaden, Sallam reworks various sources—including her native Palestinian folktale archetype of the girl Ghoul, a flesh-eating monster who devours her family and destroys her whole village, as well as Sufi mysticism and Jungian psychoanalysis—into a story of finding “meaning,” unfolding in the following three acts:

i

Visitors enter Sallam's exhibition through a meticulously carved wooden portal—the first of three sculptures. Rich with sculpted symbols—breasts, devilish horns, five legs, and intricately stacked elements—the tall arch itself forms a body, a material manifestation of the monster or ghoul, that casts a creation spell on any visitor passing through it.

ii

The second sculpture is a small, dead raven with an open belly. The ceramic bird acts as a compass or an omen—as the all-seeing raven or the gut of intuition.

iii

The third sculpture is a fragmented, hypnotic fish head, an ancient symbol of wisdom and transition. Its mesmerizing image—eyes, mouth, and gills in glazed ceramic—engages the viewer's imagination in order to assemble the parts into a fish, pointing, as the exhibition's third portal or shadow membrane, to another level of consciousness.

A fourth element in the exhibition is a text: a subconscious mind trip of a woman escaping a deadlock marriage, becoming a speaking puddle of blood, bleeding continuously from her stomach.

While silent, almost withdrawn in its appearance, Sallam's rite-of-passage trio of sculptures—combining inherent violence, existential quests, and the need to ascend spiritually—also forms a metaphor of the current, ceaseless attacks on the Palestinian people, connecting to a universal or mythical place of suffering.

Rhea Dall,
Director and Chief Curator, O—Overgaden
June 2025

SAMARA SALLAM: THE FOURTH IMPOSSIBILITY

OR رابع المستحيلات

Mariam Elnozahy

This text is inspired by *A Speaking Puddle of Blood*. The forms Samara Sallam has created for this exhibition emerge from a vast system of meaning imbued with mythology, Sufism, and deep knowledge. These sculptures do not belong to this place, but when they are assembled here, their unique cosmology accompanies them. The space is thusly transformed. Following these creations, I have written a text that provides an opportunity to access the rich worlds that inform the works on display. I speak in parables, in prose. I draw on popular folktales and sacred scripture. These stories have been passed down for generations. In this exhibition, they are given form.

جاء في الأساطير عند العرب أن المستحيلات ثلاثة، وهي الغول والعنقاء والخل الوفي.

For the Arabs, it goes that there are only three categorical impossibilities in this world. The first is the Ghoul, that mortophagous (death-eating) spirit whose ravenous bloodthirst makes the devil seem merciful. The second is the Anqa, that golden, four-winged bird who feasts on elephants and dwells at the place where the sun kisses the horizon. The third is the Faithful Friend. For the Arabs, there is no such thing as a friend who is more loyal to anyone but himself. In popular Arabic vernacular, when someone wants to indicate that something is so impossible, so unfathomable, so inexplicable, so outlandish, they exclaim: “That would be the Fourth Impossibility!”

THE FIRST IMPOSSIBILITY: THE GHOUL(A)

غ و ل [Verb: to transform]

The Ghoul preys on men. She gorges on the corpses of traders, travelers, and traitors who fall into her trap of seduction.

One such victim was the Woodcutter.¹ On an ordinary day, marked by the typical activities of wood-cutting and wife-bashing, the curmudgeonly Woodcutter met a woman who claimed to be his long-lost sister (until this point, he had no sisters). He swooned at her invitation to her lavish palace that evening. She insisted that he bring along his wife and children; reluctant and hostage, they followed him. As the night progressed, strange and frightening events unfolded, and the Woodcutter’s wife realized the “sister” was really a dangerous creature preying on her family. When her warnings to him went unheeded, she escaped into the desert with her children, leaving her husband behind. He met his fate, devoured by the Ghoul.

Who is the wretched one?

While traveling in the desert, the poet Thabit ibn ‘Amir al-Fahmi (d. 540) encountered a Ghoul and slaughtered her. He carried her back, under his arm, gaining the moniker “Ta’abbata Sharran” which literally means “he carried evil under his arm.” In prose, he wrote of her death:

I spent the night bearing down on top of her,
Waiting for morning to see what I had caught.
Then I found two eyes in an ugly head,
Similar to the head of a cat, but with a forked
tongue.²

For the erudite literary scholar Abdelfattah Kilito, the forked tongue does not connote deceit or duality.³ It is, rather, the tongue that follows after Babel. After Adam. After Ā (Alif). The forked tongue is plurality, tension, linguistic agility. It is how we communicate across languages: born in one, bred in another, literate in a third, in love in a fourth. The split tongue breaks language. It is, in short, survival.

As for the wretched one? She is but a chameleon, a changeling. Little did Ta’abbata Sharran know: the ghoul dies with one blow, but can come back to life if it is struck a second time. After that, she lives forever.

