

Alienation

اغتراب









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Cover

*Raafat Ishak Responses to an immigration request from  
one-hundred and ninety-four governments 2006-2009 (DETAIL)*  
Image courtesy of Barjeel Art Foundation.

Founder of Barjeel Art Foundation  
Sultan Sooud Al-Qassemi

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MARAYA  
ART CENTRE



مرابيا  
مركز للفنون

اغتراب

Alienation

## CONTENTS

BARJEEL ART FOUNDATION 5-6

ALIENATION BY MANDY MERZABAN 7-8

FOREWORD BY ANTONIA CARVER 9-10

RAAFAT ISHAK 11-16

INTERVIEW 17-24

AKRAM ZAATARI 25-26

WALID SITI 27-28

ABDULNASSER GHAREM 29-30

CAMILLE ZAKHARIA 31-32

LATEEFA BINT MAKTOUM 33-34

SAMA ALSHAIBI 35-38

LARISSA SANSOUR 39-40

INTERVIEW 41-46

BASHAR HROUB 47-50

JEFFAR KHALDI 51-52

SHAWKI YOUSSEF 53-56

FAYÇAL BAGHRICHE 57-60

٥-٦

مؤسسة بارجيل للفنون

٧-٨

”اغتراب“ بقلم ماندي مرزيان

٩-١٠

مقدمة بقلم أنتونيا كارفر

١١-١٦

رأفت إسحق

١٧-٢٤

مقابلة

٢٥-٢٦

أكرم زعتري

٢٧-٢٨

وليد سبتي

٢٩-٣٠

عبد الناصر غارم

٣١-٣٢

كميل زكريا

٣٣-٣٤

لطيفة بنت مكنوم

٣٥-٣٨

سما الشعيبي

٣٩-٤٠

لاريسا صنصور

٤١-٤٦

مقابلة

٤٧-٥٠

بشار حروب

٥١-٥٢

جعفر خالدي

٥٣-٥٦

شوقي يوسف

٥٧-٦٠

فيصل بغريشي

The Barjeel Art Foundation is an independent, United Arab Emirates-based initiative established to manage, preserve and exhibit the personal art collection of Sultan Sooud Al Qassemi. The foundation's guiding principle is to contribute to the intellectual development of the art scene in the Arab region by building a prominent, publicly accessible art collection in the UAE. Part of this objective involves developing a public platform to foster nuanced dialogue about contemporary art practices in the Arab world. By hosting in-house exhibitions, lending artwork to international forums, producing print and online publications, and fashioning interactive public programmes, the Barjeel Art Foundation strives to serve as an informative resource for contemporary Arab art locally and on the global stage.



تعتبر «مؤسسة بارجيل للفنون» مبادرة فنية مستقلة غير ربحية تتخذ من دولة الإمارات العربية المتحدة مقراً لها، وهي تستضيف وتعرض مجموعة المقتنيات الفنية الشخصية للكاتب سلطان سعود القاسمي، وتتمثل رؤية المؤسسة في المساهمة بدعم التطور الفكري على الساحة الفنية الخليجية عبر إيجاد حيز يحتضن الأعمال الفنية البارزة تحت سقف واحد بغية عرضها للجمهور الإماراتي، كما تهدف المؤسسة إلى توفير منصة عامة للجمهور تتيح تبادل وجهات النظر والحوار حول الممارسات الفنية المعاصرة في العالم العربي، وتسعى «مؤسسة بارجيل للفنون» جاهدة لتكون مصدراً إعلامياً وصوتاً للفن العربي المعاصر على الساحة المحلية والعالمية، وذلك من خلال استضافة معارض داخلية، وتقديم الأعمال الفنية في المنتديات والمحافل الدولية، وإصدار المطبوعات والمنشورات الإلكترونية عبر الإنترنت وابتكار البرامج التفاعلية العامة للجمهور.

## ALIENATION

ALIENATION, A STATE OF BEING DETACHED OR ESTRANGED, CAN REFER TO HOW PEOPLE ARE EXCLUDED OR MARGINALISED DUE TO BARRIERS IN LANGUAGE, CULTURE, RELIGION, SOCIAL DISPOSITION, SEXUALITY OR POLITICAL VIEWS. THAT WHICH IS FAMILIAR TO THE MAINSTREAM OF A SOCIETY IS VALUED WHILE ELEMENTS REGARDED AS FOREIGN OR "ALIEN" ARE TREATED WITH SUSPICION.

THE CONSEQUENCES OF THESE BARRIERS TAKE SHAPE IN VARIOUS CONTEXTS, INCLUDING TIES BETWEEN NATIONS AND IDEOLOGICAL CLASHES BETWEEN INDIVIDUALS. AS AUTHORITIES MAKE DECISIONS TO DRAW BORDERS AND STIPULATE REGULATIONS AND RIGHTS IN THE FOREGROUND, ALIENATION SEEPS INTO THE BACKGROUND AND CAN BE VIEWED IN THE INDIVIDUAL STORIES OF PEOPLE AFFECTED BY IT.

WORKS IN THIS EXHIBITION HIGHLIGHT HOW ALIENATION IS MANIFESTED IN SCENARIOS AS DIVERSE AS GEOPOLITICAL RELATIONS AND PERSONAL DAILY EXPERIENCES. THE WORKS INVESTIGATE THE BANALITIES OF IMMIGRATION PROCESSES, AS WELL AS IDEAS OF NATIONAL IDENTITY, URBANISATION AND THE HUMAN CONDITION.

Mandy Merzaban

Collections manager and curator

الاغتراب هو حالة من العزلة والتهميش، يمكن أن تدل على كيفية إقصاء أو تهميش الأشخاص نتيجة العوائق في اللغة، أو الثقافة، أو الدين، أو الطبيعة الاجتماعية، أو الميول الجنسية، أو الآراء السياسية. فما هو مألوف للشريحة الأساسية في مجتمع ما يحظى بالتقدير، بينما يتم التعامل بارتياب مع العناصر الأجنبية أو «الغريبة».

تتجلى نتائج هذه العوائق في سياقات عدة، بما في ذلك العلاقات بين الأمم والصراعات الأيديولوجية بين الأفراد. فعندما تتخذ السلطات قرارات برسم الحدود وإقرار التشريعات والحقوق في الواجهة، يتسرب الاغتراب إلى الخلفية ويمكن مشاهدته في القصص الفردية للأشخاص الذين تأثروا به.

الأعمال الفنية المشاركة في هذا المعرض تسلط الضوء على حقيقة أن الاغتراب يتجلى في سيناريوهات متنوعة بقدر تنوع العلاقات الجيوسياسية والتجارب الشخصية اليومية. وتحرى هذه الأعمال القواسم المشتركة بين عمليات الهجرة، وأفكار الهوية الوطنية، والتمدين، والحالة الإنسانية.

ماندي مرزيان  
القيِّمة ومديرة المجموعات

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ANTONIA CARVER

FOREWORD

Director, Art Dubai

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The Barjeel Art Foundation's latest exhibition draws on a term used in every other news report of 2011 pertaining to the Arab world - most notably in relation to the region's youth, alienated from society, and alienated from a narrative of contemporary history that denied them agency and an active role in shaping their future. 2011 was of course the year that seismic shifts altered the landscape of the region, releasing shockwaves that continue into 2012. Yet this exhibition does not attempt to sensationally seize on a moment that is treasured by many, yet has quickly become media shorthand -- hackneyed before it is really explored. Instead the show reflects the true power of contemporary art to ask questions, and set up an open-ended, complex enquiry. This approach is typical of the Barjeel Art Foundation: by drawing on a stellar, focused collection, one that is utterly familiar to the patron and curator, the exhibitions set up and tease out the relationships between works, tackling crucial themes in an accessible way, without compromise.

'**Alienation**' includes some of the most renowned artists working in the Arab world, including Akram Zaatari, the Beirut-based photographic artist who often works with the archive of the Arab Image Foundation, which he co-founded, delving into banks of historical images, particularly portraits. *Untitled (Nabih Awada's Book of Letters from Family and Friends)* is an intimate work, one that frames the potentially didactic subject of the exhibition within the context of the personal and domestic, setting the tone for the show's considered and diverse approach. Other artists in the show are upcoming, on the cusp of becoming established on the international stage: Abdalnasser Gharem, Walid Siti, Lateefa Bint Maktoum, Sama Alshaibi, Bashar Hroub, Jeffar Khaldi, Fayçal Baghriche and Shawki Youssef are joined by Larissa Sansour, who takes a playful, sharp approach to checkpoint life, and Melbourne-based Raafat Ishak, whose seminal *Responses to an immigration request from one-hundred and ninety-four governments* is reflective of an endurance test known only too well by those who spend their travelling lives seeking visas and shengens, and dealing with border politics.

The exhibition opening is one of the closing events of Art Week 2012, a time of the year when we celebrate the various arts scenes of the UAE; it seems apt to end this dynamic programme with an exhibition that opens up a new season of debate and cultural endeavour in the Gulf.

يستمد آخر معارض «مؤسسة بارجيل للفنون» اسمه «اغتراب» من مفردة لطالما تردد استخدامها في معظم التقارير الإخبارية لعام ٢٠١١ في العالم العربي - ولاسيما بين أوساط شباب المنطقة المغتربين عن مجتمعاتهم، وعن نسق التاريخ المعاصر الذي أنكر عليهم وجودهم أو دورهم الفاعل في بلورة مستقبل بلدانهم. لقد كان ٢٠١١ بلا شك عام التحولات الجذرية التي بدلت وجه المنطقة وما زالت مفاعيلها تتردد خلال عام ٢٠١٢. ومع ذلك لا يحاول هذا المعرض أن يقتنص لحظة يراها الكثيرون ثمينة، وسرعان ما أصبحت محط اهتمام إعلامي كثيف قبل أن تتكشف ملامساتها، بل يعكس المعرض بدلاً من ذلك القوة الحقيقية للفن المعاصر في طرح الأسئلة وإطلاق إشكاليات معقدة لا نهاية لها. ويدخل هذا الأسلوب في صلب منهجية «مؤسسة بارجيل للفنون»؛ فمن خلال تسليط الضوء على مجموعة استثنائية مألوفة تماماً لصاحب المؤسسة والقيّمة عليها، يقوم المعرض بسير أغوار العلاقات بين الأعمال الفنية، ومعالجة المواضيع الجوهرية بأسلوب سهل دون المساومة على القيمة الفنية.

