

Sanam Khatibi

lives and works between Paris and Brussels



Sanam Khatibi's work explores notions of animality and our primal impulses. The core of her practice questions our relationship with power structures and the duality of triumph and failure. The recurrent themes that feature in her work are chaos, destruction, excess, loss of control, domination, and submission. Khatibi is also interested in the thin line that exists between our fears and desires, and how closely they are interrelated.

Her subjects live on their impulses, set within alluring, exotic, and dangerous landscapes. Wildlife and animals are an integral part of her practice, and her figures are often depicted within the same plane as the flora and fauna. Power, violence, and sensuality mingle and overlap with each other ambiguously, giving rise to multifaceted scenarios that juxtapose the animal and the human, past and present, cruelty and seduction.

Her practice consists of paintings, embroideries, tapestries, sculptures, and installations.

Sanam Khatibi (Belgian with Iranian heritage) lives and works between Paris and Brussels.

Her recent solo shows include **Abby Kortrijk**, Kortrijk (2026); **Mendes Wood DM**, Paris (2025); **P·P·O·W**, New York (2024); **Mendes Wood DM**, São Paulo (2022); **Groeninge Museum**, Bruges (2021); **Kunsthal Gent**, Ghent (2020); **rodolphe janssen**, Brussels (2019); **BPS22 – Musée d'art de la Province de Hainaut**, Charleroi (2019).

Khatibi's work has also been part of institutional group shows at **Kunsthal KAdE**, Amersfoort (2026); **Dallas Contemporary**, Dallas (2025); **S.M.A.K.**, Ghent (2025); **Plains Art Museum**, Fargo (2024); **National Museum of Contemporary Art**, Athens (2022); **Centraal Museum**, Utrecht (2021); **S.M.A.K.**, Ghent (2021); **Kortrijk Triennial**, Kortrijk (2021); **Kunstverein Dresden**, Dresden (2020); **Museum of Contemporary Art Antwerp (M HKA)**, Antwerp (2020); **16th Istanbul Biennial**, Istanbul (2019); **Centre Régional d'Art Contemporaine (CRAC) Occitanie**, Sète (2018); **Musée d'Art Contemporain (MAC)**, Marseille (2018); **Museum of Deinze and the Leie Region**, Deinze (2016).

SELECTED EXHIBITIONS





2026
Abby Kortrijk, Kortrijk
The Living



The Living, Abby Kortrijk, Kortrijk, 2026



The Living, Abby Kortrijk, Kortrijk, 2026



2025
Mendes Wood DM, Paris
The Hunger

"Water shakes the rain from rooftops
That of ivy castles
It was green – water churned.

There were draperies
Ancient stem garrison
Hidden hearts of Mélusines
Beneath muffled blooms.
Never had the evening star
Revealed such enchantment
There was no longer night nor day.

A long beat a long wing
Terrifying."

Valentine Penrose's "Gilles de Rais", *Les Magies*, 1972.

