

PRESS RELEASE

Ayyam Gallery
11, Alserkal Avenue, Street 8
Al Quoz 1, Dubai

T: +971.4.3236242
F: +971.4.3236243
Gallery Hours:
Sun-Thu:
10:00am-6:00pm
Sat: 12:00pm-6:00pm



Sama Alshaibi: *Collapse*

Curated by Maymanah Farhat

16 November 2015 – 14 January 2016

Opening reception: Monday, 16 November from 7.00 to 9.00 pm

Tasma' (Listen), 2014; from the series *Silsila*, Edition of 3, Diasec, 120 cm diameter

Ayyam Gallery Dubai, (11, Alserkal Avenue) is pleased to present *Collapse*, the solo exhibition of Sama Alshaibi. Featuring a diverse range of work spanning several years of her artistic career, the exhibition highlights Alshaibi's conceptual approach to photography and the layered and collapsing signs that are integral to her distinctive aesthetic, particularly her use of the body as a metaphor for spatial and temporal transgressions. In addition to outlining Alshaibi's intricate sense of formalism, the photographs, installations, and videos of *Collapse* indicate the underlying themes that have shaped an ongoing narrative in her work, as the artist traces the consequences of war, the psychic effects of forced migration, and the ecological crises that have resulted from such manmade disasters.

Several of Alshaibi's photo-based projects are included in the exhibition, allowing the viewer to travel through a series of performances. By positioning her body, or that of another model, as an image that measures the psychological content of a scene, Alshaibi symbolically gestures to conditions that obstruct physical movement and suspend the imagination, forcing figures to navigate the unseen yet palpable obstacles of fraught spaces.

A centerpiece of *Collapse* is the multimedia series *Silsila*, which was first shown as part of the Maldives pavilion of the 2013 Venice Biennale. Depicting a journey that traces the footsteps of fourteenth-century Moroccan explorer Ibn Battuta, Alshaibi composes a chain of images that link the significant desert areas and shrinking bodies of water of the MENA region to the island nation of the Maldives, which is currently threatened by rising sea levels. Also inspired by the nomadic traditions of Bedouins, Alshaibi performs at each site, alluding to the processes of purification, transcendence, and renewal while signaling the mystical and historical continuity of these diverse environments.

The title work of the exhibition is a split channel video that invokes the collapse of social structures as different forces struggle for power and humankind disregards the intensifying destruction of the environment. Narrated by the melancholic and foreboding sounds of a child's violin, *Collapse* (2013-14) describes the loss of our most essential source of sustenance while we remain focused on momentary dominance, collectively headed towards disaster.

As a sort of epilogue to the Silsila series and *Collapse*, Alshaibi's newly created multimedia installation *Exodus* (2015) confirms her earlier predictions of impending widespread crises. Inspired by the recent mass migration resulting from overlapping conflicts in North Africa and West Asia, the large-scale installation maps the delicate nature of human life as communities and lands are torn apart by violence. The colony collapse of honeybees that serves as a disquieting metaphor in *Collapse* reappears in the detailed image of a bee's magnified wings, which is realised in the form of a sculptural object. Between the mosaic veins of each wing are video images that describe the trails of refugees that are now etching new migratory patterns across the world as other environments are left burning.

Collapse is curated by art historian and Ayyam Gallery artistic director Maymanah Farhat.

About the Artist

Sama Alshaibi's multimedia work explores spaces of conflict and the power struggles that arise in the aftermath of war and exile. Alshaibi is particularly interested in how such clashes occur between citizens and the state, creating vexing crises that impact the physical and psychic realms of the individual as resources and land, mobility, political agency, and self-affirmation are compromised. Through performance, video, photography, and installation, Alshaibi positions her own body as an allegorical site that makes the byproducts of war visible.

Born in Basra to an Iraqi father and a Palestinian mother, Sama Alshaibi is based in the United States where she is Chair and Associate Professor of Photography and Video Art at the University of Arizona, Tucson. Alshaibi also holds a BA in Photography from Columbia College and an MFA in Photography, Video, and Media Arts from the University of Colorado. Her works are housed in both public and private collections, including the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; Nadour, Germany; The Barjeel Collection, Sharjah; The Rami Farook Collection, Dubai; and the Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art in Tunis, Tunisia. In 2014, Alshaibi was awarded the prestigious Fulbright Scholar Fellowship as part of a residency at the Palestine Museum in Ramallah, where she developed an education program while conducting independent research.

Recently, Alshaibi has featured in solo and group exhibitions at the Pirineos Sur Festival, Lanuza, Spain (2015); Ayyam Gallery, London (2015); Arab American National Museum, Michigan (2015); Honolulu Biennial, Hawaii (2014); Photo Shanghai (2014); FotoFest, Houston (2014); the Maldives Pavilion of the Venice Biennale (2013); Venice Art Gallery, Los Angeles (2013); Madrid Palestine Film Festival (2013); University of Southampton (2013); Museum of Modern Art, New York (2012); Edge of Arabia, London (2012); HilgerBROTKunsthalle, Vienna (2012); Institut Du Monde Arabe, Paris (2012); Maraya Art Centre, Sharjah (2012); Lawrie Shabibi, Dubai (2011); and Selma Feriani Gallery, London (2010). *Sand Rushes In*, Alshaibi's first monograph, was published by Aperture Foundation, New York in 2015.

About Ayyam Gallery

Founded in 2006, Ayyam Gallery is a leading arts organisation that manages the careers of diverse, established and emerging artists from the Middle East. Blue-chip art spaces in Beirut and Dubai, a series of collaborative projects in the United States, Europe, and Asia, and a multinational non-profit arts programme have furthered the gallery's mandate of expanding the parameters of international art by introducing the dynamic art of the region to a global audience. With its widely respected multilingual publishing division and a custodianship programme that manages the estates of pioneering artists, Ayyam Gallery has also spearheaded recent efforts to document the region's art history.

Exhibition Facts

Exhibition Dates: 16 November 2015 - 14 January 2016

Opening Reception: Monday, 16 November from 7.00 to 9.00 pm

Location: Ayyam Gallery Dubai (11 Alserkal Avenue), Al Quoz 1, Dubai

T: +971 4 3236242

Email: dubai@ayyamgallery.com

Website: www.ayyamgallery.com

For press information and artwork images, please contact press@ayyamgallery.com or +971 4 3236242