



STEVE SABELLA

Photography
1997–2014

With texts
by Hubertus von Amelunxen
and Kamal Boullata

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CANTZ

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FOREWORD

by Kamal Boullata

IT IS ANOTHER NATURE THAT SPEAKS TO THE CAMERA RATHER THAN TO THE EYE.

WALTER BENJAMIN, *LITTLE HISTORY OF PHOTOGRAPHY*, 1931

In 1839, when photography's invention was introduced in Europe, the French history painter Paul Delaroche allegedly declared, "from today, painting is dead." By 1890, when Khalil Ra'd, Palestine's first Arab photographer, opened up his studio outside Jerusalem's city walls, it heralded the birth of secular painting at the hands of Christian Arab iconographers whose workshops were concentrated within the Old City. Employing traditional tools and tracing methods of copying icons, budding painters who continued their inherited trade, albeit to another end, began replacing their Byzantine models with Ra'd's photographs.

Meanwhile, as the use of the camera was becoming widely popularized, painting continued to flourish throughout Europe. In fact, during the twentieth century the history of modern art in the West was predominantly a history of painting. Pioneering artists like Man Ray, who expressed himself in both media, once explained, "I photograph what I do not wish to paint, and I paint what I cannot photograph." By 1968 John Berger observed in his essay "Understanding a Photograph," "it looks as though photography... is going to outlive painting and sculpture as we have thought of them since the Renaissance."

The present book is about the work of a visual artist who was born and raised in the Old City of Jerusalem: Steve Sabella. Over the last decade he has been using his camera as a painter uses his brush. Far from the abstraction of his predecessors' icons, he refers to his own abstractions as "mental images." Like the earliest pioneers of photography who experimented

with different surfaces including glass, pewter, and leather on which they captured their images, Steve Sabella has dabbled with variable methods to summon his own. The surfaces he has explored to print on include stones from the city of his birth and fragments of peeling wall paint from the house in which he was born.

If photographs have traditionally been considered mementos of time, in Sabella's experimental work time and memory assume an unprecedented body saturated in abstraction. The essay by Hubertus von Amelunxen in the present volume elucidates how the role of personal memory and a lived moment of history are enmeshed in the artist's abstract photography. In the process he points out the way in which the local and the global overlap in the photographer's work to reflect what Vilém Flusser describes as the experience of "groundlessness."

A few decades ago, that is, long before globalization permeated all fields of cultural expression in our world, I wrote on the evolution of Palestinian painting following the country's national catastrophe in 1948. I documented how painters living at home or as refugees in proximity of the homeland have universally employed a nonrepresentational language of expression. The further away they lived, the more they engaged in abstraction. At the time, I never imagined that such a phenomenon could possibly manifest itself in the field of photography. Observing the evolution of Steve Sabella's photographic work over the last decade, however, disclosed a curious revelation.

In 2002, as a member of the jury for an exhibition of works by finalists in a young artists' competition mounted in Ramallah, I encountered Sabella's photographs for the first time. They were all of local landscapes. By the end of his second year following his move to London in 2007 he created his first series of abstract compositions, which he titled *In Exile*. In this series Sabella shifted from what Susan Sontag calls "a photographic way of seeing" to one of cubistic imagining. As such, he shot multiple images of fenestrations and of his daughter by a window, taken

from different angles. Each shot ends up like a mere unit within a larger composition that interlaces the different shots in a tessellation of a monochromatic pattern, which recalls the structuring of the arabesque. In his essay von Amelunxen discusses this key series to denote the artist's abstraction.

Since the birth of abstract painting at the turn of the twentieth century, the history of photography has disclosed a wide variety of abstract trends that evolved inseparably from the broader development of abstraction in modern art. Since the advent of the digital age, photographic experimentation has offered a wide range of new techniques and visual effects, freeing photographers altogether from the binds of representation. Consequently, confronted with the lure of technological manipulations now possible in photographic processing and printing, the experimental photographer has been frequently seduced by pure form, a matter that in many instances is simply the product of coincidental operations. In such cases, since the subject of content in art has continued to be associated with representation it has generally been overlooked. In this volume, however, as the abstract works by Steve Sabella infer and the essay by von Amelunxen dissects, content in art is viewed as the generator of the very structure of form. After all, it is not form that creates thought, but thought that creates form.

And yet, in contemporary abstract experiments, only rarely has a photograph's content strived to capture the experience of loss and absence, the passing of time, and what von Amelunxen calls in Sabella's work "the condensation of a presence." It seems that certain abstract photographers living in the West and coming from a cultural tradition beyond the Western canon of pictorial expression share common experiences that instinctively drive them to retrieve a different sense of time in their art. It is a sense of time that alludes to the restructuring of a forsaken place of memory or a time that is often replayed in the very process of creating their art. It is the living at a remove from their home countries that leads the thoughts of such photographers to emerge in ways that mirror traits associated with their cultural roots.

Hiroshi Sugimoto's earliest series of photographs offer an instructive illustration. It was in Los Angeles and New York that the Tokyo-born photographer conceived his seminal series *Theatres* (1978) and *Seascapes* (1980). Using exposure times that extended over hours, his photographing of the length of an entire movie resulted in the absence of any of the

film's images; the cinema screen is depicted as simply flooded with whiteness. Photographing the duration of time and concluding with emptiness is not far from the qualities that Zen Buddhists bestow on the concept of the void and the experience of time's evanescence.

Similarly, in Sugimoto's hours-long exposure of photographing the sea at different times of day and night, it is through the infinite tones between white and black that the mystery of the ancient blue surges to embrace all bodies of water since time began. Acting like a subliminal connotation of the yin and the yang, the simplicity of dividing his image vertically with the horizon line into sky and sea may share compositional affinities with Mark Rothko's last paintings. But the fathomless void in Sugimoto's world of air and water invites a meditative reflection that memorizes the life of the photographer, who first saw the light by Japan's sea. In contrast, it is sheer despair that settles in Rothko's monotonic paintings executed the year preceding his suicide.

Abstraction in the Japanese master's work comes to mind here, neither because it bears any resemblance to the younger Palestinian's art nor because they both happen to work in series. In fact, apart from the degree of artistic maturation in the oeuvre of each—the vertical depth in the former versus the restlessly horizontal explorations of the latter—abstraction in the works of the one remains worlds apart from that of the other. What is more, when it comes to aesthetic sensibility, technique, and intention, each speaks a diametrically opposed language. And yet, Sugimoto's early work serves as a comparative example simply because its abstraction, like Sabella's, had its start in a foreign land. Subsequent to moving away from his homeland, each of the two photographers seems to have become more sensitized to his cultural roots. Moreover, the abstraction in their work was further enhanced when each of them remained free to travel periodically between their chosen places of residence and the countries of their birth.

After Sabella opted to move from Jerusalem to London and later on to Berlin, each of his photographic abstractions have seemed to float amid a space that lacks the gravity of a focal point. In their highly defined details all of the compositional components call for equal attention. The eye roams from one place to another, and its roaming ultimately leads back to the first place. The absence of a focal point and the allure invoked by the unfailing exactness of

each detail are features that have long characterized the aesthetics of Islamic miniatures.

Sabella's abstraction similarly recalls components of the arabesque in its regard for the repetition of a simple unit enlivened by the illusion of movement across a space whose borders are arbitrarily defined somewhere, anywhere, within the visual field. The differences between one arabesque and the next, however, are profound. Space in the traditional arabesque is organized in terms of order, proportions, and mathematical precision. By contrast, Sabella's arabesques come to life by way of the artist's intuition, and all of their components derive from photographic montages of fragments repeatedly characterized by discontinuities. Furthermore, the one fundamental difference between the two are the centrifugal forces of symmetry found in the arabesque's traditional structure as well as the two-dimensional space that it fills and the lack of these elements in Sabella's arabesques.

There are no symmetries in Sabella's arabesques, just as there are no symmetries in the two worlds he lives in. In his photography it is metaphor that replaces the role of symmetry in the traditional arabesque. In the cubistic nature of his vision it is between the "here" he moved to and the "there" he came from that his metaphors manifest what the French philosopher Gaston Bachelard called "the dialectics of outside and inside." It is no wonder that it was out of photographing fenestrations, barriers, brick walls, and skies that Sabella entered into his world of abstraction.

The slick surface and the state-of-the art production in Sabella's photography appeal to a contemporary taste and temperament. But that is only the threshold of Sabella's work, as suggested in von Amelunxen's analysis. Sabella's abstraction is all about displacements and the restlessness of living at a time stirred by chaos and ruin.

In his incessant attempts to mend together pieces of a world that no longer exists, Sabella's process of recollection subsequently emerged in the fragility of fragments of wall paint where the photographed past shatters like a mirror in one's home. Here, a poetics of time unravels in the fleeting moment, photographed such that the fragment resembles a chip of pottery from an archeological site. Time is no longer frozen in order to detail a narration. Rather, it is implied by the means of the very process used in the creative act, be it in the repetition of the photographed image or in the act of layering and erasing images that were previously

photographed. Repetition, like layering and erasing, implies time. This is a time beset by chaos, a time devoured by ruin.

How could an outsider mourn a ruin called Palestine? Where does he begin to write, from his distance, on the aesthetics of chaos, restlessness, and perpetual displacements? Which path to take, and for whom to write and why?

From his distance Hubertus von Amelunxen forges his own path. To begin with he ushers in Edward Said's writing to illuminate the way, as the poetry of Mahmoud Darwish punctuating his text never ceases to flicker like a mirage in the distance. Throughout, von Amelunxen remains fully aware of the pitfalls in that distance beyond, from which Sabella's imagery comes.

In the course of maintaining his liminal position, he proceeds by summoning questions raised, in different periods and cultures, by poets and composers, historians and photographers, physicists and psychologists, novelists and philosophers, polymaths and playwrights, artists and cultural critics, to thread together an alphabet with which to articulate what his eyes read and where his mind leads. A flaneur par excellence presiding over the realm of the tangential, von Amelunxen is capable of building bridges between Heidegger and Darwish, between Kafka and al-Hasan Ibn al-Haytham, and between Freud and Tarafa Ibn al-'Abd. In the process his text echoes the meanderings, discontinuities, and cubistic patterns that are characteristic of Sabella's art. But throughout the essay, it is the author's gaze that operates like a compass, enabling von Amelunxen to chart the trajectory of his own vision.

Since the third century, when Philostratus was recorded to have been the first to describe pictures he claimed to have seen in a gallery, writing on visual images has continued to call for the writer's imagination and knowledge to bridge the divide between visual and verbal expression. By penetrating into the interstices between image and language, painting and photography, poetry and prose, Hubertus von Amelunxen allows his reader to see what at first glance appears to be untranslatable to the eye. It is through his philosophical vision of photography that we can begin to trace the roots of originality in Sabella's work. Inspired by its contemplation, he presents us here with a personal ode to contemporary photography. Von Amelunxen's essay is as enlightening to read as Sabella's photographic images are a dream to discover.

SEARCH

1998

Steve Sabella. *Search*. 1998.
B&W infrared photography.
20.5 x 13 cm.

IN TRANSITION

2010

Steve Sabella. *In Transition*. 2010.
Lambda print on diasec.
Three 205 x 44 cm triptychs hung in a grid.



BIOGRAPHY

Steve Sabella, born 1975 in Jerusalem, Palestine, is a Berlin-based artist who uses photography and photographic installation as his principal modes of expression. In 1997 he earned a three year art photography degree at the Musrara School of Photography in Jerusalem. In 2007 he received a BA in Visual Studies at Empire State College, State University of New York. Through a Chevening Scholarship he earned an MA in Photographic Studies in 2008 at the University of Westminster with a Caparo Award of Distinction, and through a Saïd Foundation Scholarship he earned his second MA in 2009 at Sotheby's Institute of Art.

Sabella was one of the winners of the A. M. Qattan Foundation's Young Artist of the Year Award in 2002. He was a shortlisted and exhibited artist in the 2008 Independent Photographers Terry O'Neil Award in the UK. He received the 2008 Ellen Auerbach Award from the Akademie der Künste in Berlin, Germany, which included in part the publishing of Sabella's 2014 monograph *Exile*.

From the late 1990s through 2007 Sabella was based in Jerusalem, and exhibited internationally and extensively throughout Palestine, including eleven solos. He was one of the commissioned artists for the Istanbul Collection donated to the Ars Aevi Museum in Sarajevo. In 2009 he was one of the commissioned artists for the inauguration of MATHAF: Arab Museum of Modern Art in Doha, where he presented the installation *Settlement—Six Israelis & One Palestinian*. His work was included in *Keep Your Eyes on the Wall* as a part of Les Rencontres Arles Photographie, Edition 2013, and in 2014 he participated in the FotoFest Biennial exhibition *View from Inside*. In 2014, he was commissioned by the Bahrain National Museum where he presented *Sinopia* as part of the touring exhibition *Recreational Purpose*.

