

# DREAM ON



ENGLISH



# BONSEFANTEN



**With artworks by:**

Morena Bamberger  
Antoine Berghs  
melanie bonajo  
Patrick Van Caeckenbergh  
Ali Cherri  
Sofiia Dubyna  
Hadassah Emmerich  
Alia Farid  
Camille Henrot  
Laura Lima  
Aristote Mago  
Danaë Moons  
Otobong Nkanga  
Grayson Perry  
Lee 'Scratch' Perry  
Laure Prouvost  
Marleen Rothaus  
Alison Saar  
Betye Saar  
Marta Volkova & Slava Shevelenko  
Evelyn Taocheng Wang  
Sandra Vásquez de la Horra

Aristote Mago, *Throne crushing*, 2022, embroidery on burlap bag, 142 x 146 cm.  
Collection Bonnefanten. Photo: courtesy Aristote Mago/Bonnefanten.



## ***Enchanting the world***

*We live in turbulent times.*

For many years, unsettled moments have prompted the creation of art and exhibitions. Artists reflect on the world around us. Their work empowers us and makes us resilient. It offers us an escape from harsh reality. Right now, this is really necessary, as we are living in uncertain and frightening times. Wars are raging on the fringes of Europe and climate problems are becoming ever more tangible and urgent. A cultural battle about the norms and values of our future society is sweeping across the whole world. It is causing great unrest.

Yet there are increasing numbers of artists who are not enticed by doom-mongering in their work. On the contrary, these makers are hopeful of putting the world to rights and depict alternative futures. They are activist, yet not cynical in their criticism. Instead, they dare to muse nostalgically and dream while laughing. They want to re-enchant the world.

## **What is old will become new again**

This exhibition explores a new line in the

Bonnefanten collection and contemporary art. Old folklore, legends, rituals and incantations form the starting point for new work. New life is breathed into historical customs and stories, which serve as mirrors for current social problems and thus represent an alternative future.

Artists working in this way often broach themes like decolonialisation and intersectional feminism. They claim a place for marginalised groups and vanished cultures, and thus for under-represented and under-valued stories. In this way, they put politically and socially engaged topics on the agenda. The artists work in a light-hearted and humorous way, but are not afraid to criticise. They feel a deep connection with the big issues in today's society. Their artworks may be fairy tales and stories, but they always lead to a hopeful view of the actual future. *DREAM ON* is about daring to dream, even if it is against one's better judgement.



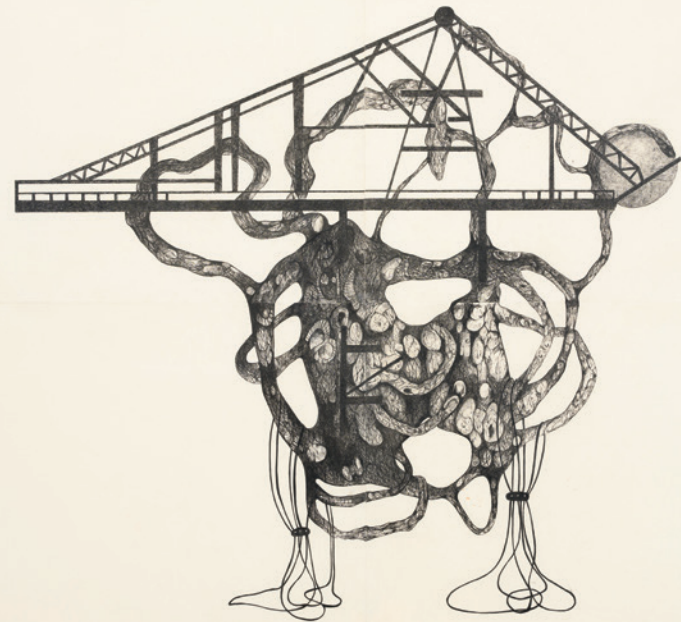
## Ali Cherri, Aristote Mago, Danaë Moons, Otobong Nkanga

### room 2.17

There are several contemporary artists whose work represents monsters and mythical figures. Ali Cherri (1976, Beirut) often makes his sculptures out of mud. He is inspired to do so by the role played by clay in many stories, from Sumerian mythology to Jewish legends. Cherri's statues tell the epic tale of Gilgamesh, the king of Uruk, in southern Mesopotamia. In the third century BC, he tried to become immortal, with the help of his friend Enkidu. Along with Cherri's film *Of Men and Gods and Mud* in room 2, these sculptures form a depiction of the forces of nature and of mankind's reckless role in the world.

