

ISLAMIC ARTS MAGAZINE

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[dis]orient , A Photo Exhibition by R  di Martino and Nedim Kufi

LONDON /The exhibition [dis]orient, curated by Noor Kadhim and Piero Tomassoni will open at Sumarria Lunn Gallery in London on June 6 and will run until June 28, 2013.

This exhibition brings together the work of R  di Martino, an Italian artist whose travels have taken her across North Africa, and Nedim Kufi, an 'exiled' Iraqi artist who now lives and works in the Netherlands. The show will present a dialogue between the two artists' works, exploring the relationship between fiction and reality, past and future, and the ethereal concept of 'Home' and 'Habitat'. In particular, what does 'Home' represent for displaced peoples, and to what extent is there an interrelationship between the real and the imagined, when one thinks of 'Home'?

While R  di Martino presents the ruined homes of a fictional future, Nedim Kufi offers a future solution to answer the real destruction of housing in war-torn states. Far more than just a single structure, 'Home' represents something much broader than bricks and mortar. It is a state of belonging that exists as much in the mind as within the built environment.

The work of R  di Martino often deals with the duality between reality and fiction. The artist's background in theatre and her passion for film emerge in her video work, which is often cinematographic in theme and experimental in nature. However, for some of her most recent works, she has switched medium from video to photography, exploring a different kind of imagery. Enticed by abandoned Hollywood sets in North Africa, di Martino's travels in Morocco and Tunisia resulted in a profound engagement with these contemporary ruins. Ranging from basic dwellings to elaborate temples, these sets formed part of the fictional habitat of film characters, today however their ruins appear to substantiate the history of inhabitants that never existed.



R  di Martino, No More Star Wars (Star Wars), Gelatin Silver

Print, 2012 /Courtesy of Sumarria Lunn Gallery and the Artist



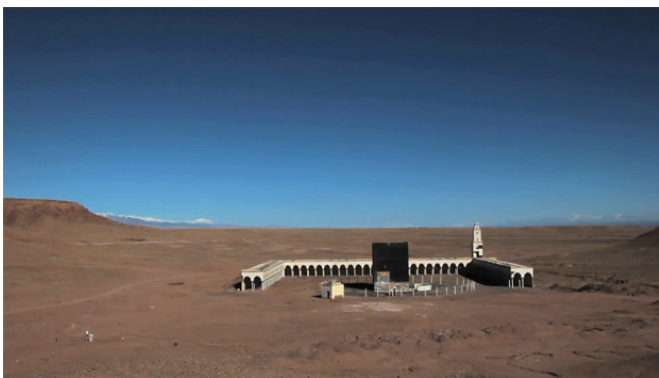
R  di Martino, Hasselblad (Ancient Greece), C type print, 2012 /Courtesy of Sumarria Lunn Gallery and the Artist



R  di Martino, Every World's A Stage, Dyptich, Part 1, Gelatin Silver Print, 2012 /Courtesy of Sumarria Lunn Gallery and the Artist



Rä di Martino, *Every World's A Stage, Dyptich, Part 2*, Gelatin Silver Print, 2012 /Courtesy of Sumarria Lunn Gallery and the Artist



Rä di Martino, *Mecca*, Aerial still frame taken from video, 2012 /Courtesy of Sumarria Lunn Gallery and the Artist

The concepts of 'Home' and 'Displacement' have been explored by Nedim Kufi in a different, more utilitarian manner. Kufi presents a unique concept for a type of recessed dwelling, part of the artist's interest in offering an urban habitation solution for his homeland, Iraq. For those whose 'missing homes' can only be replaced, Kufi's designs ensure that all residents will enjoy equality below the ground. The relationship between earth and sky, and the cool and peaceful bunker-like security of the underground home, were Kufi's inspiration.

Mapped over these structural models, the artist depicts a lost generation of fellow students he knew from his youth in 1970's Baghdad, the era he refers to as Iraq's 'golden age'. Drawn from Kufi's own dusty photographs, the identity of his youthful subjects is intentionally prolonged in his new work, even as their images fade away in ageing negatives. Kufi transposes these young people as the potential owners of these 'Nether Homes', whose faces leave permanent imprints on the structures independent of any physical experience of the space. "God knows where those kids are right now... are they still alive? Are the homes that I am creating just a maze? In my mind, these pictures, and their structures, represent a longing for tolerance, acceptance and (above all) equality in a country that in recent years has known so little of these things."

In addition to the 'Nether Home' structures, Kufi presents a series of photographs of the Palestinian residents of Jaffa during the 1930's. The photographs originally appeared in a book by the Dutch photographer Frank Scholten, who travelled in Palestine

and was inspired by the simple lives of the residents to document their lives. Discovering the book by chance in a second-hand store, Kufi was moved to transpose real Dutch flowers, which he found pressed and dried between the pages of the book, onto Scholten's images to preserve this cultural juxtaposition. Here evidence of the Jaffa residents' existence is now framed within the perception of those who never knew them in a relationship that simultaneously affirms and subverts the Orientalist notion of 'the Other'.



Nedim Kufi, *Jaffa (Untitled)*, C-type print, 2013 /Courtesy of Sumarria Lunn Gallery and the Artist



Nedim Kufi, *Jaffa (Untitled)*, C-type print, 2013 /Courtesy of Sumarria Lunn Gallery and the Artist



Nedim Kufi, Nether Home (Untitled), Mixed media, print on wood and cardboard, 2013 /Courtesy of Sumarria Lunn Gallery and the Artist

Rä di Martino

Rä di Martino was born in 1975 in Rome and is a graduate of Università degli Studi di Roma. She later lived in London and studied at Chelsea College of Art and Slade School of Art before moving to New York. She is known for her photographs, video works and installations which often use the language of cinema to explore the passage of time. Di Martino has been exhibited in numerous solo and group shows at prestigious galleries and museums worldwide including the Museum of Modern Art PS1 (New York), Palazzo Grassi (Venice), MACRO (Rome) and most recently at Tate Modern in London for the group exhibition Ruins in Reverse (showing until 24th June 2013) about the divide between historical monuments and discarded urban ruins. Rä di Martino currently lives and works in Turin.

Nedim Kufi

Nedim Kufi was born in Baghdad in 1962. He fled after serving in the Iraqi military during the Iran-Iraq war and, after moving from country to country, later settled in the Netherlands in the early 90's. He has utilised many materials and mechanisms — organic henna, handmade paper, video, animation and installation — to narrate the struggle of departing his homeland for a life in Europe. He studied at the Academy of Fine Arts in Baghdad, at the European Ceramic Work Centre in the Netherlands and at the Hogeschool voor de Kunsten in Utrecht. Kufi has participated in solo and group exhibitions across the Middle East, United States and Europe including Tate Modern and KW Berlin.