

# Reading Rämistrasse #139: Georgia Hall & Ana Victoria Bruno on Fatima Moallim at Last Tango



The Zürich-based off-space Last Tango's solo exhibition of seven drawings by self-taught artist Fatima Moallim (1992), curated by Fabian Flückiger, is an unexpected sonic journey, including works oscillating between powerful emotions and quiet reflective moments. Moallim's practice, based on personal experiences, draws from the entirety of her persona. Each artwork captures an emotional state. The stronger the emotion, the more the lines thicken, taking up space on the paper's surface. The calmer, the more lines dissipate and allow for narratives to emerge. These silent drawings, on which few lines travel across paper, whisper stories.



Fatima Moallim, *BESVÄRLIGA LJUD* (Detail), 2023  
Foto: Kilian Bannwart

Moallim works quickly to capture the intensity of a moment. Her lines are rough, and the colouring, where present, imprecise. In *BESVÄRLIGA LJUD*, (all works 2023) the hectic process results in an overlap of black oil sticks and pencil lines, forming a dark vertigo. The texture of the drawing is akin to the dense noise of contemporary urban life. It violently resonates in the body. Moallim's hand finds patterns and breaks them, again and again, translating a dystopic symphony onto paper.

AAA recreates similar experiences. Cutting through the drawing like a sharp scream, the letter A is repetitively written over a confused mash of green and black lines, arising from the guts, traversing the throat and shaped by the mouth, only to be eventually muttered, reabsorbed in the chaos, as the last few "A"s are cancelled out by energetic lines.



Fatima Moallim, *SVART TIGER*, 2023  
Foto: Kilian Bannwart

At the back of the space, *SVART TIGER* (black tiger) hangs against white walls with black-painted beams. A paper line drawing with four oblong shapes piled on top of each other. Stacked limbs, a finger, a forearm. Pipes, almost joining but not quite. Shown in Switzerland, historically home to many influential surrealist artists, one could also see hearing trumpets, archetypes of those one might need in older age, once hearing has gone and there is no option other than a large trumpet 'grandly curved like a buffalo's horn'.(1) In Leonora Carrington's 1974 novel, *The Hearing Trumpet*, protagonist Marian Leatherby, 'hard of hearing' but 'full of life', builds a utopia of werewolves, cats and mushrooms, where sound enables a world of surrealism with Carrington's subconscious at the forefront.(3) In contrast to the 30+ billion-dollar noise-cancelling industry, 'the hearing trumpet [magnifies] sound to such a degree that ordinary conversation [becomes] quite audible'.(2) Whilst Marian's hearing enables inclusion in an inaccessible world, at the same time, as the drawings of Moallim signify, it also creates psychological wounds, such as the realisation that she, as a nonagenarian, is unwanted. Moallim's work, embedded with migratory themes, can be found simmering under the surface, silent but visceral. Arguably, both Marian and Moallim are inside two worlds; one with the choice to enter the chaos and the other remaining silent.

