

An abstract painting featuring a dense composition of green and yellow brushstrokes, suggesting foliage and plants. Small red berries are scattered throughout the greenery. The overall style is expressive and textured.

EN

Marie
Zolamian

Confabulations

21.02 ———
17.05.2026

Marie Zolamian's gesture is anchored in the *present*. It is about what appears in the moment, how the hand journeys from one canvas to another and spreads colour across space, how a shape morphs into another and how layers of paint pile up like so many traces of a fleeting now.

***Confabulations* invites us to move across layered geographies and temporalities, activating relations between images, languages and experiences.**

'Painting interests me in its archaeological dimension, where not only the final image counts, but also the battles that take place in a reduced space, where pictorial solutions must be found at any cost. I like to look at icons; ex-votos and the images illustrating the first books made after the 10th century; illuminated manuscripts and the art of Persian, Armenian and Indian miniatures; and Western prayer books from the 12th to the 15th century. With their rigorous details, complex stylisations and rectified perspectives, geometry, perspective and colour become languages.'

— Marie Zolamian



Glottophobe, 2025.

Courtesy of the artist. Photograph by Roberto Ruiz.

The exhibition opens with a **constellation of recent paintings** that each condense fragments of worlds within their modest formats and rich compositions. Zolamian works with the marouflage technique, using hide glue to prepare her canvases. She then applies a glue-bound ground from which creatures, landscapes and motifs gradually emerge. In her studio, she paints in motion, drifting from one canvas to another, catching the rhythm of the moment. The small formats of the paintings make them portable, like 'emigrant icons that move through places and gazes'. Throughout their journey, they carry along words, images and techniques hailing from all around this and other worlds. Their titles form a chimeric glossary of characters, places and idioms that poetically expand, displace and reorient meaning. Playing with the extremities of scale – from very small to monumental – Zolamian situates her work at the interstice where reality and imagination collapse into a single pictorial organ.

The vitrines dispersed throughout the space look strangely domestic and mobile. The wooden cases display assemblages, paintings, notebooks and drawings gathered during what Zolamian calls ‘chosen exiles’. Like how suit-cases carry the memory of places, the vitrines contain traces of the artist’s displacements, of her movements across unfamiliar geographies and ‘micro-localities’ that she learns to inhabit through new routines, landmarks, imagination and encounters.



Route, 2018.

Courtesy of the artist and Province de Liège Service Culture.

Cutting across the room like a horizon, the series of drawings *Le jardin sans soleil [The Sunless Garden]* (2023–25) marks the line where the sky touches the ground. The title pays homage to poet Louis Boumal (1890–1918), who wrote an eponymous poetry book about exile and separation on the battlefields of World War I. Like Boumal does in his verses, Zolamian navigates the experience of displacement and exile, and reimagines it into a site for welcoming and being welcomed.

The title sets the scene in a garden – a place of delight and play. In medieval cosmologies, the garden was also imagined as a bridge between the material world and otherworldly realms. The drawings in this series emerge from Zolamian’s archival research at the OPZ psychiatric hospital in Geel. She focused on psychiatrists’ observations of newly arrived women patients between 1913 and 1918, which reveal the effects of war, or what we would now call post-traumatic stress disorder. Imagination emerges as a counterforce to violence, as a way of reconfiguring the real and inventing other possibilities at the heart of disaster. Zolamian outlines scenes of distress, people playing, a mermaid, a unicorn, giraffes, space vessels and other images that situate this garden as ‘an inner space where memory, diffuse light and imaginaries meet’.



Le jardin sans soleil, 2023-25.
Courtesy of the artist.



À servir, 2013.
Courtesy of the artist. Private collection.

Blankets, carpets, drapes and vessels immerse the room in a sense of softness and homeliness. The series *Dormition* (2011–12) invites us into the intimacy of the bedroom, where women wearing white ceremonial dresses lie in bed, as if suspended between slumber and lifelessness. They are captured in a moment of transit, as they face the threshold where one state dissolves into another.

Meanwhile, a procession ritual is taking place nearby, in a group of gouache paintings titled *À servir* (2013). In watery brush-strokes, the figures of women holding wine vessels evoke the layered symbolism of wine as a spiritual offering and a poetic trope, while the medium echoes the contemplation of water portrayed in the video *Between Fantasy and Denial* (2012). Conceived as a painting in motion, the video observes the reflection of the sunset through a glass of brush water that the artist was using during a residency in the village of Birzeit in Palestine. The soundscape anchors the video in the rumble of everyday life, while the image draws us into a mesmerising scene where water, a limited though essential resource, reveals itself as a treasure sprinkled with light and gold. The light slowly fades, and glittering warm tones turn into cold and still tonalities – as in the cycle of life.



Subsumer, 2024.

Courtesy of the artist. Photograph by Arno Roncada.

