

Press release

SIMURGH

Slavs and Tatars with Marcel Broodthaers and Cevdet Erek

February 14 - May 18, 2025

Solo exhibition by the Berlin-based international collective Slavs and Tatars at the Staatliche Kunsthalle Baden-Baden

Press conference

Friday, February 14, 2025, at 12 noon, in the presence of Slavs and Tatars and Cevdet Erek.

RSVP until Monday, February 10, 2025, 6 p.m., via presse@kunsthalle-baden-baden.bwl.de

Content

- About the exhibition and the artists
- Program
- Press images
- Press contact
- Information about Staatliche Kunsthalle Baden-Baden

About the exhibition

The solo exhibition by the Berlin-based international collective Slavs and Tatars takes its title from Simurgh, a majestic, mythological bird-like creature with references to Persianate, Turkic, and other Eurasian histories. The Simurgh story, rich in themes of unity and the interconnectedness of all living beings, offers important insights into the idea of coexistence and its relation to democracy, representational politics, self-governance, and the construction of hope. Through various media – from sound to glasswork, textiles to mirrors – *Simurgh* invites us to engage in a conversation on existence, living together, and belonging, transforming the Staatliche Kunsthalle Baden-Baden into a space for self-discovery and conviviality.

Simurgh includes newly commissioned works that connect this Eurasian creature to the context of Baden-Baden and Baden-Württemberg through the tradition of living, regenerating tales, fables, and mythologies, such as those of the Black Forest. Selected works by the pioneering conceptual artist Marcel Broodthaers (1924–1976) will feature in the exhibition promenade as referential forms, alongside a sound-based installation by Istanbul-based artist Cevdet Erek. These elements extend the horizons of *Simurgh* symbolically, architecturally, and sonically.

The artists aim to build upon Broodthaers' seminal work *Musée d'Art Moderne: Département des Aigles* (1968–71) – where the role of the eagle in French and German heraldry, literature, and history is deconstructed – by replacing the eagle, a nationalist symbol, with the Simurgh, a figure that is decidedly transnational, if not metaphysical.

As part of their collective and discursive artistic practice, Slavs and Tatars have invited Cevdet Erek to collaborate on a joint exhibit as part of the promenade – at the main space of the Kunsthalle. Adapting an earlier piece, originally presented outdoors, *Courtyard Ornamentation with Four Sounding Dots and a Fake Shade* (2024) Erek fosters a contemplation of rhythm by highlighting the connections between sound patterns featuring rhythmic repetitions. His work focuses on these auditory elements as well as the visual and spatial aspects traditionally associated with architectural 'ornamentation'.

Slavs and Tatars have long been more interested in the peripheries of knowledge production, the edges of belief systems, and the margins of rituals rather than the centers; for it is at these borders where syncretism and hybridity thrive. Since its inception in 2006, the collective has shown a keen grasp of polemical issues in society, clearing new paths for contemporary discourse via a wholly idiosyncratic form of knowledge production: including

popular culture, spiritual and esoteric traditions, oral histories, modern myths, as well as scholarly research.

Since the fall of the USSR and especially since the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine, there's been an important drive amongst former Soviet peoples towards articulating national identity and agency away from the top-down, colonial influence of Moscow. However, it is equally crucial today to also activate and redeem that which unites us as much as that which distinguishes us. These regional solidarities can be folkloric, spiritual, and semiotic (such as the Simurgh), or culinary (as the collective's interest in pickles and fermentation has shown), or ritualistic (be they harvest festivals or drinking tea from a samovar, both of which feature in their work). By focusing on the various iterations of a mythical and metaphysical symbol across a wide region, *Simurgh* reimagines the regionalism which lies at the very core of Slavs and Tatars' artistic practice.

The reach of this otherworldly bird extends from today's central Ukraine (Semargl, one of the nine pagan gods of pre-Christian Kyivan Rus') to the Uighur region in present day China. It is fitting then, that one of the most prominent allegories of the Simurgh is the Sufi notion of finding oneness in multiplicity. In Farid ud-Din Attar's (1145–1221) *The Conference of the Birds*, several birds embark on a long journey to find their leader, the legendary Simurgh, only to discover in the end that God or the Transcendent resides within themselves.

The curatorial frame of the exhibition is inspired by this 12th century epic where the Simurgh serves as a narrative device. To reach Mount Qaf, the birds must pass through seven valleys: the Valleys of Will, Love, Ignorance, Doubt, Loneliness, Rumors, and finally the Valley of Self. The exhibition is conceived in alignment with this story, juxtaposing earlier works by Slavs and Tatars with the new Simurgh-themed works.

Simurgh (2025) is commissioned by the Staatliche Kunsthalle Baden-Baden, Germany, and the Frac des Pays de la Loire, Nantes, France. The exhibition will be presented for the first time as a major solo show in both institutions: at the Staatliche Kunsthalle Baden-Baden from February 14 to May 18, 2025, followed by an exhibition at Frac des Pays de la Loire in Summer 2025.

The exhibition at the Staatlichen Kunsthalle Baden-Baden is curated by Çağla İlk, Misal Adnan Yıldız und Sandeep Sodhi.

