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GREEN ART GALLERY DUBAI ANNOUNCES A SOLO SHOW OF NEW WORKS BY INTERDISCIPLINARY ARTIST SHADI HABIB ALLAH

Shadi Habib Allah
Evacuated Containers

Exhibition Dates: 18 March – 5 May 2013

Opening Date: 18 March 2013, 6 – 9 pm

Green Art Gallery is pleased to announce Palestinian artist Shadi Habib Allah's first solo in the Gallery, following his presentation at Art Statements, Art Basel 43 last year.

Habib Allah's practice, traverses installation, video and sculpture, in order to examine the structural and material operations of the circulations of objects, people, histories and economy. While each project defines its own terms and the necessary means of engagement, he reworks existing structures or makes images of images in ways that eventually erase or replace the original, until it is unclear what is original and what is the copy. Anecdotes with an air of humor, function as a pretext for more complex topics and critical positions. His practice is not about the object or the artifact itself. It is about the reconstruction or subversion of existing objects, and in this way questions received ideas of use and value, and the structures that hold them in place.

The new series stems from an incident in 2009 when the artist was traveling to New York with a sculpture consisting of a cast of a leg he had made in Palestine. At Ben Gurion airport in Tel Aviv, he was interrogated about the use and meaning of the work. After being passed up the chain of security and responding to a myriad of questions he was separated from the work. The leg was stripped of its recognition as an artwork and destroyed without the artist's knowledge. An institutional aesthetic judgement that had unforeseen consequences.

The large-scale drawings by Habib Allah follow a process of alternative mnemonic representation in order to create images of the room where the destruction of the sculpture occurred, a place that the artist has never witnessed. Instead he relies on a different circulation of memory to create the images. The artist asked a security guard who worked at a bank in the airport if he could gain entry to the restricted room where the work was destroyed. After a number of months the guard was able to slip into the space, and then parlayed a description of the space to a police sketch artist who made detailed views of the restricted space based on the oral testimony. Habib Allah then re-drew the images into three large-scale drawings depicting the room at a 1 to 1 scale, encompassing the gallery and immersing the viewer in these psychic containers. This total immersion mediates perception, folding experience through proxy in order to wrinkle our understanding of events – held by these empty rooms we sort through time, moments to reflect and recompose the chain of perceptions that constitute our subjectivity.

The various elements of the work meet at a complex space that exists between the images and the minimal narrative in the accompanying video which parlays the affective experience through the artist's account of the incident. The drawings operate through a process of abstracting experience utilizing different vehicles – the airport security guard, the interpretation of the police sketch artist – their subjective capacity to reconstruct the scene of censorship plays an essential role in the conflating a dominant narrative of representation. Instead each process: from the work's destruction through the illicit entry of the guard, constitute a contestation of the extrajudicial wreckage. Each transmission of experience dilutes the narrative until the authority is completely emptied out of the work, leaving only the bare elements of the room, reconstituted in the monumental drawings. This empty stage is inhabited only by props and puts forth the potential for a new scene to unfold, one in which positions are reconfigured and a different narrative can emerge.

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The sculptures expand on the potential for everyday containers. The ubiquitous plastic shopping bag is a paradoxical object – a shapeshifting anti-form that takes the appearance of its contents – this thin barrier nonetheless divides space and occludes a view of the very objects that creates its structure. The plastic bag facilitates travel and keeps the order of objects in place – akin to a human ribcage – the suitcase of the human body.

“Thank you and have a nice day,” emblazoned on a bag is endemic as a repetitive cookie-cutter response of the service economy and its legions of professionalized affective laborers. Here (in)sincerity is interrupted by a profane gesture, a rupture of societal convention as a means to break down the codes and conventions that form a soft order. Rather it is humor, the spontaneity of pleasure, that overcomes and transforms us even if momentarily – the lightness of being has its own powerful potential.

Shadi Habib Allah (b.1977, Jerusalem) received a BFA from Bezalel Academy of Arts and Design in 2003 and an MFA from Columbia University in 2010. He was recently nominated for the Luma Award (2011) and was also the 2012 recipient of the Louis Comfort Tiffany Award. He held his first solo exhibition in New York at Reena Spaulings in 2010. His work has been exhibited at the Riwaq Biennale, Ramallah, Tate Modern, London, Palestine c/o Venice at the Venice Biennale and Art Statements, Art Basel 43 amongst others. Recent and upcoming exhibitions in 2013 include ‘Frozen Lakes’, at Artists Space, New York and ‘Empire State’, curated by Norman Rosenthal & Alex Gartenfeld, at the Palazzo delle Esposizioni, Rome. He lives and works in New York.

For more information, please contact the gallery at info@gagallery.com or +9714 346 9305.