

Basma alSharif A Philistine

2 November - 15 December 2019

Tue-Sat: 11am-6pm // Sun: 12noon-6pm // Preview: Fri 1 November, 7pm-9pm

Born in 1983 in Kuwait of Palestinian origin, Basma was raised between France, the US, and the Gaza Strip. Her works explore movement, travel and transport - bringing together intimate and every day camera footage, artifact, theatre and staging techniques, and connecting with Palestinian history and geography.

A Philistine is a new novella written by the artist, which reveals the story of a central character (nicknamed Loza) on a train journey moving backwards in time through history. The book begins in present day Lebanon, travelling through 1935 Palestine and ending in New Kingdom Egypt (16th-11th century B.C.E). Reinventing historical train routes that coincide with the Haifa-Beirut-Tripoli line and Palestine Railways, the story tries to suggest what such a journey would be like today, and invites new readings of the history of the region. Moving beyond exhausted ideas of borders and geographies, the book's story incites new possibilities for Palestinian futures and desires.

Hinting at the multiple meanings and geographical etymology of the word 'Philistine', the book weaves together travelogues and science fiction narratives in its first two chapters, as the 'Philistine' encounters mythical creatures and rituals, before climaxing in erotic writing with lush and vivid descriptions that pull her through a series of different rooms, moral questions and confusions. Borders are undone and the various inhabitants of Greater Syria and North Africa intertwine along a train journey that escapes the imminent future and asks questions of the past and present.

Across the two larger galleries, *A Philistine* is expanded into the space as a plush *mise-en-scène* reading room inviting the viewer to become part of the work. As the book deals with questions of time, rhythm, imagination and slowness, Basma invites the viewer to read the book in the space. It can not be removed from the gallery or consumed as an object as such - instead it should be enjoyed *in situ*, with other works and other people. The book is presented in Vernacular Arabic and English, exploring the nuances of translation, and connections and tensions between and within both languages. An accompanying sound work plays in CCA3 wherein a voice reads excerpts from the book in Arabic, alongside a series of monochrome negative prints and banners.

In CCA2 three existing film works of Basma's are screened that introduce the viewer to different ways of knowing Palestine and reflecting some of the themes of *A Philistine* - intimacy, mystical characters, fictional or reimaged landscapes and the fluctuation of time. In an attempt to describe everyday life where people are struggling for the most basic human rights, *Home Movie Gaza*, 2013, introduces us to the Gaza Strip, finding perspective in a domesticity that is complicated, derelict, impossible to separate from its politics. In *Farther Than The Eye Can See*, 2012, a woman recounts her story of the mass exodus of Palestinians from Jerusalem. Beginning with the arrival and ending with the departure, the tale moves backwards in time as a decaying

experience is traced to a place that no longer exists. Renée's Room 2012, plays with time and speed, as characters tumble or retreat through a computer game, domestic spaces, idealised landscapes and ruined realities.

To read a copy of A Philistine in the space, please sign out a book from the cabinet with a gallery attendant. Reading aids are also available.

This exhibition is part of Mophradat's inaugural Consortium Commissions - a pioneering model for co-commissioning ambitious new artworks by emerging artists from the Arab world.

Works in exhibition:

Reading room and large gallery: A Philistine: 2019. Novella, seating, textile, table, cabinet with 47 books, framed inkjet prints from digital archive, photographic banners, novella excerpts in Vernacular Arabic and English on tracing paper, and recording of A Philistine excerpt in Arabic.

Films on loop in screening room: Renée's Room, 2012, 15 mins, HD Video + 16mm film; Farther Than The Eye Can See, 2012, 13 mins, SD Video + Super 8mm film; Home Movie Gaza, 2013, 24 mins, HD Video. All films Courtesy of the Artist and Galerie Imane Farès

Event programme:

A Philistine: reading by the artist, 1 November, 8pm, CCA Galleries

A Philistine reading groups:

Hosted by Basma alSharif, 30 October, 6pm, CCA Clubroom, Free but ticketed / 16+

Hosted by Ainslie Roddick, 12 Nov, 6pm, Gallery, Free but ticketed / 16+

Screening: 10 Dec, Basma alSharif's OurobouroS, 2017, introduced by Samar Ziadat, 6pm, CCA Cinema, Free but ticketed / 16+

The ouroboros is an ancient symbol of a snake or serpent eating its own tail, variously signifying infinity and the cycle of birth and death. Ouroboros is Basma alSharif's first feature film – an experimental film in homage to the Gaza Strip and to the possibility of hope based on the eternal return. The film follows a man through five different landscapes, upending mass-mediated representation of trauma. A journey outside of time, marking the end as the beginning, exploring the subject of the eternal return and how we move forward when all is lost.

If we can make it easier to attend any event or experience this exhibition please contact Ainslie Roddick at ainslie@cca-glasgow.com

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