

PRESS RELEASE
For immediate distribution



vs. Him a solo exhibition by Sama Alshaibi
Private Preview 19 September, 2011 7:30 pm
Exhibition continues until 20 October, 2011

Lawrie Shabibi is proud to present *vs. Him*, a solo exhibition by Palestinian-Iraqi multi-media artist Sama Alshaibi- her first solo in Dubai. Working mainly in video, installation and photography, Alshaibi's works typically grapple with ideas that are often uncomfortable or taboo, transforming them into powerful and evocative statements through her lyrical and forceful aesthetic. Alshaibi will also be presenting a public talk about her art practice at The Pavilion, Burj Khalifa on the 18th of September, 2011 as part of our commitment to engage the local community in the UAE and to provide a stimulating forum for discussion.

In *vs. Him* Alshaibi employs video, photography and - for the first time- sculpture to investigate Middle Eastern masculinities in relationship to, and in contrast with, a female protagonist. In a post 9/11 environment, Western popular culture is fixated on depicting the Arab male as an existential and violent threat and yet masculinity takes a variety of forms in the Middle East, usually grounded in institutional, religious and cultural practices. Recently there have been rapid political changes in the region, but because of these deeply ingrained practices, attitudes towards gender equality seem to take much longer to change. In time, global economic and cultural forces, combined with demographics and political change, may also force a re-evaluation of masculinity and gender roles.

Alshaibi's aim however is not to describe or judge the status quo, but is prescriptive as she creates an 'encounter' where gender equalities are challenged and provoked. Some of her material references ancient history, other imagery is clearly contemporary, whilst some is verging on futuristic, so that the contemporary and future collide, giving visual form to the topologies of Middle Eastern masculinities, both real and theoretical. In the space of this 'encounter', masculinities are instantly threatened, idolised and in some cases redeemed by the female protagonist who embodies the region, the people, and the individual.

Delving into prototypes of masculinity and patriarchy, Alshaibi uses a wide range of multi-media to convey her ideas: in her interpretation of the 'Empire' as a challenged masculine force Alshaibi performs as a valiant female boxer in a fantasy boxing match; depicting the 'State' as the patriarch on trial, she produces hand crafted male and female chairs imbedded with audio-scapes which the

audience is invited to sit on and listen to, and in her exploration of the role of the 'Brother' a two channel video contrasts the daredevil car stunts of a young and reckless brother with the twists and turns of an aerial silk dancer. Using photography and video embedded in custom-made boxes which evoke intimacy between the work and it's viewer, Alshaibi stages performances featuring herself as the protagonist to portray the contemporary Middle Eastern male in his various roles, often with absurd humour, irony and 'genderalisations'.

Biography

Born of Palestinian-Iraqi parentage and exiled to the United States when young, Alshaibi's work reflects forced migrations and the in-between state of statelessness. Alshaibi is also interested in the threshold of two different existential planes, of disorientation, and spaces between spaces. Whether applied within a context of a political map or even the search for meaning, her practice is rooted in the anxieties of the human experience. Alshaibi lives and works in Tucson, Arizona, USA where she is an Assistant Professor of Photography and Video Art at the University of Arizona.

Alshaibi has exhibited in over 20 countries including Selma Feriani, London, Exit Art, NYC, Art Dubai, Dubai, Bastakiya Art Fair, Dubai, Empty Quarter, Dubai, Traffic, Dubai, Al Hoash, Jerusalem, DARB 1718, Cairo, The Bronx Museum, NYC and the Museum of Contemporary Art, Denver. Her time-based works (video art and films) have screened in numerous film festivals internationally, including Thessaloniki International Film Festival in Greece, CinemaEast Film Festival, NYC, DOKUFEST, Kosovo and MidEast Cut, Copenhagen/Denmark & Helsinki/Finland. AlShaibi is in prominent public collections such as Nadour, the Barjeel Collection, and the Rami Farook Collection.

Further Information

Further information on Lawrie Shabibi can be found at www.lawrieshabibi.com.

Lawrie Shabibi, Alserkal Avenue, Unit 21, Al-Quoz, Dubai

Opening Hours: 10am to 6pm Sunday to Thursday. Saturdays 10am to 4pm

For media enquiries please contact Joud Malhas:

info@lawrieshabibi.com

About us

Lawrie Shabibi is an exciting new contemporary art gallery located in Dubai's Al-Quoz industrial district focusing on both established and emerging contemporary artists from the Arab world, Iran, North Africa, South Asia and Turkey. Founded in 2011 by William Lawrie (former director of contemporary art at Christie's) and Asmaa Al-Shabibi (former managing director of Art Dubai), the gallery engages the public with art that imparts a cultural and political discourse together with a powerful aesthetic.