1. Alex Gaudet, “The Woodcutter’s Weary Wife.” *Phylum: UPEI Arts Review Volume XII, vol. XII*, Spring 2023, pressbooks.library.upei.ca/artsreview-xii/chapter/woodcutters-weary-wife.
2. Amira El-Zein, *Islam, Arabs, and the Intelligent World of the Jinn*. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2009, p. 140.
3. Abdelfattah Kilito, *The Tongue of Adam*. Translated by Robyn Creswell. New York: New Directions Publishing, 2022.

THE SECOND IMPOSSIBILITY: AL-ANQA

ع ن ق [Noun. There is no root for the word; it is a word without derivation from any other word, which is unusual since most Arabic words are derivations from three-letter verbs of the form *fa’ala*.]

The narration of Al Zujaj claims that no human has ever seen the Anqa.⁴

The Anqa has a lifespan of 1,700 years. The largest of the winged creatures, she occasionally flies low to the ground to grab elephants with her talons as other birds would hunt a mouse for dinner. Other than elephants, her diet consists of fish the size of skyscrapers. She mates once every 500 years, carrying the eggs as she roams and hunts. This process causes her extreme, intolerable pain—yes, even her! That elephant-eating, fire-breathing, ornitho-monster. To bring her ease, the male bird (he has no name) pours sea water down her beak until the eggs finally hatch 150 years later.⁵

On October 3, 2023 my friend Zaynab had a dream. Zaynab is from Ramallah. She is not particularly religious, which I think is typical for Ramallah folks where Islam is kind of like the شيح shih plant (worm-wood): ubiquitous, easy-to-miss-but-hard-to-unsee, potent, used to clean purulent wounds, can be healing when soaked as a tea (only in very small doses*). In Zaynab’s dream, she saw a battle taking place across the vast Golan dunes. Roaring out of the sky like Armageddon thunder, she heard the voice of God.

«أَلَمْ تَرَ كَيْفَ فَعَلَ رَبُّكَ بِأَصْحَابِ الْفِيلِ» (105:1)

“I didn’t even know that I remembered that verse,” she told me, a week later.

«أَلَمْ يَجْعَلْ كَيْدَهُمْ فِي تَضْلِيلٍ» (105:2)

The verse is from the chapter of the Quran titled “The Elephant.” In it, God narrates the story of a war campaign that is said to have originated in Yemen, with a massive army that charged Mecca with the aim of destroying the holy site of the Kaaba. The campaign featured several war-elephants, a cataclysmic sight which struck the Arabs, who had never seen the mighty elephant before, let alone in battle. In the face of inevitable defeat, only a miracle could protect them and their sacred house of worship. Their miracle came in the form of a flock of birds.

«وَأَرْسَلَ عَلَيْهِمْ طَيْرًا أَبَابِيلَ» (105:3)

4. Muḥammad ibn Mukarram ibn Manzūr, *Lisān al-‘Arab*, 15 vols. Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1955.
5. Zakariyyā ibn Muḥammad al-Qazwīnī, ‘Ajā’ib al-makhluqāt wa-gharā’ib al-mawjūdāt. Cairo: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, n.d.

The birds swarmed the army, dropping stones on them (ما قبل انتفاضة الحجارة), which turned the army into ashes. It is said that طَيْرًا أَبَابِيل, this flock of savior, warrior-birds that turned the elephant-army to ash is Al-Anqa.⁶

THE THIRD IMPOSSIBILITY: THE FAITHFUL FRIEND

خ ل ي ل [Noun/proper noun. Friend; the name of the town Al Khalil, also known as Hebron.]

The First-and-Only-Faithful-Friend was Abraham, whose friendship with God was so strong it turned the desert green. The epithet for Abraham is “Al Khalil”: the friend.

Abraham, father of the prophets, had his doubts too. He asked God to help strengthen his faith by showing him how He can resurrect the dead. And so, God obliged. He instructed Abraham to take four birds and kill them, reassuring him that they will soon return to him once more.

And so, Abraham caught four birds, slaughtered them, removed the feathers, tore their bones apart and placed dismembered parts of their bodies on seven separate hills. He held their decapitated heads in his hands as he sobbed, harrowed by the horrific act he had just committed to the precious, innocent creatures. Afterwards, God commanded Abraham to call the birds back to him, and through his tears, he whistled: “sew-sew-sew, li-li-li, sew-sew-sew.”