يشارك في «اغتراب» عدد من أبرز فناني العالم العربي بمن فيهم أكرم زعتري، الفنان الفوتوغرافي المقيم في بيروت والذي يتعامل غالباً مع أرشيف «المؤسسة العربية للصورة» التي ساهم في تأسيسها، حيث يغوص في بحر من الصور القديمة، ولاسيما الشخصية منها. ويعد عمل زعتري غير المعنون (كتاب رسائل نبيه عوضة من العائلة والأصدقاء) عملاً وجدانياً يؤطر لهدف المعرض ضمن سياق شخصي ومحلي، ويضبط إيقاعات أسلوبه المتنوع. ويتضمن المعرض كذلك أعمال عدد من الفنانين الناشئين الذين يقفون على عتبات العالمية أمثال: عبدالناصر غارم، ووليد سיתי، ولطيفة بنت مكتوم، وسماء الشعبي، وبشار الحروب، وجعفر خالدي، وفیصل بغريشي، وشوقي يوسف، بالإضافة إلى لاريسا صنصور التي انتهجت طريقة مرحة وحادة في رسم تعقيدات الحياة الإنسانية، والفنان رفعت إسحق - المقيم في ملبورن - الذي يعد عمله «ردود لطلبات هجرة من ١٩٤ بلداً» انعكاساً لتجربة مضمّنية يدركها فقط أولئك الذين يمضون حياتهم سعياً للحصول على تأشيرات الدخول وطلبات الهجرة وما يرافقها من إشكاليات سياسية معقدة.

يعد معرض «اغتراب» أحد الفعاليات الختامية لـ «أسبوع الفن ٢٠١٢» الذي نحتفي فيه بالمشهد الفني المتنوع لدولة الإمارات العربية المتحدة؛ ويبدو من الملائم بمكان اختتام هذا البرنامج المميز بمعرض يفتح الباب واسعاً أمام فصل جديد من الحوار الثقافي في منطقة الخليج العربي.

Dear Sir/Madam

I am an Australian citizen who wishes to immigrate to [ ] and settle there permanently.

I was born in Cairo, Egypt in 1967 and migrated to Australia in 1982. I obtained my Australian citizenship in 1985. I have an under-graduate degree in fine arts and a post-graduate degree in architecture history and conservation practice. I have 10 years employment experience in the art conservation field and have been practicing as a visual artist for 15 years. I have sufficient finances to settle in a new country and start a small business. I have no criminal or prison records. I speak fluent English, Arabic and French. I plan to immigrate alone and have no known relatives or friends in [ ]. I am able to wind up my financial and personal affairs in Australia as soon as I have been granted an immigration permit.

I hope you look favourably at this initial inquiry/request for immigration and let me know at your earliest convenience as to what steps I should be taking next.

Yours sincerely  
Raafat Ishak

## Abbreviated Government Responses

- 1 **Afghanistan** No Response
- 2 **Albania** I enquire as to whether you have a parent
- 3 **Algeria** No Response
- 4 **Andorra** Monsieur
- 5 **Angola** Please Contact NY
- 6 **Antigua and Barbuda** No Response
- 7 **Argentina** Investment visa only
- 8 **Armenia** Does not have permanent residency procedure
- 9 **Austria** Please refer to following website
- 10 **Azerbaijan** No Response
- 11 **Bahamas** No Response
- 12 **Bahrain** Visa valid for two weeks only
- 13 **Bangladesh** While I feel deeply honoured
- 14 **Barbados** No Response
- 15 **Belarus** No Response
- 16 **Belgium** An immigration stop still exists
- 17 **Belize** There is no visa requirement
- 18 **Benin** No Response
- 19 **Bhutan** No Response
- 20 **Bolivia** No Response
- 21 **Bosnia and Herzegovina** Regarding your inquiry, please call
- 22 **Botswana** Prove you can contribute economy
- 23 **Brazil** This process takes a while
- 24 **Brunei** No Response
- 25 **Bulgaria** We would like to send you our general
- 26 **Burkina Faso** No Response
- 27 **Burundi** No Response
- 28 **Cambodia** No Response
- 29 **Cameroon** You do not become "Cameroonian"
- 30 **Canada** Please refer to the website
- 31 **Cape Verde** No Response
- 32 **Central African Republic** No Response
- 33 **Chad** No Response
- 34 **Chile** I suggest you have an in-depth look
- 35 **China** No Response
- 36 **Colombia** Ilustracion
- 37 **Comoros** No Response
- 38 **Congo** No Response
- 39 **Congo, Democratic Republic** No Response
- 40 **Cook Islands** Kia orana your mail has been forwarded
- 41 **Costa Rica** We suggest that you visit prior to final decision
- 42 **Cote D'Ivoire** No Response
- 43 **Croatia** At least five consecutive years
- 44 **Cuba** No Response
- 45 **Cyprus** No Response
- 46 **Czech Republic** Not eligible for a residency permit yet
- 47 **Denmark** See if you qualify
- 48 **Djibouti** No Response
- 49 **Dominica** No Response
- 50 **Dominican Republic** Foreigners cannot obtain the right
- 51 **Ecuador** Foreign nationals may apply
- 52 **El Salvador** Let me congratulate for your ideas
- 53 **Equatorial Guinea** No Response
- 54 **Eritrea** I accept your wish to immigrate
- 55 **Estonia** You can find information on homepage
- 56 **Ethiopia** Dear Aafat Ishak
- 57 **Fiji** I have passed your request for action
- 58 **Finland** The most common ways to apply residence
- 59 **France** You will be able to apply for nationality
- 60 **Gabon** Must be referred through an embassy
- 61 **Gambia** No Response
- 62 **Georgia** Good luck
- 63 **Germany** Please visit our website
- 64 **Ghana** Unable to issue visa that allow you to immigrate

65 **Greece** No Response  
66 **Grenada** No Response  
67 **Guatemala** Australian citizens do not need visa  
68 **Guinea** No Response  
69 **Guinea-Bissau** No Response  
70 **Guyana** Be wary of internet schemers  
71 **Haiti** We are very pleased of your intention  
72 **Honduras** No Response  
73 **Hungary** In possession of a 'D' visa you may lodge  
74 **Iceland** To have a contract of job  
75 **India** No Response  
76 **Indonesia** Contact Directorate General of Immigration  
77 **Iran** No Response  
78 **Iraq** No Response  
79 **Ireland** You would need to find a job  
80 **Israel** Best point of contact is the Aliyah centre  
81 **Italy** The visa must be applied in person  
82 **Jamaica** After a minimum of five years  
83 **Japan** Japan doesn't have an immigration program  
84 **Jordan** No Response  
85 **Kazakhstan** No Response  
86 **Kenya** No Response  
87 **Kiribati** No Response  
88 **Kuwait** No Response  
89 **Kyrgyzstan** No Response  
90 **Laos** No Response  
91 **Latvia** I would suggest you visit  
92 **Lebanon** Please provide phone no.  
93 **Lesotho** No Response  
94 **Liberia** No Response  
95 **Liechtenstein** Sorry we don't have information in English  
96 **Lithuania** Command of the state language  
97 **Luxembourg** Have you ever visited the country?  
98 **Libya** No Response  
99 **Macedonia** No Response  
100 **Madagascar** No Response  
101 **Malawi** No Response  
102 **Malaysia** The subject is a specialised matter  
103 **Maldives** We have no resident permit law  
104 **Mali** No Response  
105 **Malta** No Response  
106 **Marshall Islands** No Response  
107 **Mauritania** No Response  
108 **Mauritius** An investor may be naturalized  
109 **Mexico** No Response  
110 **Micronesia** No Response  
111 **Moldova** No Response  
112 **Monaco** Any foreigners except French  
113 **Mongolia** Does not allow dual citizenship  
114 **Montenegro** No Response  
115 **Morocco** Australian passport holders can stay  
116 **Mozambique** Speak at least one Mozambican language  
117 **Myanmar** Go visit and see for yourself  
118 **Namibia** Identify an investment opportunity  
119 **Nauru** No Response  
120 **Nepal** No Response  
121 **Netherlands** I want to come to the Netherlands  
122 **New Zealand** Entitled to live and work for as long as you like  
123 **Nicaragua** No Response  
124 **Niger** No Response  
125 **Nigeria** Vacancy on expatriate quota  
126 **North Korea** No Response  
127 **Norway** You will need to apply for a permit  
128 **Oman** If you set up your own business  
129 **Palau** No Response



130 **Pakistan** Send complete postal address for our record  
131 **Panama** Lawyers are the people to contact  
132 **Papua New Guinea** No Response  
133 **Paraguay** No Response  
134 **Peru** No Response  
135 **Philippines** No Response  
136 **Poland** Four forms filled out in Polish  
137 **Portugal** In order to obtain a resident visa  
138 **Qatar** Australian can obtain visa at Doha airport  
139 **Republic of Korea** Must meet certain requirements  
140 **Romania** Thank you for your enquiry  
141 **Russia** Must know Russian to apply  
142 **Rwanda** No Response  
143 **Saint Kitts Nevis** No Response  
144 **Saint Lucia** No Response  
145 **Saint Vincent** No Response  
146 **Samoa** No Response  
147 **San Marino** No Response  
148 **Sao Tome and principe** No Response  
149 **Saudi Arabia** No Response  
150 **Senegal** We do not have visa powers  
151 **Serbia** No Response  
152 **Seychelles** I suggest that you visit first  
153 **Sierra Leone** No Response  
154 **Singapore** You will need to apply directly with this company  
155 **Slovakia** The embassy did receive your mail  
156 **Slovenia** Aliens who reside for five years  
157 **Solomon Islands** I suggest you phone and make an appointment  
158 **Somalia** No Response  
159 **South Africa** No Response  
160 **Spain** Why do I need a residence card?  
161 **Sri Lanka** No Response  
162 **Sudan** No Response  
163 **Suriname** No Response  
164 **Swaziland** No Response  
165 **Sweden** Check the migration board website  
166 **Switzerland** No Response  
167 **Syria** No Response  
168 **Taiwan** No Response  
169 **Tajikistan** No Response  
170 **Tanzania** Certificate of Competence  
171 **Thailand** It's better that you give us a call  
172 **Timor Leste** Lodge application when in Dili  
173 **Togo** No Response  
174 **Tonga** No permanent residency visa category yet  
175 **Trinidad and Tobago** Please send a telephone number  
176 **Tunisia** No Response  
177  
178 **Turkey** No Response  
179 **Turkmenistan** No Response  
180 **Tuvalu** No Response  
181 **Uganda** Disclose more personal information  
182 **Ukraine** Scientists and artists of public interest  
183 **United Arab Emirates** No Response  
184 **United Kingdom** I would like to discuss your email  
185 **Uruguay** Two reference letters in Spanish  
186 **USA** Thank you for your email  
187 **Uzbekistan** No Response  
188 **Vanuatu** Good morning and warm Pacific greetings  
189 **Vatican city** No Response  
190 **Venezuela** No Response  
191 **Vietnam** No Response  
192 **Yemen** Copy of law concerning Yemeni nationality  
193 **Zambia** Your ticket number is  
194 **Zimbabwe** Residence permits are investing



**Above and Right:** Raafat Ishak *Responses to an immigration request from one-hundred and ninety-four governments, 2006 - 2009* (DETAIL) Oil and gesso on MDF 194 panels: 30 x 21 cm each  
Image courtesy of the artist and Sutton Gallery, Melbourne.

