

Hatem Imam
Threshold

15 November 2018 – 02 February 2019

Curated by Amanda Abi Khalil
Letitia Gallery, Beirut



Hatem Imam, Threshold (detail), 2018, ink on zinc plate

Letitia Gallery is pleased to announce *Threshold*, a solo exhibition by Hatem Imam, curated by Amanda Abi Khalil.

For this first solo exhibition of the artist in Lebanon, all works have been newly commissioned to compose a site-specific installation for the gallery space.

Hatem Imam's artistic practice looks at the ways in which we employ representation to instill a sense of belonging to, or ownership of physical and social spaces through visual inquiries spanning across media and lately stemming from printmaking traditions.

Threshold proposes to extend the debate about the frame and framing processes inherent to the concept of representation in art – a subject that has nourished significant arguments in the field of art theory and philosophy. The space of the gallery – a virtual frame and agent of power within the structure of the art world, determines and transforms our ways of seeing and perceiving art.

Proposing a reflection on the gallery space as a framing device both physically and socially within the landscape of the art world and more precisely in the art field. Employing techniques of engraving and monotype, the exhibition presents a series of plates and prints; simultaneously the support and the impression.

From outside, the exhibition looks like an abstract composition made of different surfaces, textures and materials hanging as frames from the ceiling or sitting on the floor. The viewer is

invited to enter the gallery and cross over a physical border materialized through a subtle intervention inside the space, advert to the social and economic thresholds the gallery represents.

Extending on Imam's artistic practice that galvanizes around his or one's position *vis à vis* the world, the city, landscapes, dreams and projected or dreamt imaginaries, *Threshold* is conceived as an immersive installation of framed views straddling perceptions of representation. The works hinge on the limits between inside and outside, abstraction and figuration, magnified details and wide landscapes scratched or layered over surfaces of different scales, forms, and materialities: metal, stone, paper and plastic.

In *Vicarious Dreams (2010)*, a previous etching series by the artist based on photographs of construction site digs in Beirut, the idea of a physical and social threshold was explored beyond the beneath/below dichotomy which we find again in this exhibition as a reminder of the one immaterial threshold that shapes our vision of the world: the horizon.

The exhibition is accompanied by a joint collaboration between the artist and the curator on a publication that will be part of the installation.

Hatem Imam:

"Similarly to the aperture of a camera, or a window that overlooks a view, the gallery space is a man-made framing device through which we see the world, or that part of the world that we deem worthy of our seeing."

NOTES TO EDITORS

About Letitia Gallery

Letitia Gallery is a contemporary art gallery in Beirut focused on encouraging global engagement with contemporary art in Lebanon through the contextualization of both local and international artists and their work in the global art environment. Under the direction of Annie Vartivarian, the gallery has a strong ethos of collaboration and has worked closely with leading international curators from around the world to work on a project-focused model that looks to nurture the growth of regional artists from the MENA region as well as showcasing international artists in Lebanon within a programme of four to five exhibitions a year. Letitia Gallery offers both local audiences and international visitors the opportunity to discover international artists and to gain a deeper understanding of the breadth of their practice through public programming that includes: talks, off-site projects, site-specific commissioning and supporting cultural initiatives in Lebanon and the region.

About the artist, Hatem Imam

Hatem Imam (b. 1978 Sidon, Lebanon) is a visual artist. He holds a BFA in Graphic design from the American University of Beirut (AUB), and an MA in Fine Arts from the University of Creative Arts in Canterbury, UK. He is the member of the artist collective Atfal Ahdath, the co-founder and creative director of Studio Safar, editor-in-chief of Journal Safar, a co-founder of Samandal comics, and the artistic director of Annihaya record label. He has been teaching at the department of Architecture and Graphic Design at AUB since 2007.

Most recently, Imam took part in an artist residency at the printmaking Frans Masareel Centre in Kasterlee, Belgium, (2017). He was also commissioned for a site-specific public artwork for the newly built American University of Beirut Medical Center by Temporary Art Platform.

His work has been featured in print through independent publications and exhibited locally and internationally.

The exhibitions include *Infinite Landscape*, a solo presentation in the Galerie Ravenstein of Bozar, Brussels (2017), *Brazil* a site-specific intervention for La Vitrine, Beirut Art Residency (2017), *Short run Seattle*, a group exhibition at Fantagraphics Library, Seattle (2016), *The city in the city* with 98 weeks at the Surssock Museum's twin gallery, Beirut (2015), Conversation pieces as part of a group exhibition at Galerie Art & Essai, Rennes (2013), *Take me to this place* with Atfal Ahdath at the Mori Art Museum, Tokyo (2012), *Vicarious Dreams*, Sharjah Biennial X (2011), Exposure at the Beirut Art Center (2010).

About the curator, Amanda Abi Khalil

Amanda Abi Khalil (b. 1985, Beirut, Lebanon) is an independent curator based in Beirut. She has been focusing her curatorial projects on socially engaged art practices. She is the founder of Temporary Art Platform, a curatorial platform that aims to shift artistic and curatorial discourse towards social and contextual concerns in Lebanon through residencies, research projects and commissions.

Her latest curatorial projects include *Mathaf Mathaf / Chou Hayda*, a commission to artist Annabel Daou for the National Museum of Beirut (2018), *Art at AUBMC*, public art commissions for the American University of Beirut medical Center (2018), *Works on Paper*, a series of twelve commissions for Lebanese daily newspapers (2015). Her recent curated exhibitions include *Kurz/Dust* (co-curated with Anna Ptak) at the Center for Contemporary Arts Ujazdowski Castle, Warsaw (2015), *White Cube Literally, on form and convention of display*, Galerie Isabelle van den Eynde, Dubai (2016), *When all seemingly stands still*, GreyNoise, Dubai (2015), and *Simple past, Perfect Futures* at the CENTQUATRE, Paris (2014).

In 2018 she was a curator in residence at the Delfina Foundation, London; Inclusartiz, Rio de Janeiro and is the recipient of the 2018 Jane Farver Residency at ISCP, New York. In 2016 she was nominated for ICI's independent curatorial vision award. She curated discursive programs and took part in various selection committees with institutions such as Art Basel, FIAC, Art Dubai, The Arab Fund for Arts and culture, Saradar Foundation, Beirut Art Center, The Beirut Museum of Art, Al Serkal, Kunsthall Bergen, Kunsthall Stavanger and Foundation Ricard.

Abi Khalil was the curator of the Hangar (Umam D&R), Haret Hreik and held positions in art institutions such as the CENTQUATRE, Paris. She teaches at the Lebanese Academy of Fine Arts (ALBA) and the Saint Joseph University (USJ) in Beirut.

Exhibition Details

Title: Hatem Imam: Threshold

Address: Letitia Gallery, Tour de Saroula, Hamra, Beirut, Lebanon

Website: www.letitiagallerybeirut.com

Dates: 15 November 2018 – 02 February 2019

Opening Hours: Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Fridays: 10:00 am to 6:00 pm

Thursdays: 10:00 am to 9:00 pm

Saturdays: 10:00 am to 3:00 pm

Admission: Free

Facebook: LetitiaBeirut

Instagram: LetitiaBeirut

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