Then, Abraham watched as the feathers, blood, and mangled parts of the four birds miraculously assembled in the sky, until every bird came back to life and began to walk towards him. Each bird came to collect its head from Abraham’s hand, and if he mistakenly gave the bird a different head the bird refused to accept it. When Abraham rightfully gave each bird its own head, the birds became whole once more, and flew away to the horizon.⁷

In *Fear and Trembling*, Søren Kierkegaard talks of another, more widely known miracle from Abraham: that of the sacrifice of Isaac. For Kierkegaard, faith entails the suspension of reason: it is unethical, absurd. “How monstrous a paradox faith is, a paradox capable of making a murder into a holy act well pleasing to God, a paradox which gives Isaac back to Abraham, which no thought can grasp because faith begins precisely where thinking leaves off.”⁸

And what is friendship, but that boundless, unending well of faith? Oh sons and daughters of Abraham! Who amongst you is a faithful friend?

6. Ibn Manzūr, 1955.
7. Quran, 2:260.
8. Søren Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling* [1843]. Translated by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1983, p. 82.

NOT JUST A LAKE, A MIRROR— NOT JUST A CAR, A VEHICLE

Theodor Nymark

On the terrace, under the parasol, with a jug of water, I'm biting my nails, embraced by the ambience of a screaming donkey. Behind me, some chirping parrots, church bells, and the sound of a typewriter from the author in the condo above me, his clicking sounds forming the story that is soon to be, now a code: each letter a beat, each word a rhythm. And while he's beating the story through, the bells of the nearby church accompany me on this morning in Rome. A melody of prayer and a call to those who don't watch the time nor read the books. Not just a bell, a voice; not just a click, a word.

Like the rhythm of Morse code, blinking in the night, as a firefly luring mating partners into their heavenly bedroom, the conflict of language, particularly the language of contemporary art, is challenging. Before attending art school, my vocabulary of art was limited. I spoke of my work in terms of attitudes, how things were to resemble something else already existing, lacking reflection and critical depth. Even the term "practice" was absent from my lexicon. However, upon initially entering the art academy, I was introduced to a new type of language—a language that began to shape my thinking. I started referring to my process, as a practice, albeit hesitantly; developed a new understanding, a new gaze.

After six years of art school, in the purgatory of intellectualizing and institutionalizing my language, I concluded that this might not be a fulfilling way to reflect. A certain syntax, between how I was acting and what I was saying. I recall making music, with friends, late at night, hitting the bong, aiming to emulate artists like Diplo, Autechre, or Sugarhill Gang, or to simply create a more fat and piercing sound for the bass. Never would we say: "Let's make this beat investigate ecological interventions in the late-capitalist urban space." This phenomenon, referred to as "art speak," permeating the written discourse, propelled by conceptualism, now hollow and castrated.

The issue here should be clear: no one bothers, nobody reads, and the *speak* of "art speak" lacks many more aspects to grasp. I remember a former fellow student, a good friend, with whom I would hang out, relentlessly smoke weed, feel the surroundings in the garden, and then proceed to one of our studios. When chatting, about artworks, we would gesture passionately, grinding our fingers together, sensing the energy, and arguing the friction that exists within and between them. That friction could be described as "vibes": the way things resonate, and how vibrations are essentially a matter of pulsating tension. This tension isn't caused by language but by dynamics, energy, attitude, sensibilities—elements common in the language of painting: the attitude of a brushstroke or the rhythm of a bronze.

Nowadays, many artists, often labelled as conceptualists, are moving into a realm where their work isn't primarily defined by language and ideas, but by a space where subject and object, whatever shape they may take, have merged and become one. I'm reminded of art critic Kristian Vistrup Madsen's article "Mood Over Content," which argues for a new way of looking at and comprehending contemporary art.¹ He suggests that much contemporary art is less concerned with content and more with mood, and how this is a shift, emphasizing atmosphere and energy over traditional content and representation. Even if a piece appears to be conceptual in its visual form, and would invite rational analysis, I sometimes feel compelled to challenge the press release; rip it apart, masticate it and make it into pulp, mold it and shape it into a ball, like Michelangelo Pistoletto, and have it dry out and roll down the hill from where this language resides. Sean Tatol, the cheeky critic of *Manhattan Art Review*, once tweeted about Madsen's article something along the lines of: "European critic discovers aestheticism and thinks it's a new thing." And this very central European academic and authoritarian approach, in which the subject is praised above the object (arguably due to funding traditions), may play a role in this theatre of the art world. But while Madsen argues that *content* has essentially left the chat, I believe both he and Tatol—both critics and not artists—despite their good intentions, are slightly mistaken.

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1. Kristian Vistrup Madsen, "Mood Over Content." *Kunstkrikk*, October 2024, kunstkrikk.com/mood-over-content.

