

Lawrie Shabibi
presents
Scripted Reality

A group show with Adel Abidin, Farhad Ahrarnia, Yazan Khalili
Ayman Baalbaki, Mounir Fatmi and Nadia Kaabi-Linke

Opening Reception Tuesday 26th June, 2018
6pm – 8pm
Exhibition until 10 July
10 Hanover Street
London W1S 1YQ

Lawrie Shabibi is excited to announce “*Scripted Reality*”, a group exhibition of six artists to be shown at 10 Hanover. This is Lawrie Shabibi’s first exhibition outside our gallery space in Dubai, and explores complex topics that shape the way we view the world today.

Scripted reality (sometimes also euphemized as ***structured reality*** in television and entertainment) is a subgenre of reality television with major or typically all parts of the contents being scripted, i.e. pre-arranged by the production company”

(“*Scripted Reality, Structured Reality*”, Buzzword from Macmillan Dictionary, sourced from wikipedia.com).

The lines between news and entertainment, fact and fiction, are being constantly eroded. In this post-internet age, the nature of information consumption is transformed from the edited polish of print media to a tailored feed of disconnected news reports, advertising and clickbait. Unfettered access to images without context 24/7, the layering of unconnected factoids and opinion transform the complex real world into a series of simpler artificial constructs. We look for things that confirm our beliefs, whether or not they may be true, and we find outlets increasingly willing to deliver those views. The delusion becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy - "fakeness" accepted as real.

The response of artists has, consciously or unconsciously, become part of this new zeitgeist. Their ideas and practices have developed either through sourcing material from cyberspace, questioning morality or amorality or looking at historical events through different lenses. “*Scripted Reality*” looks at how technology and the Internet has transformed ways of looking and understanding the world around us – and how artists have responded to this.

Two paintings by **Ayman Baalbaki**, from a series never before exhibited, taken from screen shots of online video games, show the interconnectedness between the domestic setting and the physical violence in the world, a lived experience familiar to Baalbaki, having experienced various wars and invasions in his native Lebanon. Ultra violent, with graphics increasingly realistic (if emotionally heightened), these digital images are as vivid as reality. They are a visual analogue to the sinister real “video games” played by military missile and drone operators.

Farhad Ahrarnia sources images of global and contemporary Middle Eastern topics of concern and discourse from media and cyberspace, digitally printing them onto cotton aida cloth, which he subsequently embroiders. Through the language of needlework, the images are subjected to an intense degree of scrutiny, in an attempt to deconstruct and agitate layers of meanings,

power politics and hidden ideologies embedded, invested and consequently projected onto them. Often enlarging the pixels, Ahrarnia's square micro-elements of digital picture production provide an additional geometric layer on the squared-up fabric. The two systems of coordinates, of textile and digital origin, provide the underlying geometric structure of the work. Embroidery for Ahrarnia is a way to re-vitalises these images - stitching as an articulation of space and time and also as an act of self-assertion on appropriated and apparently disconnected images.

Ramallah based **Yazan Khalili's** work *Hiding Our Faces Like a Dancing Wind*, is a video piece currently on view in the exhibition *Being: New Photography 2018* at MoMA through August 19, 2018. The video is a view of a computer screen, with one open window of a woman making various gestures captured through the lens of a phone camera that is itself being filmed. Facial recognition software pops up together with other Windows, text and files. The work is a screen seen through a number of other screens – and this interplay expose structures, operations, and algorithms that become the image itself. Speaking about his work, Khalili talks about how in today's world we see images through the screen to the extent that each image takes on a life of its own – it can be shared, edited, stored etc - all within in a screen. As a result of this he has started to question the way in which images are produced, viewed and distributed. His video also appears to confuse the facial recognition system so that a sequence of ethnographic masks interrupt the frame. The work recalls colonial mechanisms of racial classifications and the construction of historical narratives, questioning the use of technology and its tendency to typecast.

Adel Abidin questions the socio-political implications of this age in his installation *Politically Correct*. Commissioned for his major museum solo at Helsinki's Ateneum Art, the installation shows five versions of this statement being squashed until the words are hardly recognisable. With the proliferation of different social and political groups on the Internet, "political correctness" has been stretched in two extreme and opposite directions and people often hide their true beliefs or values in order to fit in. At times wildly divergent world-views sit side by side in an uneasy equilibrium. The views and opinions of the other are at best tolerated and at worst fiercely dismissed and scorned – Abidin's sculpture is ironic, highlighting the vulnerability, weakness, and hypocrisy of decades of self-imposed restrictions on language that attempted to de-marginalize fringe groups.