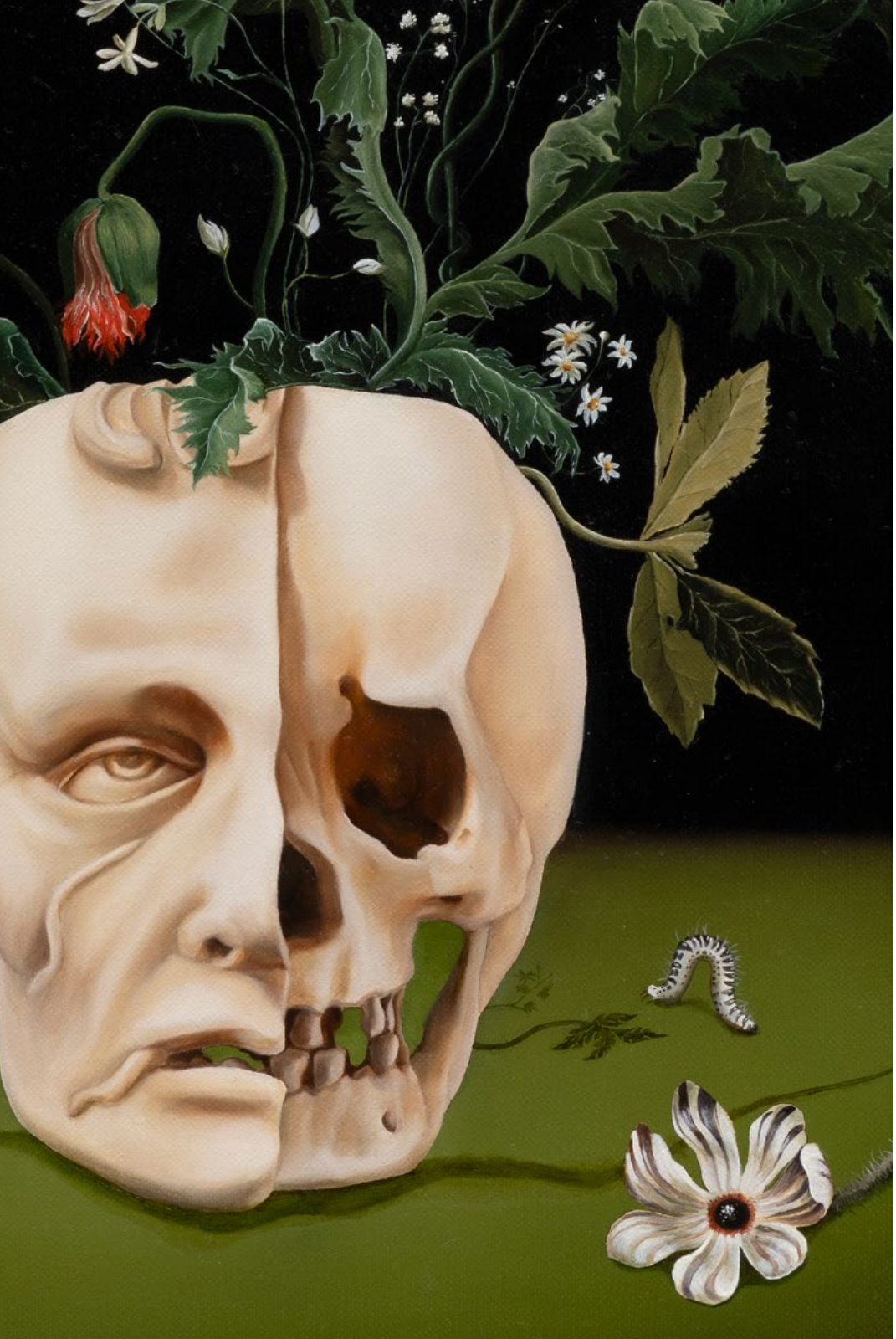
In the early 1960s, the French surrealist novelist, poet and artist Valentine Penrose, fascinated by serial killings and the bloodthirsty characters of history, began exploring the biographies of French Baron Gilles de Rais and the Hungarian countess Erzsébet Báthory. As she probed the dark and possessed soul of the latter, she delved deep into her madness and her cruelty, revealing the fascinating horror of her destiny. In a similar vein to Penrose's compelling writing, Sanam Khatibi's practice – which encompasses paintings, embroideries, tapestries, sculptures, objects and installations – oscillates between a fascination for human violence and the macabre, and the flamboyant representation of an idyllic nature bathed in soft light and lush with vegetation. Her works explore themes of animality and primal instincts, making us tread that fine line between fear and attraction, chaos and seduction.



The Hunger, Mendes Wood DM, Paris, 2025



The Hunger, Mendes Wood DM, Paris, 2025



Sanam Khatibi's work conjures first and foremost an art of paradox, where domination and submission, control and release are fervently intertwined. Here power, violence and sensuality blend and blur into each other, weaving together tales of confrontation between human and animal, instinct and reason, cruelty and desire. At the core of her artistic practice is an exploration of power dynamics and of the tension between triumph and failure. Her attraction for what terrifies her manifests on the surface of her canvases in the form of the small snakes that punctuate many of her works – creatures that inspire both fascination and phobia in her. Khatibi's inclination for paradox is also embedded in her aesthetics, and she plays with a visual tempo that is both unsettling and hypnotic, where fluid compositions and stark contrasts create a fluctuating rhythm between tension and lightness. The animal and human figures she depicts are often caught in metamorphosis and reinforce that dynamic, lending an organic, almost visceral cadence to her works. Lastly, Sanam Khatibi's canvases are composed with a skilful interplay between the representation of a vast natural landscape, embracing us with its branches, and the presence of minuscule objects nestled within it – small porcelain figurines, ivory skulls, teeth, insects, etc.

