

Somewhat Eternal

Justine Youssef

31 August – 19 October

Justine Youssef's work focuses on how people relate to land and keep their rituals and beliefs alive, especially in the face of displacement. Her film and art installations explore how these practices are affected by being forced to move and how we are part of these problems.

In her 2023 solo exhibition 'Somewhat Eternal,' Youssef created an immersive experience featuring a three-channel video. It shows an Elder in Qaḍā' Bsharrī, Lebanon, performing r'sasa, an ancient practice of using molten lead to ward off the 'evil eye.' Youssef's maternal family has relied on their knowledge of the local mountains and environment for survival and healing for generations. Now, they continue these traditions remotely, using locally available lead bullets for r'sasa.

The installation also includes embroidered textiles scented with aromatic waters made from plants. Youssef inherited this process from her family and uses plants like Blessed Milk Thistle, Burnet Rose, and Lebanese Cedar, chosen for their significance in land struggles and cultural renewal.

Overall, 'Somewhat Eternal' links personal stories with wider political and social issues, showing how ecological and human displacement are connected. The work highlights the value of rituals and traditions in offering alternative ways forward, despite the challenges of moving and adapting.