



LaTinaia | AL BOSCO

# ETEL ADNAN

Notte al Palazzo

Project initiated by Caroline & Eric Freymond  
with the participation of Laurence Dreyfus



## NOTTE AL PALAZZO

The exhibition \*Notte Al Palazzo\* shines a light on the work of Etel Adnan, the American-Lebanese artist and poet whose practice transcends the boundaries between visual and literary arts. Born in Beirut in 1925 to a Greek Christian mother and a Turkish Muslim father, Adnan grew up in a multilingual environment, speaking Greek, Turkish, and Arabic before learning French at the Sorbonne and later English at Berkeley and Harvard. A cosmopolitan at heart, she lived between Paris, Beirut, and California, notably in Sausalito, with the view of Mount Tamalpais, a major source of inspiration for her work. A staunch advocate for peace, feminism, and ecology, Adnan left an indelible mark far beyond artistic circles, achieving international recognition at Documenta in Kassel in 2012 at the age of 87.

The exhibition emphasizes the profound relationship between her literary and visual creations, which Adnan herself described not as separate entities, but as “*equivalences*.” In \*Writing is Drawing\*, she explains: “*These are not illustrations [...] they are rather equivalences, both a response and a counterpoint to the text, not only on a structural level but as a way to elicit an intellectual and emotional response to poetry.*” Her paintings and poems dialogue with each other, creating a new artistic entity where words and images blend to express deep and universal emotions.



The exhibition opens with one of her early major works, *\*La Mer à Beyrouth\** (1974), which marks the beginning of her poetic and artistic journey. In *\*I Am a Volcano\**, Etel Adnan confides: *"I started writing poetry because, as a teenager, nothing else interested me. It was in Beirut, and for a time, the sea saturated everything. [...] The sea and the sun were the first woman and the first man, the first beings, the first presences to me, and that was my first poem."* She goes on to explain that this intimate connection with the sea awakened her desire to write: *"The sea compelled me to express myself. As soon as something appeared omnipresent and essential to me, I wrote about it, and these writings became poems."* This powerful connection to the natural elements is mirrored in her visual work, where landscapes and vivid colors convey the intensity of her emotions in the face of nature.

Tuscan landscapes, dear to the artist, appear in many of her paintings. They unfold in simple shapes, bathed in vibrant colors, with particular attention to the nocturnal light and celestial bodies. Night becomes a contemplative space conducive to introspection, where light and darkness intertwine to reveal the depth of human emotions. Adnan herself remarked: *"Poetry is small and dense, and my canvases are like that. [...] I think I paint like I write poetry."* (\*In Conversation with Sabine Schaschl\*, 2015).

The exhibition also showcases the *\*Ieporellos\**, accordion-style books of Japanese origin that perfectly embody the fusion of painting and poetry in Etel Adnan's work. Their zigzag structure allows the reader to simultaneously journey through both a visual and literary narrative. This format recalls her alabaster screens depicting the Tuscan village of San Gimignano, reinforcing the idea of a journey through both internal and external landscapes.