The artist's works seems imbued with the primordial importance she places on objects and their representation. Having grown up with a mother who was an avid collector of antiquities, she inherited, upon the latter's passing, a vast collection of objects including Chinese and Japanese porcelains. These frequently come to life on her canvases, operating a sort of mise en abyme of the personal and familial memory tied to such objects. Here, jugs lie abandoned on the side of a path, spilling out their liquids – or perhaps their blood – against a diluvian backdrop.

– Martha Kirszenbaum



The Hunger, Mendes Wood DM, Paris, 2025



The Hunger, Mendes Wood DM, Paris, 2025



The Hunger, Mendes Wood DM, Paris, 2025



The Hunger, Mendes Wood DM, Paris, 2025



2025
Dallas Contemporary, Dallas
You Stretched Diagonally Across It: Contemporary Tapestry



2025
S.M.A.K., Ghent
Painting after Painting – A contemporary survey from Belgium



2024
Plains Art Museum, Fargo
Selections from the Thomas-Suwall Collection

2024
P·P·O·W, New York
We Wait Until Dark

Featuring a new series of monumental figurative works, large scale still lives, and intimate memento mori paintings, this exhibition epitomizes and expands upon the unique atemporal and allegorical vocabulary Khatibi has developed over the last decade.

People who devote their lives to art can often cite an event that placed them on their destined path. Among the earliest memories Belgian artist Sanam Khatibi recalls is the day she discovered a book on Hieronymus Bosch left out on the table by her mother. She was five. That one might advance from consuming the rapturous reproductions of *The Garden of Earthly Delights* at such a young age to painting expansive, primal scenes of a troubled Paradise is one excellent example of artistic "fate."

In Khatibi's paintings and sculptures, the veil between desire and restraint, life and death, and the natural and spirit worlds proves thin. Again and again, the artist returns to the figure of a nude goddess navigating a verdant, savage land beyond the protective scrim of "civilization." In the absence of technology, politics, bills, e-mail, and even clothing, she exhibits her most feral qualities for survival: devouring, eating, attacking, killing, and hunting. Khatibi's subjects are perennial (desire, seduction, domination, submission), and her references to allegorical forms are extensive (17th-century Dutch still life vanitas, the motif of Death and the Maiden, antiquarian amulets, and anthropological relics), all channeled into displays of human folly and erotic obsession.

Paintings by Khatibi are full of expressions of voracity: for sex, earthly delights, experience, and transcendence, and what happens when you tempt the devil. [...] Throughout the exhibition, Khatibi faithfully intertwines two genres of painting (figurative landscape and still life), leaving seemingly ancillary details from one scene to reveal as sharp memento mori in another [...]. Each of Khatibi's objects pulses into realism with near-scientific observation, appearing magnificent and fragile, possibly even forbidden. Placed against a velvety black ground, they fall into shadow as if pulled amorously into the afterlife.

– Lola Kramer





We Wait Until Dark, P·P·O·W, New York, 2024



We Wait Until Dark, P·P·O·W, New York, 2024



We Wait Until Dark, P·P·O·W, New York, 2024

2023
Mendes Wood DM, São Paulo
Linhas Tortas





2022
Mendes Wood DM, São Paulo
In my dreams, I kill him every night

Khatibi's work, which is primarily painting and drawing-based but also expands to include sculpture and installation, draws on a multi-cultural pantheon of art-historical references and imagery which the artist combines to great effect, provoking intriguing and unexpected narratives to emerge from her carefully constructed and magically symbolic compositions.

