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Nobra Haimé, New York art curator




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Selma Gurbuz
Mind's Eye
24 October – 7 December 2011

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Selma Gürbüz is nothing if not eclectic. She knows her sources and is not afraid to mix idioms. Just as the mind links remembered images and events, she intuitively weaves together disparate elements in her paintings. Gürbüz's stated aim is to look at Western art through Eastern Eyes. In her rich and evocative paintings she draws on a broad range of influences and merges them with her whimsical imagination to produce lyrical and very personal works. Each of her paintings is touched by romanticism and her own esoteric mythology. Gürbüz's works carry echoes of high Ottoman and traditional Turkish folk art, with combinations of motifs that are uniquely Turkish and rooted in the culture of the country. At the same time she introduces elements from the pantheon of Western art, from the Renaissance through the 20th century. Elements of Cranach, Leonardo, Velazquez and Goya, and the formal qualities of Ingres, Manet and Matisse and others are reflected in her paintings.

Gürbüz admits that although dreams are a major component of the subject matter of her works, she treats each as a problem for which she must provide a visual solution. She works on each painting spontaneously at first, but gradually changes features as a narrative crystallizes. Gürbüz insists that each work must have a narrative: in order to satisfy its creator, there needs to be a story. She keeps narrative shrouded in mystery, a puzzle for the viewer to solve. Each story is composed of pictograms, often humorous or absurd, but always symbolic and emotive. Tears, for example, represent rain.

In her earlier works, Selma Gürbüz made bold and simple calligraphic brushstrokes on handmade paper. She focused mainly on animals, especially cats, seen from above from a bird's eye view. At that stage her works were monochrome and her figures stood on neutral backgrounds. The results were spontaneous and playful, even impish. Gradually human figures became

more prominent and, more recently, the details in her work have multiplied. Her figures now stand amidst densely patterned compositions, often of several colours. Oil on canvas became her preferred medium for larger paintings. The mood of these recent works is calmer, more reflective and more poetic. In her recent work animal and human figures often populate the same space. Gürbüz's worldview is pantheistic. For her, this is an animal world, and relationship between the humans and animals is charged with emotions and eroticism.

Selma Gürbüz's ability to seamlessly draw together features from high and folk art from a wide range of sources, both geographical and temporal, is one factor that makes her work so mesmerizing. Another is the way that individual elements can combine different aspects concurrently. Her distinctly drawn figures against the picture plane recall those of the refined Turkish and Persian court miniatures of the 15th and 16th centuries, but there is also something more savage and mischievous about them, redolent of the mysterious and elemental divs attributed to the enigmatic Muhammad Siyar Qalam of the Topkapi albums, or even the prehistoric cave paintings of Lascaux. The all-over patterning of *Iznik* tiles and silk embroideries feeds into her paintings, yet her interpretation of their vegetal arabesques and *cintimani* is more spontaneous.

Looking East, Gürbüz goes beyond Turkey: Persian, Japanese and Indian art all feed into her work. From Japanese woodcuts we see a strong two-dimensional emphasis and a characteristic tilt of the head; from Persian and Ottoman miniature painting we see strong outlines and stylized figures and her characteristic placement of figures on the picture plane. Meanwhile, her distinctive style, with its silhouetted figures and strong outline is much influenced not just by Turkish *Karagoz* shadow theatre, but also bears a strong resemblance to American and European silhouette profile portraits of the late 18th and early 19th centuries.

There is something unmistakably “stagey” about her working process. Her paintings often have definite backgrounds and the figures are placed like actors. Gürbüz has sometime dabbled with puppetry: for a show at the Pompidou Centre in Paris she made her own puppets and also used her body in a teepee, which served as a theatre. In Yokohama Art Centre in Tokyo she performed with puppets behind a screen.

Some of her motifs have clear sources of inspiration, especially when from Western painting. Her slender figures, with their curious contortions and incidental details owe much to those of Lucas Cranach the Elder. Gürbüz painted a number of works in homage to his *Adam and Eve* series. The magnificent attire so often seen on her figures recalls the quiet dignity of Velazquez’s subjects, whilst the seductive faint smile that so often appears on her faces evoked that of the *Mona Lisa*. The traces of the voluptuous nude of Ingres’ *La Grande Odalisque* are unmistakable in Gürbüz’s *Three Roosters*.

