Contemporary Culture from the Arab World

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Larissa Sansour
In the Future They Ate from the Finest Porcelain
3/6/16—20/8/16

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The Mosaic Rooms present a unique programme of free contemporary art exhibitions, talks, films, and other special events. We are a non-profit gallery and cultural space in West London dedicated to supporting and promoting contemporary culture from and about the Arab world.

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Follow the current exhibition #InTheFuture
Larissa Sansour
*In the Future They Ate from the Finest Porcelain*
3 June – 20 August 2016

Private View: 2 June, 6.30pm–8.30pm
Tuesday–Saturday 11am–6pm, FREE

The Mosaic Rooms presents the first London solo exhibition of internationally exhibited artist Larissa Sansour. Sansour’s work explores the crossover between the fictional and the factual to look at personal and political issues. In this ambitious show, the Jerusalem-born artist creates a vision of a futuristic world where the excavation of the past is a battleground. Sansour offers a poetic and charged reflection on the politicisation of archaeology in contemporary Israel/Palestine, where the material past is used as a tool to justify territorial claims and assert historic entitlement. The exhibition features an acclaimed 29-minute video piece, large format photographs and two object-based installations.

*In In the Future They Ate from the Finest Porcelain* the artist presents a vision of a post-apocalyptic world in which a hooded figure, haunted by her past, plants fabricated archaeological evidence to secure the destiny of her people. The film’s protagonist is the leader of a narrative resistance group; we hear her recounts of the actions and ideologies behind the group, as well as her personal story revolving around the loss of her twin sister. The film is interwoven with CGI and archival imagery from differing centuries. The future narrative is collapsed into the past with visions of traditional people in Palestinian costume, Bedouin tents, British Mandate officers, situated in a dystopian futuristic desert environment of spaceships and bombs full of porcelain artefacts. The film
examines the co-option of fiction or myth as fact to question the origins of history, authorship and ownership. The photo series accompanying the film offers the viewer the chance to explore in greater detail the fictional future the artist has created, and the strands of narrative and references portrayed in each one.

Revisionist Production Line continues Sansour’s exploration of archaeology as a tool of contemporary warfare. In this installation a production line appears to be mass-producing porcelain plates printed with the keffiyeh pattern, a symbol of Palestinian nationalism. Like the porcelain shown in the film, the implication is that these will be similarly used as objects purposefully planted in the ground for future excavation and historical claims. The piece highlights the contemporary political use of archaeological practice as a means to post-manufacture fact and support pre-stated histories.

Archaeology in Absentia is the newest work in the exhibition. Here the audience encounters a series of exquisitely crafted bronze bombs. Inside each is a metal disc inscribed with coordinates referring to a site in Israel/Palestine where Sansour has recently buried porcelain during a live performance. Each bomb therefore refers to absent artefacts, yet to be unearthed, yet to intervene in historical records. Intended to belong in various museum collections, these bronze pieces offer a reversal of standard museum display – instead of objects that belong to the past, they reference a future yet to be revealed. The installation poses important questions about the role of museums and their collections in the formation of national identity, the presentation of history and constitution of the future. It also goes a step further, through
Larissa Sansour was born in 1973 in East Jerusalem, Palestine, and studied fine arts in London, New York and Copenhagen. Recent solo exhibitions include New Art Exchange in Nottingham, Turku Art Museum in Finland, Wolverhampton Art Gallery, Photographic Center in Copenhagen, Kulturhuset in Stockholm, Lawrie Shabibi in Dubai, Sabrina Amrani in Madrid and DEPO in Istanbul. Sansour’s work has featured in the biennials of Istanbul, Busan and Liverpool. She has exhibited at venues such as Tate Modern, London; Centre Pompidou, Paris; LOOP, Seoul; Al Hoash, Jerusalem; Queen Sofia Museum, Madrid; Centre for Photography, Sydney; Cornerhouse, Manchester; Townhouse, Cairo; Maraya Arts Centre, Sharjah, UAE; Empty Quarter, Dubai; Galerie Nationale de Jeu de Paume, Paris; Iniva, London; Institut du Monde Arabe, Paris; Third Guangzhou Triennial, Guangzhou, China; Louisiana Museum of Contemporary Art, Denmark; House of World Cultures, Berlin, and MOCA, Hiroshima.