Three new large-scale works, in oil and pencil on canvas, dominate the exhibition, one of which lends its title to the show: *In my dreams, I kill him every night*. At once Naive, but with an alluring sense of Magical Realism and the Medieval violence of Hieronymus Bosch, the giant figures in these works appear as grand visions of both destructive and seductive female power. The nude, oversized women that dominate Khatibi's edenic but otherworldly landscapes are either engaged in acts of cannibalism or in playful acts of seduction, perhaps, although all is not quite as it seems in these compositions. Painted in miniature on the ground next to each of these figures, are what appear to be still-life compositions of objects that function as libations, offerings of some kind, that follow no specific religion or set of beliefs, rendered almost in a Flemish Golden Age painterly style. Pristine, detailed, lifelike, and yet strangely enigmatic in their relationships between one another, these objects include human bones, vases, and pottery from various historical periods, from ancient Greece to Imperial China, bowls of fruit and flowers, dead and living animals.



In my dreams, I kill him every night, Mendes Wood DM, São Paulo, 2022



In my dreams, I kill him every night, Mendes Wood DM, São Paulo, 2022



In my dreams, I kill him every night, Mendes Wood DM, São Paulo, 2022



2021
Groeninge Museum, Bruges
Lemon Drizzle



Lemon Drizzle, Groeninge Museum, Bruges, 2021



Lemon Drizzle, Groeninge Museum, Bruges, 2021



Lemon Drizzle, Groeninge Museum, Bruges, 2021

2019
BPS22 – Musée d'art de la Province de Hainaut Charleroi
De ta salive qui mord

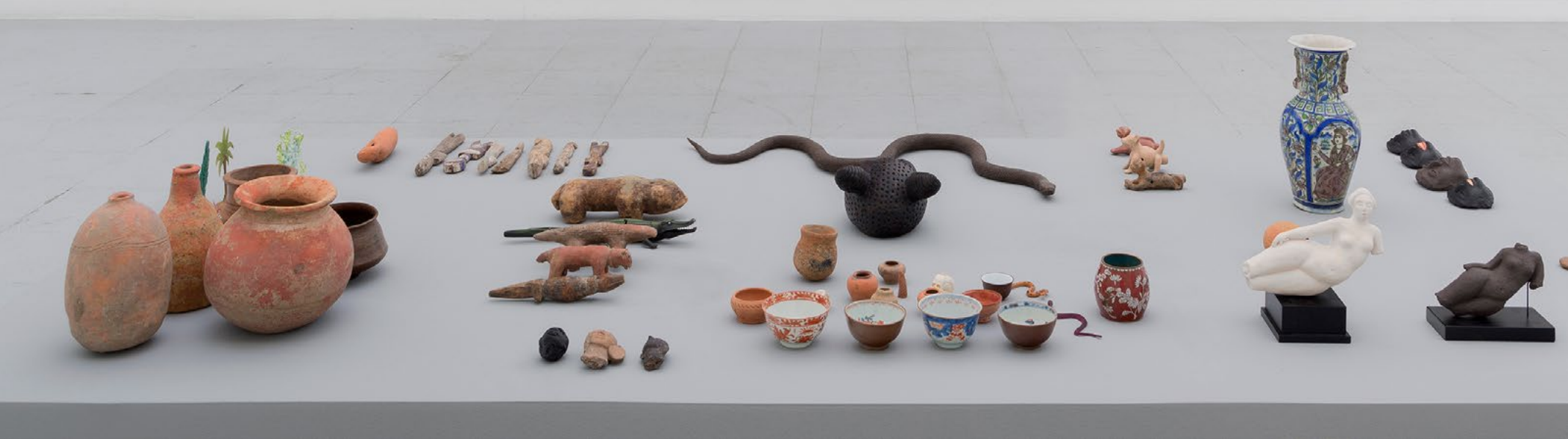




2019
16th Istanbul Biennial, Istanbul
The Seventh Continent

2017
rodolphe janssen, Brussels
Rivers in your mouth





SELECTED WORKS





Sanam Khatibi, *Sneaky Little Minx*, 2026, oil on panel, artist frame, 20 x 30 cm (unframed), 21 x 31 x 2 cm (framed) | 7 7/8 x 11 3/4 in, 8 1/4 x 12 1/4 x 3/4 in, MW.SKH.110





Sanam Khatibi
Repair, 2026
oil on panel
11 x 7 cm (unframed)
4 3/8 x 2 3/4 in
18 x 14 cm (framed)
7 1/8 x 5 1/2 in
MW.SKH.129



