

REVIEWS

1497

Green Art Gallery

L. İpek Ulusoy Akgül

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How does one explore the notion of homeliness in a place like Dubai that is in constant flux, to say the least? In a context of hyper urban-transformations and people continuously moving in and out of the city, one may argue that the sense of rootedness and continuity are under threat and that this situation shapes how residents, long-timers, locals and guests alike function on a daily basis within the urban space. Aware of such questions, Lantian Xie's curatorial premise for *1497*, a cleverly titled group exhibition at the Green Art Gallery, draws from Xie's artistic inquiry into belonging, ghostliness and imagined places. Featuring a series of works, from an installation to a print publication, the show provides a post-colonial sensitivity into the multiplicity of homely imaginaries. Tracing shared sentiments, across geographies, around the highly charged space of 'home', it follows ghostly bodies in fragile, historical and contemporary contexts.



1497, installation view.

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Placed in the centre of the gallery with its railing facing the entrance was Hera Büyüktaşçıyan's cast-iron sculpture *Main Balcony* (2014), which explores troubled collective histories and intricate power dynamics around balconies. The work is based on an actual Istanbul balcony – once of an elderly Greek lady, whom the artist met in Athens years after her displacement as a result of the population exchanges between Turkey and Greece, from which she regularly looked out to the street as a kid. As the artist mentioned in a talk at Alserkal Avenue, the sculpture articulates the tensions of between being on the *inside* and *outside*. In the work's new iteration, a nautical rope, which previously connected the piece to the upper balcony of Istanbul's now-closed Galeri Mana in its original presentation, is let loose in order to open up new interpretations of spatial belongings. Nearby, UBIK's *Support System* (2015) is installed, featuring three hooks – brass, steel and metal –



THE WOVEN ARCHIVE

Héla Ammar in conversation with Wafa Gabsi



AFTER THE BIENNIAL

Fulya Erdemci in conversation with Basak Senova



SPEAKING AS WITNESSING

Hera Büyüktaşçıyan in conversation with Basak Senova



THE PUBLIC DOMAIN HAS OPENED UP!

Fulya Erdemci in conversation with Basak Senova



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The Little Deaths of Christodoulos Panayiotou

Kate Sutton



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Işıl Eğrikavuk's The Art of Disagreement

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Seth Ayyaz in conversation with Sheyma Buali



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Mandy Merzaban



PHOTOGRAPHY AS APPARATUS

Akram Zaatar in conversation with Anthony Downey



PERFORMATIVE STATES

Coco Fusco in conversation with Stephanie Bailey

found by the artist in Bangalore that are hung on a thread connecting two points of the gallery.

Despite the contrast between Büyüktaşçıyan's bulky rope on the floor and this thread, UBIK's piece recalls the laundry hanging from balconies around the world, which in turn feeds into Matheus Rocha Pitta's *Stone Soup* (2012), which consists of small vegetables, placed on a piece of rectangular cardboard with the hand-written story, and carved stone replicas placed just opposite. Taking its title from a folk tale common among many cultures with slight variations, the work references a story of a hungry soldier (or a monk depending on where the story is told), who cooks soup with stones on a street, replacing each stone with real vegetables from each passerby, resulting in a communal meal that everyone can share – ponders the unifying force that hunger and nutrition both offer alike. While the soup is certainly symbolic for building a sense of homeliness and collectivity, an important emphasis is made on cooking as an act and labour of home-making. Of course, this is not what happened during the colonial period, during which boundaries were formed and hierarchies asserted. This is expressed in Raja'a Khalid's *Useful Tropical Plants* (2014), which consists of an industrial scent diffuser, periodically spreading the recreated smell of the Berlin Botanical Garden (once Botanical Research Center for the German Colonies), and an archival print featuring a 1950s model in a vulnerable yet untroubled pose for a Vogue photo-shoot 'somewhere' in the Caribbean. Here, ownership, usefulness, and violence are all intertwined in this fragrant and visual unpacking of colonial and exotic imaginaries around land, living things and bodies: an expression of the distance between the colonialist and the colonized. Likewise, Danh Vo's *2.2.1861* (2009) offers a transcription of the final letter by a French Catholic missionary to Indo-China, handwritten by the artist's father Phung Vo in a language he does not have access to.

Offering a counterview to the effects of colonization is Jacob Lawrence's colored screen print *The Burning* (1997) from his 'Migration' series, which depicts a scene of a village in Haiti set ablaze by its own residents during the independence war from French. This violent gesture reveals a strong sense of spatial belonging, possession or ownership taken to its limits – the point in which burning your home down so that the colonizers can't further exploit it feels like the only solution. In Shilpa Gupta's five cartographic *Tree Drawings* (2013) made of threads, the size of each tree (for example, Olive Tree 1:1547703, or Mango Tree 1:7834000) is in ratio to the lengths of fences among various borders in the world, including Palestine-Israel and Pakistan-India. While utilizing the tree as a simple yet powerful metaphor for rootedness and territory-based belongings, the white-on-white aesthetics of each 'drawing' speaks to the abstract nature of any line or demarcation. This reality was heightened by the inclusion of a 2015 publication of two texts – *Burial at Sea* by Gitanjali Dang Khanabadosh, and *I come to your country, name me* by Deepak Unnikrishnan – in this exhibition. The fact that each visitor can take a copy of this publication home adds to the sense the curatorial frame creates of an exhibition with multiple entry points by carefully utilizing objects, images, texts and scents to remind us that home is only as static as we think it is.

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ACOUSTIC ENCOUNTERS
Magdi Mostafa in conversation
with Clelia Coussonnet



AUTHOR AS SWINDLER
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THE INVISIBLE SCENT OF HISTORY
Ibraaz



LISTENING THROUGH A BEAM OF INTENSE DARKNESS
Seth Ayyaz