The fanciful, fairy-tale works of Danaë Moons (1985, The Hague) explore the primal forces of the world and the connection between people and nature. The industrial objects in her drawings – inspired partly by the mining past – appear to have originated from Mother Nature. At the same time, you can see them as a civilisation that has been overgrown and claimed by nature. Is nature the cherished source of life, or is it the frightening enemy to be overcome? This is the key question in Moons' work.

In his work, Aristote Mago (1988, Kinshasa) explores themes like the climate crisis, feminism and queer expression. He wants to restore (Black) women to the strong and central position they held in African society and the world of stories before the continent was converted to Christianity. The canvas bags he embroiders come from the foundation Action Contre la Faim. For many years, this organisation has been sending food to places in the world that are afflicted by famine, due to climate change or socio-political problems. This gives the work a raw and topical undertone. Mago stitches the designs by hand, using a traditional technique that historically speaking is only used by women. He thus breaks through the stereotypical ideas about masculinity and femininity.



Danaë Moons, *Earth Crane*, 2013, pencil on paper, 95 x 128 cm. Collection Bonnefanten. Photo: courtesy Danaë Moons/Bonnefanten.





Ali Cherri, *Of Men and Gods and Mud*, 2022, three-channel video installation, 18'48". Collection Bonnefanten. Photo: courtesy Ali Cherri/Bonnefanten.



Ali Cherri, *Leaning Figure*, 2023, zoomorphic stone head (France), medieval period; iron, xps, clay, sand, pigments, pvac glue, 80 x 60 x 125 cm. Loan Imane Fares Gallery. Photo: Ali Cherri Studio.

## Ali Cherri

### room 2.18

In Ali Cherri's film *Of Men and Gods and Mud* (1976, Beirut), a group of labourers spends their days near the Merowe Dam in northern Sudan. Among heaps of mud and in the blistering sun, they make bricks. The Merowe Dam is one of Africa's largest hydroelectric dams. In the year 2000, an estimated 50,000 people had to be forcibly relocated because of the dam. Ecosystems were destroyed and historical sites flooded.

Cherri mixes current political issues with historical events. He connects this recent destruction with traditional depictions of mud and floods. The narrative voice talks about the Greek legend of Prometheus, ancient Egyptian myths of the Nile bursting its banks, the Old Testament creation story, the Jewish legend of the clay figure golem and Noah's Ark.

The film muses poetically on the meanings of two earth forces: earth and water. They bring drought, landslides and floods, but also fertile soil and building materials. Old myths, together with contemporary events, form starting points for new stories. Increasingly, we will have to live with extreme natural phenomena. Now, politics often decides what gets wiped out and what stays put. But from which elements do we mould the future?



## Laure Prouvost, Evelyn Taocheng Wang, Sandra Vásquez de la Horra

### room 2.19

Like Ali Cherri, other contemporary artists are increasingly drawing on an age-old tradition of literary themes from various cultures and periods. They raise written and unwritten, but mainly under-represented stories onto the stage of the international art world. The presence of these stories in a museum confronts you not only with other cultures, but also your own culture.

Laure Prouvost (1978, Croix) based her tapestry *Feu que, I was born to be here* on her film *They Parlaient Idéale*, in which Prouvost travels from Paris to Venice. On the way, she meets musicians, performance artists and conjurers who speak French, English, Dutch, Arabic and Italian. She visits Marseille, a centre of immigration and cultural exchange for many centuries. She also goes to the Palais Idéal in Hauterives, a fantasy building with biblical, Egyptian and Hindu elements. The world in the film seems to be a utopia, in which people live together equally, despite their cultural differences. Prouvost breaks through this fiction by transforming scenes and things from the film into objects in the room around you, such as the tapestry, in which fantasy and reality are intertwined. In her work, Prouvost aims to contribute to connection and understanding in society. The medium of communication is key in this.



Evelyn Taocheng Wang, *Tug Boat! Celery and Children on Water*, 2019, watercolour, acrylic paint and ink on paper, 155,5 x 115 cm. Collection Bonnefanten. Photo: courtesy Evelyn Taocheng Wang/Bonnefanten.