His works have been collected by the British Museum (London), MATHAF: Arab Museum of Modern Art (Doha), Contemporary Art Platform (Kuwait), Ars Aevi Museum (Sarajevo), Cuadro Fine Art (Dubai), Salsali Private Museum (Dubai), Barjeel Art Foundation (Sharjah), and the Samawi Collection (Dubai), and in several private collections.

Sabella has given art talks and presentations at various institutions including the University of Cambridge, Turin University, School of Oriental and African Studies in London, University of East London, Accademia Albertina Delle Belle Arti Turin, Contemporary Art Platform Kuwait, Rostock University, Akademie der Künste Berlin, The British Museum and The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston.

There are several TV documentaries and short films on Sabella's work including *Jerusalem in Exile* and *Kan Yama Kan* as part of "Beyond Blue & Grey" by Eyes Infinite Films (2007), *Europe Through Their Eyes* by Ma'an TV Productions (2010), *Artist of the Month* on IkonoMENASA (2011), *Artist of the Month* on IkonoTV (2013), *Arts InSight: Who is Steve Sabella?* produced by Ernie Manouse (2014), and *In the Darkroom with Steve Sabella* by Nadia J. Kabanian (2014). He was also an invited speaker for TEDx Marrakech (2012).

Sabella has published several essays including *Hostage* (2014), *The Colonization of the Imagination* (2012), *The Business of Looking* (2011), *Reconsidering the Value of Palestinian Art & its Journey to the Art Market (Part 1 - 2010, Part 2 - 2011)*, 'Valued' in the 'West' Sold in the 'East' (2010), *Is The United Arab Emirates Constructing its Art History? The Mechanisms that Confer Value to Art* (2009), and *Palestinian Conceptual Art, Emily Jacir Shifting to an Art that Engages the Mind of the Viewer* (2009). Sabella's autobiography titled *The Artist's Curse* is forthcoming.

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

1998
— *Search*, French Cultural Center, Jerusalem

2002
— *Search*, Khalil Sakakini Cultural Center, Ramallah
— *Identity*, Khalil Sakakini Cultural Center, Ramallah
— *Life is Splendid*, Artoteca De Montreal Gallery, Montreal

2003
— *End of Days*, French Cultural Center, Jerusalem
— *End of Days*, French Cultural Center, Gaza
— *End of Days*, Al-Hallaj Gallery, Ramallah

2004
— *End of Days*, Al-Kahf Gallery, International Center of Bethlehem, Bethlehem
— *End of Days*, Faculty of Fine Arts, Al Najah University, Nablus

2005
— *Kan Yama Kan & Till the End*, Franco-German Cultural Center, Ramallah
— *Kan Yama Kan & Till the End*, French Cultural Center, Jerusalem

2010
— *Steve Sabella: In Exile*, Metroquadro Gallery, Rivoli
— *The Independent Photographers Terry O'Neil Award Exhibition*, Fulham Palace, London

2011
— *Euphoria & Beyond*, The Empty Quarter Gallery, Dubai

2014
— *Fragments*, Berloni Gallery, London
— *Will Insert Title Once Finalized*, Contemporary Art Platform, Kuwait City
— *Will Insert Title Once Finalized*, BOXART Galleria d'Arte at the Museo Scavi Scaligeri, Verona
— *Will Insert Title Once Finalized*, Meem Gallery, Dubai

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

1998
— *Search*, Beit Ha'am Gallery, Tel Aviv

1999
— *Kick Off*, The New Gallery, Jerusalem

2002
— *Homeland*, Musrara School of Photography, Jerusalem

— *Hope and the Aesthetic Moment: Young Artist of the Year Award 2002*, A. M. Qattan Foundation, Khalil Sakakini Cultural Center, Ramallah

— *Eyes from Jerusalem*, Museo di Roma in Trastevere, Rome

2003
— *Mind, Body, & Soul*, ARC Gallery, Chicago

2004
— Frankfurt Book Fair as part of the Palestinian Ministry of Culture Exhibition, Frankfurt am Main
— *Young Artist of the Year Award 2004*, A. M. Qattan Foundation, Khalil Sakakini Cultural Center, Ramallah

2005
— *At Home*, Abrons Arts Center, New York
— *Shaping Communities in Times of Crisis: Narratives of Land, Peoples and Identities*, International Center of Bethlehem, Bethlehem
— *Life is Splendid*, Artoteca De Montreal Gallery, Montreal

2006
— *Art in a Social Context*, Boomerang Theatre, Cork

2007
— *Neighbors in Dialogue*, Istanbul Collection for Ars Aevi Museum of Contemporary Art in Sarajevo, Istanbul
— *Challenging Walls*, exhibition organized by Ruthe Zuntz und Michael Reitz of Walkscreen, projected on the Separation Wall, Jerusalem

2008
— *Gates of the Mediterranean*, Palazzo Piozzo, Rivoli
— *SKTP INTRO*, P3 Gallery, London

— *Neighbors in Dialogue*, Istanbul Collection for Ars Aevi Museum of Contemporary Art in Sarajevo, Collegium Artisticum City Gallery, Sarajevo

— *The Independent Photographers Terry O'Neil Award Exhibition*, Fulham Palace, London

2009
— *The Independent Photographers Terry O'Neil Award Exhibition*, Independent Photographers Gallery, East Sussex

— *Deconstructing Myths & Realities*, Galerie Caprice Horn, Berlin
— *Palestine: La création dans tous ses états*, Institut du Monde Arabe, Paris
— *NOW: Art of the 21st Century*, Phillips de Pury, London

2010
— *Palestine, La création dans tous ses états*, National Museum of Bahrain, Manama

— *This is Not a Love Song*, The Empty Quarter Gallery, Dubai

— *Young Academy*, Akademie der Künste, Berlin

— *The Interrupted Image*, Nicholas Robinson Gallery, New York

— *Borderlines, Deconstructing Exile*, Green Art Gallery, Dubai

— *Residua*, Barjeel Art Foundation, Sharjah

— *Told, Untold, Retold*, Mathaf Arab Museum of Modern Art, Doha

2011
— *The Changing Room: Arab Reflections on Praxis and Times*, Spazio Qubi, Turin

2012
— *The Changing Room, Arab Reflections on Praxis and Times*, London 2012 Olympic Cultural Program, Hub Westminster, London

2013
— *Berlin, Israel/Palestine or How Will a New Mindset Be Possible*, Sprechsaal, Berlin
— *Keep Your Eye on the Wall*, Photoquai 2013 Biennale, Espace Central Dupon, Paris

2014
— *Keep Your Eye on the Wall*, Contemporary Art Platform CAP, Kuwait City
— *View from Inside: Contemporary Arab Photography, Video and Mixed Media Art*, FotoFest Biennial, Houston
— *Recreational Purpose*, Bahrain National Museum, Manama
— *Keep Your Eye on the Wall*, Les Rencontres d'Arles photographie, Arles

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- "Is the United Arab Emirates Constructing Its Art History? The Mechanisms that Confer Value to Art" (Spanish translation). *AWRAQ* 2 (2010), pp. 79–91.
- "Is the United Arab Emirates Constructing Its Art History? The Mechanisms that Confer Value to Art." *Contemporary Practices* 4 (2009), pp. 126–35.
- "Palestinian Conceptual Art, Emily Jacir Shifting to an Art that Engages the Mind of the Viewer." *Contemporary Practices* 3 (2008), pp. 118–28.
- "Reconsidering the Value of Palestinian Art & Its Journey into the Art Market, Part 1." *Contemporary Practices* 7 (2010), pp. 80–100.
- "Reconsidering the Value of Palestinian Art & Its Journey into the Art Market, Part 2." *Contemporary Practices* 8 (2011), pp. 96–113.
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ARTIST INTERVIEWS

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- "Eliminating Short Sightedness—Steve Sabella, Interview with Najiwan Darwish." By Najiwan Darwish. *Filistin Ashab* (Arabic) 36 (December 2009).
- "Image as Witness—Archeology of the Past: Interview with Steve Sabella." By Wafa Gabsi. *Contemporary Practices* 14 (2014): pp. 66–69.
- "The Last Word: Steve Sabella." *Canvas* (November 2013), p. 192.
- "Living Art." KPFT 90.1 FM, Community Public Radio, Houston, March 13, 2014, 6:00 p.m.
- Palästina ist Heimat trotz Besatzung. By Aishe Malekshahi. *Deutschlandfunk*, Cologne, October 31, 2006.

- “Ruthi Zuntz and Steve Sabella, Participants of Challenging Wall Project—Screenings on Both Sides of the Separation Wall” (Hebrew). Galei Zahal Radio 100 FM, Tel Aviv, July 11, 2007, 1:34 p.m.
- “Siobhan Leyden Interview with Steve Sabella.” Dubai-Eye 103.8 FM, Dubai, March 22, 2010.
- “Steve Sabella in Conversation with Sara Rossino.” By Sara Rossino. In *The Changing Room, Arab Reflections on Praxis and Times*, edited by Aida Eltorie, exh. cat. Spazio Qubi. Turin: Finding Projects Association, 2011, pp. 140–49.
- “Steve Sabella in Exile.” *Art Dubai MENASA Studio Dispatches*. The Island and Art Dubai Projects audio report, Dubai, 2011.

ARTIST TALKS, PANEL DISCUSSIONS AND PRESENTATIONS

- Sabella, Steve. Artist presentation at the Arched Room, The British Museum, October 2, 2009.
- “Dare to Question My Name or Where I Come from.” Artist presentation at TEDx Marrakech, Riad El Fenn, Marrakech Medina, September 8, 2012.
- “Deconstructing Exile.” Artist presentation and talk at the workshop From the Nile to the Indus: The Contemporary Art of the Middle East and Pakistan, School of Oriental & African Studies SOAS, London, July 8, 2009.
- “Deconstructing Exile.” Artist presentation and talk at the Scholarly Discourses and Their Representations Workshop, Rostock University, Rostock, February 27, 2009.
- “Deconstructing Jerusalem and Exile.” Artist presentation and talk at the Conflict in Cities and the Contested States Workshop at the Centre for Research in the Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities, University of Cambridge, January 26, 2010.
- “Deconstructing Jerusalem and Exile.” Artist presentation and talk at the Contemporary Art Platform CAP, Kuwait, September 29, 2011.
- “Deconstructing Jerusalem and Exile.” Artist presentation and talk at the MA Refugee Studies program, University of East London, London, December 17, 2008.
- Ellen Auerbach Award Nominee Presentation. Artist presentation at the Akademie der Künste, Berlin, April 25, 2008.
- “From Palestine to Berlin: Making Contemporary Art between Cultures. From Settlement to Independence.” Paper presented at the Fotofest Biennial 2014—View from Inside: Conference on Visual Art in the Arab World, The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, March 29, 2014.
- “From Settlement to Independence.” Artist presentation and talk at the exhibition *Israel/Palestine or How Will a New Mindset Be Possible*, Sprechaal, Berlin, October 12, 2013.
- “Gates of the Mediterranean.” Artist presentation at the Accademia Albertina di Belle Arti di Torino, University of Turin, April 21, 2008.

- “Jerusalem in Exile and Imagined Cities.” Artist presentation and talk at the Facoltà di Lingue e Letterature Straniere, University of Turin, June 9, 2009.
- “What Do Pictures Want?” Artist presentation and talk at the workshop Cross-Cultural Encounter and Inter-Religious Dialogue in Europe and the Middle East, Warwick University, London, December 20, 2008.
- “Steve Sabella in Conversation with Sara Rossino.” By Sara Rossino. In *The Changing Room, Arab Reflections on Praxis and Times*, edited by Aida Eltorie, exh. cat. Spazio Qubi. Turin: Finding Projects Association, 2011, pp. 140–49.
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La collaborazione tra il Centro Internazionale di Fotografia Scavi Scaligeri e ArtVerona è stata, anche quest'anno, molto proficua. Dopo le quattro mostre collettive realizzate insieme, il Centro Internazionale di Fotografia ospita quest'anno una personale dedicata a Steve Sabella, artista palestinese, al quale la difficile condizione esistenziale in cui si trova a vivere offre l'ispirazione per sviluppare un linguaggio artistico di grande potenza espressiva.

La mostra, curata da Karin Adrian von Roques e organizzata in collaborazione con la Galleria Boxart, è divisa in sette sezioni che, ripercorrendo le tappe di una riflessione artistica e umana sviluppatasi tra il 2004 e il 2014, trovano suggestive corrispondenze negli Scavi Scaligeri. Anche il titolo della mostra - *Steve Sabella. Archaeology of the Future* - richiama l'essenza stessa del luogo che ospita il Centro Internazionale di Fotografia, dove l'articolazione degli spazi tra antico e moderno, tra cemento e reperto archeologico, sembra riecheggiare i temi sviluppati dall'artista: la frammentazione del vissuto, la transitorietà, lo straniamento.