Artists biographies

Slavs and Tatars


Founded in 2006, Slavs and Tatars is an internationally renowned art collective devoted to an area East of the former Berlin Wall and West of the Great Wall of China known. The collective's practice is based on three activities: exhibitions, publications, and lecture-performances. Their work has been the subject of solo exhibitions at institutions across the globe, including the Vienna Secession; MoMA, New York; Salt, Istanbul; Albertinum Dresden; and have participated in the 58th Venice Biennale (2019), 8th Berlin Biennale (2014), 9th Gwangju Biennial (2012) and 2nd Islamic Arts Biennial (2025). Slavs and Tatars has published more than twelve books to date, including most recently their first children's book, *Azbuka Strikes Back* with Walther und Franz König. In 2020, Slavs and Tatars opened Pickle Bar a slavic aperitivo bar-cum-project space a few doors down from their studio in the Moabit district of Berlin as well as a residency and mentorship program for young professionals from the region.

Marcel Broodthaers

Marcel Broodthaers (1924–1976) worked primarily as a poet until the age of 40, when he turned to the visual arts. Over the next 12 years, his work retained a poetic quality and a sense of humor that balanced its conceptual framework; for his first solo exhibition, he encased unsold copies of his latest poetry book, *Pense-Bête* (Memory aid, 1964), in plaster, turning them into a sculpture. Broodthaers continued to invent ways to give material form to language while working across mediums—poetry, sculpture, painting, artist's books, printmaking, and film. From 1968 to 1972, he created the *Musée d'Art Moderne, Département des Aigles* (Museum of Modern Art, Department of Eagles), a museum with 12 sections of which he himself was director, dedicated to the role of the institution itself and the function of art in society. During this period, he also produced the thermoformed plastic plates, known as '*industrial poem*' and some '*Open letters*' in close connection with his Museum. In the final years of his life, Broodthaers created immersive '*décors*,' large-scale displays in which examples of his past work were often unified with objects borrowed for the occasion.

Cevdet Erek

Cevdet Erek lives and works in Istanbul. He studied architecture at Mimar Sinan University of Fine Arts and completed his post-graduate Sound Engineering and Design and Music studies at ITU MIAM Center for Advanced Studies in



Music. Ereğ's works have been presented widely, including Documenta, Sydney Biennale, Istanbul Biennial, and San Francisco Museum of Art. Solo exhibitions of his work were organized at Hamburger Bahnhof Museum, Kunsthalle Basel, Art Institute Chicago, and others. He conceived and exhibited 'ÇIN' for the Pavilion of Turkey at the 57. Venice Biennale in 2017.

Ereğ creates works on the intersection between sound, sculpture and architecture. In his audiovisual practice, he explores tone, space and its perception and the concepts of time and history, and applies his extensive backgrounds as an architect, educator, musician and sound engineer to construct spatial site-specific installations and sonic environments. His installations invite the audience to actively engage with the space and reflect upon the physical sensations transported through the rhythmic reciprocity between sound and the body. Ereğ often employs seriality as a means to emphasize the subjectivity of lived experiences in different locations, times and cultural contexts.

Program

Opening and weekend program

February 14 - 16, 2025

Friday, February 14

7 p.m. Exhibition opening in the presence of the artists and speeches by the curators of the exhibition Çağla İlk, Misal Adnan Yıldız and Sandeep Sodhi

Saturday, February 15

11 a.m. Curator's tour through the exhibition

12 noon Artists Talks with Slavs and Tatars and Cevdet Erek

Lunch-tours every Friday at 1 p.m. Free entrance on Fridays.
Public tours every second Sunday at 2 p.m.

Please check our website for up-to-date program or register to our newsletter.

Press photos



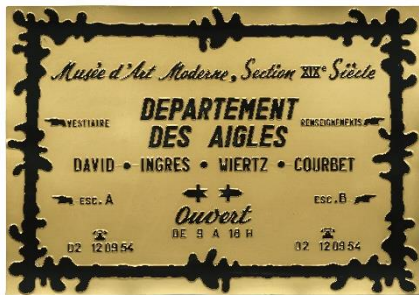
Slavs and Tatars, Stiletto 'C', 2024, hand-blown glass, hand-made faux nails, 60x30x25 cm, Photo Marjorie Brunet Plaza. Courtesy Kraupa-Tuskany Zeidler, Berlin



Slavs and Tatars, This not that, 2024, vacuum-formed plastic, acrylic paint, 71x100 cm, Photo Marjorie Brunet Plaza. Courtesy Kraupa-Tuskany Zeidler, Berlin



Astaneh, Persian, 2024, steel, glass, 105x75x18 cm, Photo Thanos Kartsoglou, Courtesy Kalfayan, Athens



Marcel Broodthaers, Département des Aigles (David-Ingres-Wiertz-Courbet) (gold version), 1968, vacuum-formed plastic (framed); 80 x 120 cm. Courtesy Estate Marcel Broodthaers

Press contact

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Opening hours

Tuesday – Sunday, 10 a.m. – 6 p.m.

Open all bank holidays, except for December 24 and 31

Prices

Adults 7€, reduced 5€

Free entry on Fridays

Staatliche Kunsthalle Baden-Baden

Lichtentaler Allee 8a

76530 Baden-Baden

www.kunsthalle-baden-baden.de

The Staatliche Kunsthalle Baden-Baden is an institution of the state of Baden-Württemberg under the auspices of the Ministry of Science, Research and the Arts of Baden-Württemberg, Research and Art Baden-Württemberg.



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