We see in reality that we often misunderstand one another. Instead of regarding this as something negative, artists often take it as inspiration for playful confrontations. Evelyn Taocheng Wang (1978, Chengdu) moved from China to Frankfurt am Main and Amsterdam. She is fascinated by identity, gender and cultural stigmas. What does it mean to be a man, woman or trans, or a Chinese or Dutch person? In order to break through prejudices, her work blends old and contemporary art, and autobiographical stories with myths, literature and (art) history.

Sandra Vásquez de la Horra (1967, Viña del Mar) bases her pencil figures on texts, fairy tales, myths and religions. These stories come from South America, where she grew up, and North America and Europe, where she studied. Despite their specific origins, the depictions have a universal quality. The skulls, rebellious nuns and outsiders are reminiscent of something you have seen before, or dreamed or experienced. To reinforce this feeling, De la Horra deliberately places random words from different languages in her drawings. The real meanings of these words – just as in the case of her figures – get lost in translation. Words become images, and in turn take on a universal character, free for everyone to interpret as they like.



Sandra Vásquez de la Horra, *Reina de la Noche*, 2010, pencil on paper, wax, 76 x 58 cm. Collection Bonnefanten, acquired with the support of Mondriaan Fund. Photo: courtesy Sandra Vásquez de la Horra/ Bonnefanten.

## Camille Henrot

### room 2.20

Camille Henrot (1978, Paris) lives and works in New York. As an artist, she makes videos and animated films, often combining them with spatial installations and sculptures. *Saturday* (2017) is the result of her characteristic, anthropological working method, for which she immersed herself in the world of the Seventh-day Adventists. This evangelical Christian denomination keeps the Sabbath (the day of rest) and baptism rituals on Saturday. The film shows church communities from New York, Washington D.C., Tahiti and the Kingdom of Tonga. Henrot's camera focuses on their age-old rituals, as well as some new ones, such as baptism and collective prayer through media channels. She alternates these images with ones of surfing, medical tests and eating.

Scrolling across the film is a news ticker with headlines about bad news. They are a source of information about the state of the world. In the context of *Saturday*, they appear to be a reason for escaping this reality. Increasingly often in today's society, we search for rituals that give meaning to existence. Henrot shows that a modern experience of old rituals goes hand in hand with the connective power of digital media – even though the latter often actually alienates us from our surroundings.