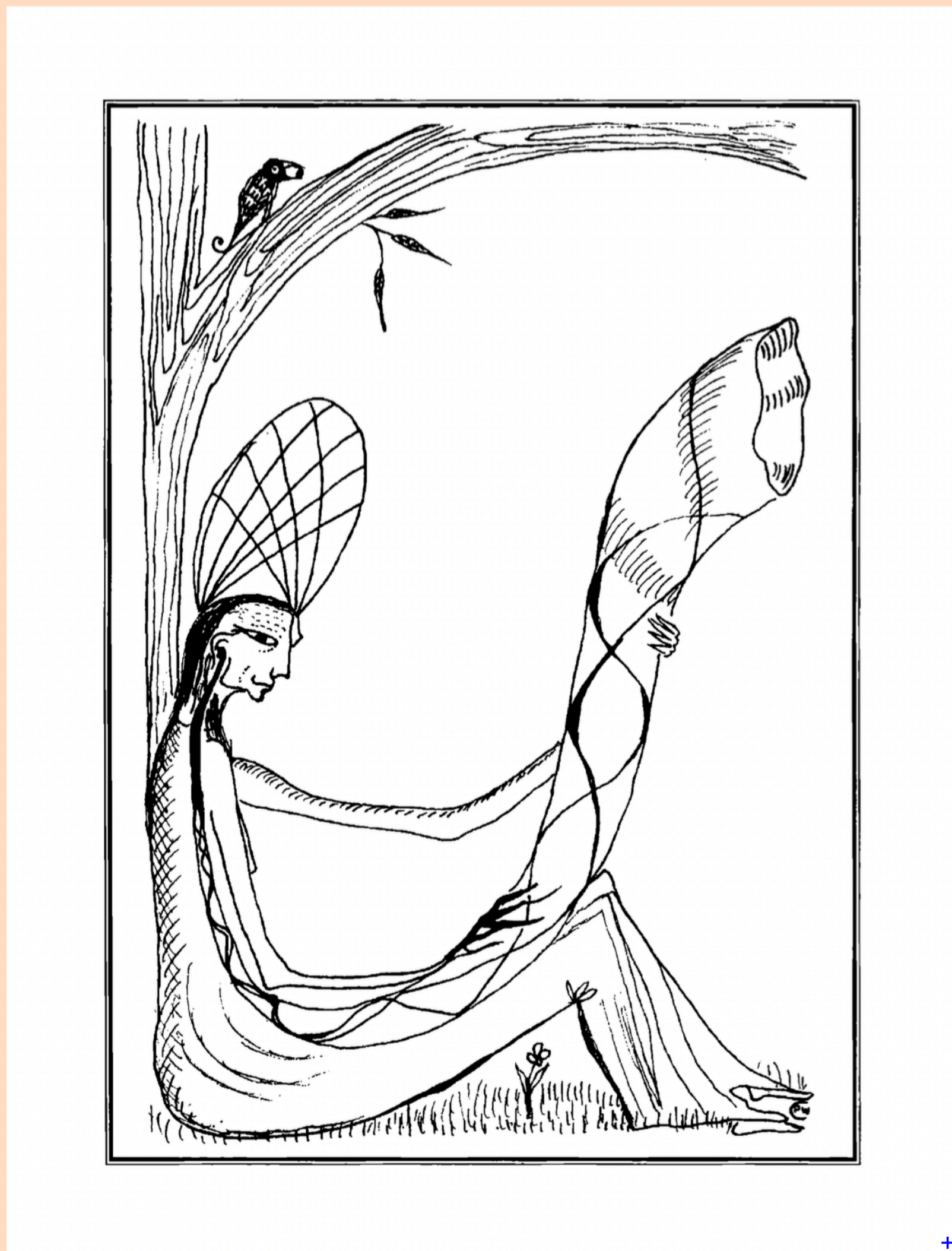


Illustration by Pablo Weisz Carrington, in *The Hearing Trumpet*, page 1, 1974

Svart tigers are rare, with the few documented sightings similar to those of black panthers. From the title, this work nods to the neighbouring drawing *MALCOLM'S BROTHER*, which references the prominent black American activist and founder of the Black Panthers, Malcolm X. Placed together in a dialogue, these works reflect experiences of systematic racism, xenophobia, civil war and religious violence, all deeply rooted across the world today. A body in a box, another one lying down and a memorial seen from two different points of view are to be found in linked lines. With a few marks, the work resembles a sketch for a movie scene. They are quietly loaded works. Silence can also be a tool to shut down diverging voices, erasing stories and oral histories. Born in Russia to Somali parents and based in Sweden, Moallim brings to the surface the colonial history of Western societies, and with a handful of lines the work opens up fragmented conversations. Trauma needs healing, ignored conversations need to be heard and silenced narratives need to gain space in contemporary discussions. Silence and sound need to coexist, as the first gives space to the second.

1+2 *The Hearing Trumpet*, Leonora Carrington, 1974

3 Afterword by Olga Tokarczuk to *The Hearing Trumpet*, Leonora Carrington, 1974

Fatima Moallim, curated by Fabian Flückiger, [Last Tango](#), Zurich, 24 November 2023–27 January 2024

## Reading Rämistrasse

Geht der Raum für Kunstkritik verloren, müssen wir handeln. Deswegen schaffen wir diesen Ort für Kritik – [Reading Rämistrasse](#) – auf der Webseite der Kunsthalle Zürich und veröffentlichten Rezensionen zu aktuellen Ausstellungen in Zürich. Diese geben nicht die Meinung der Kunsthalle Zürich wieder, denn Kritik muss unabhängig sein.

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