

DRAWING LAB

Elika Hedayat

Haroum

Curator : Valentina Ulisse

17.10.25 — 04.01.26



Elika Hedayat, *Haroum #11*,
2025, 66 x 74 cm, pencils and
watercolors on paper
© Courtesy of the artist and
Galerie Aline Vidal.

Drawing Lab

17, rue de Richelieu — 75001 Paris

The exhibition

« [...] practices of living and dying in rich worldings that I think of as string figure games »

Donna Haraway, *Staying with the trouble*



Elika Hedayat, *Haroum #9*, 2025, crayons et aquarelles sur papier, 70 x 90 cm
© Courtesy de l'artiste et de la Galerie Aline Vidal.

In several works of Persian literature written between the 10th and 12th centuries, Haroum is described as a city governed by learned women, who live in equality and harmony with their environment. Free and independent, they seem to echo the Amazons—warrior women from Greco-Roman mythology—who have become symbols of women's emancipation and gender equality.

In these ancient Persian epics, animals and imaginary creatures hold a remarkable place. Constantly allied with humans, they help blur the boundaries between genders and between species. Simorgh, for instance—a long-lived bird with boundless knowledge—is a central and metamorphic character, a being that is neither female nor male.

To give form to her own vision of Haroum, artist Elika Hedayat chose to weave references together like a “cat’s cradle” of loops and threads, in the spirit of Donna Haraway’s “speculative fabulation.”

She drew as much inspiration from the mythical literature of Iran, her native country, as from contemporary feminist and ecological science fiction, while grounding her work in transdisciplinary scientific theories centered on the idea of symbiosis—one that extends from living beings to the technological.



Sadiq Bek, *Zal Saved by the Simorgh Bird*, after the *Shahnameh* of Shah Abbas I, 16th century © Chester Beatty Library, Dublin

With fantastical undertones, her narrative nevertheless remains anchored in the present, echoing the struggles of Iranian women today. The artist alludes to them constantly through the use of black hair (as living matter), and plugs and cables (as technological elements).

Threading their way through space, these filaments—linking and connecting organisms and territories—break free from constraint and control. They are cyborgs, guiding presences within the narrative. Their presence is discreet yet rhizomatic: they lie at the heart of Haroum’s feminist and symbiotic cultural evolution, which Elika Hedayat envisions as a city of the future.

The exhibition conceived for the Drawing Lab invites visitors to explore this world still under construction. In the artist’s works, Haroum appears as a laboratory-city, in an embryonic state or at the model stage. Inspired by the writings of Vinciane Despret and by animal engineering observed through the lens of “theroarchitecture,” these structures reveal a new art of building—one that is no longer exclusively human, but interspecies.

Its inhabitant•x—mysterious, tentacled creatures—emerge both in wall drawings and in immersive, even “abyssal” installations. Here, the artist brings together animated video with the tradition of *Pardeh Khani* (curtain storytelling)—an ancient Iranian form of narration, in which a storyteller reads and recounts epic tales illustrated on canvas.

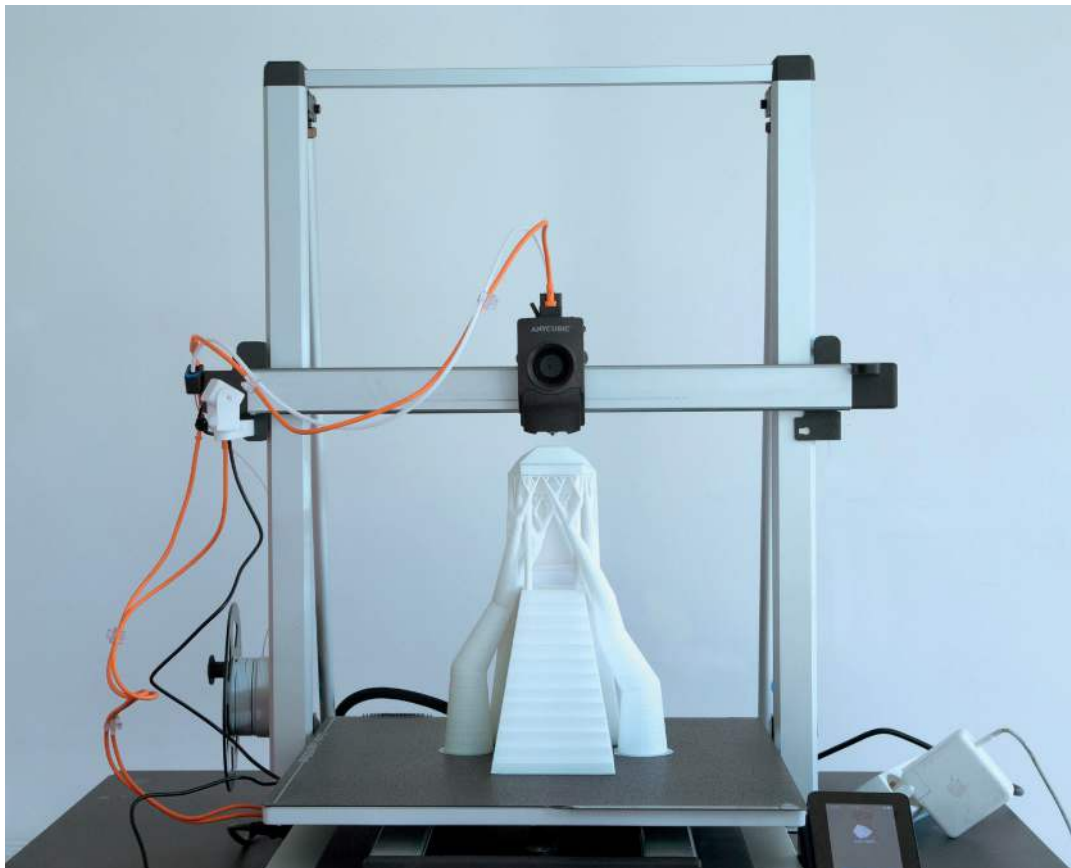
The archive format is also activated and made dynamic: the artist offers her own interpretation of history, fiction, and science. These are branching thoughts, where forms of expression overflow conventional literary categories, forming a collection of chronicles, materials, characters, and voices that underpin this contemporary vision of Haroum.

