

Fatima Moallim

‘We don’t need to see everything for it to be worthy or exist.’¹

Greek mythology describes a river of forgetfulness, Lethe, that runs along the edges of the Underworld. If you drink from this river you lose all memories of your life on Earth. Lethe is also the goddess of oblivion, while Mnemosyne is the goddess of memory and the inventor of language and words. Fatima Moallim’s work articulate an intimate relationship between remembering and forgetting, between mentally moving back in time and being in the present. What is memory and where does oblivion take over, replacing it with everything we know here and now? Which memories are ours and which have been retold to us in another time, from another perspective?

Moallim works with drawing in various formats. The exhibition features several works in oil crayons on paper, yielding a rugged and intensely opaque surface. The works are site-specific, created at Lunds konsthall just before the exhibition opened. According to Moallim, drawing is all but private. It is like a diary, a place where thoughts and sensations from your innermost being can gather. What carries meaning is, to her, not only the visual expression of drawing but drawing as action, as a choreography where the remembered and the contemporary come together as a spatial arrangement and where the private encounters the public. It is therefore important that her works be made in the spaces where they will be shown. She thinks of this as charging the works with energy from the location where she finds herself. Her physical presence and mental state combine with inner processes that have been going on for the longest time. They erupt in a quick process where she merges with her lines and the drawing emerges as if in one long exhalation. Not until afterwards, when she looks at what she has drawn, will she be able to decide what kind of story she has generated. Moallim’s visual language is a combination of abstract, figurative and written elements. They coalesce as an overall picture, co-creating a unique idiom where any hierarchic difference between the three components is erased, much like in the hieroglyphs of ancient Egypt. The written elements occur as words or in some cases as letters, singular or repeated. They appear to be sounds or tones. The drawings also reveal an interaction between the various thicknesses and intensities of the lines, which in turn reflect the various speeds of drawing. Sometimes these lines are tentative, sometimes they are determined and active. They are always in movement.

The work *Besvärliga ljud* (*‘Troublesome Sounds’*, 2023) is both literal and metaphoric. While the sounds are unambiguously characterised in the title, the image appears chaotic with its rapid tight movements gathering in a black hole. On the inside, in the eye of the hurricane, silence is produced. This is strongly reminiscent of Abstract Expressionism, which achieved a dominating position in the American art world in the 1940s and ’50s: a

¹ Katja Åberg and Olga Krzeszowiec Malmsten, ‘Interview: Fatima Moallim’, available at <https://magasin3.com/en/blog/2023/12/07/interview-with-fatima-moallim-about-the-performance-work-markeringar/> (last accessed on 29 March 2025).

tradition where the work is an extension of the artist and the ego and the id (the unconscious) are central to the question about what art expresses.² Abstract Expressionism is characterised by a highly emotional process where the artist's physical movement leaves a direct imprint on the work and the viewer is invited to feel, experience and interpret without any back story. The boundaries between figuration and abstraction, language, the ego and the unconscious, remembering and forgetting – in Moalim's drawings everything is erased and everything is connected. They are in constant movement. Like the memories in Lethe's river they gather in the streaming water, embraced by the outlines of experience.

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² See Rosalind Krauss, 'Sense and Sensibility: Reflection on Post '60s Sculpture', *October* vol. 12, no. 3 (November 1973), p. 46.