Siamo ben lieti, dunque, di questa ulteriore collaborazione con ArtVerona, che ha portato per la prima volta in un museo italiano un artista come Sabella e che offre al pubblico l'opportunità di scoprire un autore originale, con una poetica dalle profonde implicazioni culturali ed esistenziali.

Una mostra di grande spessore, quindi, che non mancherà di suscitare interesse e attenzione da parte della critica e dei visitatori.

Antonia Pavesi
Consigliera incaricata alla Cultura

Flavio Tosi
Sindaco di Verona

This year's collaboration between the Scavi Scaligeri International Centre for Photography and ArtVerona has once again been extremely fruitful. After four previous shared exhibitions, this year the International Centre for Photography hosts a one-man show by Palestinian artist Steve Sabella, whose difficult existential conditions provide the inspiration for the development of a powerful and highly expressive artistic language.

The show, curated by Karin Adrian von Roques and organised in collaboration with Galleria Boxart, is divided into seven sections which, retracing the stages of the artist's personal and artistic development from 2004 to 2014, find a striking equivalence in the Scavi Scaligeri archaeological site.

The exhibition's title - *Steve Sabella. Archaeology of the Future* - also evokes the very essence of the setting of the International Centre for Photography, where the combinations of ancient and modern, concrete and archaeological finds, seem to echo the themes examined by the artist: the fragmentation of experience, the nature of transition, alienation.

We are therefore delighted with this further collaboration with ArtVerona, which has brought an artist like Sabella in an Italian museum for the first time, and which gives the public an opportunity to discover an original voice, a poetry with profound implications both cultural and existential.

Thus, it is an enormously significant show which will undoubtedly excite the interest and attention of critics and visitors alike.

Antonia Pavesi
Counsellor for Cultural Affairs, Municipality of Verona

Flavio Tosi
Mayor of Verona

**STEVE SABELLA.
UN INCONTRO
KARIN ADRIAN VON ROQUES**

**STEVE SABELLA:
AN ENCOUNTER
KARIN ADRIAN VON ROQUES**

Agosto 2014

Si suppone che io scriva un testo. Su Steve Sabella. Per la mostra *Archeologia del Futuro*. Steve e io abbiamo già lavorato insieme. In occasione della XV Biennale di Fotografia di Houston (Texas) che si è svolta nella primavera di quest'anno. Allora avevamo esposto i foto-collage dei suoi cicli *In Exile* e *Metamorphosis*. Le opere di Steve mi sono entrate in circolo. Forse perché Steve mi è entrato in circolo come persona e come artista. Per far capire ciò non posso separare il suo lavoro dalla sua vita. E soprattutto non posso distinguere tutto questo da quello che sta accadendo oggi a Gaza. Ecco perché non sono molto interessata a scrivere un'anamnesi da storica dell'arte. Preferisco di gran lunga approcciare il suo lavoro dal punto di vista privilegiato di un archeologo.

La mostra a Verona presenta con attenzione un *parcours* in sette stazioni della poetica di questo artista. Sette tappe che conducono attraverso il processo da lui compiuto per affrontare situazioni segnate da conflitti politici, che hanno lasciato traccia e si sono depositate in vari livelli del suo inconscio. La mostra è un viaggio archeologico. Frammenti/oggetti trovati/detriti di memoria vengono scavati, assemblati, classificati e ricomposti insieme. Il mio sforzo è tentare una ricostruzione. È un tentativo verso la visione del quadro nella sua interezza. Da angolature differenti.

Annotazione I

Berlino, Ottobre 2012. Ho preso accordi per incontrarmi con Steve Sabella, alle 5.30 del pomeriggio, a Oderbergstrasse dove vive. Steve è uno degli artisti della Biennale di Houston alla quale attualmente sto lavorando. Si è fatto un nome con le sue opere fotografiche.

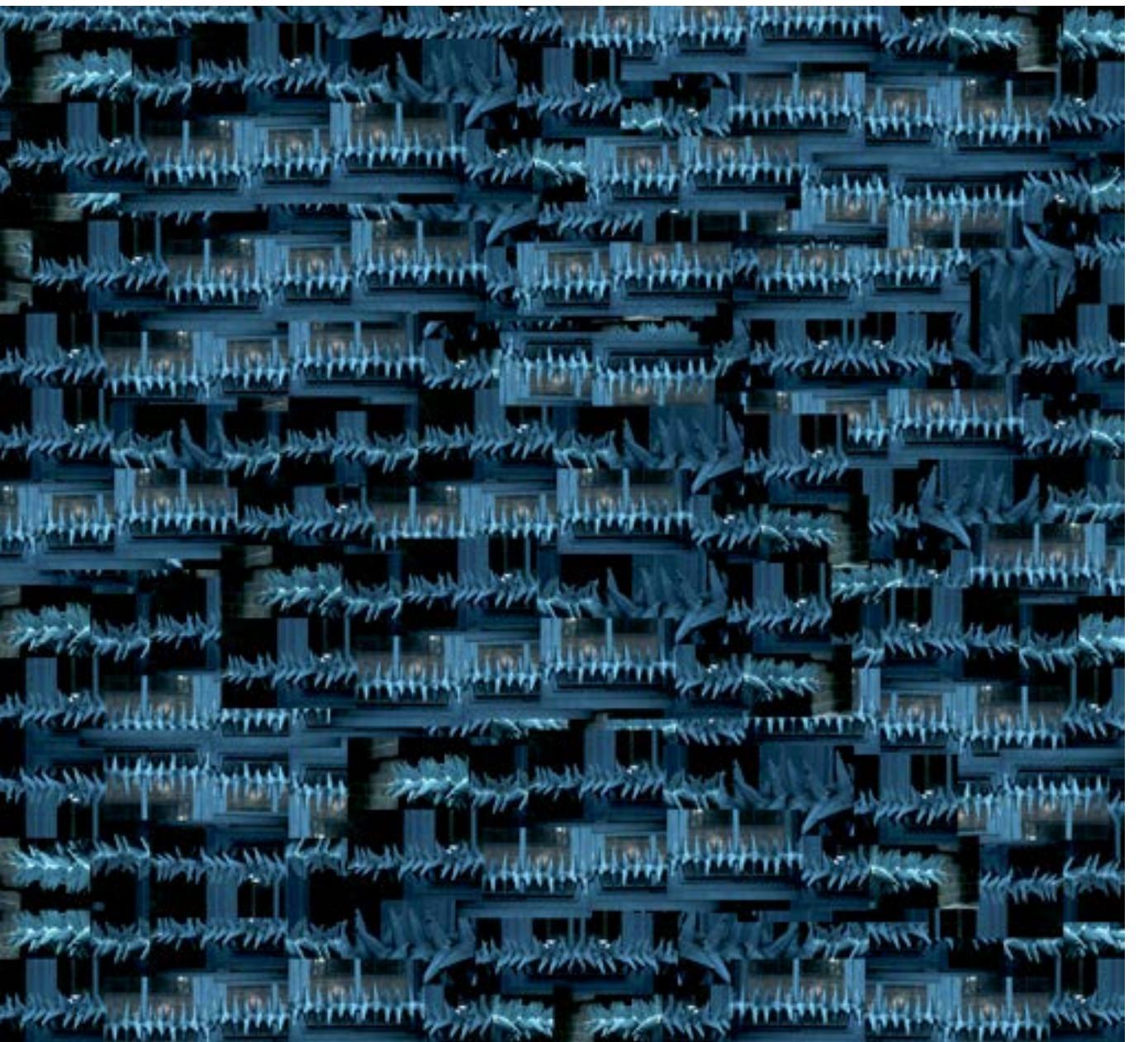
August 2014

I am supposed to write an article. On Steve Sabella. For the exhibition *Archaeology of the Future*. Steve and I have already worked together: For the 15th International FotoFest Biennale in Houston, Texas, which took place in the spring of this year. We were then showing photo-collages of his cycles from *In Exile* to *Metamorphosis*. His works get under my skin. Perhaps because Steve gets under my skin as a person and an artist. To understand it, I cannot separate his artwork from his life. And especially not separated from what is happening right now in Gaza. I am not very interested in writing a kind of art-historical anamnesis. I would much rather approach his work from the vantage point of an archaeologist.

The exhibition in Verona presents a carefully planned *parcours* through seven stations of this artist's work. Seven stations that lead through the artist's process of coping with situations marked by political conflicts that have left traces and been deposited in layers of his unconscious. The exhibition as an archaeological journey. Fragments/ found pieces/ scraps of memory that are dug up, assembled, classified and merged. My attempt at a reconstruction. The attempt to see the whole picture. From different angles.

Note I

Berlin: It's October 2012 and I have arranged to meet up with Steve Sabella. At 5:30 p.m. on Oderberg Street where he lives. Steve is one of the artists for the Biennale in Houston, which I am currently working on. He has made a name for himself with his photo works. The taxi drops me off at a random intersection. The apartment: a large one with lots of light in



IN EXILE

2008

Stampa lambda montata
su alluminio con bordo di 5 cm

Lambda print mounted on aluminum

5-cm aluminum box edge

Edizione di 6 + 2 PA

Edition of 6 + 2 AP

136 x 125 cm

Il taxi mi scarica a un incrocio qualunque con la via.

L'appartamento: grande, con molta luce, in un vecchio edificio berlinese. Le tavole del pavimento scricchiolano sotto i passi. Tutte le porte sono aperte e permettono di guardare dentro le singole stanze. L'arredamento è arioso. I mobili di design.

Steve: alto, slanciato, capelli neri, occhi scuri. Si muove come un ballerino. Rapidi movimenti oscillanti. Parla velocemente, quasi senza riprendere fiato. Qualcosa da bere? Tè. Di che tipo? Verde. Ci siamo conosciuti a Dubai. Ah, adesso mi ricordo. Ci ha presentati Omar Donia. Apprezza Omar e anche lui ha scritto un articolo per *Contemporary Practices*. Se l'ho letto? Ah, sono anch'io nel board di quella rivista d'arte. Grandioso. Il tè è pronto. Ancora troppo caldo per berlo. Steve - che è andato avanti e indietro per tutto il tempo - si siede vicino a me.

Parliamo del suo lavoro. Apre il laptop in un gesto. Mostra le immagini dei suoi cicli recenti: *Euphoria*, *Beyond Euphoria*, *Metamorphosis*. Racconta della sua concezione, in cui la sua biografia gioca una parte decisiva. La ripetizione di alcuni motivi nelle sue opere li trasporta in uno spazio mentale; l'immaginazione diviene immagine, che rivela l'interiorità e la parte esteriore di Steve, l'esilio e la via di uscita da quella condizione.

Annotazione 2

Steve: sempre irrequieto, nato a Gerusalemme nel 1975. Cresciuto lì, nella città del lungo scontro tra Israele e la rivendicazione Palestinese di umana giustizia. Non sono gli eventi da prima pagina che lo tormentano. È il piccolo, lento trascinarsi delle cose, l'infrangimento delle leggi, le sottili anomalie che gli danno la sensazione di qualcosa di profondamente sbagliato. Mentre vive nella sua città natale, si sente senza patria, sradicato. Un vagabondo. Questo sentimento cresce fino a un'afflizione che corrode, che turba il naturale senso di fiducia di un individuo,

an older Berlin building. The floorboards creak when walked on. All the doors are wide open, allowing a look into the individual rooms. The furnishings are airy. Designer furniture.

Steve: tall, slim figure, black hair, dark eyes. He moves like a dancer. Quick, vibrating movements. He talks quickly, almost breathlessly. What would I like to drink? Tea. What kind? Green. That we know each other from Dubai. Ah, I remember now. Omar Donia introduced us to each other. That he prizes Omar and that he himself wrote an article for *Contemporary Practices*, whether I read it? Ah, I am on the board of that art magazine. Great. The tea is ready. Still too hot to drink. Steve, who has walked back and forth the whole time, sits down next to me.

We talk about his work. He flips open his laptop. Shows pictures of his latest cycles: *Euphoria*, *Beyond Euphoria*, *Metamorphosis*. He speaks of his concepts, in which his biography plays a role. The repetition of his motifs turn them into a mental landscape, imagination become picture, which exposes his innermost - like his outermost - exile, and his way out.

Note 2

Steve: ever restless, born 1975 in Jerusalem. Grew up in this city with its long-lasting conflict between Israel and the Palestinian claim to human justice. It is not the spectacular events that increasingly nag at him. It is the small, slow creep of things, the infringement of laws, the subtle abnormalities that give him the feeling of something profoundly wrong. When he lives in his native city, he feels a lack of homeland, uprooted. Homeless. This feeling grows into a mounting affliction that corrodes, that unsettles one's natural basic trust, long-term. At the age of 33 he goes to London. Although he could continue to live in Jerusalem, he can do so no longer in a place where constant restrictions mark everyday life. The long-time existence of the "real" Jerusalem becomes a memory, overlaid by the new sensual impressions and living

per lungo tempo. A 33 anni va a Londra. Benché possa continuare a stare a Gerusalemme, non gli riesce più stare in un luogo dove costanti restrizioni segnano la vita di tutti i giorni. La lunga esistenza della Gerusalemme "reale" diviene un ricordo, sovrapposto alle nuove, sensuali impressioni e condizioni di vita sperimentate prima a Londra e poi a Berlino. Gerusalemme come luogo fisico si trasforma, nella coscienza di Steve, in una Gerusalemme che esiste sotto forma di raffigurazione immaginata.