Through a variety of techniques and artistic experiments, Erika Hedayat explores drawing in multiple forms and reveals the different ways it can be “set in motion.”

Through a lineage of metamorphoses, a sketch line becomes the outline of a digital model, and eventually the moving filament of a 3D print.

Through a process of hybridization, every form—subjects and landscapes alike—is caught in a continual back-and-forth of mutual transformation.

Through a play on translation, writing turns into image, and then into oral storytelling.



Erika Hedayat, *3D print of a section of the model of the city of Haroum*, 2025, 3D filament print, variable dimensions © Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Aline Vidal.

The duo artist - curator

Elika Hedayat

Born in Tehran (Iran) in 1979, she lives and works in Paris.

After studying visual communication at the Public University of Art in Tehran, she moved to France in 2004. She was then admitted to the École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts in Paris, in Annette Messager's studio, graduating with the Jury's Congratulations in 2008. She later joined Le Fresnoy, the National Studio of Contemporary Arts in Tourcoing.

Her work has been shown in numerous solo and group exhibitions in France, Iran, the United States, and South Korea, among others. Her most recent solo exhibition, *Les dépossédés*, took place in 2023 at the Malakoff Art Center, curated by Françoise Docquier.

Her works are part of several private and public collections, including FRAC Picardie, the Contemporary Art Fund – Paris Collections, CNAP, and MAC VAL.



Portrait of Elika Hedayat © Ashkan Noroozkhani

Elika Hedayat is represented in France by Galerie Aline Vidal (Paris).

In Elika Hedayat's work, reality, memory, and imagination intertwine. All mediums—drawings, paintings, videos, films, installations, performances—are employed to depict a world in upheaval, where everyday life shifts into dream. Her entire body of work revisits historical references, which she reinterprets within the realms of personal experience or fiction. Her narratives are populated by real and political references, fantastic landscapes, and dreamlike characters—part human, part animal, part plant—constantly undergoing metamorphosis.

Valentina Ulisse



Portrait of Valentina Ulisse © Senda Studio

Born in Rome (Italy) in 1993, she lives and works in Paris.

Valentina Ulisse is active in exhibition curating, research, writing, and mediation. She trained in art history and exhibition curating at La Sapienza University (Rome) and the Sorbonne (Paris). She served as associate curator for the 2023–2024 off-site season at CAC Brétigny and assists gallerist Aline Vidal, with whom she organized **De(s)rives**, a curatorial project experimenting with exhibition formats outside traditional art contexts. Recently, she curated **La Mort, Le Mat, Le Monde**, an exhibition inspired by the Tarot of Marseille, which opened the 2025 season at 6b (Saint-Denis).

She is a member of the C-E-A, the French Association of Exhibition Curators.

In her work as an exhibition curator, Valentina Ulisse draws inspiration from narratives that reject the conventions imposed by our capitalist, Western-centric, patriarchal, and heteronormative society. She explores the creation of new contemporary fictions influenced by SFFF (science fiction, fantasy, and the fantastic), folklore, fables, and legends.

The partners of the exhibition

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Around the exhibition

- **Guided tours** on Wednesdays and Saturdays at 3:30 PM by reservation;
- **Family and school visits** by reservation;
- **Mediation** available Tuesday to Saturday from 11 AM to 7 PM. The mediator's role is to explain the artists' techniques, the exhibition's theme, and to answer all visitors' questions;
- **Haroum exhibition catalog**, published by Drawing Edition La Manufacture de l'image. Available at the Drawing Lab shop one month after the exhibition opens;
- **Drawing Academy art workshops** for children (from age 6) every Wednesday and Saturday from 3 PM to 4:30 PM by reservation. These workshops include a guided visit with our mediator followed by a creative workshop related to the artist's technique.