The closer one looks at Gürbüz’s paintings the more sources one sees. Do her earlier works remind one of the 18th century Turkish calligraphic compositions in the shape of animals, or is it the inscribed, Ottoman 19th century gilded skeletons of tobacco or ivy leaves? In her figures, is it traces of 15th and 16th century Persian and Ottoman miniatures that one sees, or could it be the *Mina'i* ware of the 13th century Turkic rulers of Iran? Gürbüz lists Japanese woodcuts as source of inspiration, but in fact art from the Middle East has looked East for almost a thousand years. In a very real sense, it has been consciously *orientalist*. The Moon-faced court ladies of Persian wares of the 13th century, the blue and white of *Iznik* tiles and dishes, and the long-sleeved maidens of Turkish and Persian miniatures are just a few examples of a fascination with the Far East which has long permeated Islamic art. No doubt the Central Asian origin of the region’s Turkic overlords played a major role in bringing about these orientalizing tendencies. So too were the Ottomans instrumental in bringing occidentalizing tendencies to Middle Eastern

art, a trend which continues to this day. The second half of their reign coincided with the spread of the Renaissance, and increasing numbers of Western artists were attracted to their capital.

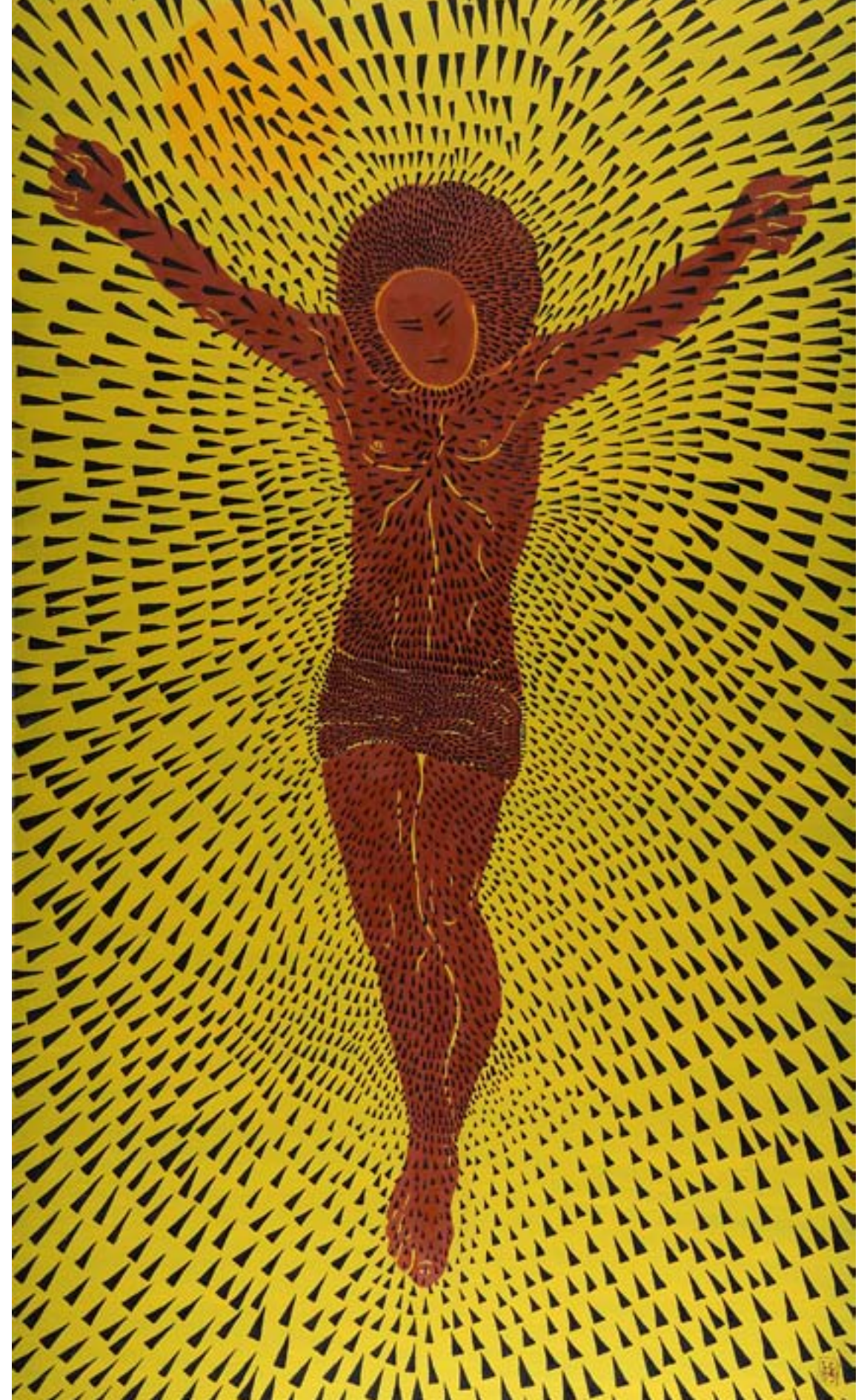
It should be no surprise that it is the art produced in the West from this point onwards that fascinates Selma Gürbüz. She is well aware of this history of cultural borrowing, which explains much of her process of picture making. Much of this is done unconsciously, and it is only in conversation that she retrospectively links the parts. Still a lot is left open to interpretation. It seems that Gürbüz leaves the line that separates intention from intuition deliberately obscured, so that her paintings bear a strangely familiarity through an unfamiliar melding of disparate parts, a kind of fairytale mythology based on our collective cultural memories. Thus her works seem timeless, yet ephemeral; imagined yet real. Selma Gürbüz comes close to touching the paradox that is at the heart of dreams, but to describe her as a surrealist would be missing half the point.

