



LARA BALADI
DIARY OF THE FUTURE



Chronologie (Detail)

Ramez 17/09/2007

Cover:

Chronologie (Detail)

Lara 11/10/2007

Ritual is a tender anchor. Through repetition, we find comfort in an otherwise uncertain reality. It is this essence of ritual that Lara Baladi explores in *Diary of the Future*, an ensemble of works that emerged from the time preceding the death of her father. The works are a celebration of the continuity of life in the face of death. Collectively, they are testament to what the artist refers to as 'the movement found within stillness.'

Born in Lebanon, raised in Paris, Lara moved to Egypt in 1997. From the time she arrived in Cairo, her grandmother started inviting friends and family of all generations for lunch every Sunday. These lunches would invariably end with drinking Turkish coffee. One of the regular visitors, Nina, would read fortunes in the thick black residue of coffee at the bottom of each cup. These readings became an integral part of that Sunday ritual.

After 50 years away from Egypt, Lara's father returned to Cairo in 2007 to die in the place he was born. By August of that year, it became clear that he could pass away at any time. The artist focused on the collective experience of her family as they accompanied him in his final six months. She writes of that time: 'How could I show the beauty and the tensions, the sadness and the joy of this communal moment which was neither morbid nor melancholic but rather excessive and strangely positive?'

The reading of coffee cups assumed importance as a medium to reflect upon this dramatic period. Lara issued strict instructions to each of her father's visitors: drink, turn the cup upside down, turn it around three times, tap the top twice and label the cup with name and date. The cups were then stored until the artist photographed them.

As each cup was turned over, deep brown rivulets and deposits in the dregs were revealed. In the photographs, we see these lines pale as they move towards the rim. White porcelain is visible between the textured brown of the coffee. In the spiralling formations created in the viscous residue, symbols or the outline of shapes appear as the granules run down to a deep black and fathomless centre.

In *Chronologie*, Lara presents a selection of the photographs in rows, capturing a fragmented narrative of those months. We sense the ceremony, an unseen performance, behind each image. Meeting, drinking and reading coffee in such a ritualised manner articulates the collective anticipation that drew her family together. And though Lara's life at this time became insular and private, a huis clos, transcendence is implicit in the reading of cups. In *Rose*, *La Mere Noire* and *The Eye of Adam*, the images are assembled into graceful shapes. The delicacy and careful patterning of these collages remind us of both a stained glass window and a paper doily, the blackness of the cups seeming to perforate the complex pattern within the lace. These works contain a sense of the intimacy of the original readings. There are also echoes of Buddhist mandalas about them, with a pattern that seems to bloom from its centre. We see the flow of an arabesque. Or perhaps a cell placed under a microscope, a visceral and mortal reality implicit in each cup.

With the interlocking weave of lace as a wonderful visual metaphor, the works meditate on the idea that our past, present and future are entwined. Just as her father's visitors would never get the same formations in their cup of coffee from one day to the next, so Lara reflects that our futures are defined by a present that is constantly

changing. *Relative Destinies*, a monumental arrangement of the cups into a vast square, points to the subjective interpretations that each person would read into the cups and in the work. In the distinctly Middle Eastern popular language of cup-reading, soggy ground coffee in the shape of a fish may be interpreted as coming wealth – but it is the intuitive language of interpretation, subjectivity itself, that is at the core of what is being explored here.

The accompanying sound piece, *Fragments*, is a five-track recording of Nina's interpretation of the photographs. Touching on the myriad fears, melancholia and strange hopefulness of that time, Nina's thirteen minute kaleidoscopic narrative seems to glide through the emotions that are embedded in these images.

Diary of the Future points to an intangible yearning that we feel in the face of mortality. The clairvoyant projections, the reading of cups, hints at a desire for a glimpse of something eternal: an unformed future that arises from the reality of the present. The artist shows us a narrative of life's continuity in the face of death, and that change is our only certainty.

Christopher Lord



La Mère Noire
Digital collage
Permanent pigment print on somerset paper or gesso
110 x 110 cm
Edition of 8 (5 on paper and 3 on gesso)
2010



La Mère Noire (Detail)

... Ah le gentil docteur...

... moi je ne lis jamais le fond des tasses...

... un groupe de personnes qui vont vers un même but, qui marchent ensemble au même rythme...

