



Dena Al-Adeeb, *Disturbance 1990* (2013). Image courtesy of the artist.

THE MIDDLE EAST CENTER FOR THE ARTS (MECA) PRESENTS: *ARCHITECTURE OF MEMORY*

Jersey City, NJ, December 20, 2013 - The Middle East Center for the Arts (MECA) at Mana Contemporary is proud to present *Architecture of Memory*, an exhibition of three distinct projects that utilize video, photography, and performance to address concerns surrounding memory, destruction, and commemoration.

Featuring two solo projects by Dena Al-Adeeb and a collaborative project by Dena Al-Adeeb and Sama Alshaibi, the exhibition most directly addresses the artists' shared experiences with trauma and dislocation from Iraq. However, Al-Adeeb and Alshaibi speak to a broader historical perspective on the commonality of gendered loss and forced migration.

MECA's first gallery space features *Baghdadi Mem/Wars* (2010), a collaborative video and photography series by Al-Adeeb and Alshaibi. The conceptual premise of *Baghdadi Mem/Wars* is rooted in the corporal, intellectual and emotional embodiment of war and displacement. The three suites (*Still/Chaos*, *Efface/Remain*, and *Absence/Presence*) emanate from the lived experiences of the artists and their personal bodily memories of a lifetime entrenched in an undying war. The narrative manifests and replays on the topography of body, memory, and spirit.

The adjacent gallery showcases *Disturbance 1980/1990/2003* (2013), a triptych video and photography memoir by Al-Adeeb that functions as a cartographic device, charting the interconnections between three pivotal moments in contemporary Iraqi history and their relationship to a trilogy of personal and collective displacements.

Al-Adeeb will also present *The Taste of Pomegranates* (2014), a performance piece and video project that brings together a diverse group of diasporic Iraqis from various personal and professional backgrounds, including academia, journalism, gastronomy, and the arts over an intimate dinner at Mana Contemporary. The participants will each be asked to request a chosen dish, gastronomically bringing together diasporic Iraqis from different regions and religions together. The artist-choreographed banquet offers a critical engagement amongst the participants, rupturing their everyday experiences while shifting perceptions. The repast is used as a means to expose their shared histories of immigration, mourning, and creative

practices, as well as to incite an encounter that is not always possible in a disjointed society. *Architecture of Memory* is on view from January 12 to February 14, 2014. An opening party will be held from 1-6 p.m. on Sunday, January 12. The event is free and open to the public, and free transportation from Manhattan will be provided.

ABOUT DENA AL-ADEEB

Dena Al-Adeeb is an artist/writer born in Baghdad, Iraq. She is currently pursuing a Ph.D. in Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies at New York University. Al-Adeeb's work refracts the political aesthetic of memory, destruction and architecture. She has exhibited at the Museum of Modern Art, Tunis, Worth Ryder Gallery at the University of California-Berkeley, Museum of Latin American Art, Headlands Center for the Arts, Darb 1718, Falaki Gallery, Mashrabia Gallery, Karim Francis Gallery, and Pro-Arts Gallery, among others. Her writing has been published in *Alif: Journal of Comparative Poetics*, *Arab and Arab American Feminisms: Gender, Violence and Belonging*, and *Encyclopedia of Women and Islamic Cultures*, among others. You can visit her website at www.denaaladeeb.com.

ABOUT SAMA ALSHAIBI

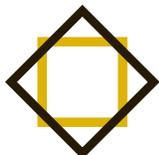
Sama Alshaibi is a multi-media artist born in Basra, Iraq. She is an Associate Professor and Chair of the Photography/Video Art Department at University of Arizona, Tucson. Alshaibi's artwork negotiates spaces of conflict: the aftermath of war and exile, the power dynamics between the nation and its citizenry and the interaction between humans competing for resources and power. Alshaibi has exhibited at Lawrie Shabibi, Dubai; Selma Feriani Gallery, London; the 55th Venice Biennial; Museum of Modern Art, New York; Edge of Arabia Gallery (London), Institut Du Monde Arabe (Paris), Center for the Arts, California, DARB 1718 (Cairo), Le Violon Bleu (Tunisia), Bronx Museum (NYC), The Museum of Contemporary Art (Denver), Al-Hoash Gallery (Jerusalem), The University of Stellenbosch Art Gallery (South Africa), among others. You can visit her website at www.samaalshaibi.com

ABOUT THE MIDDLE EAST CENTER FOR THE ARTS (MECA)

The Middle East Center for the Arts (MECA) is a not-for-profit entity at Mana Contemporary that promotes contemporary art from the Middle East through exhibitions, educational programming, and institutional alliances. Conceived as a cultural hub for artists, professionals, scholars, and the general public to engage in critical discourse, MECA is a unique epicenter for cultural exchange.

ABOUT MANA CONTEMPORARY

Mana Contemporary is a groundbreaking cultural institution with locations in Jersey City and Chicago. Based on an integrated philosophy, its facilities provide services, spaces, and programming for artists, collectors, curators, performers, students, and the greater community within single locations. For more information about Mana Contemporary, please visit www.manacontemporary.com.



MECA

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