«Gerusalemme - mi racconta - divenne un'immagine e io mi sentivo intrappolato in essa, nell'immagine di Gerusalemme ovviamente. Poi però lentamente, dopo aver rappresentato Gerusalemme in una forma, ho capito che il mio sforzo era diretto proprio a capire le immagini, la loro funzione e origine, per trovare una via e liberare me stesso. Io ho liberato davvero me stesso dall'esilio, o dall'immagine dell'esilio, proprio ricorrendo alla mia immaginazione. Ciononostante, ho realizzato subito dopo che ero stato imprigionato in altre immagini. La vita stessa diventa così un processo infinito di liberazione. Abbiamo bisogno di svelare tutti quei sistemi che occupano i nostri pensieri e immaginazioni, affinché possiamo pensare e immaginare a modo nostro».

L'esilio diviene un tema ricorrente per Steve: alla fine la "cittadinanza globale" è l'unica alternativa percorribile. Il suo periodo fuori delle mura di Gerusalemme diventa una fase in cui scendere a patti con l'allontanamento, con tutti i sintomi ed effetti collaterali che esso comporta. Ciò innesca un processo di auto-interrogazione e introspezione. E diviene uno sviluppo che lo libera dai traumi delle sue origini. «Ho capito che tutto attorno a noi è una costruzione, un sistema, i cui codici funzionano, senza essere messi in discussione, per la maggior parte delle persone - afferma in un'intervista - Sono cresciuto, per caso, in una regione famosa per i suoi codici complicati. La mia battaglia è stata quella di liberarmi da quel sistema che mi etichettava automaticamente come un individuo

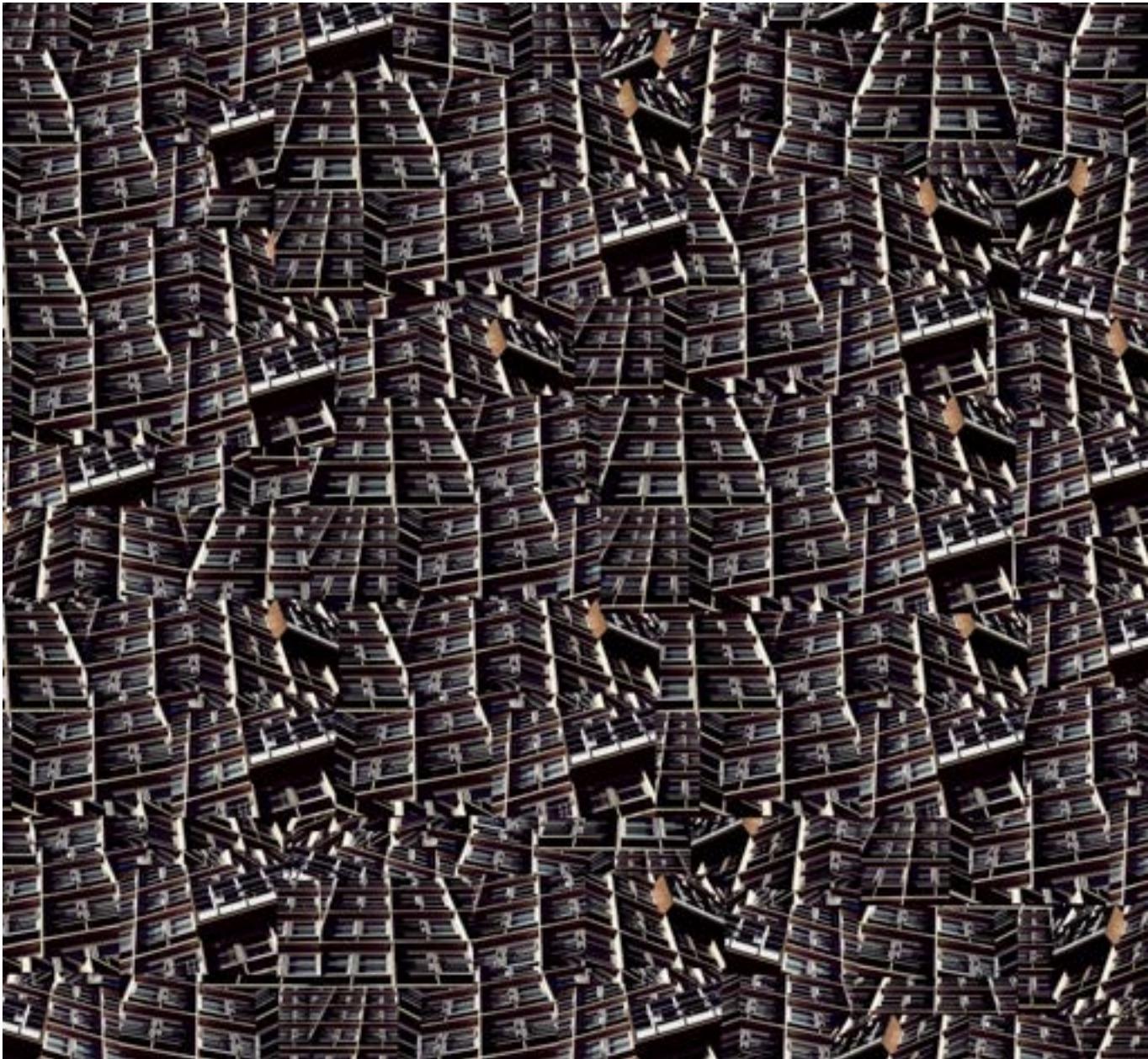
conditions of London and later Berlin. Jerusalem as a physical place gets modified in Steve's consciousness to a Jerusalem that exists in the form of an image in the imagination. «Jerusalem» - he tells me - «became an image and I felt trapped in it. It refers to Jerusalem, of course. But slowly, and after realizing that Jerusalem is an image, I understood that my struggle was to understand images, their function and origin, in order to find a way to liberate myself. I did liberate myself from exile, or the image of exile, by resorting to my imagination. However, I soon realized that I became trapped in other images. Hence, life itself becomes an endless process of liberation. We need to find all those systems that occupy our thoughts or imaginations so that we can think and imagine in our own way».

Exile becomes an ever recurring theme for Steve; in the end "global citizenship" is the only viable alternative. His time outside the walls of Jerusalem turns into a phase of coping with exile and all its symptoms and side effects. This initiates a process of self-questioning and introspection. And it becomes a process that liberates him from the traumas of his origin. «I understood that everything around us is a construct, a system whose codes go unquestioned by the majority of people» - he says in an interview - «by chance I grew up in a region known for its difficult codes. My struggle was to break free from that system, which, by default, labeled me as a person under Israeli occupation. I asked myself - what was stopping me from feeling free?» By uncoupling himself from this system he is able to be free. And he is helped to do so also through his «research on the origin and function of images»!¹

Note 3

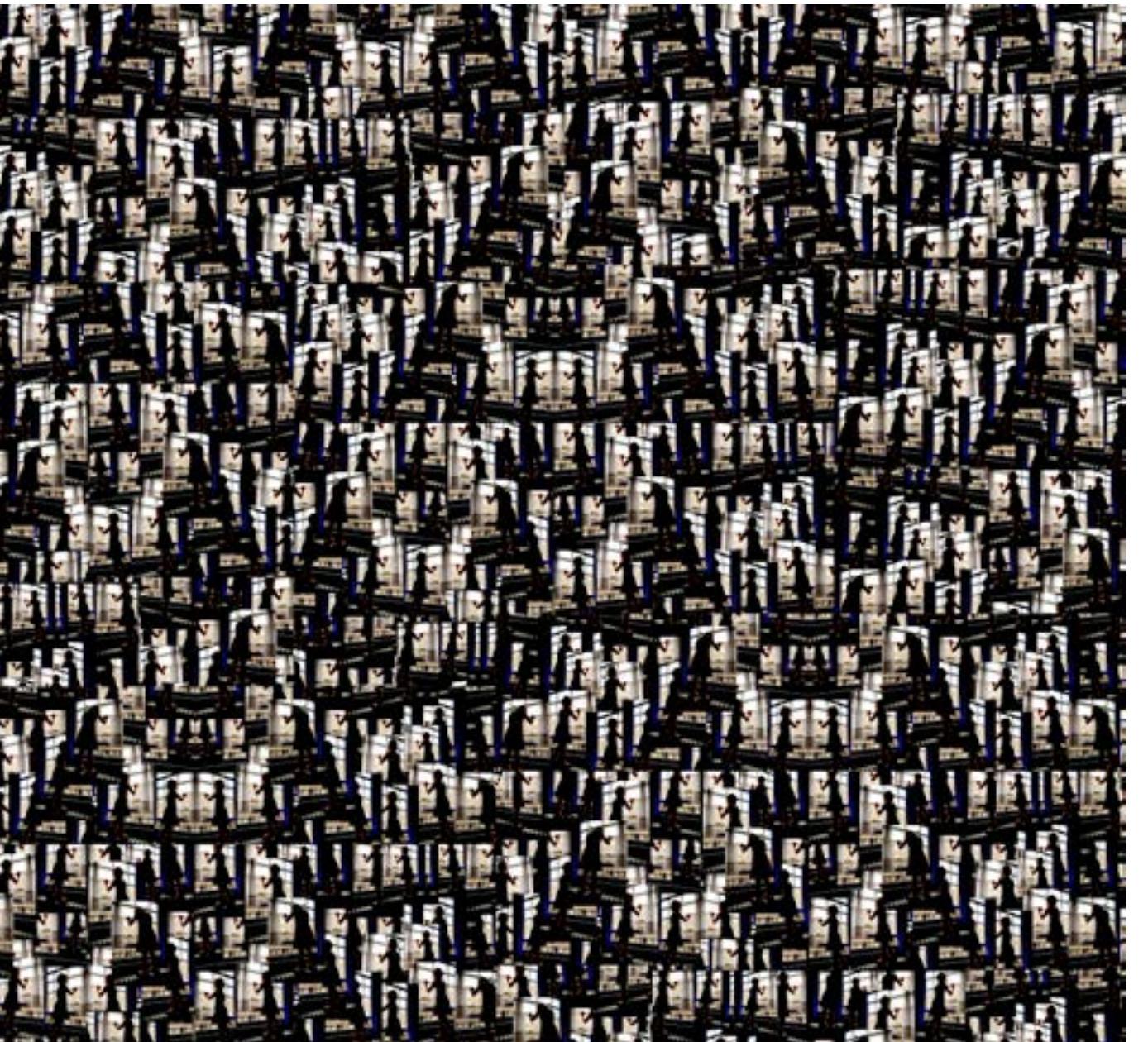
In our conversation, Steve and I speak of the disregard for the rights of others and that the

¹ Quotation from "Image As Witness – Archeology of the Past: Interview with Steve Sabella" by Wafa Gabsi



IN EXILE
2008

Stampa lambda montata
su alluminio con bordo di 5 cm
Lambda print mounted on aluminum
5-cm aluminum box edge
Edizione di 6 + 2 AP
Edition of 6 + 2 AP
136 x 125 cm



IN EXILE

2008

Stampa lambda montata

su alluminio con bordo di 5 cm

Lambda print mounted on aluminum

5-cm aluminum box edge

Edizione di 6 + 2 PA

Edition of 6 + 2 AP

136 x 125 cm

sotto l'occupazione Israeliana. Mi sono chiesto: cosa ti impedisce di sentirti libero?». Solo affrancandosi da questo binomio Steve è stato in grado di sentirsi libero. È stato aiutato in questo anche dalla sua «ricerca sull'origine e la funzione delle immagini».¹

Annotazione 3

Durante la nostra conversazione, Steve e io parliamo del disconoscimento dei diritti degli altri e affermiamo che la violazione di tali diritti, come lo stupro, l'omicidio, la schiavitù, la tortura e l'occupazione, non sono mai giustificabili, né si possono difendere o guardare da prospettive differenti. Concordiamo che i diritti altrui siano una verità universale affermata più e più volte, nei più vari contesti. Fare agli altri quello che vorresti fosse fatto a te. Gli dico che conosco quel sentimento che nasce quando qualcosa è accettata come normale ma normale non è: la perversione dei principi morali ed etici. Sto pensando al muro tra Israele e Palestina e alle zone di confine, alla Germania divisa, penso al muro di Berlino. «Sei solo un bambino e cresci in queste condizioni – ribadisco – Non conosci nulla di diverso. Fa parte della tua stessa esistenza. Vai da Est a Ovest e sei obbligato a passare dai checkpoint. Un sacco di seccature con i checkpoint. Un sovradianimensionato apparato di checkpoint. Sei sempre alla mercé del cavillo legale e del capriccio. Ogni volta il sentimento di insicurezza aumenta. Il processo di controllo finirà male per te? Oppure, metti che vai a fare una passeggiata. Il paesaggio è incantevole, il cielo azzurro. Arrivi a una zona di confine. Il paesaggio è incantevole, il cielo sempre azzurro. Con la differenza che la terra straordinaria che sta davanti a te è una zona di morte. Oltrepassarla può costarti la vita. Capiisci immediatamente l'intero sforzo necessario per mantenere lo status quo. Solo perché qualcuno possa andare da Est a Ovest e viceversa.