Sanam Khatibi
Reverence, 2026
oil on panel
9 x 6 cm (unframed)
3 1/2 x 2 3/8 in
16.5 x 10 cm (framed)
6 1/2 x 4 in
MW.SKH.130



Sanam Khatibi
Put Your Honey Where Your Mouth Is, 2025
oil and pencil on canvas
230 x 180 cm
90 1/2 x 70 7/8 in
MW.SKH.061





Sanam Khatibi
Nothing From You Today, 2025
oil on canvas
70 x 60 cm
27 1/2 x 23 5/8 in
MW.SKH.081





Sanam Khatibi, *Two Seater*, 2025, oil on stretched canvas, 17.6 x 24.1 cm | 6 7/8 x 9 1/2 in, MW.SKH.088





Sanam Khatibi, *Something I Dreamt Last Night*, 2025, oil on panel, 13.5 x 20.5 cm | 5 1/4 x 8 1/8 in, MW.SKH.106





Sanam Khatibi, *Garden Party*, 2025, hand-woven wool tapestry, 202 x 250 cm | 79 1/2 x 98 3/8 in, MW.SKH.077







Sanam Khatibi, *Out with it*, 2024, oil on panel, 15 x 20 cm | 5 7/8 x 7 7/8 in, MW.SKH.062





Sanam Khatibi, *The Open Window*, 2023, oil on panel, 14.5 x 23 cm (unframed), 24.5 x 29.5 cm (framed) | 5 3/4 x 9 in, 7 1/4 x 12 3/8 in, MW.SKH.033





Sanam Khatibi, *So Much to Tell You*, 2023, oil on canvas, antler bone, 15 x 20 cm (unframed), 24.5 x 29.5 cm (framed) | 5 7/8 x 7 7/8 in, 9 5/8 x 11 5/8 in, MW.SKH.043





Sanam Khatibi, *Quiet From Moon to Sunrise,* 2023, oil on canvas, antler bone, 13 x 18 cm (unframed), 22.5 x 27.5 cm (framed) | 5 1/8 x 7 1/8 in, 8 7/8 x 10 7/8 in, MW.SKH.042





Sanam Khatibi, *Ricin*, 2023, oil on panel, 23.9 x 31.4 cm | 9 3/8 x 12 3/8 in, MW.SKH.023





Sanam Khatibi, *Everything, exactly as it was before,* 2023, oil on panel, 16 x 21 cm | 6 1/4 x 8 1/4 in, MW.SKH.024





Sanam Khatibi
Waves Crashing, 2023
oil and pencil on canvas
120 x 90 cm
47 1/4 x 35 3/8 in
MW.SKH.025





Sanam Khatibi, *Almost a country house party*, 2023, oil, pastel, and pencil on panel, 68.5 x 91.3 cm | 27 x 36 in, MW.SKH.026





Sanam Khatibi, *Je serais douce,* 2023, volcanic stone and burnt wood, 550 x 200 cm | 216 1/2 x 78 3/4 in, MW.SKH.046





Sanam Khatibi, *Nothing has ever worked for me*, 2022, hand-woven wool, 221 x 247.5 cm | 87 1/8 x 97 1/2 in, MW.SKH.004





Sanam Khatibi
In my dreams, I kill him every night, 2022
pencil and oil on canvas
235 x 185 cm
92 1/2 x 72 7/8 in
MW.SKH.006





Sanam Khatibi, *Garden Scene (it is said they are each other)*, 2022, oil and pencil on canvas, 210 x 300 cm | 82 5/8 x 118 1/8 in, MW.SKH.007





Sanam Khatibi, *Nothing will please me more*, 2022, oil on panel, 16 x 21 cm | 6 1/4 x 8 1/4 in, MW.SKH.010





Sanam Khatibi, *Little Charlatans,* 2021, oil, pastel, and pencil on panel, 24 x 31.6 cm | 9 1/2 x 12 1/2 in, MW.SKH.047





Sanam Khatibi, *Sonnets to Orpheus,* 2021, oil, pastel, and pencil on panel, 24 x 31.6 cm | 9 1/2 x 12 1/2 in, MW.SKH.048





Sanam Khatibi, *Lemon Drizzle*, 2021, pencil and oil on canvas, 250 x 210 cm | 98 3/8 x 82 5/8 in, MW.SKH.050