Berlin based **Nadia Kaabi-Linke** explores through her artistic practice the dominant narrative of history and its underlying contradictions. She presents a sculptural intervention on a found park bench covering it with spikes typically used on boundary walls to keep people and animals out. The bench confronts the viewer with its imposition and physicality. A benign place of safety and rest is quickly transformed into a hostile object; an everyday functional item becomes perplexing in its functionality and contradictory in its purpose. These opposing features capture the schizophrenia of Western values where "freedom" is the prevailing narrative and yet there is an underlying obsession with security, control and surveillance of movement in the public and private sphere as well as online.

Finally in **Mounir Fatmi's** *Kissing Circles, 09*, the artist grapples with the speed at which mass-produced gadgets are rendered obsolete, replaced by even faster and more efficient devices. The artist makes use of white co-axial antenna cables, which he sees as quickly becoming outmoded, laying them out in circular geometric patterns presented in a plexi-box. The work is a shrine to the ideals of modernity, and to the narratives which are gradually erased from our memory. Its presentation, like a traditional museum display case, is a container of information that also functions as an archive in and of itself.

Artist Biographies:

Adel Abidin (b. 1973, Baghdad, Iraq)

Abidin received a bachelor's degree in Painting from the Academy of Fine Arts in Baghdad in 2000 and a Master's degree in Media and New Media Art from the Academy of Fine Arts in Helsinki, Finland in 2005. He is a visual artist whose projects, whilst focused on global social, political, and cultural issues, traverse a complex landscape of identity, memory, exile, violence and war. Taking specific actions or objects out of their initial context he turns them on their head, creating ironic, darkly humorous and often absurdist responses, exploring issues such as cultural alienation and distorted realities. In 2015 Abidin received The Finland Award for Visual Arts from the Finnish Ministry of Culture and Education. In 2012 he received a Five Year Grant from The Art Council of Finland and was a nominee for the Ars Fennica Prize in 2011. His works are in the collections of public institutions and major private collections including the Heino Art Foundation, Helsinki, Finland; National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, Australia; Finnish National Gallery, Helsinki, Finland; Sharjah Art Foundation, Sharjah, UAE; Barjeel Art Foundation, Sharjah, UAE; Mathaf: Arab Museum of Modern Art, Doha, Qatar; Kiasma - Museum of Contemporary Art, Helsinki, Finland; Espoo Museum of Modern Art (EMMA), Helsinki, Finland; Nadour Collection and Kamel Lazaar Collection.

Farhad Ahrarnia (b. 1971, Shiraz, Iran)

Ahrarnia holds a degree in Experimental and Documentary Film Theory and Practice from the Northern Media School, Sheffield Hallam University, UK. The artist's practice comprises a diverse range of meticulously crafted works that cover questions of ideological narratives, national identity and intercultural exchange. Ahrarnia has exhibited in several solo shows including: *Something for the Touts, the Nuns, the Grocery Clerks and You*, Lawrie Shabibi, Dubai, 2017; *A Dish Fit for the Gods*, Lawrie Shabibi, Dubai, 2015; *Stage on Fire*, Rose Issa Projects, London, 2014; *Canary in a Coal Mine*, Rose Issa Projects, London, 2014; *Stitched*, Leighton House Museum in collaboration with Rose Issa Projects, London, 2008; *Stitched*, Rose Issa Projects, London, 2008; Shipley Art Gallery, Gateshead, 2005; and *Home*, Bessie Sertees House, Newcastle upon Tyne, 2004. His works are in several notable collections including: the Cartwright Hall Art Gallery, Bradford; Harewood House, Leeds; and the British Museum, London. He lives and works between Sheffield and Shiraz.

Ayman Baalbaki (b. 1975, Lebanon)

Painter and installation artist Ayman Baalbaki studied Fine Arts at the Institut des Beaux-Arts in Beirut and the Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Arts Decoratifs (ENSAD) in Paris, and then received a Diploma from the University of Paris VIII (also known as the University of Vincennes in Saint-Denis). His paintings often represent destroyed buildings, occupied by refugees forced to leave their homeland. Strongly influenced by his childhood memories of the Lebanese civil war, Baalbaki sees recent history as its continuation, and since 2005 has created a series of works representing scattered structures, which survived the bombing of Beirut's southern part in that year. Baalbaki's art is powerful because it addresses the long-lasting crisis in the Middle East which is well-known around the world. His paintings and installations portray both individual and collective suffering and anxiety and they are able to stir strong emotions in the viewer. His work is in several notable collections including: The Ramzi and Saeda Dalloul Art Foundation, Beirut; The Farjam Collection, Dubai; Mathaf: Arab Museum of Modern Art, Doha; Tate Modern, London and the KA Collection, Beirut. He lives and works in Beirut.

