

THIS IS NOT A LOVE SONG

**Noel Jabbour
Raed Bawaya
Hady Sy**

**Steve Sabella
Richard Mosse
Sama Alshaibi**

Dubai - The Empty Quarter Fine Art Photography gallery proudly presents *This is not a love song*, an exhibition co-curated by Elie Domit & Mrs. Deane/Hester Keijser, featuring six emerging photographers and one common denominator: the current state of Palestine.

The opening reception will be held on Tuesday March 9th from 7.p.m. - 10 p.m.

When we plumbed the depth of our Arab Heritage searching for a luminous gem to light up our present and restore what has been forgotten or lost from our lives today which is Love, we brought back a pearl of everlasting incandescence - indeed a torch whose flame never dies out so long as two souls breath in love. - Marcel Khalife

This is not a love song. This is not a theme exhibition. This is not a curators' statement. This is a tribute to the few people on this planet who stand still to the test of time and tyranny, who do not bow down, blend in or give up, but who show a tenacity and force of will, who have a defiant soul that cannot be crushed. These are the people who give hope, - of the gritty kind, not the sugary sweet substitute - , because they do not pretend there is an exit from the human condition, but who nevertheless want a solution. These are the people who do not wait for the light at the end of the tunnel, but who simply start digging a way out. These are the people who keep reinventing themselves every time they get crushed to the ground.

This is not a love song is a gathering of voices and views, of positions taken and abandoned, issuing forth from and reflecting back on the situation Palestinians are facing on a day to day basis. We do not feign to give a comprehensive overview of contemporary Palestinian fine art photography. For to comprehend this field, one must first apprehend the situation, and exactly that is the nexus of the Palestinian question: that no one ever agrees on what is actually the case. We don't get the picture, instead we get many pictures and perspectives, filtered through individual experiences, national interests, global politics, religious wars - with some of these perspectives being marketed more aggressively than others.

Amidst this turmoil of vying factions forever demanding we show our colors, all that we bring is our bleeding heart. Yet if that is what it takes to be political, then the works brought together for *This is not a love song* are political to the core. There is a stubborn insistence to make up one's own mind and a decided refusal to be made party to the interests of others. We find a need to engage with the growing numbers of those forced to make a home among the ruins. We see an aversion against the spectacular outfit which the struggle for power dons for the eyes of the world. We sense a deeply felt conviction, that it is of utmost importance that we keep resisting the voices telling us that life is dispensable, who want us to forget that the only proportion that sets the scale is the human one. Art may not be able to change the real reality of life lived in conflict areas, what it can do is silently point to what we should not lose sight of in our struggle to survive.

THE EMPTY QUARTER
FINE ART PHOTOGRAPHY



Hady Sy standing in front of Not For Sale

Hady Sy (1964) is French, with a Lebanese mother and a Senegalese father, and is proud of his background, particularly as his father, an eminent theologian, raised his children to show respect for others, for their religions and their cultural differences. But as a young student in Beirut in the grips of civil war, he had to cope with increasing rivalry, violence, hatred and even death. Since the time when he was taken hostage and threatened with execution, he has seen the image of the deadly weapon pointed at his temple, and has been going over the image in his mind. Hady Sy has used all his talent as an artist to serve a cause, speaking out against murders committed in the name of blind religious fanaticism.

Agnes de Gouvion Saint-Cyr,
Inspector-General for Photography (French Ministry of Culture)

Noel Jabbour is a Palestinian artist photographer born 1970 in Nazareth. She studied photography in Jerusalem and is based in Berlin, Germany.

For more than a decade and a half, she has been placing the marginal at centre stage in her artistic work. Her photographs consistently expose a human dimension, an angle of vision, or a profound insight, which are usually unseen or ignored. In this, she performs one of art's important tasks: rendering visible what is otherwise invisible. Jabbour's art-making praxis has a transformative dimension as well: it expands our range of vision and shows us things that are important to see. Her work derives its power from a deliberate affinity with documentary photography and is represented in major public and private collections including the Musée Nicéphore Niépce, Chalon-sur-Saône; Zabłudowicz Collection, London; Neuer Berliner Kunstverein, Berlin; the Israel Museum, Jerusalem.