Informed by an interest in Arabic and Western art histories, Raafat Ishak's work explores the intersection of cultures and visual forms. Ishak's carefully abstracted compositions convey familiar contemporary symbols and urban spaces in ways that reveal the peculiarities of social and political contexts. With a background in architecture and fine arts, Ishak uses a nuanced approach linked to his own experience with emigration. Raised in Cairo until the age of 14, Ishak immigrated to Australia in 1982 and completed his education in Melbourne. The work *Responses to an immigration request from one-hundred and ninety-four governments, 2006-2009*, is a testament to the artist's aesthetic, formal and conceptual research. Ishak sent standardised letters requesting citizenship to a majority of the world's recognised governments. On 194 individual panels, he depicts the replies he received as well as the non-responses. A stylised national flag adorns each panel and the response is superimposed in abbreviated, decorative Arabic text. Painted on MDF boards, an engineered wood product often used as cheap building material, the series references modernist formal language through the use of the oval and the square and the fluidity Arabic calligraphy. Ishak lives in Melbourne and exhibits on an international scale.

يكشف عمل الفنان رأفت إسحق، الذي يحظى بخبرة واسعة في تاريخ الفن الغربي والعربي، عن التداخل بين الثقافات والأشكال المرئية؛ حيث تنطوي تراكيبه الفنية المنتقاة بعناية فائقة على دلالات للرموز المعاصرة المألوفة والفضاءات الحضرية وفق أساليب تكشف الجوانب الغريبة للسياق الاجتماعي والسياسي. واستفاد إسحق من خبرته في مجال العمارة والفنون الجميلة لإتباع منهج دقيق مرتبط بتجربته الشخصية خلال هجرته؛ حيث هاجر إسحق، الذي نشأ وترعرع في القاهرة حتى بلوغه سن الـ ١٤، إلى أستراليا عام ١٩٨٢ لينتهي دراسته في مدينة ملبورن.

ويُعتبر عمل «ردود لطلبات هجرة من ١٩٤٠ بلداً، ٢٠٠٦-٢٠٠٩» خير تجسيد لأبحاث إسحق وتجاربه القائمة على المفاهيم والجوانب الجمالية والشكلية؛ حيث أرسل الفنان طلبات الحصول على جنسية إلى غالبية الدول المعترف بها عالمياً؛ وهو يجسد من خلال هذا العمل ردود الرفض والقبول التي تلقاها من خلال تركيب ١٩٤ لوحاً خشبياً يزدان كل منها بالعلم الوطني لإحدى الدول مع إجابات القبول والرفض الواردة منها محفورة على شكل نص عربي مزين. وتشير هذه الرسوم – المنقوشة على مجموعة ألواح خشبية مضغوطة تستخدم كمواد بناء زهيدة التكلفة – إلى لغة رسمية عصرية تبدو من خلال حيوية الحروف الأبجدية العربية ذات الشكل البيضي والمربع. ويُذكر أن إسحق يعيش في ملبورن وتعرض أعماله في الكثير من المعارض العالمية.



**MM:** *Many of your works allude to architecture and urban space in ways that highlight and contemplate the form and function of these spaces. Both the material, muted colour schemes and compositions suggest a sense of being transitory and indefinite. What is the significance of place and space in your work and how it is displayed? Are there specific kinds of places that interest you?*

**RI:** Place and space are important elements in my practice. The historical, political and social attributes of a particular place lead to the eventual discussion, which I aim to propagate, on space. Places are conceptually defunct. However, I utilise specific histories to articulate my interests in space, as a contemporary and universal receptacle of associations and meanings. Architecture, by its inherent relationship to politics and economics, as well as having a deeply ingrained social and cultural function, provides broader means for articulating these concerns. What I aim to create is a speculative space for constructed memories, propositions and possibilities.

**MM:** *Your work sometimes includes MDF, a processed wood-like product that is quite far removed from genuine wood. How does this element play into your work conceptually?*

**RI:** MDF is essentially a wood and adhesive product. It is manufactured by utilising the waste produced from wood chipping, or more precisely, it is swept up wood dust mixed with glue. This places MDF at the absolute bottom of the timber chain. This material caste system interests me in that MDF defies the validation of an art object in terms of an inherent materialistic value. MDF is very cheap to obtain, retains its evenness and flatness and has a natural disposition to a peculiar colour, which is hard to achieve through paint. The colour interests me in its resemblance of wet desert sand, which is a highly uncommon sight considering the scarcity of desert rain. Ironically, I find the least wood-like material to appear as the most natural of all timbers. These contradictions present in the material make it become a surface that does not retain any materialistic associations and thus becomes a neutral container for the paint. MDF is also used for cheap cabinet making and some walling. In regards to site specificity, my paintings are often made with a particular setting in mind which contributes to its reading.



Raafat Ishak exhibition: *Recipes for aversion and strategy*. The Ian Potter Museum of Art, Melbourne University Installation, 2010. Photographer: Viki Petherbridge  
Image courtesy of the artist and Sutton Gallery, Melbourne.

**MM:** *How has your personal experience as an emigrant who moved to Melbourne from Cairo in the early 1980s shaped your ideas of citizenship and nationhood?*

**RI:** I grew up among a nationalistic fervour in 1970s Egypt, which still remains. In later years, and after migrating, I realised that this intensity was founded on an experience of loss; it was a type of mourning that followed military losses in the 50s and 60s and subsequently a contrived victory in 1973. I think the mourning lies deeper and is acutely felt by a number of segments of Egyptian society, the departed and marginalised Copts and Jews, women, libertarians and foreigners to name a few. More importantly, the mourning was, and perhaps still is, more amplified among Egypt's poor, who are yet to benefit from Egypt's independence and supposed programme of modernisation.

Meanwhile I was immersed in a different kind of nationalistic fervour in Australia that was based on victory and a presumption of superiority. I think this contrast de-shaped rather than shaped any ideas I had about citizenship and nationhood. There is no doubt that some personal attachment or a sense of pride in both countries still exists. However, I think that same sense of pride could be attributed to any place and only by circumstance is it attributed to these two specific countries. Further, and in contrast to Egypt, Australia is a country founded on migration, not to mention its initial foundation as a penal colony, a land for punishment. I think some of these

circumstances led to some ambivalence towards ideas of nationhood, and perhaps a conscious decision to at least politicise the process of its understanding.

**MM:** *There is a generation of Egyptians and other Arabs whose parents emigrated in the 1970s who also developed split loyalties or were left with an undefined sense of belonging. Could you elaborate on your identity or anti-identity in relation to broader constructed ideas of national identity?*

**RI:** A good example of a constructed idea of national identity is Australia Day on the 26th of January. The annual celebration consists of various nationalistic rituals, such as ceremonies that award prominent Australians with a variety of honorary titles, citizenship ceremonies, and widespread overt displays of flags and national emblems. Commonly referred to as 'invasion day' by a number of activists, artists and intellectuals, the celebration is a contradictory display of an overly positive sense of nationalism. The idea that a rat-infested British ship carrying petty criminals landed at Botany Bay, claimed a new British penal colony and dismantled an entire indigenous population that had occupied the land for 60,000 years, is a historical reality strategically ignored by the mainstream. The national day is an invention that instead reflects on the 200 years of achievements of a first-world country in much lighter tones.

What I find interesting about the day in particular, and nationhood in general, is the confounding pressure to simulate and conform to morally questionable ideas. I don't necessarily agree that migrants develop split loyalties. I believe the best loyalties are not divided but somehow manage to integrate disparate ideas into a workable whole. I think this does happen in Australia to a certain degree. What I think is more problematic is a tendency to assume a certain degree of ownership of a new place, politically and historically.

This is where one finds the most-extreme instances of blind loyalty and racism. Interestingly, racism is more rife among migrant communities who align themselves to a questionable foundation of a new country while maintaining inherent prejudices from their past lives.

Having said all that, I should explain that my own migrant experience was a unique, in that I left Egypt at 14 and without my parents. My older brother and I were brought to Australia for reasons that were not within my

grasp or control at 14. In fact, I was a relatively happy teenager, studying at a private language school and living in a comparatively affluent environment than most Egyptians. At 14 I was mostly concerned with making new friends, getting over lost ones and, in essence, considered the move to Australia as an adventure, albeit a long one. My identity, or what there is of it, is entirely based on a self-propagated position of independence, freedom and protest, best supported by my early decision to become an artist.



Raafat Ishak Responses to an immigration request from one-hundred and ninety-four governments, 2006 - 2009 (Tuvalu)

**MM:** *Why did you initially decide to write letters to 194 governments as part of the work "Responses to an immigration request from one-hundred and ninety-four governments?" Could you describe your approach and ambition in writing this standardised letter? Was the outcome of your quest as you expected?*

**RI:** The genesis of the project lies in a political position taken by the Australian government in the early 2000s toward asylum seekers arriving by boat. There was enormous support among the art community to allow the refugees to settle in Australia, despite popular opposition. There were a number of fundraising exhibitions taking place, a few of which I participated in. One work I made was a simple text work stating "send me home". I was suggesting that my passage as a migrant was relatively easy in contrast to the asylum seekers'. Therefore, I was proposing that I should be sent home, to make room for a more-needy refugee. This process led me to question what that home would be and where. Is there such a thing as a "home"? Was either Egypt or Australia a home as such? Continuing on this line of thought, I decided to investigate which countries would welcome me and provide me with a "home".

The suggestion is that home is a contrived concept,

without any concrete meaning. I also began to compare and contrast Australia's traditional position as a migrant-taker with other countries, and set out to investigate the ideas and policies that drive this process. I still had to deal with a visual form, which is at the core of my practice. I have always been interested in geography, particularly towns and countries', borders and flags. I approached country flags as a ready-made abstraction. Bands of colour and symbols that define states, and consequentially used them alphabetically, as another form of ready-made language construction. I was interested in the process eventually leading me to utilise a given form, that of the flags and their representative countries' alphabetical ordering. I think there were two aspects to this project. One lies in the purely visual rendering of our contemporary state as a field of bordered, enclosed and covert entities. The other was concerned with polemics. A politicised contemporary construct of country states and their bureaucratised relationship to the world at large. Interestingly, I visually achieved what I was hoping for. After receiving 97 responses, I had an equal set of responses and non-responses to work from, which in itself is an interesting visual proposition, an unintentional equilibrium. It allowed for the words "no response" in Arabic transcript, to disperse throughout the set, and create a noticeable division, without having it literally stated, between two opposed positions: acceptance and refusal.