Content hasn't disappeared; it has transformed. To combat this, to make a change, to cosplay abstraction, I propose the tool of the metaphor; a helpful figure of speech, something that is behind and transient, that moves from one to another, or even, in between and beneath. I suggest that art and its many characteristics are not devoid of content, but imbued with it, integrated within it, laced, compressed, and prismatic like a shiny, precious diamond. Consider a can of Coca-Cola: I see a red, frosted, shiny cylinder made of alloys, but I also perceive the history, nostalgia, trauma, and cultural significance associated with the brand and its liquids. It's a metaphor, containing a multitude of information, like an archive, layered and without the need to be unfolded in tedious communication, as if I were their teacher or their student. In this context, I recall a lecture I saw once on YouTube, by new materialist, ecologist, and English scholar Timothy Morton. He argues, deliberately, that understanding phenomenology involves considering the phrase: "The how is the what." The way things are is what they are. When you see a chair, its appearance defines it. This may seem basic, but in archaeology a similar approach is employed in examining an object—say, a clay jar from the late Neolithic period—the way it looks, its patina, and scars define its history and its life.

Traditionally, metaphors offer a different way to read and understand the world surrounding us. Language—and its Latin root "tongue"—is a complex organ to master. You can describe the oval, lumpy, yellow, and squishy qualities of a lemon, but it's another thing to feel its juice squirt into your mouth, hitting your tongue, causing your face to twitch. When I squeeze lemon juice onto my steamy pasta, and it seeps into the wounds of my bitten nails, the pain, the sensation of trauma, the bitterness and bliss—all these stages contribute to understanding its language. I could describe it with words, sure, but I could also feel it, in its complete entirety.

I believe this state of feeling is crucial; in this case, I want to embrace the cringe, for once, and enter a state of obliviousness. For a long time, I've been obsessed with knowing, understanding and comprehending; not knowing made me sick, tired, and restless. Obliviousness, on the other hand, cringing, bowing down to the lord of knowledge, as a novice, is the embrace of, and to exist in, the mystery of the unknown. This brings to mind a scene from the film *The Conclave*, where the protagonist addresses the cardinals, stating: "Without doubt, there is no mystery; without mystery, there is no faith; and without faith, there is no God." I think this very mystery is where language exists. Centuries ago, when the church was secularized, and society became scientific and governed, truth became a fact, and the sacred became a personal choice. New sensibilities emerged, seeking new homes: museums, nightclubs, music venues, fashion shows, poetry readings, books, and fine dining. Yesterday, when I was out gallery-hopping, suddenly, my mom texted me, "White smoke!" I hesitated for a second, jumped on a Lime bike and rushed to the Vatican.

Upon arrival, hordes of people running frantically, as if they wanted a good spot in the pit. Enormous LED screens mounted along Via della Conciliazione, speakers, fences, cameras, flags, and food trucks. For a minute, it seemed like a stadium concert, as if Coldplay was about to go on, as if the match between Arsenal and PSG was about to begin. It struck me, whether this bloated sensation made it any less divine, or if it elevated the experience to another and higher realm. These sensory experiences, while not inherently moral, replaced the church's role in defining human behavior. Although religion is experiencing a resurgence, other institutions have shifted our common cultural worldview.

In this context, language and its associated mystery are understood through a spiritual organ and mechanism. Difficult to define, grasp, and pin down. And why should we, why not, just feel, listen and rather, not know? I propose the idea—or at least the hope—that if the Catholic Church (as I am in Rome) transcended its morals, codes, and conservative rules, it could solely encompass the sensory expressions: mosaics where light filters through, casting colors across the scene, organ and choir music, the scent of patchouli wafting through the room, the draped garments, ornaments, statues, sculptures, and architecture. All these aesthetic experiences serve as ways to understand a holy entity, whatever that might be, through the body and sensation, rather than wall texts and essays.

For a while now, I've tried to approach museums as if they were books to be understood and classrooms to learn in, rather than spaces akin to churches and temples, like the illiterate peasants without access to the scroll, who once sought to comprehend the divine through sensory and visual experiences. I cannot fully embrace this world, only through verbal and written communication. To truly comprehend its complexities, one must acknowledge sensory experiences, leave the text for later, wait until you get home, comfy on the couch. This text, as well, may and should not fully encapsulate these ideas, as they are words and letters, exempt from actual sensory experience. Like the typewriter that beats through the wind, these words may become a rhythm themselves, from which we can dance and move elsewhere. Only through fado, faith, and the potential of imagination can one create these experiences independently; to scry, to see behind, and in between the world, where things become real, simply by imagination and feeling.