¹ Citazione da "Immagine come testimonianza. Archeologia del passato: Intervista con Steve Sabella" di Wafa Gabsi

violation of rights like rape, killing, slavery, torture and occupation never should be justified, defended or looked at from several angles. We say that protecting the rights of others is a universal truth that has been formulated again and again in the most varied of contexts. Do unto others as you would have them do unto you. I say that I know the feeling that arises when something accepted as normal is not normal. The perversion of ethical and moral principles. I am thinking of the wall between Israel and Palestine and speak of the zone's borders, of divided Germany, the wall in Berlin. «You're just a kid and grow into these conditions» - I say - «You don't know any different. It's a part of everyday life. You go from East to West, you have to pass checkpoints. An elaborate hassle with checkpoints. An oversized apparatus of checkpoints. You are forever exposed to chicanery and caprice. Each time the feeling of insecurity grows. Will the process of being controlled eventually end badly for you? Or you go for a walk. The landscape is lovely, the sky is blue. You arrive at a border. The landscape is lovely, the sky is still blue. With the difference that the remarkable land that extends before you is a death zone. To overstep it would cost you your life. You understand at once the entire effort necessary to keep everything status quo. Only so that no one can go from East to West or vice-versa. But it is even more complicated. When I often stand with friends at the wall in Berlin and peer into the other side, an uneasy feeling creeps over me, a feeling of complicity in the whole miserable situation. It was after all the Germans who were guilty of the terror regime. And at school they told us that we too, those born afterwards, also have to bear the heavy burden of blame. The consequence of all this was anxiety and depression. And those who experienced the terror and survived the horror are themselves also hounded by anxiety and depression. That is the tragedy of it all, that there is no end to history. That it goes on». In a queer way I feel linked to Steve's story because its continuation is



IN EXILE

2008

Stampa lambda montata

su alluminio con bordo di 5 cm

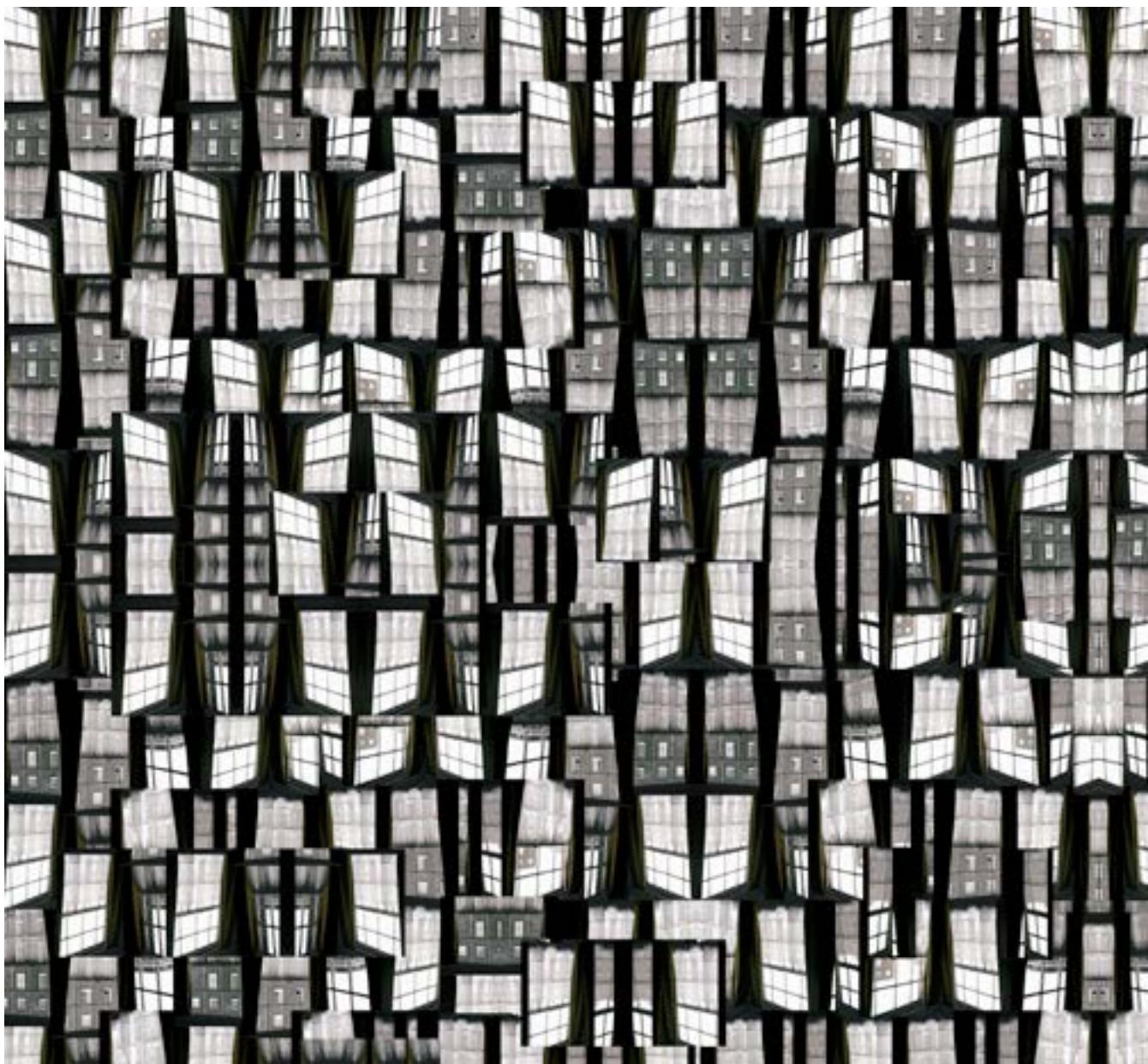
Lambda print mounted on aluminum

5-cm aluminum box edge

Edizione di 6 + 2 PA

Edition of 6 + 2 AP

136 x 125 cm



IN EXILE

2008

Stampa lambda montata

su alluminio con bordo di 5 cm

Lambda print mounted on aluminum

5-cm aluminum box edge

Edizione di 6 + 2 PA

Edition of 6 + 2 AP

136 x 125 cm

Ma è persino più complicato di così. Quando spesso, davanti al muro di Berlino con i miei amici, scrutavo verso l'altro lato, serpeggiava in me una sensazione di disagio, un sentimento di complicità verso quella situazione deprimente. Dopo tutto, erano i tedeschi a essere colpevoli del regime di terrore. E a scuola ci insegnavano che lo eravamo anche noi, seppur nati dopo, anche la nostra generazione doveva sostenere il fardello della vergogna. La conseguenza di tutto questo era l'ansia e la depressione. E quelli che avevano sperimentato il terrore ed erano sopravvissuti all'orrore erano anch'essi perseguitati da inquietudine e della depressione. Questo è l'aspetto tragico di tutto ciò, che non c'è fine alla Storia. Va avanti». In uno strano modo, io mi sento connessa alla vicenda di Steve, perché la prosecuzione della Storia è la sofferenza di tutti i Palestinesi. Perché i crimini dei nostri padri sono spesso usati per giustificare il supplizio presente del popolo palestinese.

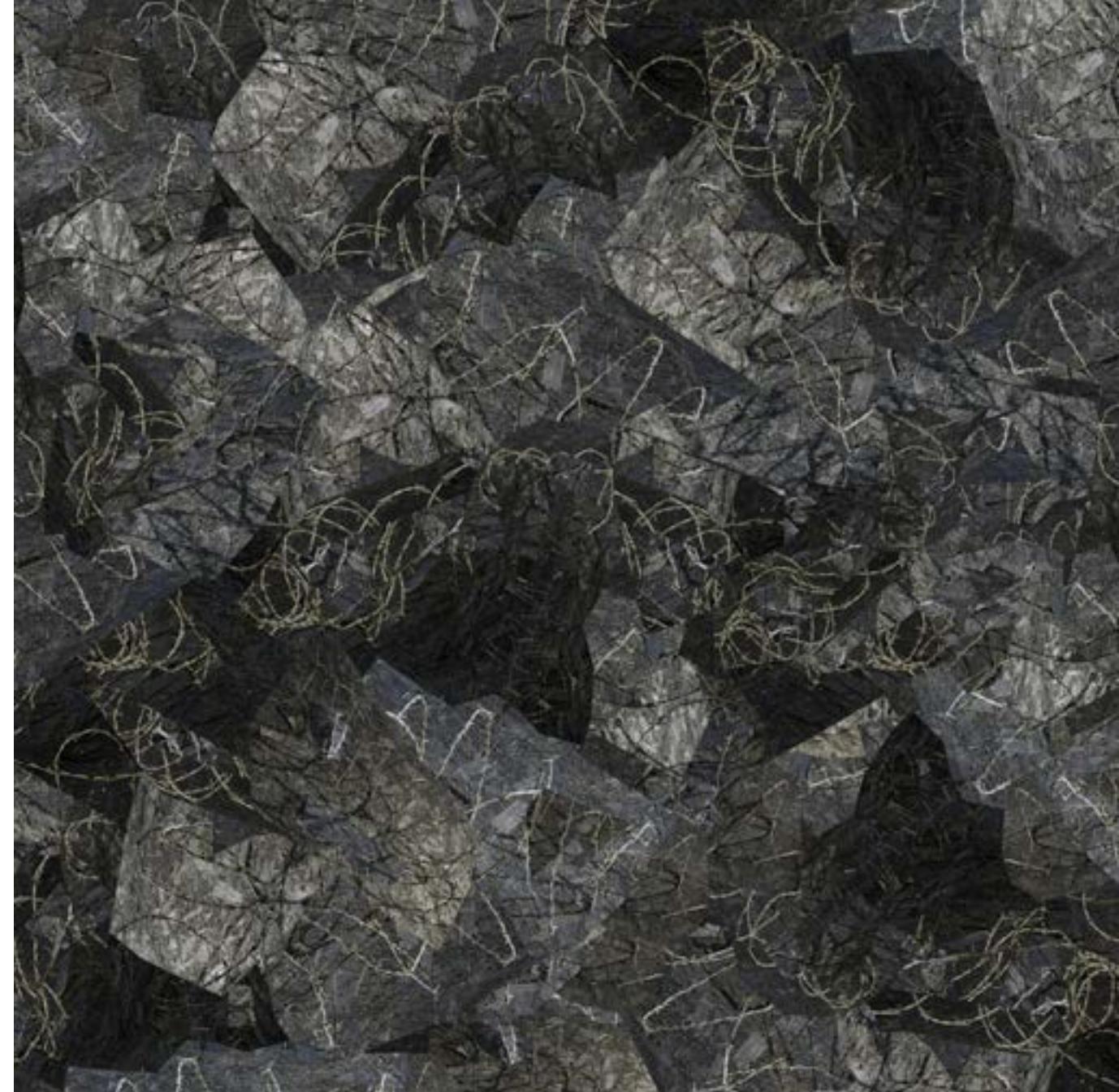
Annotazione 4

La conversazione prende una certa piega. Steve spiega che lui pensava alla morte quando aveva la sensazione di essere sull'orlo di un crollo fisico e mentale, quando non sapeva come trovare una via di uscita da quel buco nero. È stato esattamente a quel punto che una cura si rivela essere la discesa nell'oscurità, per portare allo scoperto, strato su strato, i ricordi sepolti estratti di là. Tale processo è reso possibile da un *insight*, una visione interiore più limpida. Le finestre che egli ha fotografato, ritagliato e rimesso insieme di nuovo sono espressione della sua vita che gli appare scollagata. Quelle finestre non consentono una visione sulla vita. Sono elementi di muri assenti, riflettono la lotta di Steve contro il suo esilio, interiore ed esteriore. Esse sono la descrizione dello stato del mondo che si sta sfaldando, e sono pure un tentativo di riportarlo a un sistema di ordine. Non significano un'apertura a un universo rassicurante. Non ci concedono una visione verso una distesa vasta e libera. Sem-

the suffering of the Palestinians. Because the crimes of our fathers are often used to justify the present suffering of the Palestinians.