The dense salon hang in the following room is inspired by displays of ex-votos* commonly found on altars, in temples and in public spaces. The wall draws out a vast field of associations where older paintings meet new ones, large formats are placed in dialogue with pocket-size ceramics, and portraits and landscapes hang side by side. The composition of the wall brings together pieces of a puzzle, from which the artist pulls out threads that link disparate times, places and techniques in her own trajectory. The wall uncovers common themes, continuous movements and ruptures across Zolamian's body of work. From icon to iconography, the works stand out not only as depictions of singular, discrete worlds but also as participants in the larger horizon of the artist's cosmos. Giraffes, busts, trees and myriad creatures are gathered in a new kind of map that does not abide to the rules of linear time.

* Ex-votos are objects, often paintings, that are commonly offered in thanks to a deity or saint.

Zolamian's choral installation ***Babel Bab*** (2026), made specifically for this exhibition, is animated by 'a circulation of knowledge, a hybridisation of cultures in a world in upheaval'. Its twofold title engages the intricacies of language, translation and transformation. *Babel* refers to the biblical myth of the origin of languages and their diversity, and *Bab el Bab* designates in Arabic 'the door of doors', or the ultimate gateway. Summoning images of passage and translation, the work functions as a portal made of overlapping voices, languages and narratives.

The sound piece ***Babel*** compiles sonic archives collected by the artist across many places, since 2011, in a polyphonic – at times cacophonous – composition. Upon entering the room, we hear the buzzing of a crowd, and as we move through the space, individual voices gradually emerge from the chorus. Garba, the custodian of a hostel in Porto-Novo, Benin, speaks of the importance of landmarks and orientation. Elsewhere, voices describe the use of medicinal plants in a botanical garden in Dakar, Senegal. In another corner, Armenian elders speak of their daily life in Istanbul, Türkiye, while six young boys give a tour of the archaeological site of an 18th-century castle in Abwein, Palestine. The in situ mural painting ***Bab*** embodies fleeting presences attending to this choral field. They appear as guardians of the portal, inviting us to embrace dissonance as a generative space of togetherness.

The connective principle of *Babel Bab* spreads across the whole exhibition in the form of thin gold lines that delicately mark the folds of the architecture. This intervention in the exhibition's corners and doorways accentuates the space's thresholds and destabilises the divisions enacted by the architecture. The artist draws lines that connect the entire space into a single field, or organism, where images and languages circulate freely, beyond the constraints of fixed meanings, boundaries and enclosures. Recalling the gold leaf notably used in Byzantine devotional iconography, the lines map out the exhibition as a field of relations, circulation and transformation.



Maître Virgo, 2024.
Courtesy of the artist.

About the artist

Marie Zolamian (b. 1975, Beirut) is a Belgo-Lebanese multidisciplinary artist of Armenian descent, who grew up in Lebanon until the age of 15. She currently lives in Liège, where she teaches at Beaux-Arts de Liège.

She has exhibited, among other places, at Bombon projects gallery, Barcelona (2024); Jester/CIAP, Genk (2022); Galerie Nadja Vilenne, Liège (2019 and 2016); Mu.ZEE, Ostend (2018); and Künstlerhaus Bethanien, Berlin (2013), and in group exhibitions at S.M.A.K., Ghent (2025); BPS22, Charleroi (2023); and WIELS, Brussels (2021). One of her major public works is a 76-square-metre mosaic for the peristyle of KMSKA, Antwerp (2022), for which she was awarded the lanchelevici Prize in 2023 for her architectural integration; and in 2025, she was granted the Pomona Art Prize.

Publication

To coincide with the WIELS exhibition, a monographic book titled *Le jardin sans soleil*, focusing on Zolamian's drawings and recent paintings, will be published by Posture Editions. With texts by Vanessa Desclaux and Antony Hudek, as well as a conversation between Marie Zolamian and Sofia Dati.

Curator: Sofia Dati

The exhibition is made possible thanks to the generous support of the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation

Public Programme

28/02 15:00

Look Who's Talking: Sofia Dati ^(EN)

28/03 16:00

Lecture: Angela Harutyunyan ^(EN)

01/04 19:30

Film screening: *Ismyrna*

by Joana Hadjithomas & Khalil Joreige

12/04 15:00

Book launch: *Le jardin sans soleil*

with Marie Zolamian, Antony Hudek,

Vanessa Desclaux & Posture Editions

^(EN)

16/04 19:00

Conversation: Marie Zolamian & Sofia

Dati ^(FR)

25/04 15:00

Look Who's Talking: Ilse Roosens ^(NL)

29/04 18:30

Look Who's Talking: Zoë Gray in con-

versation with Marie Zolamian ^(FR)

16/05 15:00

Lecture: Varduhi Kirakosyan ^(EN)

04/03, 01/04, 06/05

18:00–21:00

Free nocturnes with guided tours,
lectures, screenings and workshops.

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