

Sharif Waked: Balagan
Until June 20, 2020

Through sustained reflection on aesthetics and politics, Sharif Waked (*1964, Nazareth; lives and works in Nazareth and Santa Barbara, California) has consistently pierced the absurdities of reality with playful and estranged encounters between various temporalities, cultural-historical products, and political events. On the occasion of his solo exhibition at CCA – Center for Contemporary Art Tel Aviv, the artist adopted the word “Balagan,” as its title. This word, which means chaos, disarray and confusion, originally comes from the Persian word “balchan” and it traveled across borders to other languages such as Russian, Yiddish, Lithuanian and Hebrew. Following the artist’s unique modus operandi – which is rooted in the conception of single artworks, often based on appropriated images, which are then “incarnated” (and numerated) several times through different media, formats and techniques – the exhibition includes both existing and recent pieces, linking different bodies of Waked’s work over time.

Just A Moment No. 4 (Away From You) (2011), appropriates footage featuring the Egyptian singer Umm Kulthum, while she sings her iconic song *Away From You*, focusing on the stamping of her left foot just underneath the dress scraping her heel. While in *Bath Time* (2012) the artist restaged what would be the end of the day for the “zebra” – in fact a donkey disguised as a zebra – of the Zoo in Gaza, in *Just A Moment No. 21 (Shit)* (2018), outtakes of the aforementioned work shows its star performing the mainstays of everyday life: eating and shitting.

In *Just A Moment No. 19 (Nimrod)* (2018) Yitzhak Danziger’s iconic sculpture *Nimrod* meets the mosquito that in the Islamic narrative entered Nimrod’s ear and made their way into his brain to drive him mad, while in *Just A Moment No. 17 (Smiley)* (2016) an army of contemporary emojis struggle to save their smiling ancestor from destruction. *Who are you?* (2014) are twelve abstract figures based on Muammar Gaddafi’s outfits, titled after a fragment of the last speech of the late Libyan leader, in which he promised to hunt his opposition down to the last alley; in *Tugra No. 5* (2013), the artist infiltrates Israeli soldiers’ most common directive in Hebrew-inflected Arabic – “rukh min

hun!” [Get out of here!] – inside the sixteenth century calligraphic monogram (tughra) of Suleiman the Magnificent.

Crop Marks (2016) sees the artist’s self-portrait in an orange suit subjected to the print-house’s “guillotine,” cut at his neck and along the crop marks of printing and design conventions, whereas in *MoM – Museum of Mosul* (2017) the footage of ISIS’s destructive actions is reproduced as a promotional film for a now-rebranded museum. While in *Contribute A Better Translation No. 1* (2011) an archive of slogans of the Palestinian struggle undergo mechanized translation against a backdrop of visual iconography, in *Contribute A Better Translation No. 2* (2011) the Palestinian Declaration of Independence, written by Mahmoud Darwish, is transformed into Yiddish via Google Translate.

Just A Moment No. 15 (Pa-Pa-Pa) (2016) is based on the claim of Israeli criminologist and politician Anat Berko, who said there is no Palestine because there is no P in Arabic, and in *Beace Brocess No. 5* (2012) a clip from the Camp David II 2000 peace talks is refracted into the era of silent film. In *Just A Moment No. 5 (Jericho First)* (2012), the Oslo Agreements of the 1990s meet a detail of a mosaic from the eighth century Umayyads Caliphate. *Search* (2016), exposes the questions haunting Google Israel, whereas in *Jamal Al Mahamel* (2016) the barefoot carrier lifting the weight of Jerusalem on his back depicted in Suleiman Mansour’s eponymous work is absent and the city gives to gold dots.

“Balagan” is also the title of a work on display in the exhibition. It is part of the series “Arabesque” (2016-ongoing) and in it along with the series “dot.txt” (2016-ongoing) – Waked disassembles the building blocks of images to reconstruct what appear as geometric abstract surfaces. In these series, Waked questions the division between the visual and the verbal, perception and deception, the visual traditions of the past and the digital manipulations of the present, to deliver in a rather formalistic fashion the questioning, breaking, and remaking of meaning. Following these premises, the exhibition offers a bird’s eye view of Waked’s art, surveying his work as a comprehensive whole.

“Sharif Waked: Balagan” is curated by Nicola Trezzi and it is accompanied by a printed matter in Hebrew, Arabic and English. The exhibition is supported by Mifal HaPais Council for the Culture and Arts. Hospitality kindly provided by OUTSET.