Sanam Khatibi, *Please forgive me if I have been too blunt*, 2020, oil on panel, 16 x 21 cm | 6 1/4 x 8 1/4 in, MW.SKH.051





Sanam Khatibi, *Pharaoh's Dance,* 2020, oil on panel, 41 x 51 cm | 16 1/8 x 20 1/8 in, MW.SKH.052





Sanam Khatibi, *She can't pass a mirror without seducing it*, 2020, oil on panel, 21 x 31 cm | 8 1/4 x 12 1/4 in, MW.SKH.053





Sanam Khatibi, *Fantastic Beasts,* 2019, oil and pencil on canvas, 180 x 230 cm | 70 7/8 x 90 1/2 in, MW.SKH.054





Sanam Khatibi, *Sweet, murderous desire*, 2019, oil on panel, 21 x 31 cm | 8 1/4 x 12 1/4 in, MW.SKH.056





Sanam Khatibi, *Under the influence of poison*, 2018, oil and pencil on canvas, 180 x 230 cm | 70 7/8 x 90 1/2 in, MW.SKH.057





Sanam Khatibi, *Juicy Lucy*, 2016, oil and pencil on canvas, 160 x 200 cm | 63 x 78 3/4 in, MW.SKH.058





Sanam Khatibi, *With tenderness and longing,* 2016, oil and pencil on canvas, 160 x 200 cm | 63 x 78 3/4 in, MW.SKH.059





Sanam Khatibi, *A venison of loveliness*, 2016, oil and pencil on canvas, 160 x 200 cm | 63 x 78 3/4 in, MW.SKH.060



Solo Exhibitions

2026

The Living, Abby Kortrijk, Kortrijk, Belgium

2025

The Hunger, Mendes Wood DM, Paris, France

I Miscalculated the Stars, rodolphe janssen, Brussels, Belgium

2024

We Wait Until Dark, P·P·O·W, New York, USA

2022

In my dreams, I kill him every night, Mendes Wood DM, São Paulo, Brazil

2021

Lemon Drizzle, Groeninge Museum, Bruges, Belgium

2020

Cyanide, rodolphe janssen, Brussels, Belgium

Cruelest of the Seas, Kunsthal Gent, Ghent, Belgium

2019

An Hour Before the Devil Fell, P·P·O·W, New York, USA

De ta salive qui mord, BPS22 – Musée d'art de la Province de Hainaut, Charleroi, Belgium

The Murders of the Green River, rodolphe janssen, Brussels, Belgium

2018

Wild Mink, artlead Salon, Brussels, Belgium

2017

Rivers in your mouth, rodolphe janssen, Brussels, Belgium

With tenderness and longing, Billboard Series: Art in Public Space, *Artlead*, Ghent, Belgium

No church in the wild, The Cabin LA, Los Angeles, USA

2016

Le jardin décomposé, Super Dakota, Brussels, Belgium

The hollow in the ferns, NICC, Brussels, Belgium

2015

Ask me nicely, trampoline, Antwerp, Belgium

2014

Séduire ou crever de faim, Island, Brussels, Belgium

Group Exhibitions

2026

Magical Landscapes, Kunsthal KAdE, Amersfoort, The Netherlands

The Illegal Club, Tick Tack, Antwerp, Belgium

Baba Yaga, Eden Island, Brussels, Belgium

You Stretched Diagonally Across It: Contemporary Tapestry, The Fabric Workshop and Museum, Philadelphia, USA

chrysalis, BPS22 – Musée d'art de la Province de Hainau, Charleroi, Belgium

2025

You Stretched Diagonally Across It: Contemporary Tapestry, Dallas Contemporary, Dallas, USA

Painting after Painting – A contemporary survey from Belgium, S.M.A.K., Ghent, Belgium

Nous n'irons plus au bois..., Robert Grunenberg, Berlin, Germany

2024

Amadeo Luciano Lorenzato en conversation avec Lucas Arruda, Sanam Khatibi, Patricia Leite, Paula Siebra, Marcos Siqueira, Castiel Vitorino Brasileiro et Erika Verzutti, Mendes Wood DM, Paris, France

On Ma, Pedro Cera, Lisbon, Portugal

Les Liaisons Désireuses. Over lust, verleiding en verlangen, Kasteel d'Ursel, Bornem, Belgium

