

Sophia Al-Maria
BCE

“Still there are seeds to be gathered, and room in the bag of stars.”

Ursula K. Le Guin, *The Carrier Bag Theory of Fiction*, 1986

London-based artist **Sophia Al-Maria** (b. 1983, US) gathers untold histories, anecdotes, images, sounds and autobiography into her carrier bag of fiction.

Drawing on a year of performances and readings as Whitechapel’s Writer in Residence, this exhibition centres around two creation myths: one from the ancient past, one from the distant future. The first originates with the Wayuu tribe in northern Colombia, an outtake from Al-Maria’s 2017 work *The Magical State*; the second is a new collaboration with artist **Victoria Sin** (b. 1991, Canada), a film in which they have imagined a cosmogonic fantasy.

Both artists take influence from science-fiction author Ursula K. Le Guin’s *The Carrier Bag Theory of Fiction*, where she reimagines narrative as a feminist project. Instead of the heroic, masculine hunter as the framework for all storytelling, she urges us to consider the beauty and simplicity of the gatherer.

Challenging the narratives often posed by such stories, here the binaries of good and evil, female and male, light and dark are thrown into question. Can we imagine origins beyond human gender and fertility? In the juxtaposition of these two creation myths we are invited to imagine alternative histories removed from biologically defined forces, for a different kind of future.

Supported by Barjeel Art Foundation