Note 4

The conversation takes a turn. Steve explains that he thought of death when he had the feeling of standing on the brink of a physical and mental breakdown, when he didn't know how he was supposed to find his way out of this dark hole. It is exactly at this point that a kind of healing proves to be a descent into the darkness, to expose layer by layer the buried memories that are extracted there. This process enables a clearer "insight". The windows that he photographed, cut apart, and set together again are an expression of his life that seems ungrounded. They grant us no view onto life. They are elements of absent walls. And thus reflect Steve's struggle with exile, the inner and the outer one. They are a description of the state of the world that is falling apart, also an attempt to bring it back into a system of order. They do not signify an opening into a friendly world. They grant us no view into the vast and free expanse. They seem to have been robbed of their original function, as a documentation of constricted existence, even imprisonment. At the same time, Steve's window pieces are an example of his artistic approach, how he studies images and finds loopholes where he can jump from one dimension to another. The windows are imagined windows or images of windows that he perceived in his imagination. In one of the pictures from the *Metamorphosis* series in which the level of suffering as a state of the soul is expressed in a condensed form, my gaze remains glued to a cactus. The cactus to me seems strange in a world thrown out of joint. It is spiky, repelling. And perhaps, too, a bearer of hope, a sign of an eventual overcoming of suffering. Subject to the most complicated conditions, the plant survives in nature defensively, thanks to its barbs.



METAMORPHOSIS

2012

Stampa lightjet sotto diasec
con bordo di alluminio di 3,5 cm

Lightjet print on diasec

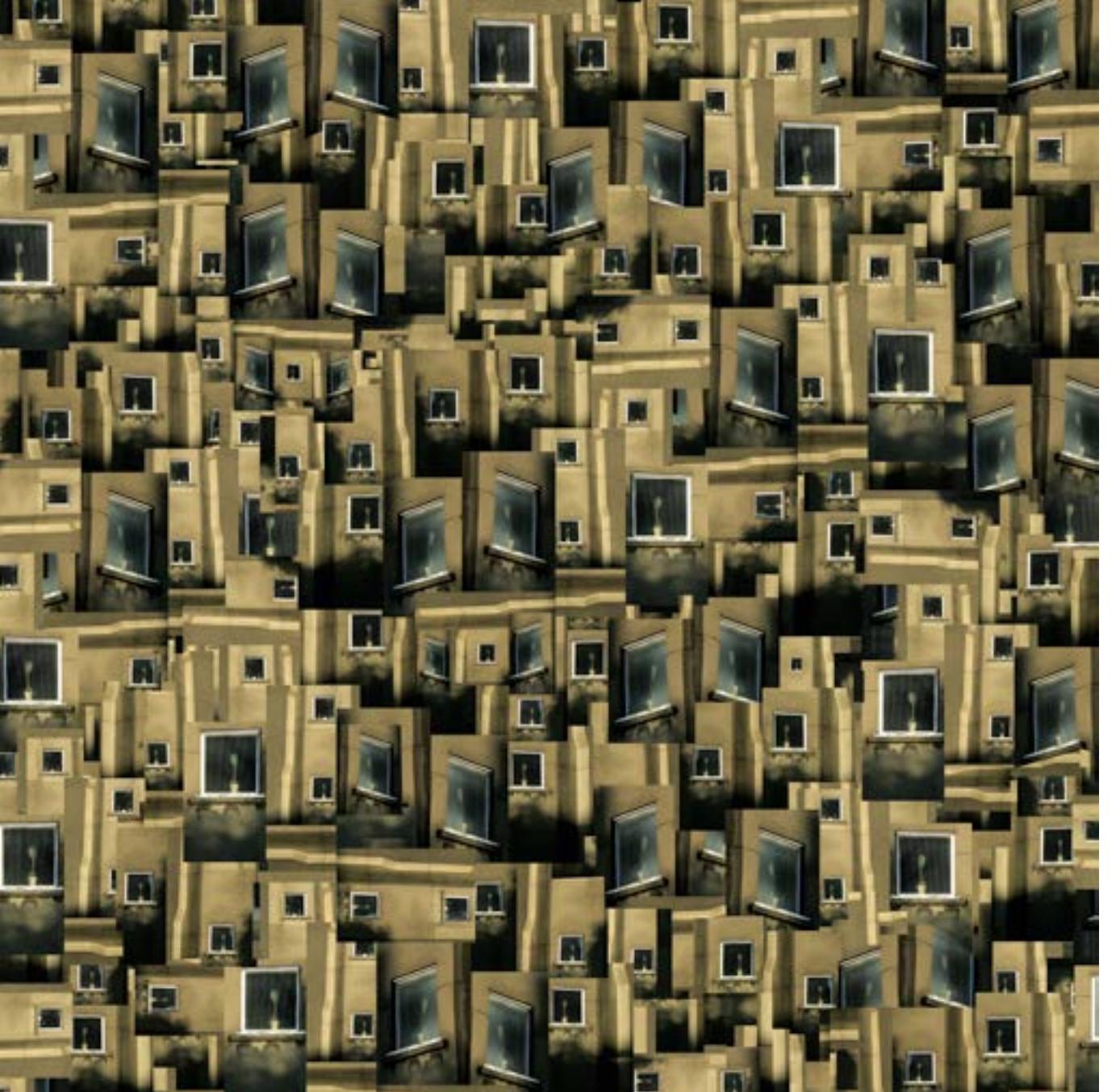
3,5-cm aluminum box edge

Edizione di 6 + 2 PA

Edition of 6 + 2 AP

160 x 160 cm





METAMORPHOSIS

2012

Stampa lightjet sotto diasec
con bordo di alluminio di 3.5 cm

Lightjet print on diasec
3.5-cm aluminum box edge

Edizione di 6 + 2 PA

Edition of 6 + 2 AP

160 x 160 cm

brano esser state derubate dalla loro funzione originaria, sono testimonianza di un'esistenza costretta, persino di reclusione. Allo stesso tempo, i pezzi di finestra di Steve sono un esempio del suo approccio artistico, di come egli studi le immagini e trovi delle feritoie per saltare da una dimensione all'altra. Le finestre sono finestre immaginate oppure immagini di finestre che egli percepisce con la sua immaginazione. In una delle composizioni della serie *Metamorphosis* in cui il livello di sofferenza come stato d'animo è espresso in una forma condensata, il mio sguardo rimane incollato a un cactus. È strano per me trovare un cactus in un mondo disarticolato. È pungente, respingente. Forse è anche però portatore di speranza, segno di un superamento della sofferenza. Soggetta alle condizioni più estreme, infatti, la pianta sopravvive in natura difendendosi con le proprie spine.

Annotazione 5

Abbastanza stranamente il cactus mi riporta a un'altra immagine: una tazza da tè giapponese di cui avevo parlato a Steve. Mia nonna aveva ricevuto ciò che restava di un servizio da tè giapponese del XIX secolo, tra cui c'era una tazza. La porcellana era dipinta ed era così sottile che potevi quasi guardarci attraverso. Quella tazza mi ha sempre affascinato. Io qualche volta la prendevo in mano con la massima cautela e la portavo alla luce. Insieme a molti piatti, la tazza sopravvisse al bombardamento su Hannover del 1943 che distrusse la casa di mia nonna. Io ho immaginato spesso questa tazza in mezzo alle pietre della casa. Un qualcosa di così fragile. Un oggetto quasi surreale in un mondo falcidiato, decimato da quel "diluvio". Per lungo tempo quell'immagine è rimasta nella mia mente come una minaccia alla pace.

La pace - pensavo - qualcosa che tutti auspicavano come epilogo della II Guerra Mondiale. Un segnale molto importante venne dato a Berlino nell'Ottobre del 1950: una campana, la campana della pace nella torre del Municipio di

Note 5

Strangely enough, the cactus takes me to another image, that of the Japanese tea cup that I told Steve about. My grandmother had the leftovers of a Japanese tea service from the 19th century, among which was a cup. The china was painted and was so fine that you could almost see through it. This cup had always fascinated me. I took it sometimes with the greatest care into my hand and held it up to the light. Along with several plates, this cup had survived the 1943 bombing raid on Hannover that destroyed my grandmother's home. I often imagined where this cup lay in the midst of the house's rubble. Something so fragile. A quasi-surreal object in a decimated, deluged world. For a long time it stood in my mind like a threat to peace.

Peace, I thought, is what everyone wished for as a goal at the end of World War II. Such a signal was given to Berlin in October 1950, a bell, the freedom bell in the tower of the Schöneberg Rathaus. And what was linked to it was the statement: «I believe in the inviolability and the dignity of the individual. I believe that all people have received from God the same right to freedom. I swear to resist aggression and tyranny wherever it appears on Earth». I firmly believed in this. And today? A declaration that loses its credibility in a world that is falling apart, a world order that allows the dignity of the individual, even whole peoples, to be repeatedly flouted.

Note 6

I see before me pictures from the film *In the Darkroom with Steve Sabella*, how Steve, with a scraper, removes thin layers of plaster from walls in houses in the Old City of Jerusalem and from the house he was born in. And in 2009 he rented a house in Ein Karem, Jerusalem, that had been occupied by the Israelis since the 1948 war. There he took a series of photographs of different objects and then, using a special technique, applied the photos to



Schöneberg. E ciò fu connesso a una dichiarazione: «Io credo nell'inviolabilità e nella dignità dell'individuo. Credo che tutti abbiamo ricevuto da Dio lo stesso diritto alla libertà. Giuro di respingere l'aggressione e la tirannia ovunque esse appaiano sulla Terra». Io credetti fermamente in questi principi. E oggi? Una dichiarazione così perde la sua credibilità in un mondo che si sfalda, in un ordine del mondo che permette che la dignità dell'individuo, persino di interi popoli, sia ripetutamente violata.

Annotazione 6

Vedo davanti a me un'immagine tratta dal documentario *In the Darkroom with Steve Sabella* (Nella camera oscura con Steve Sabella) in cui Steve con una spatola rimuove sottili strati di intonaco dai muri delle case della Città Vecchia di Gerusalemme e dalla casa in cui egli è nato. E nel 2009 ha affittato una casa a Ein Karem, la parte di Gerusalemme occupata dagli Israeliani dalla guerra del 1948. Poi Steve ha raccolto una serie di fotografie di oggetti diversi e, usando una tecnica speciale, ha applicato le foto agli strati di intonaco che aveva rimosso. Questo processo si è compiuto nella camera oscura. Portati alla luce, hanno mostrato un risultato inaspettato. Quegli oggetti, creati ex novo, sono come pezzi trovati di un tempo che racconta un passato multi-sfaccettato, che ancora persiste nel nostro presente, pur se non può essere ritracciato in nessuna epoca specifica. «Quelli con le immagini simili a piastrelle, all'inizio vengono scambiati dalla gente per veri reperti, per dei manufatti archeologici – spiega Steve – Ma tu e io sappiamo che sono un'illusione. Se infatti un archeologo zelante mettesse per caso una mano su un pezzo del genere, sarebbe scioccato dall'inganno dei propri occhi. Queste non sono pietre, ma sottili, fragili strati di vecchia pittura, improvvisamente divenuta sensibile alla luce attraverso l'applicazione di emulsione fotografica in bianco e nero. Qui è necessario una nuova branca di studio! Lo studio archeologico della immagini. Una disciplina che non

the layers of plaster he had removed. This process is accomplished in the darkroom. Brought into the light, they show an unexpected result. The newly created objects are like found pieces of a time that tells of the many-faceted past that exists in our present and yet cannot be pinned down to any specific era. «With those tile-like structure images, people think at first that these are found objects, almost archaeological artifacts» - Steve explains - «but you and I know that they are an illusion. Hence, if a keen archaeologist by chance puts his hand on such a piece, he will be shocked to find out that his eyes fooled him. These are not stones, but thin, fragile layers of old paint that suddenly became light-sensitive through the application of black-and-white photo emulsion. A new study is needed here! The archaeological study of images. Such a study cannot look at time in a linear way. It must have multiple dimensions to it. And that is a way it can speak simultaneously about the past, the present, the future and beyond».

Immersed in darkness so as to bring a different perspective to light, one that incorporates alteration and change: a stretch of Steve's path through the stations of his liberation process. A process of several years that can be traced on the tour in Verona. A process of transformation. A «work in progress. Progress towards liberation».

«I no longer feel in exile. And this has nothing to do with finding a land to settle in. The opposite is true. I grew my roots in the air – to remain in transition» (Steve Sabella).²

Note 7

What role does art play for Steve Sabella? From the beginning of the film *In the Darkroom with Steve Sabella* you hear Steve's voice out of the darkness of the darkroom.