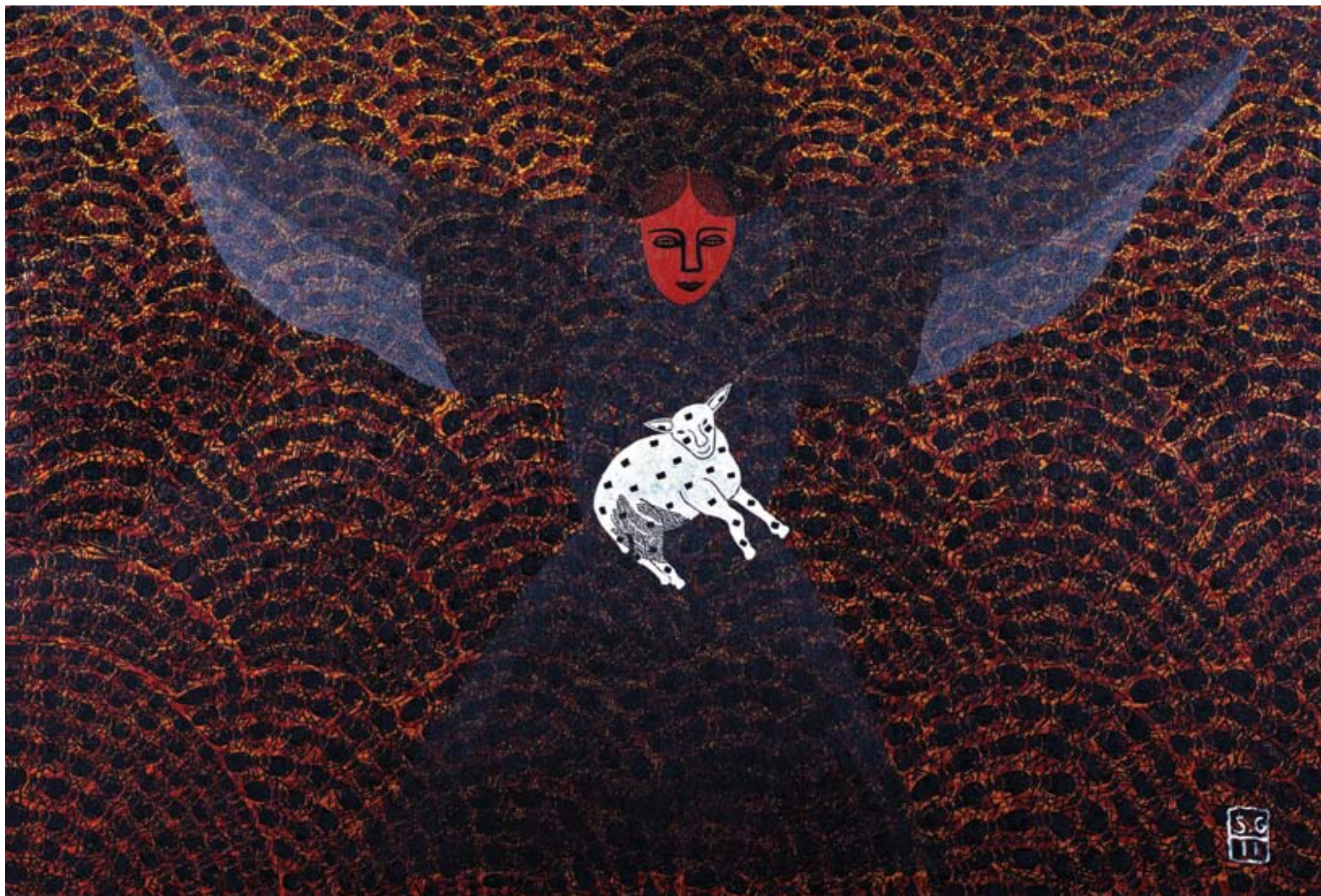
*William Lawrie,
Dubai, October 2011*



Woman With Roosters
2011
oil on canvas
