

City SALTS (Box)

Opening hours: Thu/Fri 12–5 pm, during Art Basel daily 1–6 pm
Reception during the City SALTS Summer Party on 19 June 2025

City SALTS, Hauptstrasse 12, down by the river, 4127 Birsfelden



Yumna Al-Arashi: Tears For The Future

Curated by Benedikt Wyss and Samuel Leuenberger

Yumna Al-Arashi (b. 1988) presents *Tears For The Future*, her first solo exhibition in Switzerland — a meditation on embodiment, elemental force, and the politics of being seen. Known for her uncompromising and poetic visual language, Al-Arashi turns the camera on herself to explore the body as myth, ritual, memory, and site of resistance.

The exhibition features four large-scale self-portraits, arranged like a compass. Each image is aligned with a cardinal direction and its corresponding element — Earth, Fire, Air, and Water — creating a symbolic axis through which the viewer navigates herself. These images do not merely represent the artist; they summon her — as myth, as offering, as witness. They echo the cosmological, matriarchal themes that have run through her previous work, including *Aisha* (Edition Patrick Frey, 2022), the award-winning monograph dedicated to her great-grandmother and the tattooed women of North Africa and the MENA region. That project was an homage to lineage, to women who live with unapologetic presence — and *Tears For The Future* continues this lineage in a more solitary, confrontational register.

Tears For The Future continues Al-Arashi's long-standing engagement with self-portraiture — a practice she has developed in previous photographic series including *Let Me In* and *Busy Sleeping*, first shown at City SALTS in 2024. In *Let Me In*, she inserted her body among 19th-century nude sculptures found in Zurich's public places, staging a direct confrontation between the historic male gaze and her own autonomous image-making. In *Busy Sleeping*, she surrendered control entirely, producing self-portraits only during sleep — an act of trust, vulnerability, and relinquished authorship. In contrast, *Tears For The Future* positions the body in full command: elemental, exposed, and defiantly present.

Al-Arashi's work is both intimate and collective. Her portraits carry the weight of inherited histories and diasporic longing while remaining rooted in personal ritual. Each image is a study in presence — not only of the self, but of community, land, memory, myth and our always changing gaze of the human figure and their portraits.

Yumna Al-Arashi is a Yemeni Egyptian American photographer and filmmaker based in Zurich. Self-taught in photography, she holds a BA in Liberal Arts from The New School (New York) and an MFA from the Zurich University of the Arts (ZHdK). Her practice spans photography, film, writing, and performance, challenging orientalist narratives and offering new visual languages for femininity, identity, and belonging.

Worklist:

North - Earth, 2025

C-Type Archival Print on Hahnemühle 300gsm Paper

Silver Aluminum Frame, Non Reflective Glass

100 x 80 cm

Edition of 2 + 1 AP

East - Wind, 2025

C-Type Archival Print on Hahnemühle 300gsm Paper

Silver Aluminum Frame, Non Reflective Glass

100 x 80 cm

Edition of 2 + 1 AP

South - Fire, 2025

C-Type Archival Print on Hahnemühle 300gsm Paper

Silver Aluminum Frame, Non Reflective Glass

100 x 80 cm

Edition of 2 + 1 AP

West - water, 2025

C-Type Archival Print on Hahnemühle 300gsm Paper

Silver Aluminum Frame, Non Reflective Glass

100 x 80 cm

Edition of 2 + 1 AP

The exhibition is made possible through the support of the Abteilung Kulturförderung Baselland.