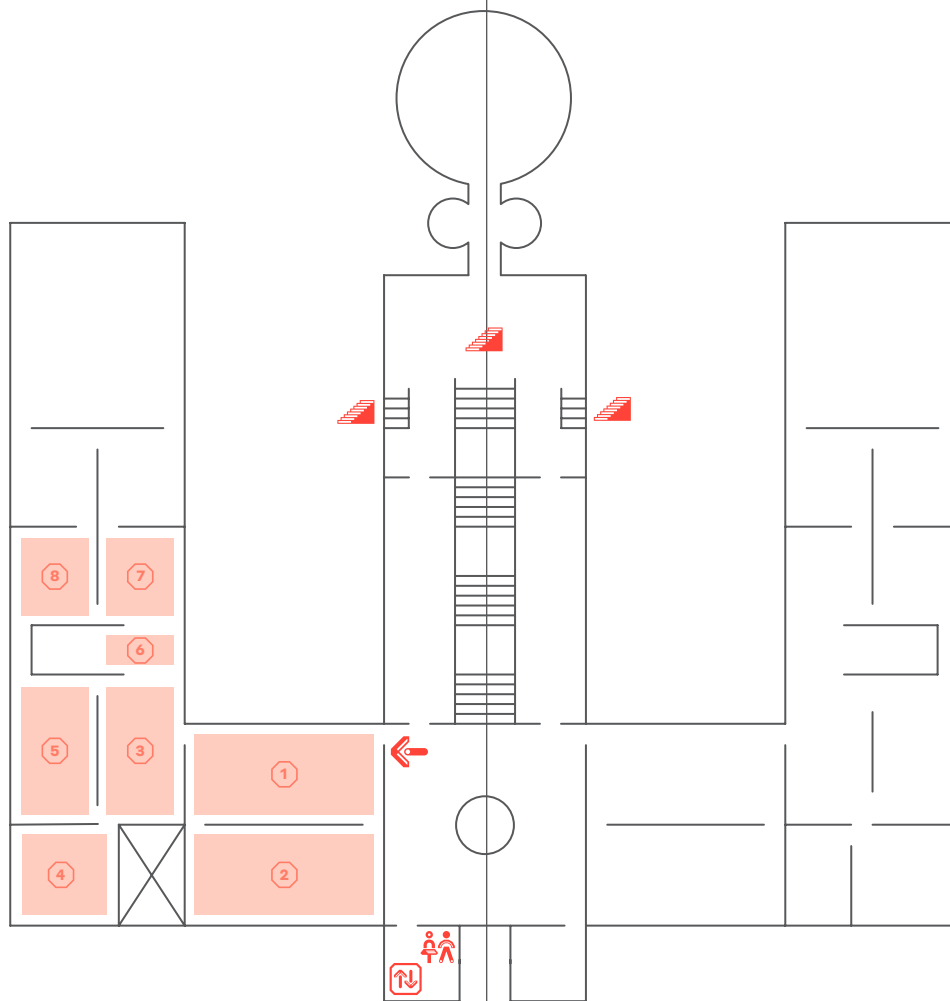
# FLOOR 2

➔ Exhibition starts here

- ① 2.17
- ② 2.18
- ③ 2.19
- ④ 2.20

- ⬆️⬆️ Elevator to other floors
- 🏠 Stairs to other floors
- 🚻 Toilets

- ⑤ 2.21
- ⑥ 2.22
- ⑦ 2.23
- ⑧ 2.24





Camille Henrot, *Saturday*, 2017, 3D-film, 19'32". Collection Bonnefanten, acquired with the support of VriendenLoterij. Photo: courtesy Pictoright Amsterdam 2020.

**Marleen Rothaus, Sofiia Dubyna,  
Hadassah Emmerich, melanie bonajo,  
Alison Saar, Betye Saar, Marta Volkova &  
Slava Shevelenko**

**room 2.21**

Dreaming about another future also involves depicting new ideas about identity and self-image. The artists take stereotypes by the horns and transform them into strong, self-aware characters.

Marleen Rothaus (1991, Bielefeld) uses her paintings as banners at feminist demonstrations. Her works thus make an active contribution to the emancipation of people who do not identify themselves as a heterosexual, cisgender man. In the painting *Coven*, you see a group of witches who are friends. According to Rothaus, witches were used, and are still used today, as spectres to oppress independent women. She turns witches into appealing icons and shows that it might be fun to sit down at the table with them.