155 x 230cm

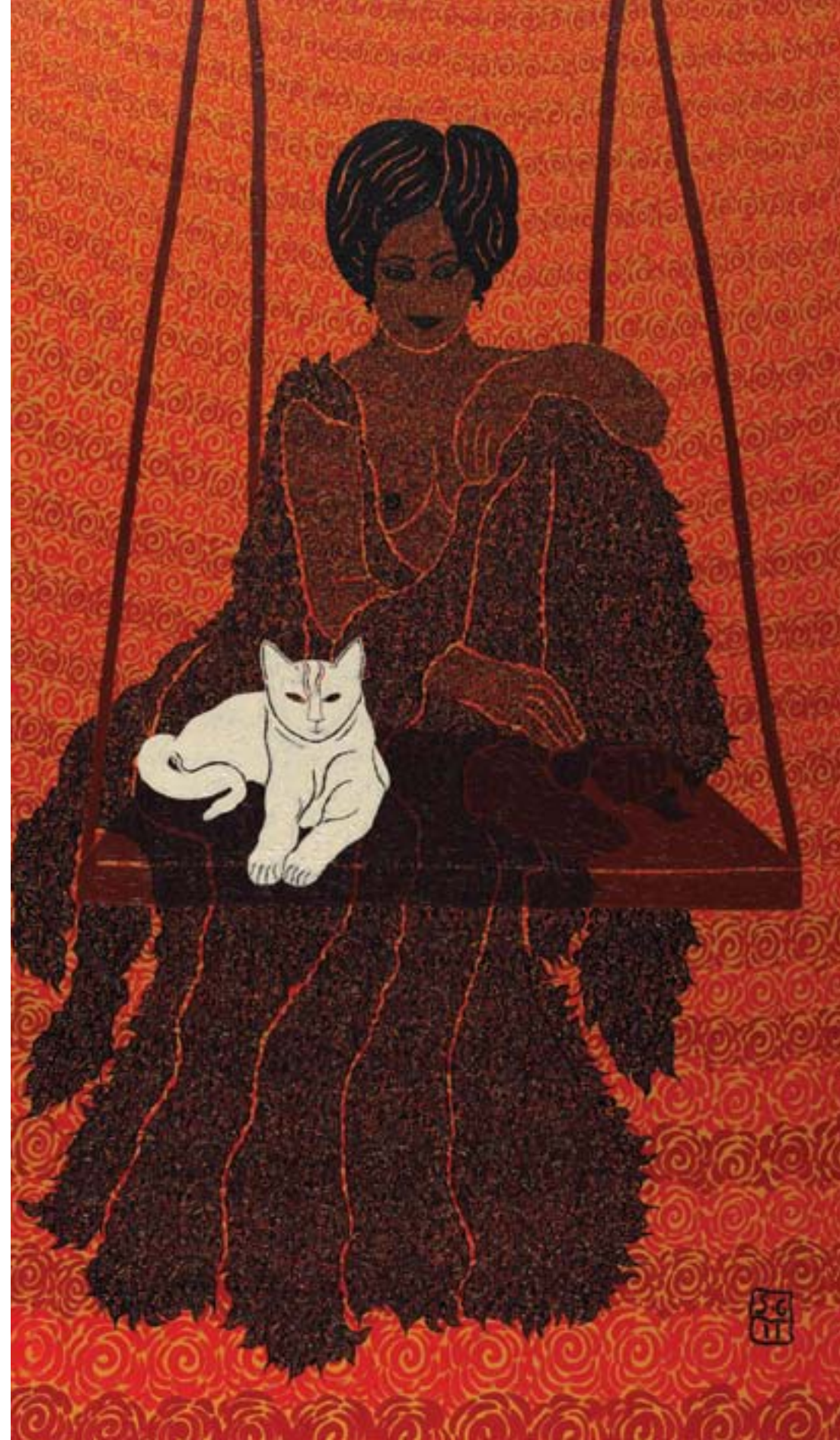
Çivili İsa - Jesus With Nails
2010
oil on canvas
200 x 115cm





