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## Tant de bo / Ojalá / Inxal·lah

İrem Günaydın, Elia Kalogianni, Tewa Barnosa, Cem A., Andrea Badia, Claudio Zulián, Merve Ünsal, Douraid Souissi and Ghylzène Boukaïla

Curated by Ayça Okay, Nadira Aklouche-Laggoune and Mercè Alsina

The exhibition *Tant de bo / Ojalá / Inxal·lah* reflects on hope as both an act of desire and an act of trust. The Spanish *ojalá*, inherited from the Arabic *inxal·lah*, carries centuries of shared histories across the Mediterranean. One expresses a longing for what could be; the other entrusts the future to a higher will.

Conceived as a space of encounter, *Tant de bo / Ojalá / Inxal·lah* brings together artists from different shores of the Mediterranean to explore how these words continue to shape our imagination of the future. Their works go beyond hope as passive waiting, presenting it instead as an active force capable of generating new forms of connection, belonging, and possibility.

*Between Breaths* (2023), by Merve Ünsal (The Hague, 1985), dwells on the fragile intervals of continuity. Inspired by the artist's encounter with a sinkhole on the Obruk plateau in Konya, the work reflects on the depletion of underground water levels due to excessive consumption. Ünsal interprets sinkholes as manifestations of delirium and collapse. Moving through image, sound, and silence, the piece inhabits the liminal space between holding on and letting go, evoking breath as both survival and transformation. In its rhythm, the work offers a meditation on resistance as a form of hope, attuned to what persists even in states of rupture.

*Flags and Fillings* (2025), by Cem A. (Ankara, 1994), reconfigures the language of national symbols through the humble yet universal form of the dumpling. The abstract flags evoke *mantı*, ravioli, pierogi, or momo—not as fixed patrimonial references, but as shared cultural patterns, endlessly adaptable and circulating across geographies. By translating food into emblem, the work destabilizes the rigidity of identity and belonging, suggesting instead a horizon of multiplicity in which difference is not erased but sustained as common ground.

Tewa Barnosa (Tripoli, 1998) engages with historical and political narratives, particularly through existing languages that might be considered non-colonial or anti-colonial, such as Libyan oral literature, Amazigh language, fiction, or mythologies. *Written To Not Remain* (ongoing since 2019) is grounded in a visual investigation of mural writing practices in post-revolutionary Libya, situating these collective declarations as ephemeral evidence of both contemporary and historical dialogue. Combining archival sequences and virtual reality, Barnosa translates and transmits photographic archives she has collected since 2019, which she regards as testimonies of the wars fabricated by the West in Libya after the Arab Spring of 2011.

*The Magic Mountain* (2023), by Claudio Zulián (Campodarsego, Padua, 1965), is a feature-length documentary that

explores the doubts, fears, and hopes of a group of citizens in the wake of the pandemic. Its title alludes to Thomas Mann's novel and delves into the strange suspended time of lockdown. Twenty-five people confined at home reflect on their lives, the society they inhabit, the mutations of the world and their surroundings, while also voicing their aspirations. Some of them are connected, others are not, yet the interactions that emerge imbue the film with a concrete humanity, offering a vivid portrait of the tensions that traverse Europe today. Recorded by the participants themselves, the footage reveals an unprecedented intimacy of lived scenes.

The video installation *Le manifeste rouge* (2022), by Ghylzène Boukaïla (Algiers, 1993), functions as a space-time capsule on the history of the Algerian War and the country's independence, revisited through contemporary reflections. The artist invites the viewer to take a seat inside a taxi and immerse themselves in a fiction through which the physical and metaphysical impact of war can be experienced. In this space, bodies are subjected to memory, trapped within a temporal loop. Through image, spatial construction, and performance, Boukaïla explores the moment of transition—one inextricably bound to collective historical events that mark territories and bodies alike, while also shaping the very structure of the space-time that carries us into them.

With *A Detection of Death or Their Agitated Postures* (2024), Elia Kalogianni (Athens, 1995) transports us to a clearing in a Cretan forest where horse owners release their animals to die in freedom. The artist captures the tension between the illusion of liberty and lifeless bodies in photographs that touch upon class and gender politics as well as interspecies relations. Her film *And There Was Evening And There Was Morning* (2025) centers on the Xenia Hotel in Nafplio, a decayed emblem of luxury and tourism. Kalogianni draws on the rumor that a secret political meeting was held there during the military dictatorship and, for security reasons, prickly pear trees were planted around it. The artist penetrates the landscape, moving between memory and fiction.

*MUSAKHAN* (2025 version, 2024), by İrem Günaydın (Istanbul, 1989), intertwines domestic rituals with fractured geographies. The work begins with the image of a mother preparing a dish spiced with a pinch of sumac while explosions light up Gaza's night sky, reflecting the ties between care and catastrophe. For Panoràmic, the artist has reimaged the scene inside a tent in Hatay, once a shelter for survivors of the earthquake, thereby transforming a space of survival into a container of memory and resistance. Linking Gaza and Hatay—two sites in the Eastern Mediterranean—the work insists on resilience and domestic persistence as forms of hope.

Through photography, Douraïd Souissi (Tunis, 1979) conveys the effects of social, political, and historical events on the Tunisian people. In these series from 2016, he focuses on the condition and uncertain destiny of the men he portrays. He respects the gestures his subjects prefer to conceal, while nonetheless capturing their inner tension. The photographed men, turning their backs to the lens or nearly so, accept the role of subjects forgotten by history, swallowed by a solitude they share. Yet each image is also a promise, a cry of hope. Immersed in the landscape, vigilant, these men await a fissure, a possibility of change, a resurgence of life. As they gaze toward the horizon—toward both a past and a future—they yearn for better days in which to reclaim their dignity and culture.

*If It Sprouts, It Will Be* (2025), by Andrea Badia (Barcelona, 1996), presents a series of forms inhabiting a space between the organic and the technological, exploring how vegetal life might manifest through alternative codes in order to escape control. These forms embody a silent, undirected yearning that materializes in the uncertainty of possible futures, in complicity with technology. One of the works incorporates a small screen functioning as a visual archive, looping through different alternative versions the piece could have taken. A larger screen, placed on the floor, projects a continuous flow of abstract images and sounds, as if it were the digital ecosystem of a saturated future in which plants have had to discover new ways of existing.

Through this constellation of voices, *Tant de bo / Ojalá / Inxal·lah* opens up a space where language, identity, and

memory converge. The exhibition invites us to consider how expressions of hope—born from cultural crossings and historical entanglements—remain vital gestures in times of uncertainty.

The exhibition has been conceived and curated by Ayça Okay (İzmir, 1991), Nadira Aklouche Laggoune (Algiers), and Mercè Alsina (Barcelona, 1966).

### Etymological References

The Spanish term *ojalá* and the Arabic *inxal·lah* share etymological roots that point to deep cultural exchanges, particularly during the period of Al-Andalus, when Muslim influence permeated the Iberian Peninsula.

- **Ojalá:** Derived from the Arabic phrase *in sha' Allah* (إن شاء الله), meaning "if God wills." Over time, its meaning in Spanish evolved to express hope or desire for future events.
- **Inxal·lah:** In Arabic, *inxal·lah* conveys a hopeful submission to divine will, emphasizing that the future unfolds according to a higher plan.

This linguistic connection reflects a broader cultural dialogue, illustrating how hope and divine will intertwine across both languages. It stands as testimony to the evolution of language through historical and cultural interactions.