

Lebanese Rocket Society: Part III, IV, V

Joana Hadjithomas & Khalil Joreige

March 19 - April 19, 2012

Joana Hadjithomas & Khalil Joreige present three new bodies of work from their ongoing project *Lebanese Rocket Society* which question images, archives and the particular history of the region - focusing on the period of the 1960's at the time of the "great Arab dream".

For their first solo exhibition at The Third Line and following the first two parts of the project presented at the Sharjah Biennial in March 2011, Joana Hadjithomas and Khalil Joreige continue their ongoing research on the Lebanese Rocket Society and explore three new bodies of works through a video and sound installation, a photographic series and the making of a rug. Documentation from Part I and II of the project will also be shown during the exhibition.

The adventure of the Lebanese Rocket Society began in the early sixties at Haigazian University where a group of students led by professor Manoug Manougian created and launched rockets for space study and exploration. Between 1960 to 1967, more than ten Cedar rockets were launched giving rise to national celebrations and resulting in a set of stamps representing the Cedar IV rocket in commemoration of the 21st anniversary of Lebanon's independence. The project has since then, become a distant, if not forgotten memory.

To fight the oblivion in which the project sank, and to question the notion of monument, Hadjithomas and Joreige recreated a scale reproduction of the Cedar IV rocket, which was exhibited at the 2011 Sharjah Biennial. *Restaged*, a photographic series documents the reenactment of the rocket's transportation through the streets of Beirut, capturing traces of strange occurrences throughout.



Restaged, 2012, C print, Size in 100 x 72 cm

The exhibition also includes *A Carpet*; a rug that bears the image of the Cedar IV Rocket stamp that was produced in 1964 to honor this scientific project. The Lebanese Rocket Society was born in an Armenian University where most students were the descendents of survivors from the genocide in 1915. The piece refers, not only to the Lebanese Rocket Society but also to young Armenian girls who produced magnificent carpets in the 1920s at an orphanage workshop in Lebanon. These girls weaved one of the largest carpets during their time, which was offered to the President of the United States as a token of gratitude for American support of their workshop. Nearly 400 girls made this carpet over 18 months whose pattern represents the creation of the world. After initially being hung in the White

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House, the carpet is now, for political reasons, very rarely shown with few people aware of its existence. Re-produced in Armenia, Hadjithomas and Joreige's rug is an evocation, a reenactment, of these two stories; a tribute to the strengths of a group to survive, aspire and dream.

The Golden Record represents aspirations in a different way. When launching, it was said that the Lebanese Rocket Society installed in the head of the Cedar rockets a radio transmitter with the message that read: "Long Live Lebanon".



The Golden Record, 2011, HD Projection on a 2metre diameter disk, [Installation and detail at the Lyon Biennale 2011]

A few years later, the American space exploration missions of Voyager 1 and 2 broadcasted messages engraved on golden records addressed to potential extra terrestrials, consisting of sounds selected "to represent the diversity of life, history and culture on earth", as a message of peace and liberty. *The Golden Record* installation is a soundtrack based on sound archives from the 60's, inspired by the memories of the various members of the Lebanese Rocket Society.

The installation shows the Golden Record filmed as it turns on the record player that enables the viewer to discover a portrait, through sound representation and reconstitution, of Beirut and the world in the 60's - highlighting such historic events as Space race, revolutionary ideas and pan-Arabism.

Lebanese Rocket Society: Part III, IV, V ponders the apparent absence of this program from society's personal and collective memory, shedding light on perceptions of the past and present - and the imagination of the future, exploring the notion of a collective dream.

About Joana Hadjithomas & Khalil Joreige

Joana Hadjithomas and Khalil Joreige are Lebanese filmmakers and artists whose cinematic and visual art practices intertwine. Their films and installations emerge from a common concern with image making and storytelling. Together, they have directed documentaries such as *Khiam 2000-2007* (2008), and *El Film el Mafkoud (The Lost Film)*, (2003), and feature films including *Al Bayt el Zaher (The Pink House)*, (1999), and *A Perfect Day* (2005). Their last feature film *Je veux voir (I want to see)*, starring Catherine Deneuve and Rabih Mroué, premiered at the Cannes Film Festival in 2008 in the 'Un Certain Regard' section and was granted the Best Singular Film Award by the French Syndicate of Cinema Critics that year

Hadjithomas and Joreige have created numerous photographic and video installations, their artwork has been shown in many museums, biennales and art centers from around the world and is part of important public and private collections. They are currently completing a feature documentary on *The Lebanese Rocket Society*. In October 2011, they were announced as winners of the Abraaj Capital Art

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Prize 2012 and will unveil their new work at Art Dubai from 21st -24th March 2012
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About The Third Line

The Third Line is an art gallery that represents contemporary Middle Eastern artists locally, regionally and internationally, with a gallery space in Dubai. In addition to on-going exhibitions, The Third Line hosts non-profit, alternative programs to increase interest and debate in the region.

The Third Line also publishes books by associated artists from the region. Books published to date include *Presence* by Emirati photographer Lamya Gargash (2008), and *In Absentia* by Palestinian-Kuwaiti Tarek Al-Ghoussein (2009), and most recently *Cosmic Geometry*, an extensive monograph on Monir Shahroudy Farmanfarmaian, edited by Hans Ulrich Obrist and Karen Marta (2011).

Represented artists include: Abbas Akhavan, Ala Ebtekar, Amir H. Fallah, Babak Golkar, Ebtisam Abdulaziz, Farhad Moshiri, Fouad Elkoury, Golnaz Fathi, Hassan Hajjaj, Hayv Kahraman, Huda Lutfi, Joana Hadjithomas & Khalil Joreige, Lamya Gargash, Laleh Khorravian, Monir Shahroudy Farmanfarmaian, Poursan Jinchu, Rana Begum, Shirine Guirguis, Shirin Aliabadi, Slavs and Tatars, Susan Hefuna, Tarek Al- Ghoussein and Youssef Nabil.

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