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A Speaking Puddle of Blood
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Samara Sallam (b. 1991, PS/DK) is a Palestinian
Copenhagen-based visual artist and hypnotherapist. She holds
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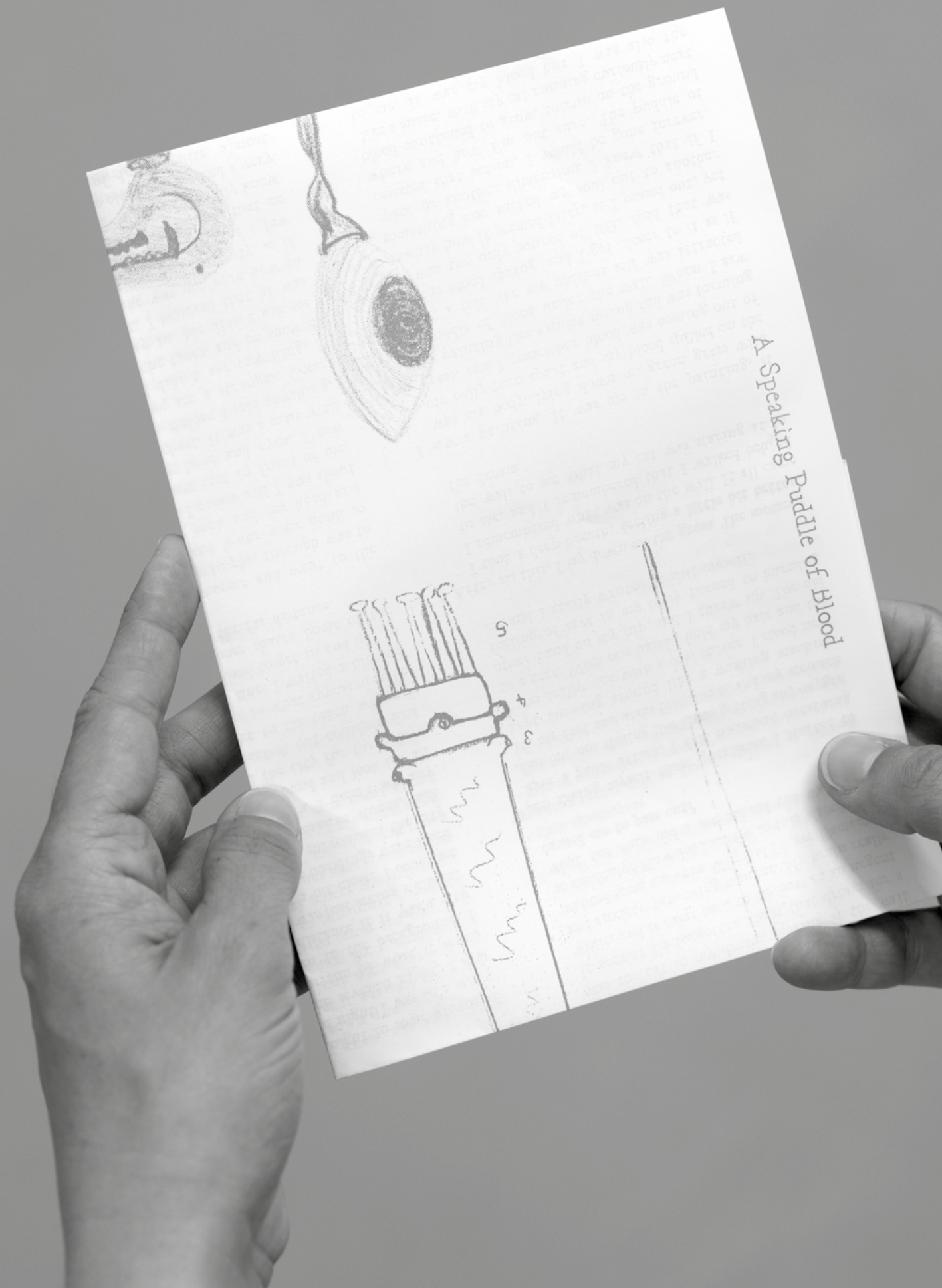
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Culture, in its general sense, a force driving the collective, seems to work against the expansion of consciousness. It controls access to what is sacred, to magic plants, practices, and science, running a system mediated by ignorance, greed, and hate. A world completely different from the inner realms of humanity that wish to rule by different values. The clash of the inside realm with the outside, inward and outward, inside the house and outside it, the body and the others, the earth and the space, separated by a door, skin, portal, a polarity in constant conflict/conversation. In and out seems to be a concept that repeats itself in endless shapes and positions.

Language, in its broader sense, is a system of two components: perception and then communication. It seems to also have two forms: inner and outer language. The inner one seems infinite and spacious,

and the outer one, struck by cultural limitations of expression, limited words, and beliefs. Yet language, in this position, does not exactly follow the polarized ruling of the world and exhaust itself by conflict; language is the existential loophole that allows access between in and out, the threshold that transports our consciousness between here and there, inside the body and outside it, from personal to collective, inside the house to outside, from my mind to a friend's mind, a cat's mind to a tree, wind, universe.

Language is limited by words and symbols, but not limited by metaphorical techniques. Language can connect the inner realm with the outer realm or the other way around. It's not only the threshold between two spaces, two realms, not only a door, skin, membrane, water, and soil; it is the space in between, the web, the fabric of existence itself.

