

Exhibitions

# Writing is drawing

From 6 November 2021 to 21 February 2022

Author: Based on an idea by Etel Adnan



Born in 1925 in Lebanon, which was under a French mandate at the time, to a Syrian father who was a former officer in the Ottoman empire and a Greek mother originally from Smyrna (present-day Izmir), Etel Adnan, who lived for a while in California and is now based in France, has continually navigated between cultures and languages.

She has always been interested in writing and its closeness to drawing, forming the basis of her work on “leporellos”, concertina-like books that she has been painting and writing in since the 1960s, paying tribute to poets from all over the world. When she published *The Arab Apocalypse* in 1980, Adnan even imagined a new way of writing poetry, in which words and signs cohabit.



The idea for this exhibition, which explores our fascination with the richness of languages and writing, grew out of a conversation with the poetess and artist Etel Adnan.

The exhibition juxtaposes precious old manuscripts, grouped together in three display cases, and works by contemporary artists and writers, most of which are from the Cabinet d'Art Graphique at the Centre Pompidou, in which writing is combined with imagery, sometimes even disappearing completely. This journey through inscriptions bears witness to a primordial interweaving of writing and drawing and reveals a universal vital energy. This energy circulates through gestures and lines, fragile crucibles of history, human beliefs and emotions.



Etel Adnan dreams that writing, whatever its language and written form, can be admired “like a painting in a museum”.

Curator:

Jean-Marie Gallais, Head of Programming Centre Pompidou-Metz