



SUMAC SPACE AN INITIATIVE DEVOTED TO CONTEMPORARY ART PRACTICES OF THE MIDDLE EAST, SHOWS ITS FIFTH DIGITAL EXHIBITION A *WHOLE POPULATION OF POETS*

THE EXHIBITION IS ON-VIEW AT WWW.SUMAC.SPACE FROM JUNE 28th TO AUGUST 24th, 2021; Curated by Davood Madadpoor



Esraa Elfeky, *The 3-Days Effect*, 2020 / 2021, still

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A Whole Population of Poets grew out of my own hazy days after *The Green Wave of Iran* in 2009. I have always carried with me a duality of optimism and anxiety about the future: a future that I will never be able to articulate as a time-based event. Rather, I would like to see my future as scrolling through a timeline on a post-production application, one that I can navigate freely without an obligation to "snap" to a certain date.

I am experimenting with a few methods to transform this anxiety. One of the most powerful tools is one's imagination and the landscapes one draws while dreaming. To me, this dreamland serves as a form of resistance to the world as I experience or perceive it. I am aware that this is not a promise for another universe or an offer to withdraw from this one, but it does assist me in creating conditions for a different mode of being within the already existing one.

I construct another self with whom to converse. There is a need for "another" me. This alienated other is a necessity in order to develop a conversation, to share a feeling of displacement in time and space.

From time to time, I project these conversations. I tend to narrate events that are no longer mine, for the sake of obscuring the line between real and unreal, in order to build this fictional territory in which I would like to live and continue to be myself.

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The Middle East's past unfolds in a series of interconnected forms. It includes shifts in people's lives as well as the lives of groups, cultures, and countries over time. It encompasses the narratives that people share of themselves and others in relation to these transitions, the myths that help them make sense of their experiences and attempt to illuminate the way into the future, as well as a tool to create a new landscape as an offer to escape from preexisting structures.

In *A Whole Population of Poets*, which borrows the title from one of the artworks, the artists invite us into their personal odyssey. They interpret the stories that people tell about themselves and about others in relation to their daily lives, which will continue to brighten the path in the future. They reshape these memories and stories, manipulating material in order to build a new stage that allows us to step into another dimension. They challenge you to understand the other's perspective and share their emotions and interiority. By creating new characters, mechanisms, and fictionalized beings, they facilitate these narrations and make you walk on an absent line between real and unreal.

PARTICIPANT ARTISTS

Mohamed Abdelkarim, b. 1983, El Minya, Egypt. Lives and works in between Cairo, Egypt and Maastricht, Netherlands. Abdelkarim's practice is performance oriented. Employing and reflecting on different performative acts, his work is concerned with the performance of renegades in a time of crisis, complicating the relationship between geography and the fugitive.

Ibrahim Ahmed, b. 1984, Kuwait. Lives and works in Ard El Lewa, Egypt. Ahmed's work is informed by research into the histories and movements of peoples and objects. His works in mixed media, sculpture, and installation engage with subjects related to colonization, power structures, and cultural hybridity, generating discussion around ideas of self and authenticity within the nation-state. Forthcoming shows include his first institutional solo exhibition at The Institute for Contemporary Art at Virginia Commonwealth University (USA).

Esraa Elfeky, b. 1989, Cairo, Egypt. Elfeky is a visual artist and film editor. She uses a variety of mediums including video, sculpture, found objects and drawing. Her

research explores links between art making and physical and psychological experience of being in landscape. She explores possibilities for marginalized communities to express social and political definitions.

Tareque Elsharquawy, b. 1990, Alexandria, Egypt. Elsharquawy is a filmmaker, photographer, and musician. His work includes the short fiction film *What Was the Question?*, the experimental video work *The Psychoticles*, and *The Holy Lands* trilogy, of which the first two parts were produced with support from the Contemporary Image Collective (Cairo) and Mophradat (Brussels). Elsharquawy graduated from the High Film Institute in Cairo in 2011, where he studied film directing.

Ezz Monem, b. 1985, Cairo Egypt. Lives and works in Melbourne, Australia. Monem is a graduate of the Faculty of Engineering at Cairo University, but began to focus on photography, through which he explores the pluralism of reality, already back in 2003.

Sara Sallam, b. 1991, Giza Egypt. Lives and works in Delft, Netherlands. Sallam is a multidisciplinary artist, who works with photography, video, and writing, often re-appropriating and manipulating archival material to invite hidden meanings to emerge. Against this backdrop, she reflects on growing up in Egypt, criticising the colonial heritage manifested in tourism, archaeology, and museum practices.

Islam Shabana, b. 1988, Cairo Egypt. Shabana is an interdisciplinary artist and a digital media designer. His work is in the intersection of technology within the human's mental faculties, mythology, and Islamic philosophy, exploring concepts like system-social dynamics, religious performative rituals, and occult practices.

CURATOR

Davood Madadpoor has lived in Florence since 2013. He has worked as a librarian, dealing with archiving methods, and later as office manager in the Tehran Art Center (Hozeh Honari). He studied photography at the Iranian Photographers' House and the Tehran University of Applied Sciences and Technology.

After receiving his bachelor's degree in fine arts, he graduated in Curatorial Studies from the Accademia di Belle Arti in Florence with a thesis focused on local context as an impetus and inspiration for the art practices of artists-in-residence. He is currently working at Villa Romana, Florence, as assistant curator and project coordinator.

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