

## Out of Place

VIKRAM DIVECHA, MOHAMMED KAZEM, :mentalKLINIK, HALEH REDJAIAN,  
HASSAN SHARIF and RAED YASSIN

22 March - 22 May 2021



Gallery Isabelle van den Eynde is pleased to announce its March 2021 exhibition, *Out of Place*. A group show featuring works by **Vikram Divecha, Mohammed Kazem, :mentalKLINIK, Haleh Redjaian, Hassan Sharif, and Raed Yassin**, *Out of Place* examines our place in an ever-shifting world, suggesting that we can be out of place in space in much the same way we are out of sync with time.

“Contemporariness is, then, a singular relationship with one’s time, which adheres to it and, at the same time, keeps a distance from it.”  
Giorgio Agamben, ‘What is the Contemporary?’ (2008)

Just as Agamben upends the idea of ‘contemporary’ as simultaneity, the exhibition frames our disconnect with space, illustrating how we are out of joint with space while being fully within it. *Out of Place* fathoms this distance through works that see space either as illusory, ephemeral, or at times, somewhat contradictorily, constructed by its own material cast-offs.

Raed Yassin describes his 2020 video performance *Humming in Abandoned Places* as a “eulogy for our times.” Specific spaces—the chapel, the theatre, a stairwell—of an abandoned pulmonology hospital complex outside of Berlin are delapidated witnesses to a collective act of humming. Drawn as much from research on echo as from sensitivity to how the personal act of humming becomes contagious, the video casts the performers as a kind of soothing resonant sculpture. Ultimately, this is a gesture of transient healing—a seemingly insignificant act in a vanishing space that musters transformational power.

Other spaces are defined by the subtraction of their own components, the shedding of their own materiality. This loss ‘constructs’ rejection or negativity, which, in turn, critiques space-making itself. :mentalKLINIK’s installation *ANOTHER LOVE\_2001* (2020), for example, evokes some gnarled party leftover—sullen bulbs cast a candy haze across tawdry disco balls, all enmeshed in a drunken tangle of wires sprawling up the wall. The work speaks to a post-space; it is a creepy remnant of an evacuated site that it still blindly tries to illuminate.

Places are also *re-placed*: what once constituted one space is enlisted in the construction of another. Vikram Divecha’s *Negative Heaps (of designated waste)* (2015) is an archive of discarded tiles, unused segments of an Islamic geometric-patterned mosaic lining a Dubai traffic underpass. The bits of waste are hand-numbered (as would be the actual tiles used in the final wall decoration), arranged in piles creating their own aesthetic pattern. The regimented heaps echo Hassan Sharif’s wall-bound *Spare Parts* (2016), itself an archive of the insignificant—a constellation of ‘replacement’ elements, meaningless without integration into a larger spatial or, in this case, mechanical whole.

Walls—the ubiquitous spatial parameters of our daily existence—are re-thought as ephemeral markers of a transient, vanished life, whether in Yassin’s crumbling lung hospital, or Divecha’s *Demolition Monoprints* (2021)—inky “on-site monoprints” of apartment walls in buildings slated for demolition.

Finally, *Out of Place* interprets the rigid “place-ness” of the wall as merely surface, or as some illusory conflation of volume and flatness. In Mohammed Kazem’s never-before-exhibited *Receiving Light. Cincinnati* (2018), the photographed wall is reduced to a surface which,

scratched and pocked, attains a tactile dimensionality. Yet the works' figurative source—the wall itself—morphs to a graphic support for the artist's light-capturing engraving.

Haleh Redjaian's 'nomadic' sculptures capture the wall at a moment of transition—hovering between invisible/visible. As such, the works are emblematic of *Out of Place*, unifying several conceptual strands: the ephemeral, in the works' temporary, shifting perspective of space; re-imagined insignificance in the fragile thread's hasty lifecycle as a 'wall'; and resonance, in the repetitive, loom-like sonic charge latent in the spanned threadwork. Perhaps echoing Yassin's contagious resonance, the machinal, "Philip Glass-y" (as the artist describes it) hum evoked by the work reinforces the sense of place not as a geolocational certainty, but as a site of illusion. And while space may articulate us—in the underpasses we navigate, the walls we skirt—we are nonetheless increasingly encouraged, like Agamben's heroic figure, to be (and remain) out of place.

