

# S.M.A.K.

## PRESS RELEASE

SIRAH FOIGHEL BRUTMANN & EITAN EFRAT

*LÀ*

06.Apr.2024 – 08.Sep.2024



Sirah Foighel Brutmann and Eitan Efrat, *Tristram's Starling on a ruin near the Dead Sea*. Courtesy of the artists.

*"...in my notes, there is stuff about time and space. About putting down roots in space. This I can understand."*

*Là-Bas*, Chantal Akerman, 2006

In April 2024, S.M.A.K. will present the first museum exhibition by Brussels-based artists and filmmakers Sirah Foighel Brutmann (b.1983) and Eitan Efrat (b.1983). Titled *Là*, the multifaceted audio-visual presentation engages in an imaginary dialogue with Chantal Akerman, who died in 2015.

Primarily featuring new moving image and sound works, *Là* is an expansive environment that invokes a layered perception of place. The title affectionately refers to *Là-bas*, the 2006 film by Akerman. Phonetically, *Là* (meaning 'there' in French) means different things in Arabic and Hebrew: in Arabic, لا means 'no' – specifically here regarding the negation of hegemonic narratives of the land. In Hebrew, לה means 'for her', and is meant in this case as a tribute or a sort of offering to Akerman. Journeying between Belgium and the Negev/al-Naqab desert in Israel/Palestine, *Là* examines historical accountability and the belief of belonging.

In September 2022, Eitan Efrat and Sirah Foighel Brutmann received a grant to initiate a project looking at Akerman's experiences as a Belgian-Jewish filmmaker, and her audio-visual relationship with the desert in Israel/Palestine. Sirah and Eitan directed *Un Âne*, a 12-minute short film responding to Akerman's timeless *News From Home* and the desert shots in her last film, *No Home Movie* (2015). This piece was addressed by Sirah and Eitan to the filmmaker as a letter, and represents the first movement of their exhibition at S.M.A.K.

Starting from *Un Âne*, and designed as a journey, the exhibition moves to the different perspectives on landscape and language embodied in the artists' *Horizons* (2024) and *[ANAN]* (2024), and on through transitory spaces and gathering points. In the fifth room, eleven 16mm projectors fill the space with images and their mechanical sounds. Each projector plays the note 'la' (A, around 440hz), the note used to tune the orchestra and recorded with musicians befriended by the artists. Visitors are invited to roam around, sharing the space with others, approaching the screens, and examining the details of the environment. The environment also reflects and unpacks the artistic processes at stake with the multiple shifts between 16 mm and digital formats, which subtly include Dead Sea water in the development of the film Brutmann and Efrat use.

Throughout the exhibition, videos and film images are all projected on natural latex screens. The beige latex has a very special texture and weight, giving it the appearance of skin. The image remains clear on both sides of the material. In the sixth room, the moving image work *Is It A Knife Because...* (2022) is projected. The work entangles love and violence in an attempt to define the source of the light. *Is It A Knife Because...* judiciously challenges notions of authority and responsibility as parents, image producers, artists and the authorities lurking outside the window. In a similar approach to Akerman's when she exposed her intimate family environment in *No Home Movie*, this work is a film made at home and born of the collision of filmmaking and parenthood.

*Là* is a multifaceted critical work that represents a reconciliation with Chantal Akerman's death and the impossibility of being able to communicate with her. Drawing on the work of Emmanuel Levinas, Jacques Derrida, and Akerman (including her writings), the exhibition engages in an imaginary dialogue with Akerman as a way to grieve. The artists lament the world left behind by Akerman as a legacy, and intend *Là* to be a reassessment of European Jewish accountability to Israel and the ongoing Palestinian Nakba from a post-Zionist perspective, in line with the rich history of Belgian Jewish anti-fascist movements from both communities.

*The exhibition is realised in partnership between S.M.A.K., [Messidor](#), and [Courtisane Film Festival](#). With the support of the Flemish government (Kunstendecreet).*

Press information

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Link to press images + captions [here](#)

## **S.M.A.K.**

Situated in Ghent, Belgium, S.M.A.K. shows art from its own collection in dialogue with works of contemporary artists from all corners of the world. By means of contemporary art, we seek and give meaning to this complex and fragmented world. In doing so, we make every effort to be accessible and inclusive, because art is for everyone. With our experimental approach, we hope visitors will be introduced to artists with a surprising and visionary view of the world.  
<https://smak.be/en>

## **Sirah Foighel Brutmann & Eitan Efrat**

Sirah and Eitan live and work in Brussels, where they work together to create audio-visual pieces, installations, and performances. Their artistic practice focuses on the performative aspects of moving images. They strive to mark the spatial and durational potentialities of reading still or moving images, the relations between spectatorship and history, the temporality of narratives and memory, and the material surfaces of image production.

Their work has been shown in duo exhibitions in Kunsthalle Basel (CH); Argos, Brussels (BE); CAC Delme (FR); Brakke Grond (NL). They have taken part in group exhibitions in the Wiels (BE); Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe, Hamburg (DE); Portikus, Frankfurt (DE); Jeu de Paume, Paris (FR); and STUK, Leuven (BE). They have participated in such film festivals as EMAF, Osnabrück (DE); Atonal, Berlin (DE); Doc Lisboa (PT); Oberhausen Film Festival (DE); Rotterdam Film Festival (NL); Les Rencontres Internationales, Paris and Berlin (FR/DE); New Horizons, Wrocław (PL); Images, Toronto (CA); 25FPS, Zagreb (HR).

Currently, Sirah and Eitan teach at Brussels' ERG, and are members of the artist collective Messidor, along with Meggy Rustamova and Pieter Geenen, as well as members of Level Five, an artist-run cooperative studio in Brussels. Refusing any form of monetary transaction with government-subsidised institutions in Israel, Sirah and Eitan support the struggle for the liberation of the Palestinian people in Palestine and around the world.