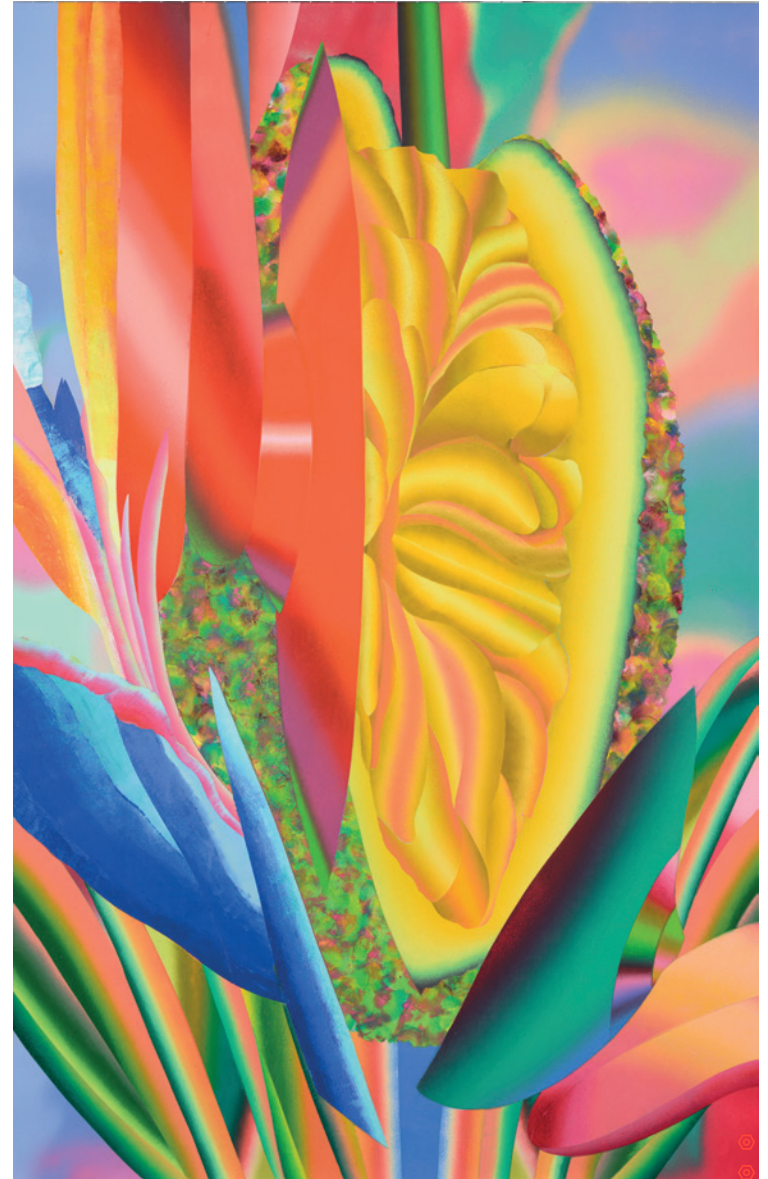
The work of Sofiia Dubyna (2000, Donetsk) revolves around being a woman, female sexuality and the female experience of sexuality. Her paintings show a lot of nudity in 'unorthodox' situations: tied up with duct tape or tie wraps, being whipped and just before or just after being penetrated. The artist explores the thin line between two worlds that women constantly have to tread with regard to sexual matters, such as pleasure and violence, or trust and abuse. The style of the work is charming and cheerful. The women portrayed in Dubyna's paintings are often good friends of hers, and sometimes she portrays herself. Friendship is a central theme in her work, and she often visualises conversations with her friends, inside jokes or adventures.

Hadassah Emmerich (1974, Heerlen) makes lush, sensual paintings in which bodies blend with flowers and plants. These seductive images distinctly refer to a fundamental life force and to fertility. Ambiguous forms may represent both flower petals and genitals, and leaves look just like licking tongues. Emmerich's work also deals self-confidently with the balance of power between different genders and the hierarchy of power in the post-colonial age. The exoticised representation of women of colour as voluptuous figures plays a role in this.

In the work *White Guise*, by Alison Saar (1956, Los Angeles), you see Topsy. Topsy is a character from the famous book *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, in which she is described as a wild, unkempt girl. This cliché image of Black children is still prevalent today. Saar presents the girl as being hot-headed, but not uncivilised. The child is self-aware and independent, yet also incredibly tender and melancholic. Out of her plaits grow cotton flowers, which enslaved children used to have to pick on the American plantations.

The charming music in the work *Pee on Presidents* by melanie bonajo (1978, Heerlen) suddenly gets a new connotation when the content becomes clear: the number tells of the places where women want to pee. It is a feminist pamphlet for everyone with a vagina. At the same time, it also shows the vulnerability of this group, who literally have to expose themselves to meet a primary need.

Hadassah Emmerich, *Jack of Hearts II*, 2022, oil on canvas, 220 x 140 cm.  
Collection Bonnefanten, acquired with the support of Mondriaan Fund.  
Photo: courtesy Hadassah Emmerich/Bonnefanten.







Installation view Antoine Berghs, *adjust your vision / in case you find pity in pain / enter like it's supposed to / say yes at every door / we harvest the blue*, 2021, mixed media installation. Photo: Peter Cox.

## Antoine Berghs

### room 2.22

Antoine Berghs (1971, Geleen) prefers to describe his work as a continuous pilgrimage: 'a cathartic journey to get a grip on things and the world'. Since 2014, he has been creating wooden statues and man-sized pencil drawings in his studio, and giving form to texts and rituals that revolve around his self-image and attempts at self-transformation. In 2021–2022, the Bonnefanten presented Berghs' impressive installation *adjust your vision / in case you find pity in pain / enter like it's supposed to / say yes at every door / we harvest the blue*. The scalemodel of this installation is on view here. Halfway through the duration of the original exhibition, Berghs opened the installation with a ritual performance.

