

Lost Referents of Some Attraction marks Malak Helmy's first major solo exhibition, reformulating various works from the past five years of her practice into a show that responds to its hosting site, the Sharjah Art Gallery at AUC's New Cairo campus. The exhibition brings together three films, an audio and two text-based works, in addition to a series of objects and spatial interventions.

The artist sets up environments within environments, presenting altered objects stripped of function as indexical referents within the space. They refer to other sites, studies, research...and each other. In the exhibition "Placeholders" (2014) are texts that replace images. They find themselves among other new works. "Statements from the Compound" (2014) reveals a time-based story cast on unfixed photo paper. Gradually exposed, the light-sensitive medium gives in to environment, the work becomes unstable and the story once present fades, frame-by-frame. A small square patch of 3D printed grass "Introduced Natives" (2014) alludes to the prototypical real, and acts as a prelude to the show.

"Records from the Excited State" (2010-present), a chaptered work, is an ongoing study of "the rhythms of the site of leisure" along Egypt's coastline. Since the 1970's the government has pushed the development of local tourism encouraging the building of compounds along the North Coast. She uses many methods to mine the site: visits, walks, people, studies, traveling with birds... The chapter "Notes from the Carbon Coast" (2010) features carbon and its allotropes graphite and diamond as a blueprint for temporary cities stuck between two states, construction and destruction.

A messenger bird visits a nuclear plant, while traveling along the Western Desert and the Mediterranean Sea: "Music for Drifting" (2013) is also a record of that bird visiting an old port on the edge of Alexandria, a hill from the Battle of Alamein, a glass desert formed by a meteorite shower 200,000 years ago. The bird collects rhythms as measure from places that have historically changed.

"Keyword Searches for Dust" (2009) is a film composed of an array of web sourced images, immersive in its spontaneity, the narrative of dust points to something larger, the prospect of 'coming together' alluding to the becoming of an event.

The dénouement of this show is “Chapter 3: Lost Referents of Some Attraction” (2012) revolving around five characters wandering on the edge of a narrative, anticipating employment into meaning along three scenes in landscape: a salt flat, a beach, and an empty plot consigned to a nuclear power plant in the future.

Program

Small Talks

23 April 2014, 5PM

A program of talks, performances and responses with Antonia Alampi, Brian Conley, Jens Maier-Rothe, Matthew Rana, Sarah Rifky, Nile Sunset Annex and Nada El Shazly.

Curated by *Beirut* as part of AUC_LAB

AUC_LAB is a new series of monographic exhibitions, projects and publications, which are commissioned by the AUC Sharjah Gallery, directed by Kaya Behkalam.

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