

**PETRIT
HALILAJ**
**Very volcanic over
this green feather
(Papagall)**

Curator: Amy Zion

**Based on an original
presentation curated by
Anne Barlow, Director,
with Giles Jackson,
Assistant Curator, Tate St Ives**

8 June – 23 July 2022

**6 rue du Pont de Lodi
Paris 6**

The exhibition "Very volcanic over this green feather (Papagall)" is accessible from Tuesday to Saturday from 11 am to 7 pm at 6 rue du Pont de Lodi, Paris 6.

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Very volcanic over this green feather (Papagall) (2022) is the fourth solo exhibition by Petrit Halilaj at kamel mennour. The show is curated by Amy Zion, based on an original presentation curated by Anne Barlow, Director with Giles Jackson, Assistant Curator, Tate St Ives. (*Papagall*), an addition to the original title, is Albanian for "parrot". A large-scale installation based on the artist's drawings from childhood is located under the glass-ceiling of 6 rue du Pont de Lodi; an introduction with historical and personal background is presented at the entrance.

Halilaj was thirteen years old in April 1999 when he met an Italian psychiatrist named Giacomo Poli. At the time, the artist was living in Kukës II, an Albanian camp for people fleeing the war in Kosovo (1998-99). Drawing was a channel of non-verbal communication between Dr. Poli and the camp's children. The doctor recounts the therapeutic aim of expressing pain to relieve the children of the great emotional weight they were carrying as the war raged across the border. Drawing, in his words, was a way to "not suffer passively." The resulting imagery created by Halilaj includes graphic episodes of the war. Back in Italy, Dr. Poli exhibited the drawings by Halilaj and other children of Kukës II to publicize and raise awareness for the plight of Kosovar-Albanians. He also kept in contact with Halilaj and supported his artistic development.

Halilaj's set of 38 drawings made with Dr. Poli in Kukës II testifies to his early talent, for which he was featured on news programs as part of the war's international coverage. This origin story has formed part of his biography since he began exhibiting art as an adult over a decade ago. Yet, the drawings themselves were exhibited for the first time since the war in 2020 at Queens Museum, New York. Around the same time, Halilaj was beginning to conceive the project: *Very volcanic over this green feather* commissioned for a solo exhibition at Tate St Ives, for which Halilaj revisited his drawings from two decades' prior.

Halilaj outlines three approaches in his series from Kukës II: he drew scenes that he witnessed first-hand, scenes he observed through the media, and scenes he invented from his imagination. The first two approaches are hard to distinguish: markers in dark hues and deep reds were selected to depict upturned earth, smoke, wood, soldiers, and blood. Although done simultaneously, the drawings from imagination are rendered in bright colors and depict bucolic, peaceful and unharmed landscapes filled with beautiful, elaborate and exotic birds. In addition to the 38 drawings, after Dr. Poli left the camp, Halilaj was asked to make an artwork to present to UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan during his scheduled visit the following month. This drawing is larger than the others, and mixes scenes from the set made with Dr.

Poli. Carefully preserved all these years in Albania by the artist Ymer Metaliaj, the work is revealed to the public for the first time here since Halilaj's meeting with Annan.

Returning to this material as an adult and a trained, established artist also necessitated therapeutic guidance, which Dr. Poli, who remains close to the artist, provided. Through that process, Halilaj cut out figures, animals, houses, plants, and other objects that were drawn from scenes witnessed, from the media, and from his imagination. He combined the elements into a theatre-like, larger than life-size installation composed of suspended elements printed on soft felt, that has been painted by hand on reverse. As Poli states, "from a psychological point of view, this re-composition of fragments of memory ... allows you to integrate those parts of yourself that, because of excessive suffering, have been put aside but which are still present."

Very volcanic over this green feather (Papagall) is a challenging invitation to walk through a tangled forest of childhood recollections of war, a psychic landscape where dreams share space with nightmares.

Born in 1986 in Kostërc (Kosovo), PETRIT HALILAJ lives and works in-between Germany, Kosovo and Italy. His work is deeply connected with the recent history of his country, and the consequences of the political and cultural tensions in the region. But while confronting a collective memory, his work often originates from a personal experience and it is usually the result of an intimate process and a shared moment with someone he loves. His unique, and sometimes irreverent, way to playfully confront the essence of reality results in a deep reflection on memory, freedom, cultural identity and life discoveries.

Petrit Halilaj's work has been shown in solo exhibitions at the Museo Reina Sofía, Madrid; the New Museum, NYC; the Fondazione Merz, Turin; the Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern; the Hammer Museum, Los Angeles; the HangarBicocca, Milan; the Kölnischer Kunstverein, Cologne; the Bundeskunsthalle, Bonn; the National Gallery of Kosovo, Pristina; the Kunsthalle Lissabon, Lisbon; the Foundation Galeries Lafayette, Paris; WIELS, Brussels; as well as in group exhibitions at the 15th Lyon Biennale; the Louisiana Museum in Denmark; the Palais de Tokyo, Paris; the MAK Center for Art and Architecture, Los Angeles; the Palazzo Grassi - Pinault Collection, Venice; NEON, Mykonos, Greece; and the Westfälischer Kunstverein, Münster.

He represented Kosovo at the 55th Venice Biennale in 2013. He received the Mario Merz Prize, and the special mention of the jury at the 57th Venice Biennale in 2017.

Most recently Tate St Ives presented his solo exhibition, *Very volcanic over this green feather*. In 2022, a selection of works from the same project has been featured in the group show *Adjustable monuments* at Sammlung Philara, Düsseldorf.

His works are currently on display at the Fries Museum in Leeuwarden, The Netherlands and he will take part in Manifesta 14 in Pristina, Kosovo, to be opened on the 22nd of July 2022.