... il lui ouvrirait comme une fenêtre sur la vie. Il est dédié à une cause...

... Il a une aura autour de lui ...

... pas du tout dispersé -ce qui est propre aux hommes en général- ce n'est pas comme les femmes qui mélangent tout...

... Elle est plus angoissée en apparence qu'elle ne l'est vraiment ...

... Il n'y a que ce problème qu'elle a devant elle et elle ne voit plus que ça ...

... Quand on lit la tasse, ça dénote surtout le moment présent pas toujours l'avenir...

... une ombre de quelqu'un qui la hante ... Le ... poisson représente un bien matériel ...

... tu essayes d'éteindre cette lumière mais tu n'y arrives pas, elle est plus forte que toi ...

... Tu as une personne qui occupe une immense place dans ton cœur et dans ta tête et je pense que c'est ...

... ton papa ... face à son désarroi... malgré les moments difficiles ... ce n'est pas la fin pour lui... ce qu'il peut lui arriver

n'est qu'un commencement, celui d'une autre vie, superbe. Voilà, c'est là, elle le sait ...

... elle le voit partir, elle est assez triste en fait... elle va recevoir une nouvelle qui va la percuter avec beaucoup de force ...

... Si quelque chose doit arriver à Ramez, ce n'est pas dramatique... ce n'est pas la fin pour lui ...

... Elle a comme deux anges qui sont là et qui attendent Ramez. Deux personnes qu'il a dû beaucoup aimer sur terre ...

... Elle est résignée. La mort ce n'est que du charnel. Elle sait que le plus important, ce n'est pas ça ...

... Ton papa vous a tous donné beaucoup de force ... Quelqu'un. Voilà. Qu'elle quitte. Quelqu'un qui s'en va de sa vie ...

... Le profil de ton papa est très présent dans sa tête, elle le voit même quand elle a les yeux ouverts. Mais, elle ne le voit pas tel qu'il était quand il était ...

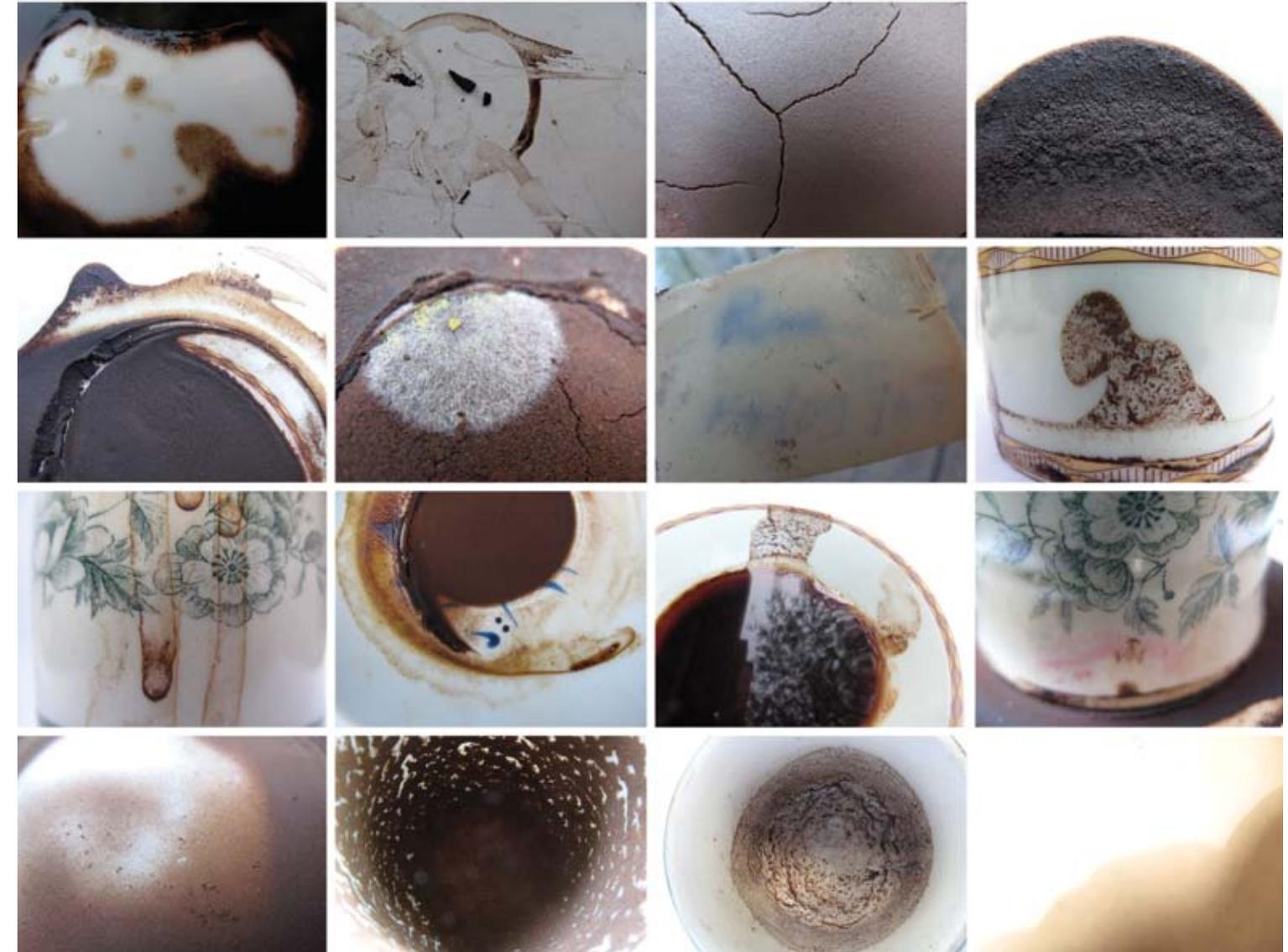
... dans ses derniers jours mais elle le voit tel qu'il était quand il allait bien. On dirait même qu'il porte un chapeau ...

