



## **Palestine Arum | Rahmi Hamzi**

**Curated by Barak Rubin and Livia Tagliacozzo | Idris**

A black container filled with water holds a number of sculptures shaped like the Arum Palaestinum, a plant also known as Solomon's Lily and Priest's Hood. The plant, native to eastern Mediterranean areas, can be found in desert, mountain, and woodland areas including Jerusalem's surroundings and the Upper Jordan Valley. Mentioned in religious texts and depicted in archeological sites in Ancient Egypt, this plant has the peculiarity of being toxic in its raw form, but edible and curative when treated. Hamzi reproduces the traditional Palestinian herbal medicine, still extremely popular in local cuisine and healing practices, to exemplify notions of femininity, sexuality and purity. While the submersion of the sculptures in the water evokes the decantation process necessary to prepare the plant, the way its toxicity is neutralized serves as a metaphor for notions of chastity. Hamzi's wall illustration also features a botanical element, namely Cuscuta, known under many names including lady's laces and devil's hair. This rootless parasitic plant attacks its host plants and has medicinal properties. Superseding perceptions, expectations, and (mis)perceptions of femininity, the botanical elements in the illustration and the installation strike a balance between seemingly contradictory properties inherent in expressions and qualities of femininity. The female anatomy and psyche, as well as elements of chastity and sexuality are represented by aesthetically beautiful plants that are simultaneously healing, nutritive, contaminating, and poisonous.