***MM: Why did you decide to use Arabic to represent the responses to your immigration request?***

**RI:** I wanted the reading of the actual responses to be secondary to the viewing of the project in its entirety. I have always exhibited them with a room sheet listing the countries and the transcribed text. Arabic as a script is predominantly decorative in my mind, or at least in the way I have utilised it. The script itself can be more visually compelling than the message it carries. Furthermore, I regarded the responses as temporal anyway. Too much about the politics and policies of a given moment, rather than a concrete set of rules. The use of Arabic facilitated the viewing of the responses as a fluid set of rules, a set of temporary statements. Arabic is inherently, and historically, fluid.





Raafat Ishak *Responses to an immigration request from one-hundred and ninety-four governments, 2006 - 2009* (Installation view)  
Oil and gesso on MDF 194 panels: 30 x 21 cm each  
Image courtesy of the artist and Sutton Gallery, Melbourne.

RECEIVED / TELEGRAM

11

Code postal / Postal code  
 Adresse postale complète / Full postal address  
 Nom complet du père / Father's full name  
 Date de naissance / Date of birth  
 Sexe / Sex

12

Code postal / Postal code  
 Adresse postale complète / Full postal address  
 Nom complet du père / Father's full name  
 Date de naissance / Date of birth  
 Sexe / Sex

9. DESTINATAIRE/ADRESSE

NO. CIRC  
 Téléphone / Telephone  
 Nom complet (selon l'usage local) / Full name (as expressed locally)

REPLY TO THE MESSAGE

BBIRUT

Nouvelles de caractère personnel et/ou familial (Family and/or private news)

111

جوي هذه هي اجابتنا ربما دائما بالحب  
 لك تكون رديته اعذرتي انا لست لاتي  
 بل شارة وامل كلمات متقاطعه في الجرائد  
 لبلد الصعبة لعل هذه مزه سريره  
 ارجو ان تستمع لها ما  
 ارجو كل ما تطلبه ان ترسله لنا عبد الحكيم  
 على الرسالة ولدي الامم من الرأية  
 النامة والذات والهدى سلامي الى جميع  
 اجدواك فردا فردا

امك المتناقه

ام سويل

12. 12 OCT 1992

Date / التاريخ  
 Signature / التوقيع

direction envelope of our ... Folds here visit at all hours to borrow a cup of ... up on gossip. "We don't lock our doors" says one ...



رسالة الى  
 ريمت لاجل  
 ١٩٩  
 ١٨  
 في حبك  
 لاص  
 ١٤٥  
 ١٤٦  
 ١٤٧  
 ١٤٨  
 ١٤٩

ANADA  
 بسم الاحوة والرفقة  
 اخي صديقي سيرة  
 اكتب لك هذه الرسالة المتواضعة لانه لك معرفت  
 شعرت لوقت وطول الحبيب الذي نلتون بمانع العبر  
 لعودتي اليه كم نطلبنا الاسم والظروف التي انت الا انا  
 احبنا لثريد غديا ولكنك هو انك القابل لسوء ولذا  
 من انتم اقولس الامر وديم ثركت في ضم شيقه الوصي  
 مع نتمتع العاصم  
 اما في حين فاما في  
 انتم وانا في حالي في  
 ذلك من حبيبتك في  
 وبعدهم انهم في  
 لان نتمتع ذلك في  
 وانا ان اطلع من  
 راضيا اني لك امر  
 مرتعة بها عهلتك يا  
 وان اللقاء القريب  
 احبك  
 ريمت ١٨

MESSAGE  
 مشتاقين لاجل  
 ANXIOUS FOR  
 NEWS  
 مشتاقين لاجل  
 Signature

**Previous and Above:**

Akram Zaatari *Untitled (Nabih Awada's Book of Letters from Family and Friends)* 2007 C-Print  
49 x 40 cm (each) Image courtesy of Galerie Sfier Semler, Berlin.

Growing up during the Lebanese Civil War, interdisciplinary artist Akram Zaatari lived in an environment of limited mobility in the Southern town of Saida. During his adolescence, Zaatari developed a practice of researching, collecting and recording from his surroundings, a habit that later shaped his artistic approach. His methodology can be likened to fieldwork: gathering data for analysis and uniquely presenting his observations through photography, film and installation. Playing with genres of documentary filmmaking, photography and archival practice, Zaatari often blurs the borders between fiction and reality, history and memory. Exploring the subtle

intricacies of Lebanon's post-war condition, Zaatari sifts through hidden personal histories. He inspects image making and its circulation in relation to circumstances of war and resistance and also analyses representations of male sexuality. In his recent project about communist resistance fighter Nabih Awada, who was detained in an Israeli prison from 1988 to 1998 at the age of 16, Zaatari investigates the psychological effects of imprisonment and restricted communication. His work consists of photographed letters exchanged between Awada and his family and friends during his imprisonment. Zaatari is co-founder of Beirut-based Arab Image Foundation and has exhibited internationally, including at biennials in Istanbul, Venice, Sharjah and Sao Paulo.

من غير عنوان (كتاب رسائل  
نبيه عواضه العائلة والأصدقاء)

أكرم زعتري

نشأ الفنان الموهوب أكرم زعتري خلال فترة الحرب الأهلية اللبنانية وعاش في جنوب صيدا وسط ظروف صعبة التنقل. وابتكر زعتري خلال فترة مراهقته العديد من الأساليب الجديدة للبحث والعمل الميداني والاستقصاء والأرشفة، وهو ما ساعده على رسم ملامح رؤيته الفنية؛ إذ يعتمد منهجه على البحث الميداني وجمع البيانات والمعلومات لتحليلها، وتقديم تصوره وملاحظاته الفريدة مستخدماً فن الصور الفوتوغرافية، والأفلام، والأعمال التركيبية. ويستعين زعتري بالضروب الأدبية مثل الأعمال الوثائقية، والتصوير، وأساليب الأرشفة بغية طمس العوائق والحدود بين الواقع والخيال وبين التاريخ والذاكرة. ومن خلال استكشاف تعقيدات وإشكاليات حقبة ما بعد الحرب الأهلية اللبنانية، يسعى زعتري لسبر أغوار تجاربه الشخصية والتمحيص بدقة في عملية إنتاج الصور وتداولها بالارتباط مع ظروف الحرب والمقاومة والصور التحليلية للهوية الذكورية.

ويسلط زعتري من خلال مشروعه الأخير الضوء على المقاوم الشيوعي نبيه عواضه الذي قضى عشر سنوات في سجون الاحتلال الإسرائيلي بين الأعوام ١٩٨٨-١٩٩٨ منذ كان في السادسة عشر من عمره؛ حيث يصور الآثار النفسية للسنج وصعوبة التواصل مع العالم الخارجي. وتنطوي أعمال زعتري على الرسائل الفوتوغرافية المتبادلة بين عواضه وأهله وأصدقائه خلال فترة أسره.

يشار إلى أن زعتري يعتبر أحد المشاركين في إطلاق «المؤسسة العربية للصورة» ببيروت، وقد شارك في العديد من المعارض العالمية المرموقة مثل بيناليات اسطنبول، والبندقية، والشارقة، وساو باولو.



Walid Siti *Chasing Utopia 2* 2011 Straw, clay and acrylic. 40 x 40 x 40 cm  
Image courtesy of Barjeel Art Foundation.

The symbolic role of natural landscapes and constructed landmarks to collective memory is central to the work of esteemed Iraqi artist Walid Siti. Referencing the ancient citadel of Erbil with rudimentary symbols of Kurdish folklore such as mountains and rivers, Siti explores the relationship between the ancient and contemporary, the innate and the living, the eternal and the changeable. Using painting, drawing, printmaking and installation, Siti investigates aspects of collective memory with the individual experience amid changing socio-political realities. Born in Dohuk in Iraqi Kurdistan in 1954, Siti lived in the former Yugoslavia before seeking political asylum in London during increasing aggression against those opposed to Iraq's Ba'athist regime. Based in London

since then, Siti's experience of exile feeds into his analytical observations of the rapid changes in Erbil after its stagnation from years of war. Siti's basic approach references the building blocks of societies; beginning each piece with a broad base mounting to form a peak, the artist repetitively layers brush strokes and shapes to reflect disparities between the lower and upper levels society. In *Chasing Utopia*, Siti examines parallels between two cities, Dubai and Erbil, where rapid transformation threatens cultural identity and natural surroundings. Siti, who has exhibited internationally, participated in Iraq's pavilion at the 54th Venice Biennale.

## وليد سיתי

«السعي وراء اليوتوبيا»

تركز أعمال الفنان العراقي وليد سיתי - المولود عام ١٩٥٤ في مدينة دهوك بکردستان العراق - على دور الدلالات الرمزية المتجسدة في المناظر الطبيعية والمعالم التاريخية المشيدة بالنسبة للذاكرة الجمعية وخبائها. ويستكشف سיתי أوجه التشابه بين القديم والمعاصر، والفطري والمكتسب، والأزلي والمتغير، وذلك من خلال تصويره لقلعة أربيل الأثرية مع بعض الرموز الأثرية والبدائية المستوحاة من الفلكلور الكردي مثل الجبال والأنهار. كما يحاول سיתי سبر أغوار الذاكرة الجمعية مستعيناً بالخبرة الشخصية في خضم المشهد الاجتماعي والسياسي المتغير، وذلك من خلال رسم اللوحات الطباعية والزيتية والأعمال التركيبية. وأسهمت تجربة المنفى بمدينة لندن في إثراء ملاحظات سיתי التحليلية فيما يتعلق بالتغيرات السريعة التي تشهدها مدينة أربيل بعد تجاوزها سنوات طويلة من الحروب والاضطهاد. ويعتمد الأسلوب الرئيسي للفنان سיתי على التصوير الواضح للمباني السكنية؛ حيث عمد إلى رسم مبان عريضة القاعدة يتضاءل اتساعها وصولاً إلى القمة، وهو يستخدم ضربات خفيفة من الفرشاة لرسم الطوابق والأشكال المختلفة وفق أسلوب يعكس التفاوت بين الطبقات الدنيا والعليا للمجتمع. وفي عمله «السعي وراء اليوتوبيا»، يسلط سיתי الضوء على أوجه التشابه بين مدينة دبي ومدينة أربيل التي تشهد تحولا يفوق الإدراك ويهدد هويتها الثقافية والتاريخية وسياقها الطبيعي.

