

Sharif Waked

«Halftones»

11.9. – 15.11.2020

The work of Sharif Waked (*1964, Nazareth; lives and works in Nazareth and Santa Barbara CA) investigates cultural and political moments in present and past histories, playfully juxtaposing different positions and narratives and generating paradoxical and absurd encounters. His oeuvres – ruminations on the meaning of making and seeing art in the digital era – are based in notions of appropriation, translation, and the juncture between image and text. The exhibition at Kunsthaus Baselland – the first exhibition of Sharif Waked in Switzerland – features several works, including pieces from his series “Arabesque” and “Just A Moment,” presented alongside independent works.

In the first gallery, *Just A Moment No. 4 (Away From You)* (2011) follows the diva Umm Kulthum, singing her iconic song *Away From You* (1965), and focuses on the stamping of her left foot just underneath the dress scraping her heel. Next to it, *MoM – Museum of Mosul* (2017) reproduces the footage of ISIS’s destruction in Iraq as a promotional film, for a now-rebranded museum. A fragment of the same footage reappears in *Just A Moment No. 17 (Smiley)* (2016) in which an army of contemporary emojis struggle to save their smiling ancestor from ruin.

In the second gallery, a site-specific architectural intervention serves as the display device for two works: on one side, *Bath Time* (2012) features a donkey taking a good shower after a long day performing as a zebra at the Gaza Zoo; on the other side, *Just A Moment No. 21 (Shit)* (2018), presents the outtakes of the main star of *Bath Time*, as she performs the mainstays of everyday life: eating and shitting. Surrounding *Bath Time* and *Just A Moment No. 21 (Shit)* are works from the series “Arabesque” (2016-ongoing). Here Waked disassembles the building blocks of images to reconstruct what appear as geometric abstract surfaces. In these series, Waked questions the division between the visual and the verbal, perception and deception, the visual traditions of the past and the digital manipulations of the present, to deliver in a rather formalistic fashion the questioning, breaking, and remaking of meaning.

The third gallery displays, on entry, *Just A Moment No. 5 (Jericho First)* (2012). In this diptych – which is at the junction of two series, “Just a Moment” and “Jericho First” – the Oslo Agreements of the 1990s meet the tiled mosaics of the eighth century Umayyads Caliphate. Next to it, *To Be Continued* (2009) transforms the suicide bomber into the tenth century storyteller of *One Thousand and One Nights*, Scheherazade, who kept death at bay by feeding Shahryar’s narrative curiosity.

The exhibition is curated by Nicola Trezzi, Director and Curator, CCA – Center for Contemporary Art Tel Aviv, and Ines Goldbach, Director, Kunsthaus Baselland.