Byzantine Angel
2011
oil on canvas
155 x 230cm

Woman With White Cat
2011
Oil on canvas
200 x 115 cm



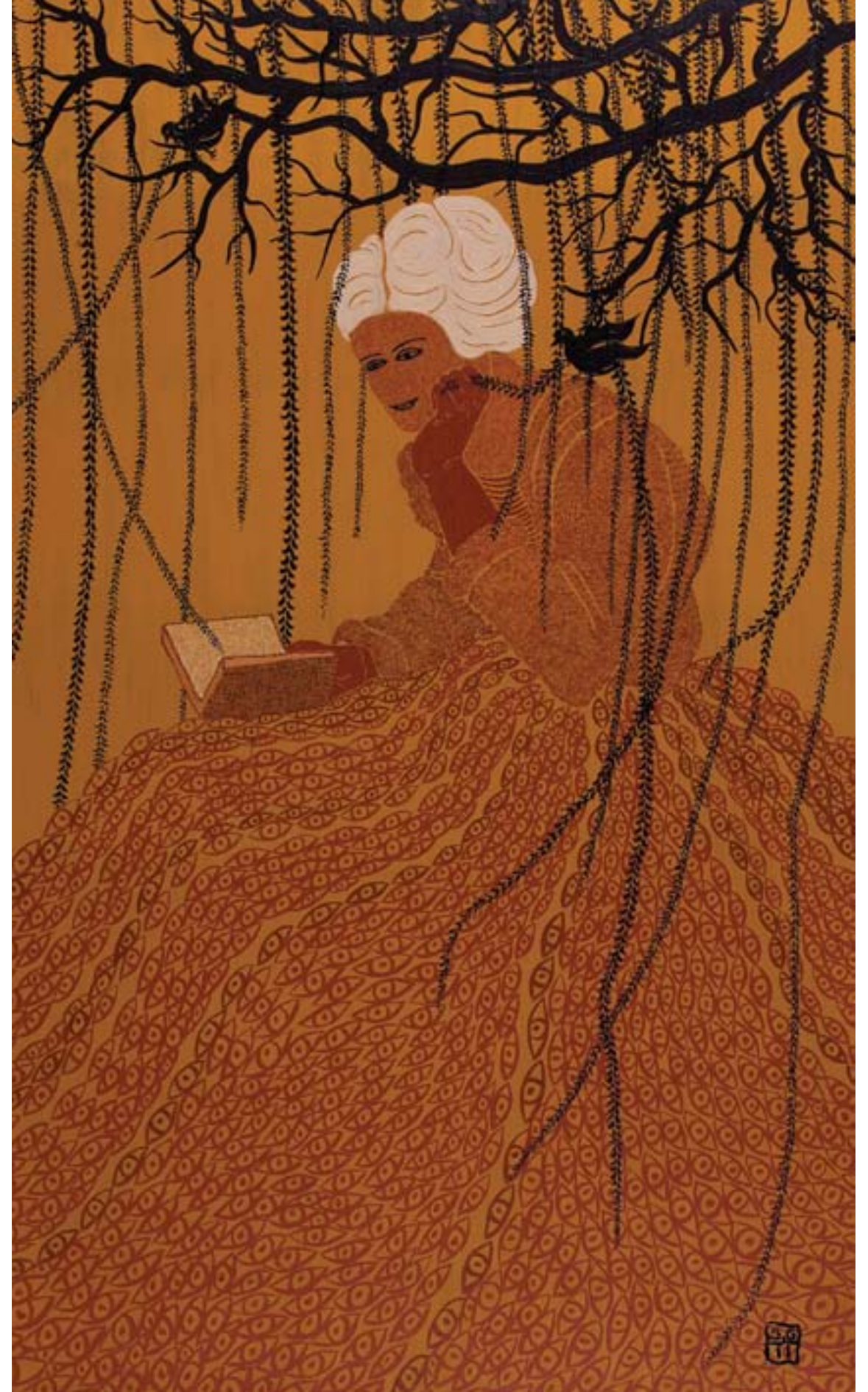


Zümrüdüanka - Phoenix
2011
Oil on canvas
155 x 230 cm

Still Life with Rose
2011
Ink on handmade paper
163 x 115 cm



Poet
2011
Oil on canvas
200 x 115 cm





Adem ve Havva - Adam and Eve
2010
Oil on canvas
200 x 115 cm



Still Life with Hydrangea
2011
Ink on handmade paper
163 x 115 cm



Flowered Woman
2011
Ink on hand made paper
300 x 150 cm, 118 1/8 x 59 1/8 in

Born 1960, Istanbul, Turkey
Lives in Istanbul

Education

1982 Exeter College, Art and Design, England
1984 Marmara University of Fine Arts, Painting Department, Turkey

Solo Exhibitions

2011 “Shadows of My Self”, Rose Issa Projects, Leighton House Museum, London
“Kırmızı&Siyah” (“Red&Black”), ALANistanbul, Istanbul

2010 “Arketip” (“Archetypes”), Warehouse (Antrepo) no:3, Istanbul

2009 “Uninvited,” Akbank Culture Center, Istanbul, curated by Levent Çalıkoglu
“Sunny Shadows,” Gallery Apel, Istanbul, and Tokio Gallery, Tokyo

2008 Galerie Maeght, Paris
Boutique 1 Gallery with Fadi Mogabgab, Dubai
“Cat’s Eye,” Milli Reasurans Gallery, Istanbul

2007 “Kamiyama Workshop”, Kamiyama
“Safa,” MAC Art Gallery, Istanbul
“Sunny Shadows II,” Gallery Apel at Istanbul Contemporary Art Fair, Istanbul
“Sunny Shadows I,” Makii Masaru Fine Arts, Tokyo