Language is limited by words and symbols but once you follow language under the surface, watch where it goes, who it visits, how it moves, its patterns, you will start to predict its ways of weaving meaning, of structuring cities, driving politics, leading wars, genocides, forming a spell, structuring waters, bodies, and minds.

A Speaking Puddle of Blood started with exploring language in storytelling, and continues with the sculptures guiding language to write its own story. This is the language movement in three steps. You take the action, movement; if you don't move, there is no tracing.

First movement

The first movement is the meeting with the physical world, an ego, a violent reality. It is scary but also exciting. Violent but also soft, the tree that at night turns into a monster; it is alive, specific to the physical realm. Its inner torments are externalized with aggression, or guilt given voice and shape. It's both the self and the other at once, sending information to the physical body and psyche.

Second movement

The second movement is a sign, an act of wonderment, a compass, an answer that gives more questions, but leads the way forward. When you move towards language, language starts to move towards you. It initiates a conversation. The inner and outer realms start to have a common language, a connection, hints of greeting, and more clearly woven threads of connection.

Third movement

The third movement is the shadow of the first act; the shadow taking the form of a membrane, a structure that shapes a wall but is soft enough for the water to pass through. It protects, but also imprisons. It contains dualities but with clearer connections. You see language jumping on top of a wall to the other side, accessing a house. You stalk it, seek what it's doing and why it's there. And only you can understand the path and the final destination.



















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Samara Sallam (f. 1991, PS/DK) er palæstinensisk billedkunstner og hypnoseterapeut bosat i København. Hun har en MFA fra Det Kongelige Danske Kunstakademi (2022) og en BA fra Det Fynske Kunstakademi (2019). Sallam har desuden studeret billedkunst på L'École Supérieure des Beaux-arts i Algeriet og journalistik på Universitetet i Damaskus i Syrien.

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IKKE BLOT EN SØ, ET SPEJL - EN BIL, ET FARTØJ

Theodor Nymark

Problemet her burde være tydeligt: Ingen interesserer sig for det, ingen læser det, og denne *speak*-del af "art speak" glæmmer at tage adskillige aspekter i betragtning. Jeg husker en tidligere medstuderende, en god ven, som jeg hang ud med, konstant rog weed med, vi sansede omgivelserne i skolens have og fortsatte ind på et af vores atelierer. Når vi talte om kunst, gestikulerede vi passioneret, guidende fingerbevægelser, mærkede energierne og argumenterede for den friktion, der eksisterede i og imellem dem. En friktion, der kunne beskrives som vibes, mæden, ting resonerer på, og hvordan vibration, når alt kommer til alt, er et spørgsmål om pulserende spændinger. Spændingerne er ikke udløst af sprog, men af dynamikker, energi, attitude, sensibiliteter – velkendte elementer indenfor maleriets sprog: et penselsstrøg, attitude eller en bronzes rytme.

Jeg bider mine negle på terrassen under parasollen, sidder med en drikkedunk omsluttet af lyden fra et skrigende æsel bag mig, og ovenfra er der pappeøjeskæppen, kirkelokker, lydsporet fra overboens skrivemaskine – hans tasterlyde former den historie, som snart findes, men som stadig er en kode: hvert bogstav er bear, hvert ord en rytme. Og mens han hamrer sig vej gennem sin historie, akkompagneres jeg af nærliggende kirkelokker til dem, der ikke tjækker tiden eller læser bøger. Ikke kun en klokke, en stemme, ikke kun et klik, et ord.

Som morsebytterne, der blinker i natene, som en lildlue, der lokker mager til sit himmelske soveværelse, er sprogets konflikt en udfordring – særligt samtidskunstens sprog. Inden jeg gik på kunsthakademiet, var mit kunstvokabular begrænset. Jeg talte om mit arbejde som en slags attitude, hvordan ting skulle ligne noget, der allerede eksisterede, jeg manglede praksis fandtes ikke i mit dybde. Selv begrebet praksis fandtes ikke i leksikon. Men da jeg begyndte på kunsthakademiet, blev jeg introduceret til en ny type sprog, et sprog, der begyndte at forme min tænkning. Jeg begyndte at referere til min proces som en praksis, om end tøvende, udviklede en ny forståelse, et nyt blik.

