



# Layers

STEVE SABELLA

Selected works: 2006 - 2014  
Exhibition & Book Launch

21.9.14 - 21.10.14

Exit, 2006, Lambda print on diasec., 70 x 62 cm  
Limited edition of 6 + 2AP

## Layers

Steve Sabella - Selected Works 2006 – 2014  
Exhibition and Book Launch

**Opening reception:** 21/9/2014 (6:00 – 10:00pm)

**Exhibition dates:** 22/9/2014 – 21/10/2014

**Contemporary Art Platform / The Art Room**

“Layers” presents Steve Sabella’s new works *Independence* (2013) and *38 days of re-collection* (2014), together with *Metamorphosis* (2012) and *Exit* (2006). Born in Jerusalem, Palestine, Sabella has used his work as a platform to address the reality of the impact that perpetual conflict and occupation has on people, including himself. Through his art he developed a method for coming to terms with his exile, the journey of which is reflected in the titles of some of his series - *Exit, In Exile, Euphoria, Beyond Euphoria, Metamorphosis* and *Independence*.

**By looking to the genealogy of the image and asking what came first, the image or the world, Sabella discovered not only the power of images to present and communicate ideas but furthermore, their ability not to represent reality, but to create it. As he stated, his works are, “meant to act as imagined bridges, map-like structures that connect us to our past with an eye to the future”**

In *Exit* Sabella reflects upon the impact of time on the body and the inevitability of demise. In *Metamorphosis* however, new realities are created when the objects of oppression take on new forms, ultimately shifting and relinquishing them of their power. In *38 days of re-collection* images of household objects and family photographs appear on the surfaces of fragments of paint. The

images were taken in a Palestinian home that the artist resided in for 38 days, a home that has been occupied by Israelis since 1948. The paint fragments were collected from the walls of the home he was born in as well as other homes in the Old City of Jerusalem.

The mundanities of everyday life are presented as archeological artifacts, relics, to be treasured. And yet these fragile timeless entities retain a multitude of histories within them. **Independence is removed completely from history and context.** Figures are suspended in darkness, appearing both placid and apprehensive, their luminous bodies revealing distortions and broken bones. The work offers enigmatic and polarizing reflections upon the internal and external, utopia and dystopia, suspension and liberation.

About this exhibition Malu Halasa wrote in her essay : "Steve Sabella left the city of his birth in 2007 to study in London, eventually settling in Berlin. Since the contemporary art boom in the Middle East began in the early 2000s, some Arab artists complain they are being ghettoized and are not allowed to make art for art's sake. There is an onus on them to be engaged politically and illuminate regional conflicts in their work. Sabella challenges officially accepted narratives that posit the occupation in Palestine as the marginalized experience of a people taking place 'over there.' His art series Exit (2006), Metamorphosis (2012), 38 Days of Re-collection (2014) and Independence (2013), included in his solo exhibition Layers at CAP Kuwait, reveal the centrality of the occupation to modern consciousness. **His work also challenges the limitations of photography, a medium that screams of the here and now**".

In addition to the exhibition, there will be a monograph launch on the opening night with the presence of the artist, titled *Steve Sabella – Photography 1997-2014*, published by Hatje Cantz in collaboration with the Akademie der Künste Berlin, with texts by Hubertus von Amelnunx and Kamal Boullata.

Sabella has three solo exhibitions this fall: Layers at CAP Kuwait (September 21 – October 21), Archeology of the Future at The International Center for Photography Scavi Scaligeri in Verona (October 8 – November 16), and Independence at Meem Gallery in Dubai (October 27 – December 6). They are part of a new way the artist presents his works which began with his solo Fragments earlier this year at Berloni Gallery in London (March 6 – May 10). In these interrelated exhibitions, Sabella creates new constellations of his works, in a non-curatorial, non-chronological arrangement. Instead the artworks are presented to the viewer in configurations intended to reveal connections and thus new readings. **Sabella views his oeuvre as a search for visual palimpsests – which manifest in a multitudinous progression from personal experiences and historical / political circumstances, towards theoretical speculation and aesthetic discovery. However, regardless of the intentions that may have inspired the creation of an individual work, in this cycle of exhibitions reconfiguration brings forth layers of the palimpsest that may not have been revealed before.** As Sabella writes, "Today my images gain their independence from my narrative. My aesthetic struggle is to create art with a connection to visual history. My illusions are imagined bridges, map-like structures, that connect us to our troubled past with an eye to the future."