2006 “Feline II,” Gallery Apel, Istanbul
“Feline I,” Galerie Maeght, Paris
“Go East,” Beijing TSI1 Contemporary Art Center, Beijing
“Artist Residence Solo Show,” Tokyo

2005 “Dive into the dream,” Gallery Nev, Ankara

2004 “The Fairy and the Genie” (“Tüylü Masallar” (“Feathering Tales”), Gallery Apel, Istanbul

2000 “Yünname”, Gallery Apel, Istanbul

1999 “Les Contes de la Peau,” Centre Culturel Français, Istanbul

1999 “Karaname,” Gallery Apel, Istanbul

1998 “Zodiak’la Hayale Dalıs” (“Dreaming with the Zodiac”), Gallery TEM, Istanbul

1997 “Mundus Elementaris,” travelling show: Alliances Françaises de Buenos Aires, Mendoza, Cordoba, Bahia Blanca, Rosario, Santa Fe, Mar del Plata

1996 Gallery BB, Houston, Texas
Décor pour la Soirée Futuriste, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris
Derimod Art Center, Istanbul
“Magie Grise,” Galerie Stepanska, Institut Français, Prague

1995 “Londres Revisitée,” travelling show: Espace Mira Phalaina, Montreuil and Centre Culturel Français, London

1994 “La Mille et Troisième Nuit,” Galerie Thorigny, Paris
“1003 Nuits,” Gallery TEM, Istanbul

1993 “Poème avec 10 Paragraphes,” Gallery TEM, Alay Köskü, Istanbul
“Les Trapézistes de l’Infini,” Aldebaran-Espace Vigneron, Baillargues, Montpellier

1992 “Jeux de Mains,” Galerie Thorigny, Paris
“Meleklerin Cinsiyeti” (“Sex of Angels”), Gallery TEM, Istanbul

1991 Espace Merle-Portalès, St Germain-En-Laye, France
“Meleklerin Düsü” (“Dream of Angels”), Galerie Nev, Ankara
“Le Café de ma Favorite II,” Bibliothèque Municipale, Yerres

1990 “Le Café de ma Favorite,” Galerie Lacourière-Frélaout, Paris

1989 Mask Art Gallery, Izmir

1988 “Calligraphie de l’Ombre” (“Gölge Hüsnühatları”), Gallery BM, Istanbul

1987 Gallery Urart, Ankara

1986 Gallery Urart, Istanbul

Group Exhibitions

2010 “From Traditional to Contemporary,” curated by Levent Çalıkoglu, Istanbul Museum of Modern Art
Rose Issa Projects at Contemporary Istanbul Art Fair,