وشارك سיתי، الذي تحتضن أعماله العديد من المعارض العالمية المرموقة، في معرض «بينالي فينيسيا» الرابع والخمسين ممثلاً للجنح العراقي. ويذكر أن سיתי عاش في يوغسلافيا السابقة قبل طلبه للجوء السياسي في لندن نتيجة تزايد المضايقات لمعارض النظام العراقي السابق، وليستقر هناك منذ ذلك الحين.



Abdunasser Gharem *Men at work III* 2010 Industrial lacquer paint on rubber stamps on 9 mm Indonesian plywood with light bulbs 240 x 300 cm  
Image courtesy of the artist and Caprice Horn.

The socio-political dichotomies present in the media, politics and daily life stand at the centre of Saudi Arabian artist Abdunasser Gharem's installations, public interventions and sculptural works. Gharem's work is informed by his unique interpretation of the social conditions of his home country and his direct interaction with society. His process is very much rooted in communication and exploration. Gharem intentionally does not have studio space. Rather, he incorporates art into his day-to-day life, searching for opportunities for interventions in his surroundings. Born in 1973 in the Saudi region of Khamis Mushait, site of the King Khalid Air Base, Gharem serves as a major in the Saudi army. Gharem brings a multi-dimensional understanding of the world around him to artwork that juxtaposes recognisable icons, such as road signs, political figures and trademarks, and uses everyday, mass-produced materials.



Gharem's creations engage observers, compelling them to the question and challenge fixed ideas and customs. In his series *Men at work* Gharem highlights the gesture of a lone soldier within a kaleidoscope of Islamic motif and a road sign commonly found in the Middle East region. Gharem has garnered international acclaim for his work and is part of the Saudi artist initiative, Edge of Arabia.

## عبد الناصر غارم

«الرجال يعملون ٣»

يعكس الفنان التشكيلي السعودي عبد الناصر غارم رؤيته الفريدة حول الازدواجيات السياسية والاجتماعية التي تبرزها وسائل الإعلام والسياسة والحياة اليومية، وذلك من خلال ابتكار المجسمات التركيبية، والأعمال النحتية، ومعرضات الأماكن العامة، وهو يعتمد في تقديم لوحاته على التفاعل المباشر مع الجمهور. كما تعكس أعمال غارم تحليلاته الفريدة المتعلقة بالظروف الاجتماعية السائدة في موطنه الأم إلى جانب تفاعله المباشر مع الجمهور والمجتمع. ويتسم غارم بنهجه المتعمق في التواصل والاستكشاف، حيث تعتمد عدم امتلاك استوديو خاص به حرصاً منه على جعل الفن جزءاً من نمط حياته اليومية وفرصة تتيح له التدخل بما يحيط به.

ولد عبد الناصر عام ١٩٧٣ في منطقة خميس مشيط التي توجد فيها قاعدة الملك خالد الجوية بالمملكة العربية السعودية. وبصفته رائداً في الجيش السعودي، أضفى غارم مفهوماً متميزاً ومتعدد الأبعاد للعالم من حوله؛ حيث يتراصف في أعماله العديد من العناصر اللافتة مثل الإشارات الطرقية، والرموز والشخصيات السياسية، والعلامات التجارية مستخدماً مواد تتواجد في حياتنا اليومية بكثرة. ولعل أهم ما يميز أسلوب غارم الفني هو قدرته على التواصل مع الجمهور ودفع المشاهد للتساؤل، وتحدي كافة الأعراف والمعتقدات والأفكار المسبقة التي تعتبر من الثوابت في الماضي. وفي عمله «الرجال يعملون»، يسلط غارم الضوء على صورة جندي محاط بأجواء إسلامية مع إشارة طرقية عادة ما توجد في منطقة الشرق الأوسط. ولد الفنان التشكيلي السعودي عبد الناصر غارم عام ١٩٧٣ في مدينة خميس مشيط بالمملكة العربية السعودية، ولا يزال يقيم هناك؛ وهو يعمل ضابطاً برتبة رائد في الجيش السعودي. وحظيت أعمال غارم بشهرة عالمية، كما يتم عرض أعماله في معرض «حافة الجزيرة العربية» السعودي.

Autobiographical influences play an important role in the work of Camille Zakharia, who chronicles the multitude of places he has called home since leaving Lebanon in 1985 during the Civil War. Creating a vast portfolio of work using photomontage and collage to document personal encounters with people, Zakharia intimately captures the public and private spaces of his life. Zakharia's montages often include family photographs, fragments of personal letters and other delicate items, which he re-assembles in a way that portrays the rupture and discord of his experiences. In his series *Coastal Promenade*, a work commissioned by Bahrain's Ministry of Culture as part of the nation's participation in the Venice Biennale's 12th International Architecture Exhibition, Zakharia documents the dwindling number of fisherman's huts situated along Bahrain's coastline. Addressing the nation's changing relationship to its landscape and water amid vast urban development and land reclamation, Zakharia underlines the quiet decline of sea culture in Bahrain, a name that means "two seas" in Arabic. A resident of the island nation since 1999, Zakharia was born in Tripoli, Lebanon in 1962 and has also resided in the United States, Greece, Turkey and Canada. His work has been exhibited in the Gulf Arab region, Europe and North America.





**Above:** Camille Zakharia Hut 12 Busaiteen Bahrain **Left:** Hut 5 Muharraḡ Bahrain from the Coastal Promenade series 2010 Hahnemuhle Fine Art Paper Ed. 2 of 3 and Ed. 3 of 3 61 x 61 cm  
Image courtesy of the artist.

سلسلة «نزهة ساحلية»

كميل زكريا

يتميز الفنان اللبناني- الكندي كميل زكريا برصيده الكبير من الأعمال الفنية التي استخدم فيها الكولاج والمونتاج الفوتوغرافي لتوثيق المساحات العامة والخاصة واللقاءات مع الناس. وغالباً ما تشتمل أعماله على صور عائلية، وقصاصات من الرسائل الشخصية وغيرها من الأغراض الخاصة التي يعيد صياغتها بأسلوب يعكس تشتت تجاربه. ويتناول زكريا تجربته الشخصية بطرق عديدة مستعرضاً الأماكن العديدة التي اتخذها وطناً له منذ مغادرته لبنان خلال الحرب الأهلية عام ١٩٨٥. ويوثق كميل زكريا في سلسلته «نزهة ساحلية» - الذي ترعاه وزارة الثقافة البحرينية ضمن إطار مشاركتها الوطنية في معرض العمارة الدولي الثاني عشر في «بينالي البندقية» - العدد المتضائل من عشش صيادي الأسماك على طول الشريط الساحلي للبحرين مع تسليط الضوء على تغيير علاقة سكان هذا البلد مع الطبيعة والبحر في خضم المد الحضري الهائل وعمليات استصلاح الأراضي، حيث يؤكد زكريا في أعماله على الانحسار التدريجي للثقافة البحرية في مملكة البحرين التي تستقي اسمها من البحر. ويشار إلى أن كميل زكريا هو من مواليد مدينة طرابلس عام ١٩٦٢؛ وأقام في كل من الولايات المتحدة، واليونان، وتركيا، وكندا، ويقوم حالياً في البحرين منذ عام ١٩٩٩. وقد تم عرض نتاجاته الفنية في الخليج، وأوروبا، وكندا، والولايات المتحدة.

Emirati artist Lateefa Bint Maktoum combines photography and montage to create ethereal landscapes that examine transformations in culture and the ever-changing connections between life, nature and women. Using her personal experiences of life in Dubai as a base, Maktoum re-imagines and re-invents the landscape of her childhood. She explains the importance of nature to cultural rituals such as preparing food, saying, "I used to cut leaves off the ghaf tree with one of my mother's friends and take them back to the Majlis to eat with rice." The importance of women and the bonds that are built through cultural practices have influenced her artwork. She notes, "what Dubai was, the essence of it is being lost." In her series *Observers of Change*, part of the UAE's exhibit at the 2011 Venice Biennale, Maktoum captures the Gulf nation's transformed landscapes amid mass urbanisation, land reclamation and construction. Upturned and wilted palm trees represent an acute awareness of the conflicting environment of her homeland and the death and rebirth of cities. Maktoum is the founder of Tashkeel, a facility dedicated to providing artists based in the UAE a place to produce and exhibit art.



Lateefa Bint Maktoum *Observers of Change I* 2011 Digital print mounted on 4 mm dibond. Digital print mounted on 4 mm dibond Ed. 1 of 3 221 x 148 cm  
Image courtesy of the artist and Tashkeel.

«مراقبو التغيير ١»

لطيفة بنت مكتوم

تمزج الفنانة الإماراتية لطيفة بنت مكتوم فن التصوير الضوئي بالمونتاج لتصوغ مناظر استثنائية بديعة تعين من خلالها التحولات الثقافية والصلات دائمة التغيير بين الحياة والطبيعة والنساء. وبالاستناد إلى تجاربها الحياتية الشخصية في مدينتها الأم دبي، تعيد الفنانة تخيل وابتكار صور طفولتها، وتشبه أهمية الطبيعة في الطقوس الثقافية المتوارثة بعملية إعداد الطعام قائلة: «كنا نقطف أوراق شجرة الغاف مع إحدى صديقات والدتي لكي نتناولها مع الأرز في المجالس». كما يبدو أثر النساء والروابط المبنية من خلال الممارسات الثقافية واضحة في أعمال الفنانة، وتقول بهذا الخصوص: «أعتقد بأن مفهوم وجوه وجود دبي قد ضاع». وتضيء لطيفة بنت مكتوم في سلسلتها «مراقبو التغيير»- التي شاركت ضمن الجناح الإماراتي في معرض فن العمارة الدولي الثاني عشر في «بينالي البندقية ٢٠١١»- على الهوية المتغيرة لبلدها الخليجي في خضم تزايد المساحات العمرانية واستصلاح الأراضي وأعمال البناء. وتمثل أشجار النخيل المقلوبة والهزيلة رؤية الفنانة الواضحة للبيئة الحافلة بالتباينات في بلادها عاكسة مفاهيم موت المدن وولادتها مجدداً. وأسست لطيفة بنت مكتوم مركز «تشكيل» الذي يعد منشأة فنية تهدف إلى توفير المساحة للفنانين في دولة الإمارات العربية المتحدة لإنتاج وعرض إبداعاتهم الفنية.