... On dirait qu'elle est délivrée d'un gros souci. Mais ça ne veut pas dire qu'elle n'a pas de sentiments, elle est bourrée de sentiments ...

... Il acceptait la mort ... il savait que ce n'était pas la fin ...

... mélangé en même temps, je ne peux pas dire de la joie, mais une forme de paix ...

... parfois, la mort apporte une délivrance ...

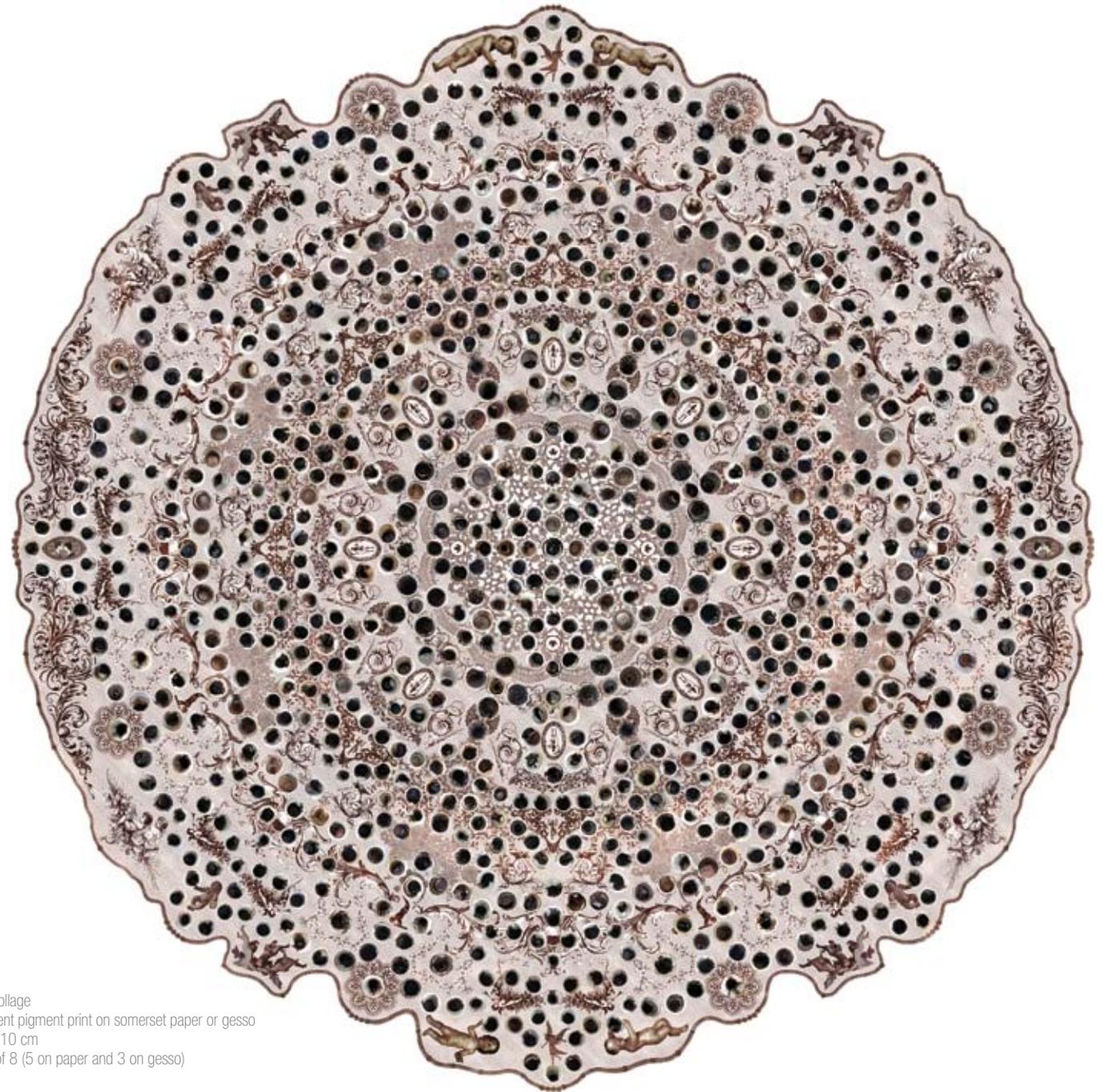




Chronologie
