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Press release — June 2022

THE SUN IS MY ONLY ALLY CHARBEL-JOSEPH H. BOUTROS

exhibition from 24 september au 23 december 2022

opening: Friday 23 September 2022, 6:30 pm

After rising in the East (at Home Works 8/ Beirut Art Center in 2019, with a different title), then finding its zenith in the North (at S.M.A.K in Ghent in 2020), Charbel-joseph H. Boutros's exhibition *The Sun Is My Only Ally* is completing its trajectory in the West, at La Criée Centre for Contemporary Art. Like the sun. For Rennes, Boutros is bringing together a group of poetically abstract works forming an environment – a geographic entity – in which private stories are interwoven with those of art, place and the course of history, time present with traces of the past and the components of reality with the alchemy of dreams.

Rennes' variation on *The Sun Is My Only Ally* unfolds around a central space that embraces and extends the previous exhibitions, and satellite spaces that echo our changing loves and our recurring nightly dreams. In this setting the artist's works give tangible expression to mostly fleeting or elusive physical, mental and emotional perceptions.

«A work of art is not just a picture hung on a wall or a sculpture installed in an exhibition. An artwork has to take into account the entirety of its surrounding context. For me, an exhibition is a magical place, a new geography that reformulates reality. It also reformulates and re-channels the art world itself: everything becomes raw material, from the curator of the exhibition to the first visitor who comes in, to the sun that illuminates it, to the museum itself and the art market.»*

The earlier versions of the exhibition, in Beirut and Ghent, fell victim to the political and health crises that are shaping our present: the former was open only on the evening of the vernissage, the latter had to close after a month, before being extended. As for La Criée, the exhibition was postponed for a year. So the event comes echoing with whiffs of history and of the long reveries that made waiting bearable.

Charbel-joseph H. Boutros: What do you see as an ideal exhibition?

Sophie Kaplan: I would say, an exhibition simultaneously containing profound ideas and the experiencing of beauty.

CJHB: There's a sentence coming back to me – I've forgotten the author's name – that runs, «When the mystery is too overwhelming, you don't dare disobey.» «I believe that a work of art should

create this mystery and the same goes for an exhibition... That's how I see an «ideal» exhibition: it's an exhibition that offers the visitor a new reality, an alternative to reality... I like to think of an exhibition as a new geography obeying its own laws. This new geography/exhibition should be an intense poetic immersion for the visitor. This encounter should be capable of changing the course of things in someone's life.

SK: I share with you this idea – this conviction, this utopianism – of an exhibition that can change the life of the person who passes through it as much as he or she is permeated by it. An exhibition that would change their life in the sense that it would change their way of looking and feeling. In the sense that it would broaden beauty's ambit.*

With *The Sun Is My Only Ally*, Charbel-joseph H. Boutros proposes a subtle geography which makes tangible the different strata that enrich our dreams, together with our lives as they walk, collide, halt and go their way.

* Catalogue: *The Sun Is My Only Ally*, 2022

The exhibition is accompanied by the artist's first monograph, jointly prepared by S.M.A.K Ghent and La Criée centre for contemporary art, and published by Mousse Publishing. It includes texts by Ismaïl Bahri, Jean Marie Gallais, Charbel-joseph H. Boutros, Sophie Kaplan, Mouna Mekouar, Stéphanie Saadé, Sultan Souod Al Qassem and Philippe Van Cauteren.

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Charbel-joseph H. Boutros was born in Lebanon in 1981. He divides his time between Beirut and Paris.

His work has been shown at venues including the Palais de Tokyo in Paris, the Istanbul Biennial, the Centre Pompidou-Metz, S.M.A.K (Ghent), Punta della Dogana (Venice), Home Works 8 (Beirut), Ashkal Alwan (Beirut), Beirut Art Center, CCS Bard College (New York State), Bahia Biennial, Yinchuan Biennial (China), Nantes Art Museum, LaM (Villeneuve d'Ascq, France), Salvador Museum of Modern Art and Barjeel Art Foundation (Sharjah).

He is represented by Grey Noise in Dubai, Galeria Jaqueline Martins in São Paulo and Brussels, and Galeria Vera Cortês in Lisbon.

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curator: Sophie Kaplan

production: La Criée centre for contemporary art

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