Reserve your workshop now by emailing info@drawinglabparis.com from the following options:



Erika Hedayat, *Haroum #1*, 2024, 26 x 36 cm, pencils and watercolors on paper © Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Aline Vidal.

— Threaded Creature

Children invent an imaginary creature inspired by mythical and fantastical animals. After drawing it, they extend the figure by gluing threads directly onto the paper—feathers, tentacles, horns, or energy flows take shape in relief. This gesture transforms the drawing into a living, hybrid, and ever-evolving being. A game of metamorphosis inspired by the work of Erika Hedayat.



Erika Hedayat, *Haroum #4*, 2024, 36 x 48 cm, pencils and watercolors on paper © Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Aline Vidal.

— Dream City, Living City

Children imagine a utopian city inspired by Haroum, an imaginary place governed by wise women and symbiotic creatures. Each participant designs a building or an inhabitant of this futuristic city, then connects their creation with those of others. Threads, ribbons, and drawings link the elements together to form a large collective map. A playful way to reflect on ecology, imagination, and community living. The workshop concludes with a storytelling and sharing moment.

The Drawing Lab Project grant



View of the exhibition Ito Meikyū / Thread of Wandering by artist Boris Labbé (curated by Judith Guez) October 11, 2024 — January 5, 2025 © Nicolas Brasseur

Drawing Lab Project is a production grant dedicated to a contemporary drawing exhibition, offered by the Drawing Lab—the exhibition space of the Drawing Society.

The call for projects, aimed at artist/curator duos aged 25 and over, of French nationality or residing in France, was open from June 19 to October 10, 2024.

In 2022, the grant was redesigned to select a single exhibition project

per year, fully focused on contemporary drawing practices and their exploration. This ensures a full year of production between selection and realization, allowing the duo to preserve the originality and experimental nature of their concept.

The Drawing Lab, operated by the association Drawing Projects & Friends, commits to producing the exhibition, which will be presented in its space for three months starting October 17, 2025. The exhibition will be accompanied by a public program of events and workshops, as well as a monographic catalog and a limited-edition Drawing Edition artwork—signed and numbered.

The selected duo receives a grant of €20,000 (excl. tax), covering the production of artworks, fees for both artist and curator, transportation, travel expenses, and restoration of the exhibition spaces.

The project was selected by an artistic committee composed of:

- **Fabienne Bideaud**, independent curator
- **Alexandra Fau**, scientific coordinator of the NID – Chair of New Imaginaries of Drawing at the École des Arts Décoratifs
- **Christine Phal**, president of Drawing Now Paris and founder of the Drawing Lab
- **Philippe Piguet**, art critic and independent curator
- **Sophie Toulouse**, co-founder of The Drawer publishing house, artistic director of the Hyper Bien gallery and Bagarres magazine

The Drawing Lab



View of the exhibition FREE JAZZ, Henri Matisse and... curated by Claudine Grammont from June 13 to September 30, 2025 © Nicolas Brasseur

Founded by Christine Phal in 2017 on a philanthropic model, the Drawing Lab is a private space for experimentation and exhibitions entirely dedicated to promoting contemporary drawing.

By presenting three exhibitions per year, the Drawing Lab aims to be a space for showcasing drawing in all its forms—offering artists the opportunity to take drawing beyond the sheet and explore its many facets. In addition to producing the exhibitions, the Drawing Lab handles communication, public outreach, cultural mediation, the publication of a catalog, and the organization of satellite events throughout each show.

Located on level -1 of the Drawing Hotel, the Drawing Lab is free and open to all. Its mission is to make contemporary drawing accessible to every audience.

Discover the full program, workshops, and upcoming events at drawinglabparis.com.

DRAWING LAB

Practical informations

Drawing Lab

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[@drawinglabparis](#)

Metro Palais Royal – Musée du Louvre (Lines 1 et 7)

Metro Pyramides (Lines 14)

Bus Palais Royal – Comédie Française

(Lignes 20, 21, 32, 39, 68 et 72)

L'équipe

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Opening Hours

Daily from 11 AM to 7 PM

Mediator present from Tuesday to Saturday,
11 AM to 7 PM (except on public holidays)

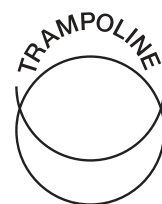
Mornings reserved for school and group visits

Admission and Visits

Exhibition: Free entry

Events, guided tours, and workshops: prices
and booking available at drawinglabparis.com

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The Drawing Lab, the experimental and exhibition space for contemporary drawing run by the Drawing Society, is managed by the association Drawing Lab Projects & Friends (1, rue Cels — 75014 Paris) and is a member of the Trampoline Association for the French Art Scene.