Selections from the Thomas-Suwall Collection, Plains Art Museum, Fargo, USA

Giants, rodolphe janssen, Brussels, Belgium

2023

Linhas Tortas, Mendes Wood DM, São Paulo, Brazil

BEACH, Nino Mier Gallery, Brussels, Belgium

The Cabin LA presents: A curated flashback, Green Family Art Foundation, Dallas, USA

Come a little closer, DC Moore, New York, USA

Je serais douce, Le Voyage à Nantes, Nantes, France

2022

Modern Love (or Love in the Age of Cold Intimacies), National Museum of Contemporary Art, Athens, Greece

Finis Terrae, Snijders&Rockoxhuis, Antwerp, Belgium

Abrasive Paradise, Kunsthal KAdE, Amersfoort, the Netherlands

The Natural World: Part II, Alexander Berggruen, New York, USA

2021

Modern Love (or Love in the Age of Cold Intimacies), Centraal Museum, Utrecht, the Netherlands

One Way or Another 10 years Posture Editions, S.M.A.K., Ghent, Belgium

Paradise, Kortrijk Triennial, Kortrijk, Belgium

Beyond the Looking Glass, UTA Artist Space, Los Angeles, USA

Mirrored Infinities, The Agprognostic Temple, Brussels, Belgium

Chants of a Gargoyle, Waldburger Wouters, Brussels, Belgium

2020

The Shameful Kiss, Kunstverein Dresden, Dresden, Germany

Tears of Eros, Centraal Museum, Utrecht, the Netherlands

Zonder kunstenaars geen kunst, Museum of Contemporary Art Antwerp (M HKA), Antwerp, Belgium

2019

The Seventh Continent, 16th Istanbul Biennial, Istanbul, Turkey

Some Trees, Nino Mier Gallery, Los Angeles, USA

Salon de Peinture, Museum of Contemporary Art Antwerp (M HKA), Antwerp, Belgium

2018

Nightfall, Mendes Wood DM, Brussels, Belgium

Terres de Femmes, Praz-Delavallade, Paris, France

Mademoiselle, Centre Régional d'Art Contemporaine Occitanie, Sète, France

Op de grond, tussenin of aan de hemel, Ten Bogaerde, Coxyde, Belgium

100 Sculptures, Anonymous Gallery, Mexico City, Mexico

SEED, Paul Kasmin Gallery, New York, USA

Dead Eden, Lyles & King, New York, USA

What are you staring at?, Eduardo Secci, Florence, Italy

Quel amour!?, Musée d'Art Contemporain (MAC), Marseille, France

NICC 20 Years Jubilee, NICC, Antwerp, Belgium
Weeping, Dreaming, Fucking, Laughing, Wschód Gallery, Warsaw, Poland

2017

Hecate, Various Small Fires, Los Angeles, USA
Dalonaz, Royal, Brussels, Belgium
Listening to The Form, Panthera, Brussels, Belgium

2016

Summer in the City, Christine König Gallery, Vienna, Austria
Biennial of Painting, Museum of Deinze and the Leie Region, Deinze, Belgium
Balls & Glory, rodolphe janssen, Brussels, Belgium

2015

Louise 186, Brussels Art Days, Brussels, Belgium
Me, myself and I, trampoline, Antwerp, Belgium
Palourdes cuites, Christopher Crescent, Brussels, Belgium
Every day I'm..., Harlan Levey, Brussels, Belgium

2014

The Penthouse Art Event, Harlan Levey Projects, Bloom Hotel, Brussels, Belgium

2013

Thalie Art Project, Brussels, Belgium

2012

The Antagonist, Waterside Contemporary, London, UK

Collections

Al Thani Collection
Art Gallery of Ontario
Arsernal Contemporary Art
Belfius Art Collection
Beth Rudin DeWoody Collection
BPS22 – Musée d'art de la Province de Hainaut
Centraal Museum Utrecht
City of Nantes
Dib Bangkok
Fondation Thalie
Leeum Museum of Art
Musée d'Ixelles
Norton Museum
Province du Hainaut
Rennie Collection
S.M.A.K.
Samdani Art Foundation
Yan Du Collection



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