## SHORT BIOGRAPHIES

**VIKRAM DIVECHA** (born 1977, Beirut) is a Mumbai-bred artist based in Dubai. He holds an MFA in Visual Art from Columbia University (2019) and graduated from the Whitney Museum's Independent Study program (2019-20). Divecha's projects often bring invisible structures into plain view, to raise questions about agency, ethics and value. His conceptual and collaborative practice has developed around what he calls 'found processes' - those forces and capacities at work within state, social, economic and industrial spheres. Interrogating specific environments, Divecha's endeavors often see him realigning social and urban systems to generate an altered, amplified outcome as the operation runs its course. The changes he initiates are not simply injected into a system and then showcased; rather, Divecha's are slow processes, capable of enduring well beyond the time/space framework of what is 'exhibited', in some cases generating sustained social associations. Despite interacting with largely invisible systems, his works have a definite materiality and formal rigour. Divecha's engagements translate into site-specific works, public art, installations, video, photography and drawings.

**MOHAMMED KAZEM** (born 1969, Dubai) lives and works in Dubai. He holds an MFA in Fine Arts from University of the Arts, Philadelphia. Throughout his practice, Kazem has tried to capture the un-capturable. From his own body and the objects of his quotidian to nature itself, Kazem senses what is un-measurable—sometimes even un-seeable—and transfigures it into a visual work. He observes and measures, yet he does not record. He collects and analyses, yet he does not portray. Rather, Kazem responds to the abstractness of nature. He hears, then renders sounds visually. He sees, then uses action and performance to make a vision manifest. His scratchings, paintings, drawings and sculpture are at the fulcrum of many senses—sound, sight, touch, movement. Kazem was a member of the Emirates Fine Arts Society early in his career and is acknowledged as one of the 'Five', an informal group of Emirati artists -at the vanguard of conceptual and interdisciplinary art practice.

**:mentalKLINIK** is a Brussels-based artist duo from Istanbul composed of Yasemin Baydar (born 1972, Istanbul) and Birol Demir (born 1967, Ankara) who began their collaborative practice in 1998. The duo has an open laboratory approach to process, production, roles, conception and presentation. This vocabulary gives their work a relationship with different references and background. Their work is a mix of oxymora and paradoxes, darkly humorous, self-contained and as much concerned with the total effect of accelerated capitalism as with the invisible politics and dynamics that define our everyday lives. :mentalKLINIK's oeuvre is droll and can look very playful and fun but at the same time, it is violent, abrasive and very questioning of the world we live in. Eschewing themes of identity, history and memory, their works range from immersive time-based installations to sculptures and objects that thwart categorization.

**HALEH REDJAIAN** (born 1971, Frankfurt) lives and works in Berlin. She studied Art History at the Goethe University of Frankfurt and furthered her studies in drawing and printmaking followed by sculpture at the Royal Academy of Fine Art in Antwerp. She works in a variety of mediums, predominantly works on paper, textiles, murals and spatial installations often referring to architecture. Grounded in geometry, she uses its rules to reshape and retrace the apparent order of angles and lines. Her compositions subtly belie their own errors and form what she calls a 'natural abstract language.'

**RAED YASSIN** (born 1979, Beirut) lives and works in Berlin. He graduated from the Theatre Department of the Institute of Fine Arts in Beirut in 2003, and in 2015, he was awarded a research fellowship at the Akademie der Kunst der Welt in Cologne. An artist and musician, Yassin's work often originates from an examination of his personal narratives and their position within a collective history, through the lens of consumer culture and mass production. He is also a founding member of Atfal Ahdath, a Beirut-based art collective.

**HASSAN SHARIF** (1951-2016) made a vital contribution to conceptual art and experimental practice in the Middle East through 40 years of performance, installation, drawing, painting and assemblage. Sharif graduated from The Byam Shaw School of Art (now part of Central Saint Martins) in 1984 and returned to the UAE shortly after. He set about staging interventions and the first exhibitions of contemporary art in Sharjah, as well as translating art historical texts and manifestos into Arabic so as to provoke a local audience to engage with - or at least reject - contemporary art discourse. In addition to his own practice, he also encouraged and supported several generations of artists in the Emirates. Sharif was a founding member of the Emirates Fine Arts Society (founded in 1980) and the Art Atelier in the Youth Theatre and Arts in Dubai. In 2007, he was one of the four artists to establish The Flying House, a Dubai institution for promoting contemporary Emirati artists. Hassan Sharif wanted to make art accessible to the general public, not just to art experts and collectors, hence his early decision to work non-commercially, in the public spaces of the Emirate of Sharjah. He created his works out of cheap, everyday materials, or mass-produced objects acquired from markets. Art can just as well be made from plastic cups, cutlery, flip-flops, blankets, or cheap toys as from any other material—this notion reflects his critical stance towards the consumer culture that emerged in the Gulf region after the discovery of oil. Many of the works he called 'Objects' explore the evolution of the city and of consumer society.

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