14 panels of permanent pigment prints on Somerset paper
980 x 220 cm
Edition of 8 (5 on paper and 3 on gesso)
2008



View from The Good Old Days
 curated by Clare Butcher
 Aarhus Museum, Denmark
 2010



Rose
 Digital collage
 Permanent pigment print on somerset paper or gesso
 410 x 410 cm
 Edition of 8 (5 on paper and 3 on gesso)
 2010



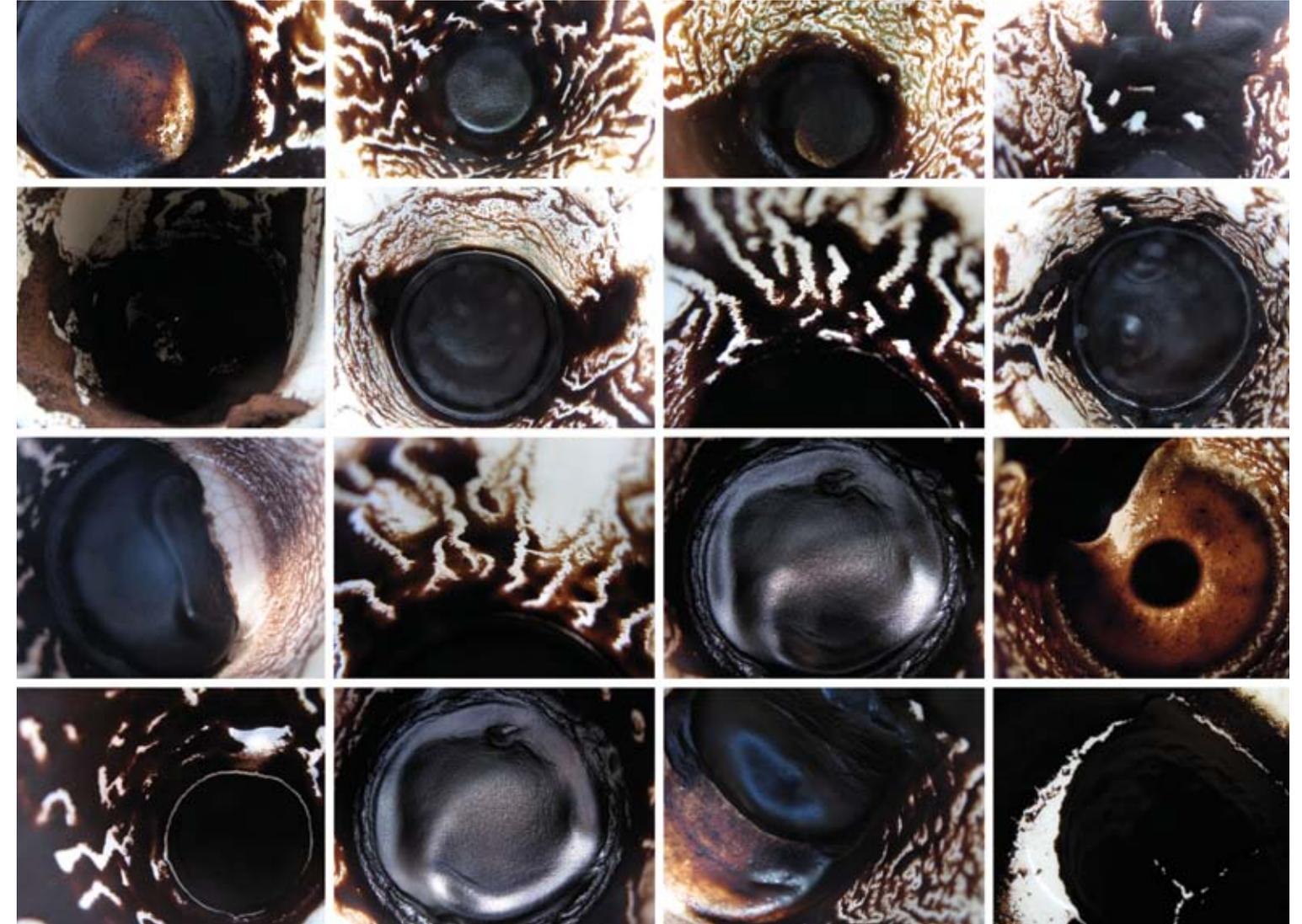
Rose (Detail)