Sansour currently lives and works in London, UK.

About the artist

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Summer Programme

FILM
Politicising Tourism in Palestine
Wednesday 8 June, 6.30pm
Screening of the documentary Open Bethlehem, followed by a panel discussion on tourism as a tool of colonisation and strategy of resistance in Israel/Palestine. The second event in Crisis and Creativity: A Season of Contemporary Films from and about the Arab World curated by Shohini Chaudhuri.
Tickets £6.50

TALK
Heritage and Theft in Syria and Iraq
Wednesday 15 June, 7pm
Join experts Benjamin Isakhan, Neil Brodie and Toby Dodge to discuss the destruction of cultural heritage and the looting and illicit trade of objects from Iraq and Syria. They will look at the use of both by ISIS and the political situation that led to such devastation.
FREE

BOOK LAUNCH
Garden State
Saturday 18 June, 2pm
Celebrate the launch of Garden State, a new photography book by artist Corinne Silva which looks at the politics of planting in Israeli settlement gardens. Silva will be in conversation with Middle Eastern plant expert Sabina Knees.
FREE

FILM
Social Media as Archives of the Arab Uprisings
Thursday 23 June, 6.30pm
Screening of the documentary Silvered Water, Syria Self-Portrait, accompanied by a panel discussion on social media archives as a means of creative expression and of state surveillance. The final event in Crisis and Creativity: A Season of Contemporary Films from and about the Arab World.
Tickets £6.50

SUPPERCLUB
A Post Apocalyptic Palestinian Supper Club
Friday 24 June, 7pm
Larissa Sansour and Joudie Kalla, of Palestine on a Plate, will tie this three-course meal to the past, present and future, serving dishes in both a traditional Palestinian style and a futuristic one with food served in petri dishes and lab flasks.
Tickets £35, limited availability

TALK
Beyond Dystopia
Thursday 30 June, 7pm
In a time of uncertainty, curator Amal Khalaf asks how artists and writers are envisioning futures that are at the same time hard and hopeful. How are they using science-fiction to intentionally disrupt?
FREE
VISUAL ARTS
Artist Talk
Wednesday 6 July, 7pm
Larissa Sansour in conversation with Anthony Downey, editor-in-chief of Ibraaz. They will reflect on the artist’s current exhibition and her wider practice, which explores the crossovers between fact and fiction, the political and personal in the context of the Middle East.
FREE

TALK
The Politics of Narrative
Wednesday 13 July, 7pm
Alister Miskimmon and Dina Matar discuss the use and meanings of narrative employed in national, state and cultural identity formation. The talk will focus on Israel and Palestine, but will reference wider current regional conflicts.
FREE

TALK
Conflict City — Jerusalem
Thursday 21 July, 7pm
Dr Shadia Touqan and Dr Wendy Pullan on the difficulties and politics of cultural heritage preservation and revitalisation in the contested city space of Jerusalem. Chaired by Robert Bevan, and followed by a Q&A session.
FREE

TALK
Future Preservation
Wednesday 27 July, 7pm
Guests including Brendan Cormier and Christina Riggs will discuss the role of digital fabrication technologies and archaeological practice in global heritage preservation. They discuss the future of national museums in our transnational and postcolonial world.
FREE

FRIDAY LATE
Long Play: Past and Future Records
Friday 29 July, 7pm
Join DJ Chris Menist for an evening spinning vintage Arabic records. Get involved and bring your own records to add to the playlist. Design your own record cover using reclaimed vinyl covers and colour in legendary divas whilst enjoying music themed cocktails.
FREE

FILM
Halcyon
Wednesday 10 August, 7.30pm
Curator Rachel Dedman presents an evening of new short films from the Middle East, which use the critical possibilities of science fiction to explore contemporary themes.
£6.50

FILM & TALK
The Chronotopes of Palestine
Thursday 18 August, 7pm
Screening of five ethnographic shorts about three generations of exiled Polish and British Palestinians and their different ways of remembering. Followed by panel discussion with Dr Yasmin Gunaratnam, the film’s director Dominika Blachnicka-Ciacek and protagonists.
FREE