She is also the recipient of several major scholarships, prizes and residencies from the Berlin Senate, the Musée Nicéphore Niépce, Pépinières européennes pour jeunes artistes and the A.M. Qattan Foundation.



*Palestinian Interior # 12
(Hebron), 1994 © Noel Jabbour*

Raed Bawayah was born in Palestine in 1971. Graduated in 2004 from the Musrara school of photography in Jerusalem, he currently lives and works in Paris.

Working in different countries, Raed Bawayah always takes into consideration the people ignored by the national and/or international community. In the line of Diane Arbus whom he feels related with, Raed Bawayah has developed a special interest for the people considered as “marginalized”: « At a time when the overwhelming majority of Palestinian photographers is caught in the grip of photojournalism and provides daily coverage of the conflict in occupied territories, I choose a different approach, » says Bawayah, to justify the bias of its standard.

*Deadline, Bethlehem Mental Hospital
Palestine 2004 © Raed Bawayah*



Steve Sabella, born in Jerusalem in 1975, is a London based artist. Steve Sabella studied art photography at the Jerusalem School of Photography and New Media, and holds a BA in Visual Arts from the State University of New York. Sabella received his first MA in Photographic Studies from the University of Westminster and his second MA in Art Business at Sotheby's Institute of Art in London.

Steve Sabella's art has been exploring since the mid 1990's notions of imagined cities, hyperrealities and the relationship of the subconscious mind with reality. Having realized that Jerusalem, Sabella's city of birth no more exists, he started perceiving the harsh reality of living in 'exile' or in alienation. *Jerusalem In Exile* explored the mental image Palestinians held of Jerusalem and has gained international attention, leading to its production into a short documentary film. Consequently, Sabella is currently giving a visual form through photomontage to the 'state of mind' of living in 'mental exile'.



His recent international shows include: Neighbors in Dialogue (Istanbul 2007, and Sarajevo, 2008), Gates of the Mediterranean (Rivoli, 2008), Palestine, La Création Dans Tous Ses Etats, Institut du Monde Arabe (France, 2009), NOW - Contemporary Art of the 21st Century, Phillips De Pury (London, 2009).

In Exile, 2008 © Steve Sabella



Richard Mosse is an Irish artist based in New York. He is currently working internationally with the Leonore Annenberg Fellowship in the Performing and Visual Arts. Mosse received an MFA in photography from Yale University in 2008. He is represented by Jack Shainman Gallery. In the coming year, Mosse's work will be showing at Fotofest 2010 Biennial (Houston), Museu de Mataro (Barcelona), and Musee d'Elysee (Lausanne).

Dust III, 2005 © Richard Mosse

Sama Alshaibi is an artist born in Basra, Iraq to an Iraqi father and Palestinian mother, and is now a naturalized US citizen. Alshaibi's photography, video, film and performance works evoke the language of suffering, displacement and loss. She often uses her own body as both a protagonist and a site, linking struggles and the way that nations have affected and twisted lives in bodily performances. Her auto-ethnographic approach is informed by her own history of living in war, the double negation to her familial homelands and her countless encounters with those policing borders from the undesired.

An Assistant Professor of Photography at the University of Arizona, Alshaibi received her M.F.A. in Photography & Video and Media Arts at the University of Colorado at Boulder. Alshaibi's work is exhibited internationally, with exhibitions at Paris Photo and Art Dubai, and solo exhibitions in The West Bank and London. She is represented in the Middle East by the Empty Quarter, Dubai and in Europe by Selma Feriani Gallery, London.

For more information and images for press, please contact:

Kiera Purdue

StickyGinger PR

Tel: +971 50 34 33 275

kiera@stickygingerpr.com

Lucy Freeman

StickyGinger PR

Tel: +971 50 34 33 275

lucy@stickygingerpr.com

For more information on The Empty Quarter, please contact:

Elie Domit, Creative Director

The Empty Quarter Fine Art Photography Gallery

The Gate Village Building 02, P.O. Box 506697, DIFC U.A.E.

Tel: +971 43 23 1210 Mobile: +971 50 55 33 879

www.theemptyquarter.com



Intercontinental, 2009 © Sama Alshabi