Rose
View from The Good Old Days
Curated by Clare Butcher
Aarhus Museum, Denmark
2010



Relative Destinies (Detail)

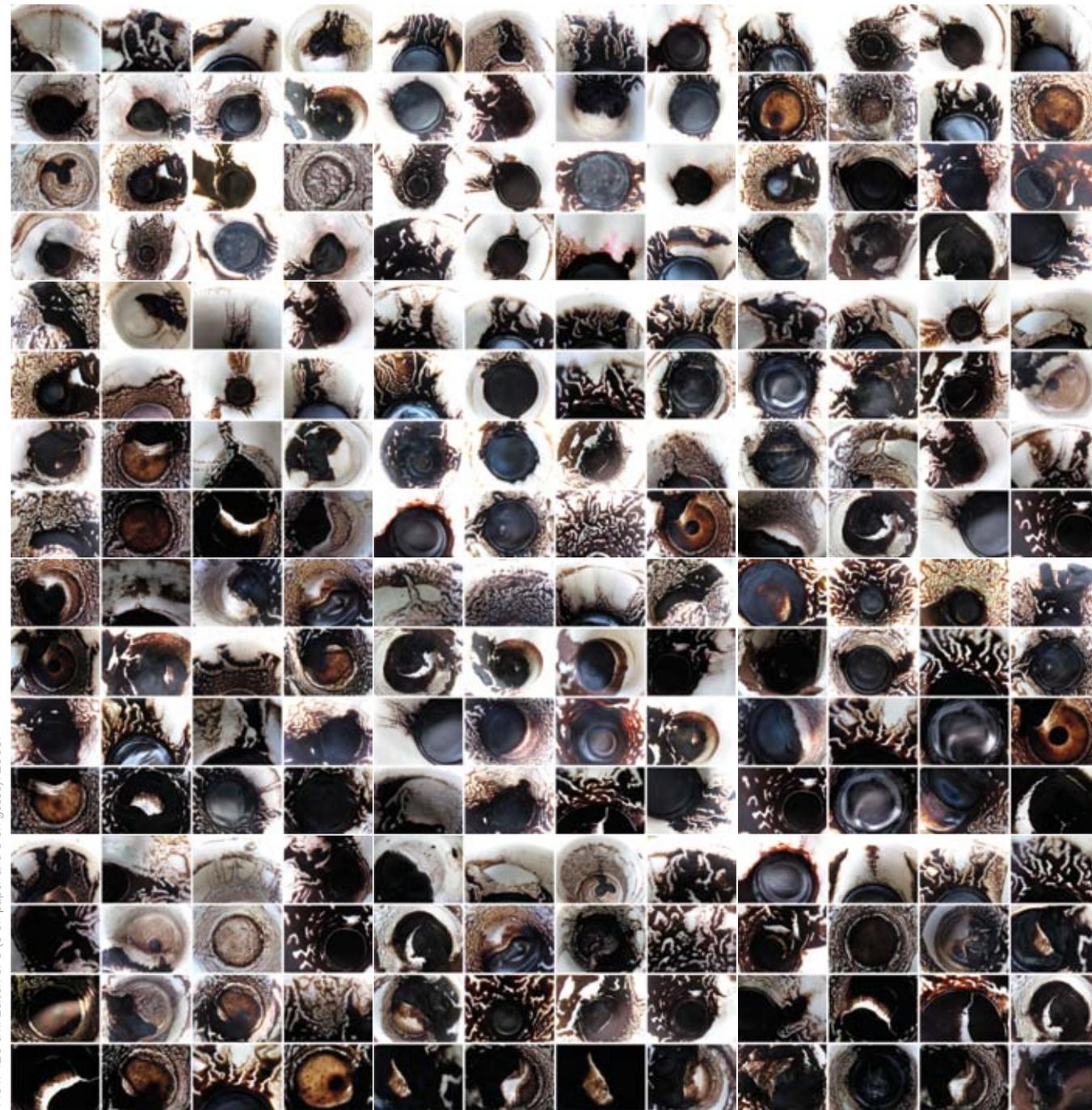


Relative Destinies (Detail)



Relative Destinies
View from The Good Old Days
curated by Clare Butcher
Aarhus Museum, Denmark
2010

Relative Destinies, 12 panels of permanent pigment prints on Somerset paper
440 x 420 cm. Edition of 8 (5 on paper and 3 on gesso), 2008.





The Eye of Adam (Detail)



The Eye of Adam
Digital collage
Permanent pigment print on somerset paper or gesso
120 x 65 cm
Edition of 8 (5 on paper and 3 on gesso)
2010.

BIOGRAPHY

Lara Baladi is an artist works through a process of accumulating, interpreting and re-interpreting images –a broken fragmented memory, which "she tries to 'fix'" in various media and forms, from installations to videos, collages, tapestries, etc.

Born in Lebanon in 1969 of Lebanese-Egyptian origin, Lara Baladi has lived in Beirut, Paris, London and Cairo, where she works and resides since 1997.

Her work has been exhibited internationally across the Middle East, the US, Japan and Europe, and is part of a number of contemporary art collections, including the Fondation Cartier in Paris, the Museet for Fotokunst in Copenhagen, the Pori Art Museum in Finland and the Chase Collection in New York.

Following the fellowship she received from the Japan Foundation in 2003, she exhibited one of her large scale installations, Roba Vecchia, in Cairo, in February 2006,

in Art Dubai and the Sharjah Biennial in 2007 and in the Kennedy centre in Washington DC, in February 2009.

In 2006, Lara Baladi was commissioned to show an installation of 20 screens/projections along one kilometer of seashore on the opening night of the Image of the Middle East Festival in Denmark. The same year, the artist initiated and directed Fenenin El-Rahhal, an "artists working summit" on the subject of Territory in the Egyptian Western desert - www.nomadicartists.com.

She won the Grand Nile Prize at the 2008/09 Cairo Biennial for her ephemeral construction and sound installation Borg El Amal.

She is a member of the Beirut-based Fondation Arabe pour l'Image.