METAMORPHOSIS

2012

Stampa lightjet sotto diasec
con bordo di alluminio di 3,5 cm

Lightjet print on diasec

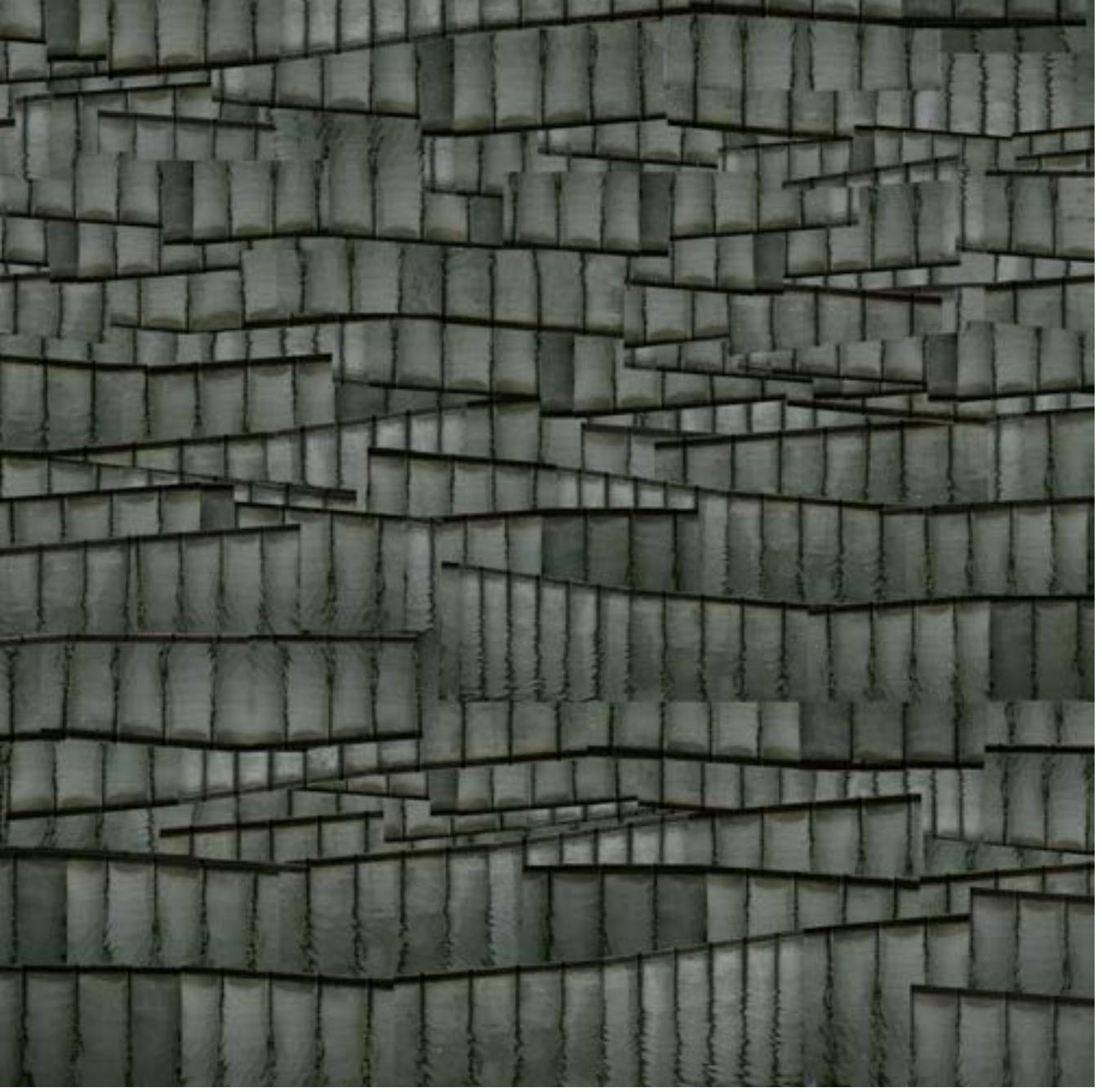
3,5-cm aluminum box edge

Edizione di 6 + 2 PA

Edition of 6 + 2 AP

160 x 160 cm

² Cited from the interview "Image as witness – Archaeology of the past: Interview with Steve Sabella" by Wafa Gabsi



METAMORPHOSIS

2012

Stampa lightjet sotto diasec
con bordo di alluminio di 3.5 cm

Lightjet print on diasec
3.5-cm aluminum box edge

Edizione di 6 + 2 PA

Edition of 6 + 2 AP

160 x 160 cm



può guardare al tempo in maniera lineare, ma deve necessariamente comprendere dimensioni multiple. Uno studio tale può così parlare simultaneamente di passato, presente, futuro e oltre».

Bisogna immergersi nell'oscurità per portare alla luce una prospettiva differente, quella che incorpora l'alterazione e il cambiamento: ecco qui un segmento del cammino di Steve attraverso le stazioni del suo processo di liberazione. Un processo durato diversi anni che può essere ritracciato nel percorso di Verona. Un processo di trasformazione. Un «*work in progress*. *In progress* verso la liberazione».

«Non mi sento più in esilio. E questo non ha nulla a che fare con l'aver trovato un Paese in cui stabilirmi. È vero semmai il contrario. Ho fatto crescere le mie radici nell'aria, per rimanere *In Transition*, in transizione» (Steve Sabella).¹

Annotazione 7

Che ruolo gioca l'arte per Steve Sabella? Dall'inizio del film *In the Darkroom with Steve Sabella* senti la voce di Steve che esce dal buio della camera oscura.

L'arte è diventata il mio veicolo per la liberazione.

L'arte mi ha portato in mondi diversi e in diverse dimensioni.

L'arte ha alterato la mia percezione.

L'arte mi ha sempre fatto domande e lasciato le risposte aperte alle mie interpretazioni.

Art became my vehicle for liberation
Art took me to different worlds and dimensions
Art altered my perception
Art always asked questions and left the answers open for many interpretations



METAMORPHOSIS

2012

Stampa lightjet sotto diasec
con bordo di alluminio di 3,5 cm

Lightjet print on diasec

3,5-cm aluminum box edge

Edizione di 6 + 2 PA

Edition of 6 + 2 AP

160 x 160 cm

I Citazione da "Immagine come testimonianza. Archeologia del passato: Intervista con Steve Sabella" di Wafa Gabsi



IN TRANSITION

2010

Stampa lambda sotto diasec
con bordo di alluminio di 3.5 cm
Lambda print on diasec
3.5-cm aluminum box edge
3 trittici appesi su griglia
3 triptychs hung in a grid
44 x 205 cm (ognuno/each)



ARCHEOLOGIA DEL FUTURO

STEVE SABELLA

Noi abbiamo bisogno di immagini per creare la Storia, specialmente nell'era della fotografia e del cinema, ma abbiamo anche bisogno dell'immaginazione per rivedere queste immagini, e ripensare così la Storia

GEORGES DIDI-HUBERMAN

Cosa viene prima, il mondo o la sua immagine? Per rispondere a questa domanda, siamo sospinti verso la genealogia dell'immagine. E se il mondo è sempre stato un'immagine, come hanno stabilito i filosofi più volte, allora la nostra ricerca arriva all'infinito. Tuttavia, possiamo risolvere gli svariati enigmi di immagini lungo il percorso ricorrendo alla nostra comprensione del mondo in cui viviamo. Le immagini delle caverne furono probabilmente i primi sforzi dell'uomo per riuscire a *immaginare* e poi decodificare le immagini che ci eravamo rappresentati di noi stessi. Studiare quelle immagini è archeologia visiva. Da dove è venuta fuori la nostra immagine? Probabilmente fu allora che scoprìmo il nostro primo genoma visivo. I suoi geni contenevano un DNA fatto di luce - o rispecchiato dalla luce - un'illusione. Disegnando sulle pietre, l'uomo fissò l'illusione della visione percepita nella nostra immaginazione. Dopo qualche millennio, abbiamo fissato questa luce sulla carta o su piastre metalliche: ed è nata la fotografia. Le immagini fisse hanno scioccato il mondo. Hanno dato vita alla più grande analogia con l'illusione che i nostri occhi siano capaci di vedere; ma quelle immagini non hanno niente a che fare con la realtà. Creano un mondo per conto loro.

Poiché le immagini creano una loro coscienza del mondo, mi chiedo se non sia ora di smettere di soffermarci sulla connessione tra imma-

ARCHAEOLOGY OF THE FUTURE

STEVE SABELLA

We need pictures to create history, especially in the age of photography and cinema, but we also need imagination to re-see these images, and thus, to re-think history

GEORGES DIDI-HUBERMAN

What came first, the world or its image? In order to answer this question, we are led towards the genealogy of the image. And if the world has always been an image, as philosophers have stated time and again, then our search reaches to infinity. But, we can solve several visual puzzles along the way, adding to our understanding of the world we live in. The first cave images were probably our early known attempts in being able to *image* and eventually decode the images we imagined of ourselves. Studying them is visual archaeology. Where did our image come from? Perhaps it was then that we discovered our first visual genome. Its genes contained DNA made of light - or mirrored from light - an illusion. By drawing on stones, we fixed the illusion of sight perceived in our imagination. A few millennia later, we fixed this light on paper and metal plates - photography came into existence. The still images shocked the world. They bore the greatest resemblance to the illusion our eyes were able to see, yet they had nothing to do with reality. They created a world of their own. Because pictures create their own consciousness of the world, I wonder if the time has come to stop focusing on the connection between images and the "real world". Maybe we need to explore the visual components of the world by looking into the image itself - just like in scientific research. We need to study images, the connections between them, their

gini e "mondo reale". Forse abbiamo bisogno di esplorare le componenti visive del mondo, guardando all'immagine stessa, proprio come in una ricerca scientifica. Abbiamo bisogno di studiare le immagini, le connessioni tra loro, le loro caratteristiche e specialmente le loro origini, guardando ad esse direttamente e non nel costante confronto con la realtà. Ciò potrebbe permetterci di scoprire le infinite possibilità nascoste nelle immagini. Il mio rapporto con l'immagine è simile a essere in una odissea nello spazio, alla ricerca della comprensione di come si forma l'immagine. E poiché l'immagine è parte dell'immaginazione, decrittarne il codice ci permetterà di vedere oltre la nostra realtà. Forse siamo entrati in un'era in cui le immagini possono essere non fisse, né più legate alla carta o a uno schermo, svincolate dal tempo, libere di fluttuare nelle nostre immaginazioni.

Il montaggio di un'immagine ci permette, ad esempio, di cambiare una forma in un'altra. Le 24 immagini fisse che compongono un secondo di video possono essere riordinate e visualizzate in modo che la prima immagine diventi la ventiquattresima, e la ventiquattresima divenga parte di un'altra costellazione temporale, creando una nuova storia o realtà. Quando queste immagini sono spostate dalla loro sequenza originaria, hanno viaggiato nel tempo. Le immagini viaggiano costantemente nel tempo, o per essere più precisi, le immagini possono passare da uno stato all'altro in qualunque dato momento.

Nel mio lavoro, scatto fotografie da angolature differenti e poi creo un collage per portare alla luce forme nuove. Mi chiedo se sto creando o svelando qualcosa che è già là fuori in attesa di essere scoperto. Io ho cominciato a riguardare il mio lavoro, e mi sto sbarazzando di tutti i testi, pensieri, concetti che sono stati fissati ad esso. Sto imparando a svelare nuove letture, oltre le intenzioni originarie delle opere (intenzioni che

characteristics, and especially their origins by looking at them directly and not in constant comparison with reality. This may allow us to discover the infinite possibilities that are hidden in images. My relationship with the image is like being on a space odyssey, in search of understanding image formation. And since an image is part of the imagination, unlocking the code will allow us to see beyond our own reality. Maybe we have entered an era where images can be unfixed, bound no longer to paper or screen, liberated from time, floating freely in our imaginations.

Image editing, for example, allows an image to change from one form to another. The 24 still images that make up one second of video can also be rearranged and displayed so that the first image becomes the 24th, and the 24th can become a part of another time constellation, creating a new story or reality. When these images are moved out of their original sequence, they have travelled in time. Images constantly time travel, or to be more precise, images can go from one state to another at any given moment.

In my work, I take photographs from several different angles and then I create a collage to bring forth new forms. I ask myself whether I am creating or unveiling something that is already out there waiting to be discovered. I have started re-looking at my work, and getting rid of all the text, thoughts and concepts that have been fixed to it. I am learning how to unveil new readings beyond the original intentions of the works (intentions that had more to do with context rather than the artistic images themselves). I started to perceive the work in the form of a visual palimpsest, where what is hidden is far more than what is visible.

For my next work, I will project the image of Jerusalem onto a wall in one of its Old City caves. I will effectively transform the cave into



TILL THE END

2004

Emulsione fotografica B/N
su pietra di Gerusalemme
B&W photo emulsion
on Jerusalem stone
Pezzo unico_Undeque
27 x 14 x 6 cm

avevano più a che fare con il contesto che con le immagini artistiche in sé). Ho iniziato a percepire il lavoro sotto forma di palinsesto visivo, in cui ciò che è nascosto è molto più grande di ciò che è visibile.

