

RANA HAMADEH

A RIVER IN A SEA IN A RIVER

08.02.2014 - 23.03.2014

HAMZA HALLOUBI

APPEAR

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ENGLISH

The exhibition presents work by Lebanese artist Rana Hamadeh (1983, currently based in Rotterdam), and Moroccan artist Hamza Halloubi (1982, currently based in Brussels and Tangier). Both artists seek out the fictionalized and subjective narrative within the complex dimensions of the public sphere. Their stories offer alternatives for the conventional understandings of political history, language, identity and difference.

Rana Hamadeh's show *A River In A Sea In A River* is part of the overarching project *Alien Encounters* (2011 – ongoing). This long-term research project serves as an umbrella for a growing archive of performance works, texts, cartographic and choreographic projects, as well as theoretical and hypothetical gestures. Initially inspired by Sun Ra's film *Space is the Place* (1974), which proposes an African-American exodus towards outer space in response to racial injustice, *Alien Encounters* builds upon the idea of 'provincializing' planet Earth – a proposition that aims at queering the spatial paradigms that constitute our contemporary global understandings of the 'worldly'. Bringing together elements from science fiction film and literature, contemporary migration and capital flows, colonial legacies, mining and transportation histories, and legal theory, the project's different episodes form a multi-faceted effort to reflect on the conjunctions of the legal and the spatial.

A River In A Sea In A River delves deeper into these issues and develops along the same performative and associative logic of 'mapping'. The central work can be read as a cartographic and theatrical scenography for a 'play' of stories, places and encounters.

This exhibition, seen as a second chapter of Hamadeh's recent work, *The Big Board, or ... 'And before it falls, it is only reasonable to enjoy life a little'* (2013) is an exhaustive deliberation on the notion of 'falling': falling as a dynamic of virulence (falling ill/contagion); falling as a physical choreographic gesture; and falling as a form of legal apathy. Through a theatrical characterization of the figure of the plague doctor in Ancient Greece, passing through 19th-century colonial institutionalization of the quarantine as the premise for military authoritarianism, and ending with the figure of the dictator as doctor, the work combines an intensive scrutiny of the relations of criminology, epidemiology, and theatre with an exploration of the dimensions of land, sea and outer space. In its course, it encounters questions such as: Can flowing water be a possible space for re/thinking the law? Is justice possible beyond the material and discursive stability of the ground?

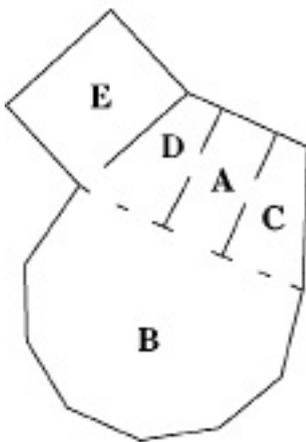
During the finissage of the show, on Sunday 23 March 2014, Rana Hamadeh will give a performance in the scenography of *A River In A Sea In A River*.

The exhibition *Appear* presents Hamza Halloubi's new film *Golshifteh Farahani will not appear in this film* (2014). The film questions 'the appearance of the actor'. It is based on the notion that this appearance in itself already contains meaning and looks at how this appearance can generate political, social, and cultural effects. The film's protagonist, the Iranian actress Golshifteh Farahani, embodies these issues in an exemplary manner. As a celebrity in France and Iran, Farahani takes up the part of diva, while she is simultaneously a political refugee.

From an attempt to capture Farahani's appearance, an in-depth investigation ensues into that appearance – staged or not – and the various idealizations and clichés that are projected upon her from the realms of cinema and media in both the West and the East. In a preliminary phase of this work in progress, Halloubi conducted an interview with Nahal Tajadod, author of a novel inspired on Farahani's life and career. The resulting film portrait, *Golshifteh Farahani will not appear in this film*, questions the presence of the actor in a film and the film industry codes and reflects on topics such as fiction and truth, cinema and life, exile, politics, and Iran.

In the other two video works in the show, these topics are explored in a similarly philosophical and subtle manner: *Letter to Aura* (2012) starts from the artist's subjective narration to reflect on his specific geopolitical location. *Apparitions à Soco Chico* (2013) questions the contemporary perception of filmed images in relation to the history of cinema.

Manoeuvring between documentary and fiction, *Appear* subverts the language of cinema to make the filmmaker's creative process itself the subject of the exhibition. Guided by the artist-author's voice, all of these works maintain a philosophical aspect that refers both to theoretical knowledge and to personal memories.



Exhibited works

RANA HAMADEH
A River In A Sea In A River

ROOM A (entrance) &
ROOM B (hemicycle)
A River In A Sea In A River
2014
Scenography for a play
Dimensions variable

HAMZA HALLOUBI
Appear

ROOM C
Letter To Aura
2012
Video installation
8'00"
Color, sound

ROOM D
Apparitions à Soco Chico
2013
Video installation
6'15"
Color, sound

ROOM E

Golshifteh Farahani will not appear in this film
2014
With Nahal Tajadod
Video installation
16'00"
Color and black and white, sound