He says about the work, "On one side, the hinged panels – or rather gates – show abstract motifs for the purpose of meditation, and on the other they show fragile figurative drawings. The hypnotic effect of image, flashing light and noise takes me (and possibly the viewer) to another state. The noise and flashing light 'liberate' the drawings, abstract motifs and material: everything starts moving, living and becoming energy: everything becomes a vibration. During a ritual, I sang and chanted texts naked and opened the gates, after which the drawings of a vulnerable inner world became visible. Finally, I made a hole in the wall with a hammer. Through this action, I glorified, questioned and challenged reality."



**Patrick van Caeckenbergh, Alia Farid,  
Grayson Perry, Lee 'Scratch' Perry,  
Laura Lima**

**room 2.23**

Antoine Berghs' penchant for the mystical state is representative of a bigger social trend. In an age of individualism and capitalism, a growing number of people are searching for meaning in their daily rhythm, through rituals, for example. Spirituality is found in the form of objects or non-traditional religious convictions. For instance, Patrick van Caeckenbergh (1960, Aalst) opposes the rational and apparently universal image we have of the world and the way it works. Instead, he dreams up his own myths. Like Ali Cherri, Caeckenbergh tells these myths through clay sculptures. They are a cacophony of absurd elements, reflecting life itself.

For a growing number of contemporary artists, the time has come to artistically document traditions from their own community or from other under-represented areas. For example, filmmaker Alia Farid (1985, Kuwait/ Puerto Rico) recorded one of the oldest, unchanged traditions in the world. Every year in July, during Nowruz Sayadeen, the inhabitants of the South Iranian island Qeshm celebrate the start of the fishing season. They honour the gift of nature: the islanders do not fish, do not eat shellfish and bathe in healing water. They dance, eat and live it up. During an age-old ceremony, the crowds of spectators are plagued by various characters, including the shtoor (camel), asb (horse) and *rooba* (bird). For this region that is so dependent on water, the tradition signifies the beginning of the new year.

The collages by producer, singer and artist Lee 'Scratch' Perry (1936, Kendal – 2021, Lucea) are rooted in traditions that come from yet another part of the world. His works are a mix of religious beliefs and practices from Rastafari, Christianity and the Ettu community in Jamaica. Perry collected the ingredients for his patchwork of symbols and signs obsessively. As if in a ritual, he put them together by remixing, editing, dubbing and sampling them. Using afro-futuristic and mystical images, Perry continued the tradition of Jamaican wall paintings on canvas. They depict political messages, music icons, religious symbols, African myths and well-known Rastafarians.



Lee 'Scratch' Perry,  
*Untitled (Master of the Universe)*, 2018,  
170 x 140 cm.  
Collection  
Bonnefanten.  
Photo: courtesy Lee  
'Scratch' Perry/  
Bonnefanten.



Morena Bamberger, *Sonnekaskro Djiephen*, 2024, mixed media. Process photo, Well, Nederland.

## Morena Bamberger

### room 2.23

Morena Bamberger (Roermond, 1994) made a large installation commissioned by the Bonnefanten. The work, *Sonnekaskro Djiephen*, Sinti for *A Life Of Gold*, will be included in the collection. It forms the transition between the collection presentation *DREAM ON* and the solo exhibition of Malgorzata Mirga-Tas. Bamberger made the trailer in close consultation with Mirga-Tas.

This trailer, and especially its wheels, speaks to the heart of Sinti and Roma culture. It symbolises constant movement. Not surprisingly, the wheel is centrally depicted on the Sinti and Roma flag. Bamberger sees the caravan as a chapel, a small shrine that honours the lifestyle and culture of the Sinti and Roma. Even though they no longer travel, they keep their customs close to their hearts.

Projected onto the laundry, hanging on the line to dry, are two films. They are from 2017, when Bamberger was still in art school and struggling with her identity as an artist. Being an artist had not been something she was taught from home: her family struggled so much with Bamberger's choice of profession that it led to a split. In these films, we see Bamberger's first tentative rapprochement. In the first film, Bamberger portrays the trailer park she grew up in and her family, viewing herself as an artist through the eyes of her family. In the second film, she uses the caravan camp as a studio and looks at Sinti culture from the point of view of being an artist.





# **DREAM ON**

08.06.2024 – 30.03.2025

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Cover and previous page images: Alia Farid, *At the Time of the Ebb*, 2019, video, 15'49". Collection Bonnefanten. Photo: courtesy Alia Farid/Bonnefanten.

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