Efter seks års kunstudannelse, i den skærpslid, der var at intellektualisere og institutionalisere mit sprog, konkluderede jeg, at der næppe var en tilfredsstillende måde at reflektere på. En bestemt syntaks mellem, hvordan jeg opførte mig, og hvad jeg sagde. Jeg husker at lave musik med mine venner sent om natten, mens vi røg fede og forsøgte at efterligne artisten som Diplo, Autechre, Sugar Hill Gang eller simpelt hen at skabe en tykkere, mere gennemborgende bas. Aldrig ville vi sige "lad os få bearer til at undersøge økologiske interventioner i det senkapitalistiske byrum". Dette fænomen, ofte kaldet "art speak", der gennemsvyter skriftlidskurserne og drives frem af konceptualitet, føltes efterhånden udhulet, kasteret.

signifikans, der er forbundet med dette brand uden behovet for at blive pakket ud via kedsommelig kommunikation, som var jeg en lærer eller en studerende. Jeg husker en forelæsnings af den britiske forsker Timothy Morton, jeg engang så på YouTube. Han argumenterer med fuldt overlæg for, at en forståelse af fænomenologi involverer overvejelser af vendingen: "The how is the what." Måden, ting er på, er det, de er. Når du ser en stol, defineres den af sin fremtoning. Dette forekommer muligvis elementært, men indenfor arkæologien benyttes en lignende tilgang: undersøgelser af et objekt, eksempelvis en lerkrukke fra den sennecolitiske periode: dens udscende, patina og ar definerer dens historie og liv.

Traditionelt set tilbyder metakoden en anderledes måde at læse og forstå verden omkring os. Sprog – og ordets latinske rod *lingua* (der også betyder 'tunge') – er et komplekst legeme af mester, Man kan beskrive citronens ovale, ujævne, gule, rynkede fremtoning, men det er noget andet at mærke dens saft sprøjte ind i munden, ramme tungen, få ansiget til at fortække sig. Når jeg presser citronsaft ud over min dampende pasta, og saften derpå siver ned i sårene omkring mine nedbidte negle, opstår en smerte, en traumefølelse, noget bittert og noget frydefuldt – alle disse stadier bidrager til den sproglige forståelse af citron. Jeg kan beskrive det med ord, helt bestemt, men jeg kan også mærke det i sin fulde helhed.

Jeg opfatter dette følgende studie som afgørende; for en gængs skyld vil jeg omfavne *the cringe* og træde ind i en tilstand af uvished. I lang tid har jeg været besat af at vide, forstå, gennemskue, det gjorde mig syg og træt og rastløs ikke at vide. Uvidenhed, derimod, at *cringe*, at bøje sig for indsigtsens herre som en novice, er omfavnelsen af at eksistere i det ukendtes mysterier. Det får mig til at tænke på en scene fra filmen *The Conclave*, hvor protagonisten henvender sig til kardinalerne og erklærer: "Without doubt, there is no mystery; without mystery, there is no faith; and without faith, there is no God." Jeg tror, det er flere århundreder siden, da kirken blev sekulariseret, og samfundet blev videnskabsbaseret og reguleret, blev sandhed lig med fakta, og det hellige blev et personligt valg. Nye sensibiliteter opstod og søgte nye græsgange: musser, natklubber, spillesteder, modeshows, digtoplæsninger, bøger, gastronomi. I går, da jeg var ude og se galleristillinger, skrev min mor "Hvid røg!" til mig. Jeg tøvede et sekund, hoppede på en Lime-cykel og skyndte mig til Vatikanet. Da jeg ankom, løb horder af mennesker hektisk rundt, som om de ville have en god plads i pitten. Enorme LED-skærme monteret langs Via della Conciliazione, højtalere, hegn, kamrater, flag og food trucks. Et øjeblik føltes det som en stadionkoncert, som om Coldplay skulle til at gå på, gå i gang. Det slog mig, om denne oppustning egentlig fik optimeret til at virke mindret guldømmelig, eller om den løftede det til et andet, højere rige.

verdensbillede. I denne kontekst skal sprog og dets dertilhørende mysterier forstås gennem spirituelle organer og mekanismer. Svære at definere, overskue, sætte fingren på. Og hvorfor skulle vi, hvorfor ikke bare føle, lytte, hellere undgå at vide med sikkerhed. Jeg præsenterer idéen – eller i hvert fald håbet – om, at hvis den katolske kirke (efter som jeg er i Rom) transcenderer sin moral, sine kodekser og konservative regler, ville den i sig selv kunne omfatte sansoplevelserne: mosaikker, hvortilgennem lysset filteres og kaster farver over scenariet, orgel, kormusikken, patchoulidften, der viftes gennem rummet, de draperede gevandter, ornamenterne, statuerne, skulpturerne og arkitekturen – alle disse æstetiske oplevelser fungerer som veje til at forstå en hellig helhed, hvordan sådan en end ser ud, gennem kroppen og sansningen snarere end gennem vægtekster og essays.