Born in Basra to an Iraqi father and a Palestinian mother, Sama Alshaibi has a long history of negotiating spaces of conflict in her artwork: the aftermath of war and exile, the power dynamics between nation/state and its citizenry, and the interaction between humans competing for resources and power. Her personal history as a naturalised U.S. citizen of the Iraqi-Palestinian Diasporas has bound Alshaibi to an inescapable relationship with such issues. She infiltrates and confronts spaces in which control and domination are the status quo. Her work challenges predictable attitudes toward power dynamics between the strong and the weak, shaping new possibilities for consideration. Her practice functions in multiple frames: within the trajectory of liberation struggles and within the discourse of art. The work *Contested Land* is from the Mount of Olives, photographed while standing in East Jerusalem, with the Israeli-occupied side to the right and Palestinian-controlled Abu Dis visible to the left. The right side is divided by the separation wall, which appears like a severing wound in the landscape. This wound is also embedded in the social fabric of the occupied land, a split dividing those with power and those without.





Right and Above: Sama Alshaibi Contested Land 2007 (from Contested Land series) [DETAIL] C-Prints on Crane Museo Paper Ed. 3 of 6 58.4 x 58.4 cm  
Image courtesy of the artist, Lawrie Shabibi Gallery and Selma Feriani Gallery.

«أرض الصراع»

سما الشعيبي

ولدت الفنانة سما الشعيبي في مدينة البصرة العراقية من أب عراقي وأم فلسطينية وهي تحمل الجنسية الأمريكية. وتعكس أعمال الشعيبي خبرة واسعة في فضاءات التفاوض لحل النزاعات. تتناول الشعيبي تجارب الحرب، والمنفى، وديناميكية الحكم بين أجهزة الدولة ومواطنيها، والعلاقات بين الناس ونزاعهم على الموارد الطبيعية والسلطة. وبحكم كونها مواطنة مغتربة من أصول عراقية وفلسطينية وتحمل الجنسية الأمريكية، وجدت الشعيبي أن لا مفر أمامها من التعامل مع هذه القضايا. وتستكشف الشعيبي المساحات والفضاءات التي تسود فيها أشكال الحكم والسيطرة، كما تتحدى أعمالها الاتجاهات والأفكار المقبولة المتعلقة بديناميكيات القوة والسلطة المتمحورة حول الصراع بين القوي والضعيف، وهو ما يتيح لها طرح أفكار واحتمالات جديدة يمكن أخذها بعين الاعتبار. وتعتمد الشعيبي على منهج متعدد الأطر ينطوي على مسيرة الكفاح من أجل التحرير والخطاب الفني.

ويمثل عمل الشعيبي «أرض الصراع» صورة فوتوغرافية مأخوذة لمدينة القدس من جبل الزيتون، وتظهر فيها القدس الشرقية على الجانب الإسرائيلي المحتل من جهة اليمين؛ أما من جهة اليسار، فتظهر مدينة أبو ديس على الجانب الفلسطيني. وينقسم الجانب الأيمن إلى قسمين نتيجة بناء جدار الفصل الذي يبدو كجرح عميق يشوه المنظر الطبيعي للمنطقة، وشرخ في النسيج الاجتماعي بين من يتربعون على عرش السلطة ومن لا حول لهم ولا قوة.



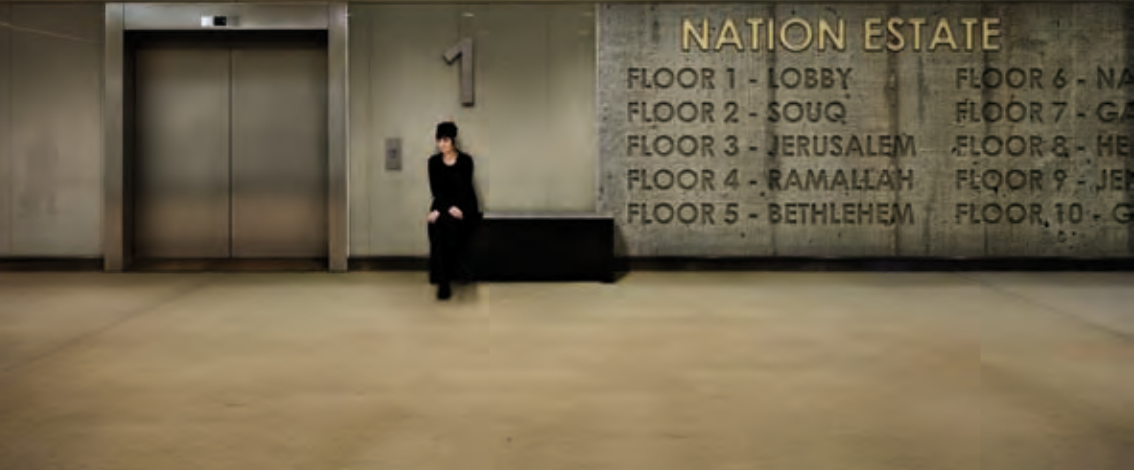
Sama Alshaibi *Contested Land* 2007 (from *Contested Land series*) C-Prints on Crane Museo Paper  
Ed. 3 of 6 58.4 x 58.4 cm  
Image courtesy of the artist, Lawrie Shabibi Gallery and Selma Feriani Gallery.





Larissa Sansour explores the complexities of life in Palestine by drawing on pop culture and film in a cunning and often-humorous subversion of Western narratives. Her work includes references to TV comedies, spaghetti Westerns, sci-fi and horror films—genres typically associated with light entertainment. She combines political commentary with a playful exploration of alternative universes in multidisciplinary projects spanning photography, video and installation. Sansour searches for innovative ways to revive contemporary Palestine, offering an otherworldly reflection on the tragic absurdity of day-to-day life there.

In *Nation Estate*, the future Palestinian state is located in a hi-tech skyscraper large enough to house the entire Palestinian population. Each floor is named after a Palestinian city and is linked by an elevator. Conceived in the wake of the Palestinian request for nationhood at the United Nations in 2011, the work comments on the diminishing territory of the Palestinian state and how impossible it is to interconnect its cities. The piece was nominated for the 2011 Lacoste-sponsored Elysée Prize of Switzerland's Musée de l'Elysée. However the nomination was later revoked at Lacoste's request to disassociate itself from the political implications of the artist's concept, a move that sparked a worldwide outcry. Born in Jerusalem, Sansour studied fine arts in Copenhagen, London and New York and is currently based in London. Her widely exhibited work is featured in a number of recent art publications.



Larissa Sansour Nation Estate - Main Lobby 2011 C-print Artist's Proof Ed. 3 of 10, 59.4 x 42 cm  
Image courtesy of the artist.

## لاريسا صنصور..... «مبنى الدولة»

ولدت الفنانة الفلسطينية لاريسا صنصور في مدينة القدس، ودرست الفنون الجميلة في كوبنهاغن ولندن ونيويورك، وهي تقيم حالياً في العاصمة البريطانية لندن. وتستكشف صنصور في أعمالها تعقيدات الحياة في فلسطين من خلال تسليط الضوء على ثقافة موسيقى البوب والعروض السينمائية مع إضفاء روح الدهاء والدعابة الهزلية المستمدة من الروايات الغربية. وتركز أعمال صنصور في مجملها على حس الكوميديا التلفزيونية السوداء الخفيفة، وأفلام الغرب الأمريكي والرعب والخيال العلمي، إلى جانب الأعمال التي تتسم بخفة الظل. وتجمع صنصور بين الحس السياسي ورغبة استكشاف عوالم جديدة مفعمة بالمرح من خلال اعتمادها على فن التصوير الفوتوغرافي والفيديو والأعمال التركيبية، كما تسعى إلى البحث عن أساليب مبتكرة تبث الروح في الهوية الفلسطينية ومكوناتها المعاصرة، وتقدم انعكاساً خيالياً لعبثية الحياة المأساوية اليومية في موطنها.

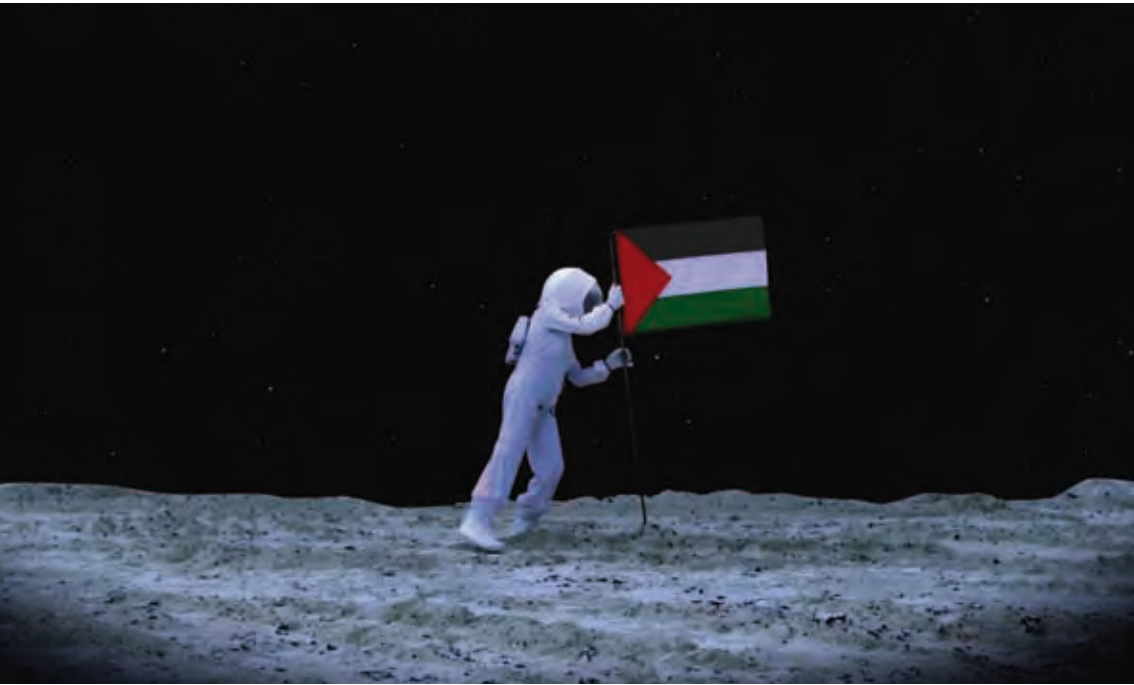
وفي عملها «مبنى الدولة»، تتخيل صنصور دولة فلسطين الموعودة بمدنها المحتلة وكأنها ناطحة سحاب حديثة تكفي لاحتضان الشعب الفلسطيني برمته، فيما تتوضع كل مدينة محتلة في طابق وترتبط مع بعضها البعض عن طريق مصعد كهربائي. ولملت صورة هذا المشروع في مخيلة صنصور غداة تقديم السلطة الفلسطينية طلب تأكيد عضويتها الكاملة في الأمم المتحدة، حيث رغبت بتسليط الضوء على عمليات البناء الاستيطاني وسرقة الأراضي وتقطيع أوصال المدن الفلسطينية. وتم ترشيح عمل صنصور للفوز بجائزة «لاكوست إليزيه» التي يمنحها متحف الإليزيه السويسري تحت رعاية العلامة التجارية الفرنسية «لاكوست» للملابس». ولكن «لاكوست» استبعدت فيما بعد مشروع «مبنى الدولة» من المسابقة مدعية بأنها تود النأي بنفسها عن الاتجاهات السياسية الخاصة بصنصور، وهو ما أثار موجة غضب في صفوف الجمهور على مستوى العالم.

