

Zineb Sedira
Maritime Chronicles
Preview 5th June 2014 h. 6.30 pm
6th June - 19th July 2014
Text by Yasmina Reggad

Ricardo Crespi Gallery presents *Maritime Chronicles*, a solo show by international London-based artist Zineb Sedira.

Ricardo Crespi Gallery is thrilled to present Zineb Sedira with her first solo show in Milan which will showcase recent video and photography works.

In *Maritime Chronicles*, recent bodies of work by Sedira cast their gaze upon the sea of Marseille, France and Nouadhibou, Mauritania. Featuring photography and video installations, the exhibition speaks of transitional existences and liminal spaces, as well as addresses environmental, geographical and cultural mobility issues. Negotiating between both past and future, she also presents different methodologies to address the issues of transmission, memories and legacy.

Over the fifteen years of her practice, Sedira has enriched the debate around the concepts of modernism, modernity and its manifestations in an inclusive way. She has also raised awareness of artistic expression and the contemporary experience in North Africa. She found inspiration initially in researching her identity as a woman with a singular personal geography. From these autobiographical concerns she gradually shifted her interest to more universal ideas of mobility, memory and transmission. Sedira has also addressed environmental, geographical and cultural issues, negotiating between both past and future. Using portraits, landscapes, language and archival research, she has developed a polyphonic vocabulary, spanning fiction, documentary and more poetic and lyrical approaches. Sedira has worked in installation, photography, film, video and she has recently returned to object-making.

In her most recent body of work developed in a sugar silo located in the Port of Marseille, Sedira proposes a possible archaeology and geopolitics of commodified natural resources. In the monumental photographs ***Sugar Silo*** (diptych), ***Sugar Mountain*** and ***Sugar Landscape I, II and III*** (2013), the mountains of sugar stocked in warehouses take the form of landscapes, craters and geological and topographical strata. Once the buildings are empty, layers of sugar dust imprint themselves upon the walls of ***Sugar Surface*** (2013), creating abstract murals.

The granulated sugar that is transported in bulk to Marseille to be stored is extracted from sugar cane in tropical and sub-tropical regions of the world, from Africa and Oceania to the Caribbean, the West Indies and the shores of Latin America. The different shades of ochre in these sugars recount the stories of human migrations, the endless journeys through the seas and oceans, and the triangular trade routes of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Once a virgin strip of sand dragged along from the Western Sahara to the North Atlantic Sea, the coastlines of the peninsula of Nouadhibou (Mauritania) now resemble a desolated post-apocalyptic film set. The set of photographs ***Ship on Sand*** (2014) and the diptych ***Comings and Goings*** (2014) are striking images of damaged and abandoned skeletons of rusted ships, which are fragile floating sculptures anchored into the sand threatening to collapse at any time. Are they departing or starting their journey from here?

Moreover, Nouadhibou is the natural habitat of exotic migratory birds that stop here each year. It is also both the end of the African journey of candidates for illegal immigration and the departure to a promised land. The maritime business has turned this rich ecosystem into an environmental disaster and a waste dump where local communities have developed parallel economies responding to the global demand in metal.

As a recurrent emblematic symbol in Sedira's photographs from Nouadhibou, the anchor, which grips the bottom of the sea and holds the ship firmly in place, anticipates the vessel's arrival and the memories to be kept and transmitted.

Preserving and transmitting memories of the past in order to leave a legacy for the future has often been at the core of Sedira's work. The three-screen video installation *Transmettre en abyme* (2013) investigates the Detaille collection, a living photographic archive of three generations of photographers in Marseille spanning from 1895 to today, in addition to another local photographer's body of work produced between 1935 and 1985. In 1996 the family archive had been enriched by the acquisition of Marcel Baudelaire's collection of valuable visual testimonies – an obsessive 'ship spotter' who compulsively photographed the boats arriving and departing from of the port of Marseille. *Transmettre en abyme* is a unique record in its own right of an artist who is herself a photographer and collector of memories. Sedira subtly visually unveils the methods of documentation, counting, ordering and classification. The installation draws attention to the contribution of little known photographers to the local history of photography of Marseille. It is also an homage to dedicated 'image keepers' such as Hélène Detaille, the archivists who have formed and are preserving cultural memories for future generations.

Sedira began her art career in the mid 1990s in London, after completing her studies at Central St Martins, the Slade School of Fine Art and the Royal College of Art. She lives in London and works between London, Algiers and Paris. She has exhibited at the Bildmuseet, Nikolaj Art Center, Musée d'Art Contemporain [MAC], Palais de Tokyo, Tate Britain, ICP Triennial, NY, Centre Pompidou, Hayward Gallery, British Art Show 06, ICA, Brooklyn Museum, 1st Quadrennial for Contemporary Art, Venice Biennale and Folkestone Triennial, the Singapore Art Museum, Singapore Art Museum and Foundation Miro.

Sedira has had solo exhibitions at the Rencontres de la Photographie d'Arles, Cornerhouse, the Photographers' Gallery, The Wapping Project, Rivington Place and John Hansard Gallery, and recently exhibited at Blaffer Art Museum and Charles H. Scott Gallery.

Her works can be found in several major public collections including Deutsche Bank, Tate Modern, Museum of Modern Art and Pompidou Centre, Victoria and Albert Museum, Arts Council of England, Gallery of Modern Art, Glasgow, Sharjah Art Museum and the Fond National d'Art Contemporain.

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