

Alserkal Initiatives Collaborates with Cité internationale des arts for an Exhibition Imagining Solidarity as Lived Practice



Photo credits: Saad Eltinay, from the photographic series “Alive and Eternally Rising” Feb 2021 - Dec 2022, courtesy of the artist.

Created by Alserkal Initiatives in partnership with Cité internationale des arts and in collaboration with Lightbox, *When Solidarity Is Not a Metaphor* will take place from 16 to 21 April 2024 at My Art Guides Venice Meeting Point, Navy Officers’ Club, Arsenale, Venice.

Curated by Nataša Petrešin-Bachelez, Arts and Culture Programme Manager at Cité internationale des arts, the exhibition spans installations, photographs, performances, listening sessions, and heart-to-heart conversations.

The exhibition offers a counter-space to the reigning agendas of war, patriarchy, and colonialism, and their toxic impacts on human and non-human ecosystems. The exhibiting artists—alumni, residents, and collaborators of both Cité internationale des arts in Paris and Alserkal Initiatives in Dubai—challenge the understanding of ‘solidarity’ as merely an object of theorising and discourse.

Featured artists include Majd Abdel Hamid, Yana Bachynska, Rehaf Al Batniji, Paula Valero Comín, Saad Eltinay, D Harding, Adelita Husni-Bey, Nge Lay, Museum of Breath, Koushna Navabi, Shada Safadi, Dima Srouji and Jasbir Puar.

The exhibition is complemented by a diverse programme starting at 3pm daily, with contributions by DAAR - Sandi Hilal and Alessandro Petti, Initiative for Practices and Visions of Radical Care (Bani Khoshnoudi, Magdi Masaraa, Elena Sorokina), Maya Al Khaldi and Sarouna, R22 Tout-Monde, Zora Snake, Saul Williams and Anisia Uzeyman.

Intentionally foregrounding artistic practices, *When Solidarity is Not a Metaphor* focuses on simple gestures, often evoking quotidian existences on the periphery of conflict. Inspired by the title of the book *Decolonization Is Not a Metaphor* (2012), in which authors Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang analyse the material and factual violences of colonialism, the exhibition positions solidarity as praxis.

Throughout the six-day exhibition and corresponding programme, solidarity is articulated as compassionate porosity; a feminist, care-driven fluidity of moving across mindsets. Its most humble unit of expression is held in the word ‘with’—working, thinking, speaking, and simply being in a state of with-ness.

Many of the featured artists in *When Solidarity Is Not a Metaphor* share the destiny of forced displacement and are doubly committed, both to igniting questions that address these displacements and to sustaining ethical practices of production.

Vilma Jurkute, Executive Director of Alserkal Initiatives, remarked: “*When Solidarity is Not a Metaphor* is a collective attempt grounded in the cognitive generosity of our partner institutions and a global civic network of multi-disciplinary practitioners. In light of the ongoing injustices in Palestine, Sudan, Ukraine, and other parts of the world, it feels imperative for us at Alserkal to embody the spirit of lived practice and extend our platform to the Venice Biennial. By working with artists whose practices are embedded in the ethics of care, we hope to encourage whole-thinking structures and shared moments of intention to emerge.”

Benedicte Alliot, Director General of Cité international des arts, said: As a private foundation embedded in the values of hospitality, conviviality and safe space and dedicated to the well-being of artists, it is with deep gratitude that we accepted Alserkal Initiatives’ invitation to join them in presenting this project at the My Art Guides Venice Meeting Point. We deem it of the utmost importance and in continuation with our mission to stand in solidarity during these difficult times—times that are challenging for artists, practitioners and art institutions across the world.

Mara Sartore, Director of Lightbox, said: “The Venice Meeting Point was established with the purpose of promoting dialogue among artists, whilst fostering a sense of unity and meaningful connections. In today’s context, stimulating this dialogue, nurturing a community spirit and solidarity are more crucial than ever. That is why this year, we have partnered with Alserkal Initiatives and Cité international des arts, both of which embody the core principles of our project through this exhibition.”

The exhibition will run from 16 to 21 April 2024, and will be open from 09.00 to 19.00 daily, with an ancillary programme taking place in conjunction with the exhibition from 15.00 every day.

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EDITORS' NOTES

About Alserkal Initiatives

Alserkal Initiatives contributes to re-framing narratives about complex geographies, artistic practices, and creative production, providing opportunities and platforms for practitioners to experiment, deepen their research, and engage with diverse audiences.

About Cité international des arts

The Cité international des arts is the largest artists' residence in the world. Located in the heart of Paris, it brings together creators and enables them to carry out a creative or research project in all disciplines. For periods between two months and a year, the Cité international des arts gives artists the chance to work in an environment that is conducive to creativity and open to encounters with professionals from the cultural world. In the Marais or in Montmartre, the residency also provides an opportunity to meet and talk to over 300 artists and practitioners in the art world of all generations, nationalities and disciplines.

About Venice Meeting Point

Established in 2015, the My Art Guides Venice Meeting Point is a platform created by Lightbox to foster an international dialogue around contemporary art, thus creating collaborative opportunities between visual artists, art organisations and the international art community, as well as cultivating a deeper public engagement with the arts.

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