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**INTERVIEW**

LARISSA SANSOUR

with MANDY MERZABAN



Larissa Sansour *A Space Exodus* 2009 Video 5'24"  
Image courtesy of the artist.

**MM:** *In video works such as Bethlehem Bandolero and A Space Exodus you reference Western film genres, applying their plots and clichés to a Palestinian context. Your use of these dramatics is often in an overtly ironic and political way. What message do you strive to send with this approach and do you see any risks conceptually in making blunt statements in artwork?*

**LS:** In my work, I often resort to fictionalised space to address current political realities. In the case of Palestine, the political reality on the ground has taken such a dramatic development that it is more surreal to address the situation in an understated way, rather than resort to hyperbole. Sometimes and as in the case of Palestine, the political reality can reach such an impasse that regular methods of addressing the problem are rendered futile.

I don't see my work as being direct or blunt in its statements. In my work, I usually posit a parallel universe in which current political realities can be

addressed. My work is not necessarily didactic, but offers a new way of looking and approaching the problem at hand. In *Bethlehem Bandolero* and *A Space Exodus*, I attempt to create scenarios where the Palestinian is no longer the victim, but instead enjoys the same power as anyone else in our media-driven, entertainment-led world. The people who are usually the subject of news reports and diplomatic initiatives instead become the commentators. No longer the underdogs, they stand at the same level as the rest of the world's media and power-players.

**MM:** *In some of your work, you are a primary persona or protagonist, particularly in your video works A Space Exodus, where your name is labelled on your space suit, Land Confiscation, Run Lara Run, as well as the preliminary photos for Nation Estate. Why have you chosen to implicate yourself in your work? Can you elaborate on how your presence in your artwork has become integral in your creative practice?*

**LS:** In my early works, I included myself as the primary protagonist due to budget restrictions. I simply did not have the funds to hire real actors. Since those early works, my own presence in my pieces has become sort of a signature. It has also gradually become clear that a certain performative quality is lost if I don't take part in my own work. By now, it seems as if the acts carried out by my protagonists only make overall sense if they are embodied by one single person, and that person simply, virtually by default, happens to be me.

I also tend to involve my family quite a bit. My sister and brother feature in several of my pieces. Even they have become part of the signature by now. I guess that working

with people I know extremely well gives me a high degree of certainty that I can get the results I am hoping for. In my dialogue pieces, for example, it is crucial for me that the people involved are not afraid to delve into politically sensitive issues. The unpredictable nature of these conversations still needs a certain framework in order to make sense. And such a framework, I find,



Larissa Sansour *Bethlehem Bandolero* 2005  
Video, 5' 39'' Image courtesy of the artist.

is most-easily established by surrounding myself with people whose convictions and performative qualities I am familiar with. My sister and brother will also join me on the set of the *Nation Estate* film - in which I will once again be acting as the female protagonist.

**MM:** *What is your view of the label 'political artist'?*

**LS:** I have a hard time seeing how art can be separated from politics. I think the concept of "Art for the sake of Art" is a mantra that gets repeated often, but that does not make much sense in the long run. Politics have always been inseparable from art throughout its history. It is hard to imagine an autonomous piece of work that is not conditioned by its context. I guess certain artists are more directly or overtly politically engaged than others, and if they need to be labelled "political artists" for easier categorisation, I don't see a big problem with that.

As many other artists, especially from the Middle East, I see that there is an urgency in referencing worldwide politics, and I do feel that art is a potent tool in achieving or affecting political change, no matter how slight, provided it always functions on its own premises and is not taken out of the artistic discourse.

**MM:** *In your preliminary photographs for the project Nation Estate, you envision the establishment of a Palestinian state within a futuristic concrete and metal edifice. Housing both Palestine's people and landmarks, floors are connected by an elevator, thereby shielding residents from draconian Israeli checkpoints. The building's windows overlook historical sites such as the Dome of Rock, giving a timeless sense of loss and separation. How does this narrative comment on a future Palestinian state?*

**LS:** *Nation Estate* is a project I have been thinking about for a long time. When I first got the idea for the project, its working title was *Living the High Life*. With Israeli settlement activity confiscating more and more Palestinian land, my idea was that for any future Palestinian state to emerge, one would have to think vertically. Now the project has finally found its proper form in the shape of a sci-fi photo series and short film. The decision to finally realise it came in the wake of the Palestinian bid for nationhood at the UN.

Set within a grim piece of hi-tech architecture, *Nation*



Larissa Sansour *Nation Estate* - Olive tree 2011 C-print Artist's Proof Ed. 4 of 10, 59.4 x 42 cm  
Image courtesy of the artist.

*Estate* envisions an ambiguously dystopian Palestinian state rising from the ashes of the peace process. In this vision, Palestinians have their state in the form of a single skyscraper: the *Nation Estate*. Surrounded by a concrete wall, this colossal high-rise houses the entire Palestinian population - finally living the high life. Each city has its own floor: Jerusalem, on the third floor; Ramallah, on the fourth floor. Intercity trips previously marred by checkpoints are now made by elevator. Aiming for a sense of belonging, the lobby of each floor re-enacts iconic squares and landmarks - elevator doors on the Jerusalem floor opening onto a full-scale Dome of the Rock. Built just outside the actual city of Jerusalem, the building has views of the original golden dome from the top floors.

In the film, we see a short narrative unfold. The main story takes place mostly in the elevator, but various floors from the building will also be revealed. I will be playing the main character in the film - as I have done on several previous occasions.

In the completed film and photo version of *Nation Estate*, the preliminary photos developed for the Lacoste Elysée

Prize 2011 and since banned by the sponsor, French fashion giant Lacoste, will also be part of the installation. Having been at the centre of a major censorship scandal, these three photos have taken on a life of their own and become a central element of the entire project.

***MM: The removal of your nomination and the outcry that followed has drawn attention to the artwork itself. Do you regard this as beneficial to the ambition of the work overall?***

**LS:** Lacoste's decision certainly generated more publicity than the prize itself could have ever provided. This is, of course, a very fortunate outcome, not only for the work itself and for me as an artist. Seeing Lacoste held accountable in this manner was a small victory for artistic expression as such. What was particularly positive about this experience was the museum's decision to side with the artist instead of the corporate sponsor. Not to mention the massive public reaction to Lacoste's behaviour. The public support was absolutely crucial. Without that, events would not have turned out the way they did.

I originally issued my press release stating my case against Lacoste's decision purely for the sake of putting it on record. I simply wanted it to be known that I had not accepted the removal of my work silently. I never anticipated that my statement would get the kind of reaction it did. Within 24 hours, the story was picked up by mainstream news worldwide - from Japan to Brazil. I am eternally grateful for all the support I received. It has been truly overwhelming.

The Lacoste episode also brought a new angle to the Palestinian issue to the mainstream media. Exposing a clear-cut act of political censorship generates exactly the kind of attention that the censoring body is trying to avoid. The massive attention the work has received means that I will get the opportunity to show it in a range of exciting places. Showing the work and letting it speak for itself is, of course, what any artist wants for any new production, so I am very grateful that the attention following the Lacoste controversy has given me these new opportunities.





Larissa Sansour *Nation Estate - Jerusalem Floor* 2011 C-print Artist's Proof Ed. 3 of 10,  
59.4 x 42 cm  
Image courtesy of the artist.

Deeply affected by growing up under occupation, interdisciplinary artist Bashar Hroub poetically inspects individual experience as it relates to imposed political realities. Rooted in his own subjectivity, Hroub explores sentiments of belonging and attachment to specific places, cultures and communities. As a Palestinian born in Hebron, Hroub is accustomed to dealing with the complexities of place and identity. In the *Here and Now* series, produced while living in the United Kingdom and pursuing his Master's of Fine Arts at University of Southampton's Winchester School of Art, Hroub investigates the relationship between the individual, self, memory and physical surroundings. Placing himself in various locations with a mirrored cube on his head, the artist's body and head become the location where contested notions of visibility, invisibility and identification are negotiated. Against the backdrop of the artist's experiences of estrangement under occupation, the work explores different levels of alienation, the hitherto-unknown physical freedom felt during Hroub's sojourn in the UK, the novelty of being a foreigner in unfamiliar surroundings, in contrast with the feeling of being a foreigner in one's own country.



Bashar Hroub Here and Now 2 2010 Ed. 1 of 3 C-print, 66 x 100 cm  
Image courtesy of the artist and Green Art Gallery.

« هنا والآن »

بشار حروب

كان لنشأة الفنان الفلسطيني متعدد المواهب بشار حروب تحت وطأة الاحتلال الاسرائيلي أثر عميق في تناوله التجربة الفردية المرتبطة بالوقائع السياسية المفروضة وفق أسلوب رومانسي حالم، واستكشافه لمشاعر الانتماء والارتباط بأماكن وثقافات ومجتمعات معينة، والتي تبدو متجذرة في تجاربه الشخصية. وقد اعتاد حروب -المولود بمحافظة الخليل في رام الله- على التعامل مع تعقيدات المكان والهوية؛ وهو يتناول العلاقة القائمة بين الفرد والذات والذاكرة والبيئة المحيطة كما يبدو واضحاً من خلال سلسلته الفوتوغرافية « هنا والآن » التي أنتجها أثناء فترة إقامته في المملكة المتحدة بغية الحصول على شهادة الماجستير في الفنون الجميلة من « كلية وينشستر للفنون » التابعة لجامعة « ساوثامبتون ». وقد دأب حروب على تجسيد الصور التي تدور في مخيلته من خلال وضع مكعب زجاجي عاكس على رأسه والتنقل في أماكن عديدة، حيث يصبح عقله وجسده أشبه بمكان فسيح ملائم لتناول الأفكار المتضاربة حول مفاهيم الرؤية الواضحة والمبهمة والمطابقة. ويتناول عمل حروب الجديد المستويات المختلفة للعزلة مع تجارب الإقصاء التي مرت على الفنان في ظل الاحتلال، والحرية الجسدية مجهولة المعالم التي يعيشها اليوم والتي لمسها خلال إقامته المؤقتة في المملكة المتحدة، فضلاً عن اختبار الفارق بين شعور المرء حينما يكون أجنبياً وسط محيط غير مألوف وشعوره عندما يكون غريباً في أحضان موطنه.







