MAHMOUD EL SAFADI

*Personal Sea*

September 18 – November 02, 2025

*Personal Sea*(2025) is a series of miniature paintings that explore the Mediterranean as a site of memory, inheritance, and continuity. In these works, the artist seeks to impersonate his late grandfather, stepping into his place within the seascapes of the Eastern Mediterranean. By appropriating fragments of his grandfather’s history, he stages an intimate doubling, where geographical proximity and the repetition of scenes across time turn the sea into a theatre of cyclical history.

Between 1939 and 1946, Mahmoud’s grandfather served under the British flag in the Eastern Mediterranean, from El Alamein to the coasts of Palestine and Lebanon. His service coincided with the enforcement of the 1939 White Paper, which sought to restrict Zionist migration to Palestine, producing a maritime space marked by war, empire, and displacement. He spoke little of these years, leaving silences that Mahmoud approaches through archival research, fragmentary accounts, and speculative painting.

The artist’s relationship to the Mediterranean is shaped by its contemporary conditions: a littoral landscape that is at once connective and exclusionary, communal and privatized, fluid and heavily policed. Painted onto playing cards that recall *quatorze*, a game taught by his grandfather, the images accumulate across time as a visual palimpsest, situating personal and inherited memory within broader histories of struggle, surveillance, and belonging.

Artist Biography:

Mahmoud El Safadi (b.1987, Beirut) is an artist and filmmaker whose practice emerges from personal histories of migration and displacement, tracing how movement across borders shapes identity, memory, and belonging. Working with video, photography, sculpture, and installation, he engages the entangled relationships between nature and culture, material and lived heritage, and the porous line between the “natural” and the “artificial.” His hybrid forms operate as gestures of resistance; challenging dominant narratives, cultural and economic imperialism, and the ways globalization produces both connection and fracture.

El Safadi’s work has been presented in international exhibitions, including *In a blink of an eye*, Temporary art platform (2024); *Caravan: Thinking with Alexandria* (Biella, Marseille, Aarhus, Alexandria, 2022–23); *Fine Print*, Beirut Art Center (2022); *Lost in the Right Direction*, Art Design Lebanon (2021); *Pattison Outdoor Billboard Public Art Project*, Capture Photography Festival, Vancouver (2021); *March Projects*, Sharjah Art Foundation (2017); *4th Aflam International Festival of Arab Cinema*, Marseille (2016); and *In the Heart of the Heart of Another Country*, ArtBOX, Thessaloniki (2016).

He participated in the Home Workspace Program at Ashkal Alwan, Beirut (2014–15), and holds a BFA in Film and New Media History from York University, Toronto (2010).

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