The Eye of Adam (Detail)

SELECTED SOLO SHOWS

- Surface of Time** B21 Art Gallery, Dubai, UAE, 2008
- Towards the Light** 20 screens (slide show) projections along one kilometre of seashore. Opening night of Image of the Middle East Festival, Copenhagen International Theatre, Denmark.
- Roba Vecchia** The Townhouse gallery, Cairo, Egypt, 2006
- Kai'ro** Lansmuseet, Vasternorrland, Harnosand, Sweden, 2005 – 06
Nikolai, Copenhagen contemporary Art Centre, Denmark, 2005
Pori museum, Pori, Finland, 2005, Bildmuseet, Umea, Sweden, 2004

SELECTED GROUP SHOWS

- Songs of Survival in a Precarious Age** Perfumes & Bazaar, Sydney Biennial, 2010
- Wild Is the Wind** Shish Kebab and Sandouk El Dounia tapestry, Savannah college of art & design, Georgia, 2010
- The Good Old Days** Diary Of the Future, Aarhus Museum, Denmark, 2010
- Tarjama/Translation** Sandouk El Dounia tapestry, Queens Museum, New York, USA, 2009
- Arabesque** Roba Vecchia, Kennedy Centre, Washington DC, USA, 2009
- Cairo International Biennale** Borg El Amal, Grand Nile award, Egypt, 2008 – 09
- New Ends, Old Beginnings** Diary of the Future, Bluecoat gallery, Liverpool, UK, 2008.
- Sharjah Biennial** Sharjah, United Arab Emirates, 2007
- Gulf Art Fair** Roba Vecchia. DIFC, Dubai, UAE, 2007
- Snap judgments** International centre for Photography, NY, USA, 2006
Miami Art Central, Miami, USA, 2006
Museo Tamayo Arte Contemporaneo, Mexico City, Mexico, 2007
National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, 2007
Memphis Brooks Museum, Memphis, USA, 2008
Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, Netherlands, 2008

- Al Fanous al Sehry** Townhouse gallery of Contemporary Art, Cairo, 2002
- Sandouk El Dounia** El Nitaq Festival, Cairo, Egypt, 2001
Ashkal Alwan, Beirut, Lebanon, 2001
- The Eye of Mary Magdalene** Galerie De Visu, Marseille, France, 1998
Mois de la Photographie, Beirut, Lebanon, 1998

- Afrika Remix** Johannesburg Art Gallery, 2007
Mori Museum, Tokyo, 2006
Centre Georges, Pompidou, Paris, 2005
Hayward Gallery, London, 2005,
Kunst Palast museum, Dusseldorf 2004
- Some Stories** Kunsthalle, Vienna, 2005
- Rencontres de la Photographie Africaine** Bamako, Mali, 2003
- Disorientation** Haus Der Kulturen Der Welt, Berlin, Germany, 2003
- The Desert** Fondation Cartier Pour l'Art Contemporain, Paris, France, 2000
Fundacion Caixia, Barcelona, Spain, 2001
Centro Andaluz de Arte Contemporaneo, Sevilla, Spain, 2001
- The Eye of Mary Magdalene** Asbaek Gallery, Copenhagen, Denmark, 2000
Ronald Feldman Gallery, New York, USA, 1999
Townhouse Gallery of Contemporary Art, Cairo, Egypt, 1999
Musée de la Photographie de Charleroi, Belgium, 1999

GALLERY ISABELLE VAN DEN EYNDE

Gallery Isabelle van den Eynde (prev. B21) has discovered and nurtured the talent of some of the most promising figures in the Middle East's contemporary art scene. A generation of artists – including the likes of Rokni and Ramin Haerizadeh, Reza Aramesh, Khosrow Hassanzadeh and Lara Baladi – has emerged from the gallery's focused tutelage, attracting the attention of adventurous collectors and curators, as well as prestigious institutions from the region and beyond.

Having recently moved to a larger space in an industrial quarter near the centre of Dubai, Gallery Isabelle van den Eynde showcases an intense and innovative program of exhibitions that break conventional understandings of art coming out of the Middle East. The gallery has participated in several art fairs, including Art Dubai, Paris Photo and Abu Dhabi Art, to great acclaim, inspiring the gallery's hosts about new art from Iran and the Arab world. In 2010, the gallery will launch its first publication.

DRIVING DIRECTION

On Sheikh Zayed Road, take exit 43 in the direction of Al Manara East, descend into Al Quoz Industrial Area and turn right at the traffic lights. Continue straight through the first set of traffic lights and Al Serkal Avenue, a grey compound of warehouses, is visible on your right. Enter via the gate on the right hand side, then take the first right inside the compound and Gallery Isabelle van den Eynde is on your left, lot 17.

OPENING HOURS

Sat-Thu 10am-7pm; Fri closed

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