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#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.



Facing page and overleaf *In the Future They Ate from the Finest Porcelain*, film still, 2015

Cover *Archaeology in Absentia*, production still, 2016. Photographer: Soren Lind

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,

Above Revisionist Production Line, installation shot, 2016

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



Above *Archaeology in Absentia*, production still, 2016. Photographer: Soren Lind

the planting of artefacts it interrupts future historical interpretations, directly challenging and revealing the malleable nature of history.

The body of work in this exhibition refers to Israel's use of archaeology and history to construct its nationalist narrative and to justify its occupation and confiscation of Palestinian territories. It is also more broadly reflective of other contested and colonial spaces. In such conflicted contexts, where the near future seems impossible, the far one and its potential for radical change offers the space to envision other possibilities. Because of this, the artist's use of science fiction in this exhibition is particularly resonant. It is also a pertinent way to present the Palestinian narrative, often suspended in a sense of awaiting

the return, in the hope of homeland and a future yet to come.

In a contemporary context of globalisation and transnationalism Sansour raises significant questions about concepts of nation, authorship and the mutability of history. The artist encourages the viewer to question what is portrayed as fixed and definitive. In this exhibition Sansour has created visions of a dystopian future, which refers to realities being played out in the present day. These realities are becoming increasingly evocative of the party slogan from Orwell's *1984*, 'who controls the past controls the future; who controls the present controls the past.'

About the artist

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.

In the Future They Ate From the Finest Porcelain is co-commissioned by FLAMIN Productions through Film London Artists' Moving Image Network with funding from Arts Council England; New Art Exchange, Nottingham; Bluecoat, Liverpool; Wolverhampton Art Gallery, Wolverhampton; and The Mosaic Rooms, A.M.Qattan Foundation, London; with support from Doha Film Institute; The Danish Arts Council, Arts Council England, Iambic Film, Knud Højgaard's Fond and Contemporary Art Platform - Kuwait. Produced by Spike Film and Video, Bristol.

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



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