

THE BIRD, THE  
THREAD AND THE  
OPEN SEA

2025-2026

P O R  
T F O O  
L I O

ESMERALDA KOSMATOPOULOS

*“Therefore, yourselves to see as you are  
seen,  
Yourselves must bridge the gulf you made  
between.”*

**— FARID UD-DIN ATTÂR**

*The Conference of the Birds*

# The Bird, the Thread and the Open Sea

The Bird, the Thread, and the Open Sea reimagines Farid al-Din Attâr's Conference of the Birds as a journey through space, matter and sound. In the Sufi poem, thousands of birds set out in search of the Simurgh, only to discover that what they sought was inseparable from their own transformation. Kosmatopoulos approaches this journey not as a narrative to illustrate, but as a structure through which to explore hesitation, renunciation, orientation and becoming.

Developed through three interconnected chapters, the series progressively releases the story from the written page. In *Wings* (after Attâr), monumental wings remain suspended between anchoring and flight. In *archipeLogos*, embroidered fragments of the poem form a shifting geography that visitors physically navigate. In *Thirty Birds*, language dissolves into whispered voices, birdsong, rhythm and silence. Textile, sculpture, embroidery and sound turn the exhibition into a spatial fable whose meaning emerges through movement. Like Attâr's birds, visitors do not follow a fixed route towards a promised destination; they cross a landscape of fragments in which searching gradually becomes a form of transformation.

# Wings (after Attâr)

2025, Hand-dyed canvas, pigment, gold leaf, rope, sand

Wings (after Attâr) explores the moment preceding departure: the fragile interval in which the desire to leave encounters the forces that hold us back. Inspired by five birds from Attâr's Conference of the Birds, the works isolate a single wing from each figure. Removed from their bodies, plumage and narrative identities, the wings become the minimal forms through which flight may still be imagined.

Constructed from monumental expanses of hand-dyed textile, the five wings are suspended by visible ropes anchored to sandbags on the floor. Their forms appear capable of movement, yet remain materially bound to the ground. Weight and lift, hesitation and momentum, attachment and renunciation coexist within the same structure. The ropes do not simply prevent flight: their tension makes the possibility of flight perceptible. Each wing embodies a different disposition towards the unknown, but none completes the act of departure. Together, they form a suspended chorus in which transformation has begun without yet being fulfilled—a landscape of beings poised between the lives they inhabit and the journey that might carry them beyond themselves.





## Heron (after Attar)

Hand-dyed layered canvas, natural pigments, gold leaf, rope, sandbag





### **Hoopoe (after Attar)**

Hand-dyed layered canvas, natural pigments, rope, sandbag

## Owl (after Attar)

Hand-dyed layered canvas, natural pigments, rope, sandbag

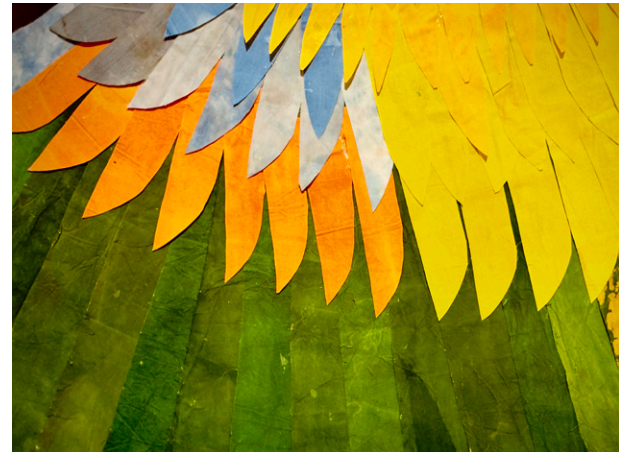




### **Peacock (after Attar)**

Hand-dyed layered canvas, natural pigments, rope, sandbag





### **Parrot (after Attar)**

Hand-dyed layered canvas, natural pigments, rope, sandbag

# archipeLogos

2025, Embroidery on veil

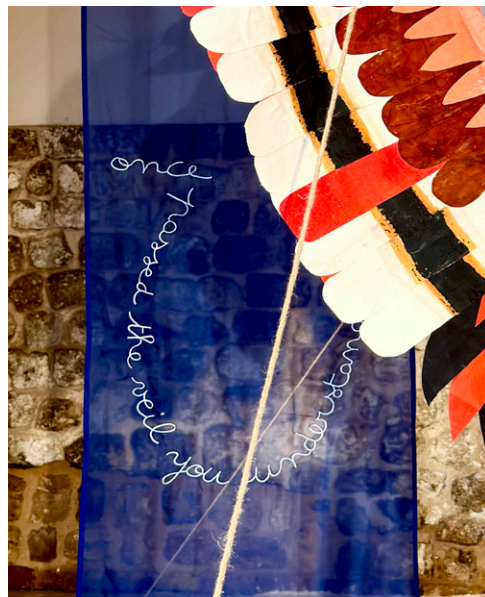
archipeLogos transforms Attâr's poem into a fragmented geography that can no longer be read from a single position. The work takes its title from the meeting of archipelago and logos: an expanse of separated territories held together by language. Rather than presenting *The Conference of the Birds* as a continuous narrative, Kosmatopoulos disperses its words through space, turning reading into an act of movement and orientation.

Fragments of the poem are embroidered onto long, translucent blue textiles suspended throughout the exhibition. Arranged like waves, currents or shifting horizons, the panels overlap without forming a stable sequence. Visitors must pass between them, approach certain phrases and lose sight of others. The text becomes alternately visible and obscured as bodies move through the installation. No definitive path reconnects its fragments; each passage produces another temporary constellation. Like Attâr's birds crossing the seven valleys, the reader advances without being able to perceive the journey in its entirety. Language no longer describes the landscape from outside: it becomes the unstable sea through which each visitor must find a way.









# Thirty birds

2026, Sound

Thirty Birds returns to the revelation contained within the name of Attâr's Simurgh: in Persian, si murgh can be read as "thirty birds." At the end of their journey, the surviving birds discover that the sovereign they sought is reflected in their own assembled presence. The work approaches this encounter through sound, asking how a collective body might emerge without becoming a single, unified voice.

Birdsong recordings gathered during a journey through Mesopotamia are interwoven with whispered fragments of Attâr's poem, spoken by the artist. Words, calls, breaths and silences appear, disappear and answer one another without settling into a continuous narration. The poem is no longer encountered as writing but as an atmosphere distributed through space. Individual voices remain recognisable while becoming part of a larger, unstable composition. Repetition creates echoes rather than certainty; silence becomes an active interval through which other sounds can emerge. The destination of the birds' search is therefore not represented as an image. It becomes an experience of listening in which multiplicity, relation and recognition briefly form a collective presence.

## **Listen to the audio work:**

[https://drive.google.com/file/d/1SPORX40tNagq7qHFld9cK0M57rRbYLje/view?usp=drive\\_link](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1SPORX40tNagq7qHFld9cK0M57rRbYLje/view?usp=drive_link)

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