Jeffar Khaldi *Go Where* 2008 Oil on canvas 240 x 220 cm  
Image courtesy of the artist and Sotheby's.

Palestinian artist Jeffar Khaldi's striking, dream-like paintings are reminiscent of his personal experiences and cultural background. Born in Lebanon in 1964, Khaldi experienced the chaos of the Lebanese Civil War and emigrated to the United States as a teen to avoid being forced into one of the militias. Khaldi's colossal, vivid paintings combine his observations of contemporary existence into a pseudo-fantasy world, at times telling tales of isolation, collective nostalgia and history. Fusing political satire and fantasy, Khaldi subversively

highlights the obscurities of mainstream media, cliché and the sound bites that shape dominant views of the past and present. The paintings are often informed in their duality by his experience with Western and Eastern cultures, pulling viewers in different directions as Khaldi explores contradictory aspects of reality and historical disparities. Part of his process involves intensive research around mediated events, with a particular interest in his homeland of Palestine. Khaldi uses his work to assert the absurdities of occupation and injustice. Showcased in major private and institutional collections, including the JP Morgan Chase Collection and Mathaf Museum of Arab Art, Khaldi's work has also been featured in the Sharjah Biennial, Saatchi Gallery in London and the Museo de Arte in Mexico.

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جعفر خالدي

أين المبنى

تتسم لوحات الفنان الفلسطيني جعفر خالدي بأسلوبه الفني الحالم الذي يردد صدى تجاربه الشخصية وخبرته الثقافية الواسعة؛ فقد ولد خالدي في لبنان عام ١٩٦٤، وشهد فوضى حربه الأهلية، ليهاجر على إثرها إلى الولايات المتحدة في سن المراهقة كي يتفادى إرغامه على الانضمام إلى إحدى الميليشيات المتناحرة. وتختزل لوحات خالدي الضخمة والمفعمة بالحوية ملاحظاته وتصويراته حيال الوجود الإنساني المعاصر في إطار شخصي أشبه بالخيال يقص من خلاله أحياناً حكايات عن العزلة والحنين. ومن خلال دمج بين السخرية السياسية والخيال، يستكشف خالدي خبايا وغموض وسائل الإعلام المهيمنة، وتعليقاتها المتبدلة، وإعلاناتها السريعة التي ترسم صورة الآراء السائدة بين الماضي والحاضر. وغالباً ما تعكس لوحات خالدي ازدواجية تجربته مع الثقافتين الغربية والشرقية، والتي تمضي بالمشاهد في اتجاهات مختلفة يسبر خالدي من خلالها أغوار الجوانب المتناقضة للحياة الواقعية والتباينات التاريخية. ويعتمد خالدي في جزء من عمله على إجراء البحوث المكثفة حول الأحداث الخاضعة للتدخل مع إيلاء اهتمام خاص لموطنه الأم فلسطين، وتكريس أعماله للتعبير عن عبثية الاحتلال وظلمه وجبروته.

وتم عرض لوحات خالدي ضمن العديد من المجموعات الفنية سواءً لأفراد أو لمؤسسات عالمية مرموقة بما في ذلك مجموعة «جي بي مورجان تشيس»، و«المتحف العربي للفن الحديث» (المتحف)؛ كما عرضت أعماله خلال «بينالي الشارقة»، و«غاليري ساتشي» في لندن، و«متحف الفنون الجميلة» في المكسيك.



Shawki Youssef *Mud, iron and brick for a perfect crime* 2011 Mixed media 143 x 402 cm  
Image courtesy of Barjeel Art Foundation.





The tense and tormented bodies appearing in Shawki Youssef's artworks bring to mind the effects of emotional trauma and oppression on the human body. Anonymous representations, his dislocated figures typify the collective human struggle and form an animated observation of societies under constant pressure of violence, war and loss of humanity. Born in Beirut, Youssef studied fine art and intercultural mediation. These combined interests feed into his work, which explores conditions of Lebanese contemporary society and their effects on human beings. Not limiting himself to painting and drawing, Youssef works with various media, including video, performance and text. *Mud, Iron and Ink for a Perfect Crime* is part of a recent series of paintings exploring the inherent visceral consequences of anxiety and injustice on the human body. Youssef's process is also rooted in painting the bodily and unconscious experience linked to ego, desire and social expression. Distorted limbs and body parts often appear fragmented and caught between torture and decay. Reflecting both theoretical discourse and study of social trauma, Youssef's work taps into delicate individual stories of vulnerability and fear.



Shawki Youssef Mud, iron and brick for a perfect crime [DETAIL] 2011 Mixed media 143 x 402 cm  
Image courtesy of the Barjeel Art Foundation.

«طين، وحديد، وحبر لجرّيمة كاملة»

شوقي يوسف

تستحضر الأجساد المعذبة ذات الملامح المتوترة في أعمال الفنان يوسف شوقي آثار الصدمات العاطفية والنفسية والقمع والقهر الذي يتعرض له الجسد البشري؛ كما يجسد من خلال صورته المجهولة أشكالاً بشرية متفسخة ومشوهة للغاية تشخّص ماهية الصراع البشري الجمعي، وتشكل رصداً متحركاً للمجتمعات التي ترزح تحت وطأة ضغوطات دائمة نتيجة العنف والحرب وفقدان الحس الإنساني. ودرس يوسف، المولود في بيروت، الفنون الجميلة والتداخلات الثقافية المختلفة، وهو ما أسهم بإثراء اهتماماته حيث تجلّى ذلك في أعماله التي تستكشف ظروف المجتمع اللبناني المعاصر ومدى تأثيرها على الإنسان. ولا يقيد يوسف نفسه في مجال الرسم والتصوير فقط، بل يستخدم في عمله العديد من الوسائل بما فيها الفيديو وأعمال الأداء والكتابة. وتعد لوحة «طين، وحديد، وحبر لجرّيمة كاملة» جزءاً من سلسلة لوحاته الأخيرة التي تستكشف التبعات العميقة والمتجذرة لعوامل القلق والظلم وأثرها على الجسد البشري. ويبدو نهج يوسف راسخاً في تصوير التجربة الجسدية واللاواعية المرتبطة بذات الإنسان، والرغبة، والتعبير الاجتماعي. وغالباً ما تظهر في لوحات يوسف صوراً لأطراف مشوهة وأجزاء بشرية تبدو عليها آثار التعذيب والانحلال، كما تعكس أعماله جوانب الخطاب النظري ودراسة الصدمات الاجتماعية، مما يجعلها أشبه بقبصص فردية حساسة ودقيقة تتناول الضعف والخوف البشري.



In the Name of God,  
the Most Gracious, The Most Merciful.



In the Name of God,  
the Most Gracious, The Most Merciful.

Algerian-born interdisciplinary artist Fayçal Baghriche often situates his projects in public spaces, exploring common rituals and patterns of social behaviour. His public intervention works are playful, anarchic and seek to disrupt the set rhythm of contemporary urban life to subvert conventional expectations. In his video *The Message Project*, Baghriche re-frames Syrian filmmaker Moustapha Akkad's 1977 epic film production "The Message", depicting the story of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) and the birth of Islam. To reach a broader audience, two versions of the film were shot, one in Arabic with well-known Arab actors and the other in English with a Hollywood cast. Both followed the same script, set and costumes, and the portrayals were captured verbatim in the two languages. In his project, Baghriche splices the two versions into one, creating a bilingual conversation between the actors. The work highlights how popular culture is categorised according to narrow definitions of target audiences. The seamless dialogue that results unites both the actors and intended viewers. Alluding to the universalism of cinema, Baghriche creates a space for encounter and dialogue that attempts to bridge two worlds toward one unified message. Baghriche now lives and works in Paris and has exhibited internationally.



Muhammad is turning my city upside down.



Learn that every muslim  
is a brother to every muslim

Page 57-60 Fayçal Baghriche The Message Project 2010 Video 185 min Ed. 4 of 5  
Image courtesy of the artist.  
© Moustapha Akkad.

« مشروع الرسالة »

فيصل بغريشي

يعرض الفنان الجزائري متعدد المواهب فيصل بغريشي مشاريعه وأعماله في الساحات العامة، ويسعى إلى تسليط الضوء على الطقوس والأتماط الشائعة للسلوك الاجتماعي، كما تتسم أعماله بطابعها الهزلي والفوضوي، وبسعيها إلى الإخلال بإيقاع الحياة الحضرية المعاصرة وكسر انسجامها بغية تقويض التطلعات والآمال التقليدية المتوقعة .


ومن خلال عمله « مشروع الرسالة »، يعيد بغريشي صياغة ملحمة فيلم « الرسالة » للمخرج السوري الراحل مصطفى العقاد الذي تم إنتاجه عام ١٩٧٧، والذي يتناول سيرة الرسول محمد عليه الصلاة والسلام ويزوغ فجر الإسلام. وكان قد تم إنتاج نسختين من هذا الفيلم إحداهما باللغة العربية بمشاركة باقة من أشهر الممثلين العرب، والثانية باللغة الإنجليزية بمشاركة ممثلين من هوليوود، وذلك حتى يصل إلى شريحة أوسع من الجمهور. كما تم اعتماد نفس السيناريو والديكور والملابس مع تجسيد اللوحات التصويرية ذاتها في كلا النسختين. واتجه بغريشي في هذا المشروع نحو توحيد نسختي الفيلم بهدف إبداع حوار ثنائي اللغة بين الممثلين. ويبين عمل بغريشي كيفية تصنيف الثقافة الشعبية حسب المقاييس المحدودة والنظرة الضيقة للجمهور المستهدف، حيث تسهم لغة الحوار السلسلة في كسر الحواجز بين الممثلين والجمهور المشاهد. ومن خلال التلميح إلى مسألة عالمية السينما، يسعى بغريشي إلى ابتكار فضاء يلائم الصدام والحوار ويكون كفيلا بمد جسور التواصل بين عالمين مختلفين سعياً لإيصال رسالة واحدة.

ويذكر أن بغريشي يقيم ويعمل اليوم في باريس، وقد تم عرض أعماله في العديد من المعارض العالمية.



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