

Fouad Elkoury and Tamara Al Samerraei

Play the Possum

31 May – 14 July 2016

Gypsum is delighted to showcase the work of acclaimed Lebanese photographer Fouad Elkoury and Kuwaiti artist Tamara Al Samerraei in a joint exhibition entitled Play the Possum. The exhibition marks Elkoury's first presentation in Egypt since 2004, and Al Samerraei's second show at Gypsum. Play the Possum brings together a group of select photographs that were taken by Elkoury in Hungary, Poland, Lebanon, Germany, Egypt and Palestine between 1978 and 2010, alongside a series of new paintings by Al Samerraei.

With a striking equilibrium between intent and intuition, the works in the exhibition compose an uncertain narrative characterized by what is left unsaid. In Fouad's photographs, we are propelled from one location to the next - from the run down sets of the historic Studio Nahas in Cairo, to the architectural remains of the Lebanese civil war and deserted landscapes of Soviet bases in the former Eastern bloc. Decay gives way to renewal. Against the backdrop of conflict, we are shown life affirmed: as youth with its promise of success, as resilient shrubbery pushing through slabs of concrete.

In Play the Possum, Al Samerraei's starting point was a mixed group of photographs from her personal archive, from Fouad Elkoury's and from the public domain. She depicts interior and outdoor spaces and objects that are stripped of everything except their bare essence. Her details are vague and pigments take on the appearance of discoloration. Plants, silent and inanimate but alive, are a recurring element in almost all her paintings. The works emit a psychological charge that is intensified by the visceral rawness of the canvases. Like a spectral vision, we register a palpable presence even when we can't physically see it.

Fouad Elkoury is a photographer and a video artist. He is a co-founder of the Arab Image Foundation in Beirut. His early bodies of work were published in Be...longing (2011), On war and love (2007), Sombres (2002), Suite Egyptienne (1999), Beirut City Centre (1992) and Beyrouth Aller-Retour (1984). Elkoury has presented solo exhibitions at Beirut Art Center (2011), LenbachHaus, Munich (2005), La Crypte, Beirut (2004), Townhouse Gallery, Cairo (2004), Maison Européenne de la Photo, Paris (2002), Centre de la Photographie, Geneva (1996), Institut du Monde Arabe, Paris (1988), Centre d'Art Contemporain, Rouen (1986). He has participated in international group exhibitions, including Mediterranean Photography Festival, France (2013), 9th Gwangju Biennale (2012), 52nd Venice Biennale (2007), National Museum of Contemporary Art, Athens (2006), Sharjah Biennial 7 (2005), Palais de Tokyo, Paris (1993). He lives and works between Paris and Beirut.

Born in Kuwait in 1977, **Tamara Al Samerraei** lives and works in Beirut. She received a BA in Fine Arts from the Lebanese American University in Beirut in 2002 and completed the inaugural year of the Home Workspace Program at Ashkal Alwan (2011-2012), Beirut. Her solo exhibitions include Let Me Stay a Little Longer, Marfa' Projects, Beirut (2015-2016), Make Room for Me, Gypsum Gallery, Cairo (2014); Fleeting Fences (2011) and Something White (2008), Agial Art Gallery, Beirut. She has participated in several group exhibitions including Complicity, Sultan Gallery, Kuwait (2016), On Water, Rosemary and Mercury curated by Christine Tohme for Ashkal Alwan's Homeworks 7, Beirut (2015); 25 Ans De Creativite Arabe, Institut Du Monde Arabe, Paris (2012); All About Beirut, White Box, Munich (2010); Exposure, Beirut Art Center, Beirut; Radius of Art project, Fladernbunker, Kiel, (2008); Shoe Box, Dar Al Funoon, Kuwait (2007). Most recently Al Samerraei completed a nine-month residency at the Cite International Des Arts in Paris (2014). She teaches painting and drawing at the School of Visual Arts at the Academie Libanaise Des Beaux-Arts (ALBA).