Mounir Fatmi (b. 1970, Tangier, Morocco)

Fatmi constructs visual spaces and linguistic games to address prominent forces such as power, politics and religion. He is the recipient of the Cairo Biennial Prize, 2010, the Uriöt prize, Amsterdam and the Grand Prize Leopold Sedar Senghor of the 7th Dakar Biennial, 2006. His work is in several collections including: Art Gallery of Western Australia, Perth; Queensland Art Gallery of Australia, Brisbane; AGO, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto; Fondation Louis Vuitton Pour la Création, Paris; Fonds National d'Art Contemporain, Paris; Fonds Municipal d'Art Contemporain, Paris; Cité nationale de l'histoire de l'immigration, Paris; Bibliothèque Municipale de Lyon; Museum Kunstpalast, Düsseldorf; Fondazione Cassa di risparmio di Modena, Modena; National Museum of Mali, Bamako; MMP+, The Marrakech Museum for Photography and Visual Arts, Marrakech; Museum of the ONA Foundation, Casablanca; MOCAK, Museum of Contemporary Art, Krakow; Mathaf, Arab Museum of Modern Art, Doha; Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; Rijksakademie Collection, Amsterdam; De Nederlandsche Bank N.V., Amsterdam; Koç Foundation, Istanbul; The Brooklyn Museum, New York and the Hessel Foundation for the Bard Museum, New York. The artist lives and works in Paris.

Nadia Kaabi-Linke (b. 1978, Tunis, Tunisia)

Nadia Kaabi-Linke studied at the University of Fine Arts in Tunis (1999) before receiving a PhD from the Sorbonne University in Paris (2008). Her installations, objects and pictorial works are anchored in constellations of cultural and historical, social and political contexts and refer to a certain place or to coincidental events. Making use of different media, artefacts, symbolisms and codes, her work is intertwined with socio-psychological topics: perception, memory, geographically and politically constructed identities. Her works are part of several public and private collections including: Solomon R. Guggenheim, New York; Dallas Museum of Art, Texas; Barjeel Art Foundation, Sharjah; Sharjah Art Foundation; Burger Collection, Hong Kong; Museum of Modern Art, New York; Arter Vehbi Koç Foundation, Istanbul; Samdani Art Foundation, Dhaka; M+ Museum, Hong Kong; Fondation Villa Datris pour la Sculpture Contemporaine, l'Isle-sur-La-Sorgue; Abraaj Group Art Collection, Dubai; Ministère de la Culture et de la Sauvegarde du Patrimoine, Tunis and the Kamel Lazaar Collection, Tunis. The artist lives and works in Berlin.

Yazan Khalili (b. 1981, Syria)

Khalili received a degree in Architecture from Birzeit University, Palestine in 2003, graduating in 2010 with a Master's degree from the Centre for Research Architecture at Goldsmith's College, University of London. Khalili works are detailed, reflective and full of intent. He uses photography, videography and the written word to unravel historically constructed landscapes. Khalili's work explores the effect of geographical distance on our interpretation of territory, and its ability to amplify or arrest our political and sentimental attachments. In 2015 Khalili received the EXTRACT Young Art Prize, Kunstforeningen GL Strand, Copenhagen, Denmark as well as grants from the Arab Fund for Arts and Culture and the Young Arab Theatre Fund. In 2006 Khalili received the A.M. Qattan Foundation's Young Artists Award and was nominated for the KLM Paul Huf Award in 2009, 2010 and 2012, as well as the Bellagio Award in 2013. Khalili's work is in several prominent collections including the Videoinsight Foundation, Turin, Italy; the British Museum, London, UK; Sharjah Art Foundation, Sharjah, UAE and the Imperial War Museum, London, UK. Khalili currently lives and works in and out of Palestine.

About Lawrie Shabibi:

Lawrie Shabibi is a contemporary art gallery housed in Dubai's Alserkal Avenue. The gallery supports the long-term development of the careers of young international contemporary artists with a focus on those from the Middle East and North Africa. The gallery also organizes art historical exhibitions working with an older generation of artists from the region. Liaising with curators, institutions, museums and collectors the gallery has successfully introduced international artists to the region whilst at the same time presented Middle Eastern artists to the international contemporary arts community. By holding a regular programme of exhibitions, screenings and talks, publishing catalogues and participating in international art fairs, Lawrie Shabibi has in the space of six years been a forerunner in the development of the contemporary art scene in Dubai.

For more information on Lawrie Shabibi please visit:
<http://www.lawrieshabibi.com>

Press Inquiries:

For more information, please contact Asmaa Al-Shabibi
E. asmaa@lawrieshabibi.com
Dubai M. +971 50 467 0272
London M. +44 7704 907617