	Istanbul	2001	“Paper Works,” Gallery Apel, Istanbul
2009	Casa Del Arte at Contemporary Istanbul Art Fair, Istanbul	2000	“Garçon, de quoi écrire!” Musée des Beaux-Arts, Caen
2008	“Modern Experiences,” Istanbul Modern, Istanbul “Je ma’apel Apel,” Gallery Apel, Istanbul	1999	“Hic Liber est Meus,” Mairie du Sixième Arrondissement, Paris “Nuit,” Gallery Apel, Istanbul
2007	“KAIR 2007,” Kamiyama, Japan “Modern and Beyond,” Santralistanbul, Istanbul “Selection 2007 from the Elgiz Collection,” Istanbul	1998	“Les Cafés Littéraires,” Institut Français, Barcelona “Damak” (“Palate”), Gallery Apel, Istanbul
2006	“Tenses of the Tulip,” curated by The Imperial Mint, Istanbul “Visit the Visit,” Contemporary Istanbul Art Fair-Gallery Apel, Istanbul “Three Contemporary Artists,” Galerie Maeght, Beijing, Selma Gurbuz (Turkey), Marco Del Re (Italy), Aki Kuroda (Japan)	1997	“Le Cirque,” travelling show: Espace Mira Phalaina, Montreuil; Athénée Théâtre Louis Jovet, Paris; Novomestka Radnice, Prague “Ex-Libris,” Institut Culturel Français, Barcelona “Le Cirque,” Les Silos, Maison du Livre et de l’Affiche, Chaumont “Le Zodiaque,” Galerie Mai Olivier, Paris “Les Cafés Littéraires,” Les Silos, Maison du Livre et de l’Affiche, Chaumont “Garçon, de quoi écrire!” Musée des Beaux-Arts, Caen
2005	“Newroz-Nevruz,” curated by Nuran Terzioğlu, Diyarbakır United Nations 60th Anniversary Exhibition, Genoa “Cat’s Eye,” Galerie G-Art, Istanbul “Where is Istanbul?” curated by Emre Zeytinoglu, MSG, Istanbul “Newroz-Nevruz,” curated by Nuran Terzioğlu in Diyarbakır “50 artists, 50 works,” MGS, Istanbul	1996	“Ex-Libris,” travelling show: Alliance Française Buenos Aires and Argentina “Le Cirque,” travelling show: Gérard-Georges Lemaire, Editions Eric Koehler, Athénée-Théâtre Louis Jovet in Paris; Espace Mira Phalaina, Montreuil; and Novomestka Radnice, Prague
2004	“Dialogues Plastiques,” Grand Place, Hotel de Ville, Brussels “More Wind! Four Contemporary Artists from Turkey,” Yokohama Portside Gallery, Japan “From Hills and Dales,” Gallery Apel, Istanbul	1995	“Tapis Volants,” Institut du Monde Arabe, Paris “Ex-Libris,” Institut Culturel Français, Barcelona “Automatic Games,” Biennale de Kwangju, Korea “L’après-midi d’un faune,” Espace Merle-Portalès, Uzès “Tapis Volants,” Institut du Monde Arabe, Paris
2003	“Metal Works,” Gallery Apel, Istanbul “Fantaisies du Harem et les Nouvelles Shéhérazades,” travelling show: Museum of Contemporary Art, Barcelona and Museum of Natural History, Lyon “Cara a Cara,” travelling show: Selma Gürbüz with Arden Reed and Marco Del Re, Galerie Maeght Paris and Barcelona “Hamam,” Swedish Cultural Institute, Stockholm “Love Affairs,” curated by Rose Issa, (touring exhibition), Stuttgart, Bonn and Berlin	1994	“Paris est une Fête,” Galerie Stepanska, Prague “Double Jeu,” Centre Culturel Français, Barcelona Frankfurt Art Fair, Galerie Thorigny
2002	“Chair +”, Gallery Apel, Istanbul “Basbasa,” Selma Gürbüz with Marco Del Re, Garanti Gallery and Gallery Apel, Istanbul	1993	“Cumhuriyet’ten Günümüze Kadın Sanatçılar” (“Republic to the Present - Women Artists”), Istanbul Arkeoloji Müzeleri, Istanbul “Ex-Libris,” Galerie Thorigny, Paris “Cartes de Vœux d’Artistes,” Galeries XIII, Arles Galerie Thorigny, FIAC, Paris
		1992	“Cekmeceler” (“Draws”), Galeri MD, Istanbul “Parigi,” Palais de la Civilisation Italienne, Rome “Vous avez dit Romain?” Espace Merle-Portalès, Uzès “Petits Formats,” Galerie Thorigny, Paris Istanbul 2nd Art Fair, Tem Sanat Galerisi, Tüyap Sergi

- 1991 Sarayı, Istanbul
 “L’Orient des Cafés,” travelling show: French Cultural Centre Cairo, Alexandria, Athens, Thessaloniki, Jerusalem, Tel Aviv
 “L’ennemi,” Petit Foyer, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris
 “Eros Iconoclaste,” Galerie Vidal-Saint Phalle, Paris
- 1991 “Là-bas près de la source,” Espace Merle-Portalès, Uzès
 “N’importe où, Hors du Monde,” Librairie Café Littéraire Le Pavé, St Germain en Laye
 “Mon Salon, mes Haines,” Galerie l’Aire du Verseau, Paris
- 1991 “Celebi’den Gürbüz’e Sanatin Hizmetinde Bes Yil” (From Celebi to Gürbüz,” Tem Sanat Galerisi, Atatürk Kültür Merkezi, Istanbul
- 1990 “Les Cafés Littéraires,” Galerie CC, Palace of Congress, Graz, Austria; Institut Français Culturel: Istanbul, Alexandria, Cairo, Damascus, Athens, Thessaloniki, Tel Aviv, Jerusalem, Amman, Baghdad
 “Heykel ve Desen” (“Sculpture and Drawing”), Gallery TEM, Istanbul
 “Büyük Sergi,” Santral Holding, Museum of Painting and Sculpture, Istanbul
- 1989 “Méditerranée,” curated by Beral Madra, Bari, Italy
 “Pangi,” Palais de la Civilisation Italienne, E.U.R., Rome
 Second International Biennial of Istanbul,
 “Mon Salon, mes Haines,” Galerie l’Aire du Verseau, Paris
 “Turkish Contemporary Art,” Sotheby’s-Küsav, Alay Köskü, Istanbul-London

Public Collections

The British Museum, London
 Galerie Maeght Collection, Paris
 Santral Istanbul
 Istanbul Bilgi University
 Istanbul Modern
 Project 4L, Istanbul
 Painting and Sculpture Museum, Ankara