Jeg har længe forsøgt at møde musser, som var de bøger, der skulle forstå, eller klasseværelser til indlæring, snarere end rum i familie med kirker og templer – som de analfabetske bønder uden adgang til skrifttuller, der engang forsøgte at begribe det guddommelige gennem sanseligg, visuelle oplevelser. Jeg er ikke i stand til at omfavne denne verden fuldt ud, kun gennem verbal og skriftlig kommunikation. For i sandhed at kunne forstå dens kompleksiteter må man anerkende sansoplevelserne, gemme teksten til senere, vente, til man kommer hjem og kan slappe af på sofaen. På samme måde kan og skal denne tekst ikke være en fuldstændig indkapsling af disse idéer, eftersom de er ord og bogstaver fritaget fra sansoplevelsen. Som skrivemaschinen, der hamrer gennem vinden, bliver disse ord en rytme i egen ret, til hvilken vi kan danse og bevæge os i andre retninger. Kun gennem *fado*, troen, og fantasien potentielt kan man skabe disse oplevelser uafhængigt, for at kunne spå, for at kunne se om bag ved verden og ind i dens mellemrum, hvor ting bliver virkelige, simpelt hen ved fantasien og følelsernes kraft.



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Samara Sallam
A Speaking Puddle of Blood
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Det er en stor fornøjelse at introducere denne publikation, der udkommer i forbindelse med Samara Sallams soloudstilling *A Speaking Puddle of Blood* på O – Overgaden. Siden 2021 har O – Overgaden med genreøs støtte fra Augustinus Fonden produceret en publikationsrække, der udgives i forbindelse med kunsthallens soloudstillinger. Målsætningen med denne serie er at mangfoldiggøre samtalerne under og efter udstillingerne og åbne op for, at nyt materiale kan udspringe heraf.

I dette tilfælde har skribent, kurator og kunstnerisk leder af Konsthall C i Stockholm Mariam Elnozahy bidraget med et essay om mytologien og folkløren indlejret i Sallams værker, og billedkunstner Theodor Nymark har skrevet en tekst om kunstens sprog overfor kunstens metafysik og atmosfære. En stor og varm tak til begge bidragsydere. Derudover vil jeg gerne takke hele O – Overgadens team for den store indsats i forbindelse med udstillingen, og naturligvis også fanfare, vores grafiske designere, for deres dedikerede arbejde på denne publikation. Sidst, men ikke mindst, en særlig tak til Samara for at dele sit materiale – fra koncept til udviklede samtaler – med os alle sammen, både gennem udstillingen og denne publikation.

Billedhugger og hypnoseterapeut Samara Sallam bruger sproget ikke blot som et kommunikationsværktøj, men som en kraft, der flytter og forandrer vores verden og kroppe. Gennem omhyggeligt udformede objekter maner Sallams kunstneriske praksis til nye bevidsthedsniveauer og eftertanke – og søger efter mening i en voldelig verden ved at skitserer grænseområder mellem det magiske og det virkelige. Til sin udstilling på O – Overgaden samler Sallam forskellige kilder – bl.a. sin hjemstavns palæstinensiske folkesagn om den kvindelige ghoul: et kødædende monster, der fortærer sin familie og ødelægger sin landsby, såvel som Sufi-mysticisme og Jungiansk psykoanalyse – og omformer disse til en fortælling om at søge efter mening, fortalt i følgende tre akter:

I

Besøgende træder ind i udstillingen gennem en fint udskåret træport – den første af tre skulpturer. Flydt med skulpturelle symboler – bryster, djævelske horn, et mytisk antal ben og hermetisk samlede trædele – danner den høje, buede port selv en krop, der giver monsteret eller ghoulen fysisk form, samtidig med at portalen fortryller eller besværges enhver, der går gennem den.

II

Den anden skulptur er en lille, død ravn med åben bug. Flugten, skabt i keramik, fungerer som et kompas eller et varsel – som møder vi den alvidende budbringer eller ser ind i intuitionens maveformmelse.

III

Den tredje skulptur er et fragmenteret, hypnotisk fiskehoved – et gammelt symbol på visdom og overgang. Men værkers fængslende billede skabes først af beskuerens forestillingsverne, som skal samle delene, i form af øjne, mund og gæller i glaseret keramik, til en fisk. Som udstillingens tredje portal eller skyggebrun peger værket mod et andet, højere tanke- eller bevidsthedsniveau.

Et fjerde element i udstillingen er en tekst: en underbevidst, psykodelisk rejse, der følger en kvinde, som undslipper sit forliste ægteskab og bliver til en talende blodpøl gennem en konstant blødning fra maven. Trods det, at Sallams overgangsritual i form af de tre skulpturer er tavs og nærmest tilbagetrukket i sit udtryk, danner værkerne – gennem deres fokus på iboende vold, eksistentiel søgen og behovet for åndelig udvikling – en metafor for samtidens uophørlige angreb på det palæstinensiske folk, der forbindes sig med en universel eller mytisk form for lidelse.

Rhea Dall
Leder og chefkurator på O – Overgaden,
juni 2025

INTRODUKTION