- 2011 Issa, Rose, “Shadows of My Self,” Rose Issa Projects, London
- 2010 Çalıko lu, Levent, “Arketip,” Antrepo 3, Istanbul
- 2010 “Gelenekten Ça da a-Modern Türk Sanatında Kültürel Bellek,” Istanbul Modern, Istanbul
- 2009 Çalıko lu , Levent, “Davetsiz” (“Uninvited”), Akbank Sanat, Istanbul
- 2008 “Je ma’apel Apel - 10th anniversary catalogue of the Gallery Apel,” Gallery Apel, Istanbul
- 2008 Lascault, Gilbert, “Safa,” Mac Art Gallery, Istanbul
- 2007 “Modernity and Beyond,” Santral Istanbul Museum, Istanbul
- 2007 “Modern Deneyimler” (“Modern Experiences”), Istanbul Modern, Istanbul
- 2006 “Les Griffes Effilées,” limited-edition illustrations by Selma Gürbüz, text by Gilbert Lascault, Editions Maeght, Paris
- 2006 “Feline,” Editions Maeght, Paris
- 2004 Edgü, Ferit, “Cin ile Peri” (“The Fairy and the Genie”), Gallery Apel, Istanbul
- 2004 “Saman Güncesi-Bayburt Baksı Müzesi için 123+2 Sanatçı, 123+2 Yapıt,” Bayburt Baksı Museum Publications, Turkey
- 2003 Issa, Rose, “Love Affairs,” Islamische Welten, ifa-Galerie, Stuttgart
- 2003 “Pantera - Selma Gürbüz, Pierre-Marc de Biasi,” Collection DUOS, Editions Maeght, Paris
- 2003 de Biasi, Pierre-Marc, “Les Voluptés Secrètes d’Artémis,” Editions Maeght, Paris
- 2003 “Cara a Cara: Arden Reed, Marco Del Re, Selma Gürbüz,” Collection Carnet de Voyage, Editions Maeght, Paris
- 2003 “Fantasies de l’harem et les Nouvelles Scheherezades,” CCCB - Centre de Cultura Contemporània de Barcelona and Institut Europeu de la Mediterrània, Barcelona
- 2002 “Ba ba a - Marco Del Re, Selma Gürbüz,” Garanti Gallery-Gallery Apel, Istanbul
- 2000 Akay, Ali, “Yünname” by Ali Akay, Gallery Apel, Istanbul
- 2000 “Siyah Qalam au Présent: Siyah Kalem Günümüzde, Tüylü Masallar, Christine Khondji, Selma Gürbüz, Istanbul
- 1999 “Karaname,” Gallery Apel, Istanbul
- 1999 “Les Contes de la Peau,” Institut Français, Istanbul
- 1998 Gürbüz, Selma and Lemaire, Gérard Georges, “Zodiak’la Hayale Dalı ” (“Dreaming with the Zodiac”), Gallery TEM, Istanbul
- 1997 Lemaire, Gérard Georges, “Mundus Elementaris,” Centre Culturel Français, Buenos Aires
- 1996 Lemaire, Gérard Georges, “Le Cirque,” Editions Eric Koehler;Athenee-Theatre Louis Jouvet, Paris; Espace Mira Phalaina, Montreuil; Novomestka Radnice, Prague
- 1996 Lemaire, Gérard Georges, “Magie Grise,” Institut Français Prague and Istanbul

- 1995 Bourgois, Christian, “Londres Revisité,” illustrations by Selma Gürbüz (Paris)
- 1994 Lemaire, Gérard Georges, “La Mille Et Troisième Nuit: Tapage Nocturne par Jean-François Bory, Contre-jours par Bernard Comment, Les Muses Inquiétantes,” Paris-Istanbul
- 1994 “Antigone,” illustrated by Selma Gürbüz, script by Peter Greenaway, Lédignan
- 1992 Lemaire, Gérard Georges, “Jeux de Mains,” Galerie Thorigny, Paris
- 1992 Heuilliet, Patricia, “Les Muses Inquiétantes,” Galerie Thorigny and Editions Eric Kohler, Paris
- 1992 Lemaire, Gérard Georges, “Le Sexe des Anges” (“Meleklerin Cinsiyeti”), Gallery TEM, Istanbul
- 1991 Bourgois, Christian (ed.), “L’ennemi: Constantinople-Illustration d’Ülfet, La Libertine d’Ahmet Rasim,” Nouvelle série no: 2, Paris
- 1990 Lemaire, Gérard Georges, “Le Café de ma Favorite,” Galerie Lacourière Frélaut, Paris
- 1989 Lemaire, Gérard Georges, “Calligraphie de l’Ombre” (“Gölge Hüsnühatları”), Gallery BM, Istanbul

The publication of this catalogue coincides with an exhibition of the same title at Lawrie Shabibi, Dubai 24 October -
7 December, 2011.

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