Per il mio prossimo progetto, proietterò l'immagine di Gerusalemme sul muro di una grotta della Città Vecchia. In effetti, trasformerò proprio la grotta in una camera oscura, cospargendo la parete di emulsione fotografica sensibile alla luce e proiettando la luminosità dell'immagine su una superficie che non ha mai visto la luce prima. Anche dopo aver fissato l'immagine, grazie a un processo chimico, essa è destinata un giorno a scomparire. Probabilmente,





TILL THE END

2004

Emulsione fotografica B/N
su pietra di Gerusalemme
B&W photo emulsion
on Jerusalem stone
Pezzo unico_Unique
20 x 19.5 x 7 cm

trascorsi molti anni, l'emulsione si seccherà, deperirà e si staccherà dal muro. Tuttavia, se pur scomparirà fisicamente dalla caverna, essa sopravviverà in altre infinite forme immaginate come le fotografie, i film, persino la memoria. L'immagine non muore mai, semplicemente cambia forma.

Dobbiamo ricercare ciò che venne prima della grotta: la genealogia dell'immagine. La storia viva dell'immagine nella grotta non è iniziata con la mia proiezione di essa sul muro. Proviamo a tracciare all'indietro da dove è venuta l'immagine. La proiezione è un'immagine. La sorgente

with my projection of it on the wall. Let us try to trace back where that image came from. The projection is an image. The source of that projection is a photographed image of Jerusalem. Did what the image depicts ever exist in a physical form? What guarantees that Jerusalem is not an image that was created or revealed, just like the one on the cave's wall? What is the source of all these images? Image and perception are multilayered, and we might be living in a world with an infinite number of visual palimpsests.

Furthermore, this project does not require me to physically go and seek out this cave in Jerusalem and turn it into a darkroom. I might. The imagination has already materialized the project and made it a reality. These written words give it legitimacy. We can already speak about the project's connotations and meanings. People have already reacted to the project regardless of its manifestation. The mind can explore location without location. This is the archaeology of the future. It is an expedition through image and imagination. Can we break free from our image? I came to terms with my exile after a process of self interrogation and introspection. As Vilém Flusser writes, «Émigré become free, not when they deny their lost homeland, but when they come to terms with it». I did not want my DNA to change, I would always come from Jerusalem, but what could change is consciousness and perception. By examining exile from different angles and perspectives, I was able to dig deeper into the relationship between images and the reality they create. I freed myself. Decoding fixed systems that are constantly at work to entrap people in bordered spaces led me to see the bigger picture. Each series I have created began with a visual question, which, once solved, would lead me to a new chamber with a new visual challenge. Looking back

della proiezione è un'immagine fotografata di Gerusalemme. Quello che l'immagine ritrae è mai esistito in una forma fisica? Cosa assicura che Gerusalemme non sia un'immagine, creata o svelata, proprio come quella del muro della grotta? Qual è la fonte di tutte queste immagini? Immagine e percezione sono multistrato, e potrebbe darsi che noi viviamo in un mondo con un infinito numero di palinsesti visivi. Ma c'è di più; questo progetto non mi richiede di andare fisicamente a cercare quella grotta a Gerusalemme e trasformarla in una camera oscura. Potrei. L'immaginazione, tuttavia, ha già materializzato il progetto e lo ha trasformato in realtà. Queste parole scritte l'hanno legittimato. Noi possiamo già parlare delle connotazioni del progetto e dei suoi significati. La gente ha già reagito al progetto, indipendentemente dalla sua manifestazione. La mente può esplorare un luogo senza il luogo. Questa è l'archeologia del futuro: una spedizione attraverso l'immagine e l'immaginazione.

Possiamo liberarci dalla nostra immagine? Io sono venuto a patti con il mio esilio, dopo un processo di auto interrogazione e introspezione. Come scrive Vilém Flusser: «Gli esuli divengono liberi, non quando negano la patria perduta, ma quando scendono a patti con essa». Io non volevo che il mio DNA cambiasse, io vorrò sempre provenire da Gerusalemme, ma quello che potrebbe cambiare è la consapevolezza e la percezione. Esaminando l'esilio da diverse angolazioni e prospettive, sono stato in grado di scavare più in profondità nel rapporto tra le immagini e la realtà che creano. Ho liberato me stesso. Decodificare schemi fissi, costantemente in azione per intrappolare le persone in spazi delimitati, mi ha portato a vedere il quadro più ampio. Ogni serie che ho creato è iniziata con un interrogativo visivo, che, una volta risolto, mi ha portato in una stanza nuova con dentro una nuova sfida visiva.



TILL THE END

2004

Emulsione fotografica B/N
su pietra di Gerusalemme
B&W photo emulsion
on Jerusalem stone
Pezzo unico_Unique
15.5 x 19 x 6.5 cm

at my work, I see that I was unfolding palimpsests that explore the multiple layers of my past, and the influence perception had on my "reality". Today my images gain their independence from my narrative. Their hidden layers begin to reveal themselves through new readings. It is time to engage further in the process of looking, where meaning resides only in the mind of the viewer. 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 past with an eye to the future.

Guardando indietro al mio lavoro, vedo che ho chiuso palinsesti che esploravano i molteplici strati del mio passato, e colgo l'influenza che ha avuto la percezione sulla mia "realtà". Oggi le mie immagini godono di una loro indipendenza dalla mia narrazione. I loro livelli nascosti rivelano loro stesse attraverso nuove letture. È il momento di impegnarsi ulteriormente nel processo di ricerca, verso una visione in cui il significato risiede solo nella mente dello spettatore. Il mio sforzo estetico è quello di creare un'arte con una connessione alla storia visiva. Le mie illusioni sono ponti immaginati, strutture simili a mappe, che ci collegano al nostro passato con un occhio al futuro.



TILL THE END
2004
Emulsione fotografica B/N
su pietra di Gerusalemme
B&W photo emulsion
on Jerusalem stone
Pezzo unico_Uncle
▲ 26 x 13 x 9 cm
◀ 15.5 x 22.5 x 13 cm



TILL THE END
2004
Emulsione fotografica B/N
su pietra di Gerusalemme
B&W photo emulsion
on Jerusalem stone
Pezzo unico_Uncle
▲ 27 x 14 x 4 cm ▲
17 x 13.5 x 8.5 cm ▶







19.1 x 12.2 cm

13.1 x 11.3 cm

8.2 x 8.2 cm

38 DAYS OF RE-COLLECTION

Negativo B/N (generato da immagine digitale)
stampato con emulsione fotografica B/N su
frammenti di pittura raccolti in case della
Città Vecchia di Gerusalemme

B&W white film negative (generated from
a digital image) printed with B&W photo
emulsion spread on color paint fragments
collected from Jerusalem's Old City
house walls

Pezzo unico_Unique

Photos by Stephen White

9 x 7.1 cm
5.1 x 9.4 cm
6.9 x 7.7 cm
8.1 x 5.3 cm





10.3 × 16.7 cm



21.5 × 27.5 cm
16 × 21.2 cm



**NELLA CAMERA OSCURA
CON STEVE SABELLA**
LEDA MANSOUR

La regista fa scivolare il suo disco, Goldmund attacca, *La malattia dell'eleganza* manda il suo ritmo, la videocamera di Nadia Kabalan si muove sotto effetto del piano al rallentatore, in cerca di questo artista elegante...

Piano piano e Steve Sabella, nel suo atelier-laboratorio, ci spiega: «Ci vuole un po' di tempo!». Un po' di tempo per una creazione che si rivela gocciolando con estrema lentezza, come il sudore di un archeologo. L'occhio si posa sulle sue mani, sta cercando di ricreare la città: «una nuova semiotica di Gerusalemme». È appunto questo rapporto con lo spazio che Sabella affida, teso, al suo lavoro, che parte dalle mura della città e della sua vecchia casa che non è più sua!

«Il luogo in sè stesso non esiste, è tutto uno stato mentale!».

Con questo spirito si lancia in un esperimento arcaico: se è vero che un muro è fatto di materie prime quali acqua e calcestruzzo, Sabella si attacca a qualcos'altro, qualcosa di molto antico: alla metamorfosi di un artista in un archeologo, quasi uno storico, senza però accento nostalgico. Lui è là, scava, scava, scansiona, raccolgile, strappa frammenti di pittura dalle pareti, e li mescola; la mescolanza con vecchie foto di famiglia e oggetti intimi; tutto per tracciare la strada di oggetti abbandonati, prima di lasciare quella casa senza chiudere la porta!

Nella sua camera oscura Steve Sabella realizza che, come parte di una metamorfosi le cui mura che non avranno mai tratti lineari: «Chi ha detto che una trasformazione deve seguire linee dritte?».

Qui ci sono percorsi sconosciuti, di figli sovrapposti uno sull'altro, griglie, letti distrutti e Terra

**IN THE DARKROOM
WITH STEVE SABELLA**
LEDA MANSOUR

The filmmaker slips his disc, Goldmund turns, *The Malady of Elegance* sends the rhythm, the camera of Nadia Kabalan moves under an effected piano in search of this elegant artist...

Piano Piano and Steve Sabella, in his workshop/laboratory, directs us: «Needs a little time!» A little time for a creation which pours extremely quietly like the sweat of an archaeologist. The eye posed on his hands, it is intended to recreate the city: «a new semiotics of Jerusalem». It is this relation with the space that Sabella entrusts in his work of the walls of the city and the old house of his birth, a house which is not his any more!

«The place in itself does not exist, everything is a state of mind!»

This spirit launches out in an antiquated experiment: if a wall is built with raw materials like water and concrete, Sabella sticks to another matter, something very ancient, this metamorphosis of artist into an archaeologist and quasi-historian, without a nostalgic accent. He is there, he digs, excavates, scans, pickaxes, tears fragments off the walls, and mixes them with old photographs of family faces and intimate objects; all this to trace the paths of these forsaken objects, before leaving without closing the door of the house!

In his darkroom, Steve Sabella realizes, as part of the metamorphosis of the walls whose lines will be never linear: «Who said that a transformation would follow a straight line?»

Here, there are unknown paths, of superimposed sons, ransacked grids, beds and no man's lands: «How to be born in a demolished land in the heart of a separation wall?»

The piano still resounds, this time in the interior life of the artist, conscious of this effect



L'arte è il mio rifugio

di Nessuno. «Com'è esser nato in una terra demolita e con nel cuore di un muro di separazione?».

Il pianoforte risuona ancora, questa volta nella vita interiore dell'artista, consci di questo effetto-muro dentro di lui ovunque egli vada, in tutti i suoi movimenti, e talvolta nel profondo del suo corpo!

Attraversare il muro: e la città apparirà differente. Una tecnica e un'investigazione visiva che riporta il colore al suo posto reale. Il bianco e nero riporta il colore, e tra i due stà ciò che l'artista amorevolmente cerca di riportare fino alle origini della fotografia, proprio come se si fosse all'inizio della creazione fotografica. La sua storia diviene quella della casa, dei suoi

wall has, everywhere it goes, in all its movements and sometimes deep within his body!

To cross in the walls and the city was different. A visual technique and an investigation which return the color to its real place. The black and white brings up the color; and what exists between the two is what the artist seeks lovingly to return to the sources of photography, as if one were at the beginning of photographic creation, his history becomes also that of the house, its inhabitants and their exile. What is an exiled photograph?

It is the artist, alone when the light of the workshop dies out, he murmurs about his matters, of water, gelatine, paintings of acrylic resin, and a dialogue with the art, where one is surprised



abitanti e del loro esilio. Ma cos'è una fotografia esiliata?

L'artista, da solo quando la luce dell'atelier si spegne, mormora con la sua materia di acqua, la sua gelatina, la pittura di resina di acrilico e con il suo dialogo con l'arte, e ci si sorprende di tutto ciò che dice l'arte, di ciò che ci fa vedere e ascoltare.

Qui sei solo tu ... Qui decidi quando il muro è dentro la tua vita e quando non lo è.

Un sussulto del piano, al silenzio si deve questa potenza artistica, di un nuovo senso di libertà: sono libero di interpretare...

of all that art tells us, what it makes seen and heard.

Here, you are never alone... Here, you decide when the wall is in your life and when it is not. The piano jerks, and this silence is owed to the artistic power of the freedom in the new meaning: I am free to interpret...



NELLA CAMERA OSCURA CON STEVE SABELLA

NADIA JOHANNE KABALAN

In the Darkroom with Steve Sabella (Nella camera oscura con Steve Sabella) è un breve documentario di 15 minuti che offre una visione dall'interno della pratica dell'artista, attraverso la quale la tecnica fotografica e gli esperimenti materiali diventano uno strumento necessario all'introspezione e all'investigazione visiva del passato. Mentre la serie *Metamorphosis* (2012) rivela la trasformazione di Sabella, dopo un conflitto interiore che deriva dall'esperienza dell'occupazione, *38 Days of Re-Collection* (2014) documenta lo scavo della storia di Gerusalemme dimenticata e re-immaginata. Dal buio, figure fluide e racconti personali vengono alla luce, dalla camera oscura, il ventre che porta alla vita le immagini e le immaginazioni.

«Quando sei in camera oscura non parli con nessuno. L'unica cosa con cui parli è ... l'arte».

STEVE SABELLA

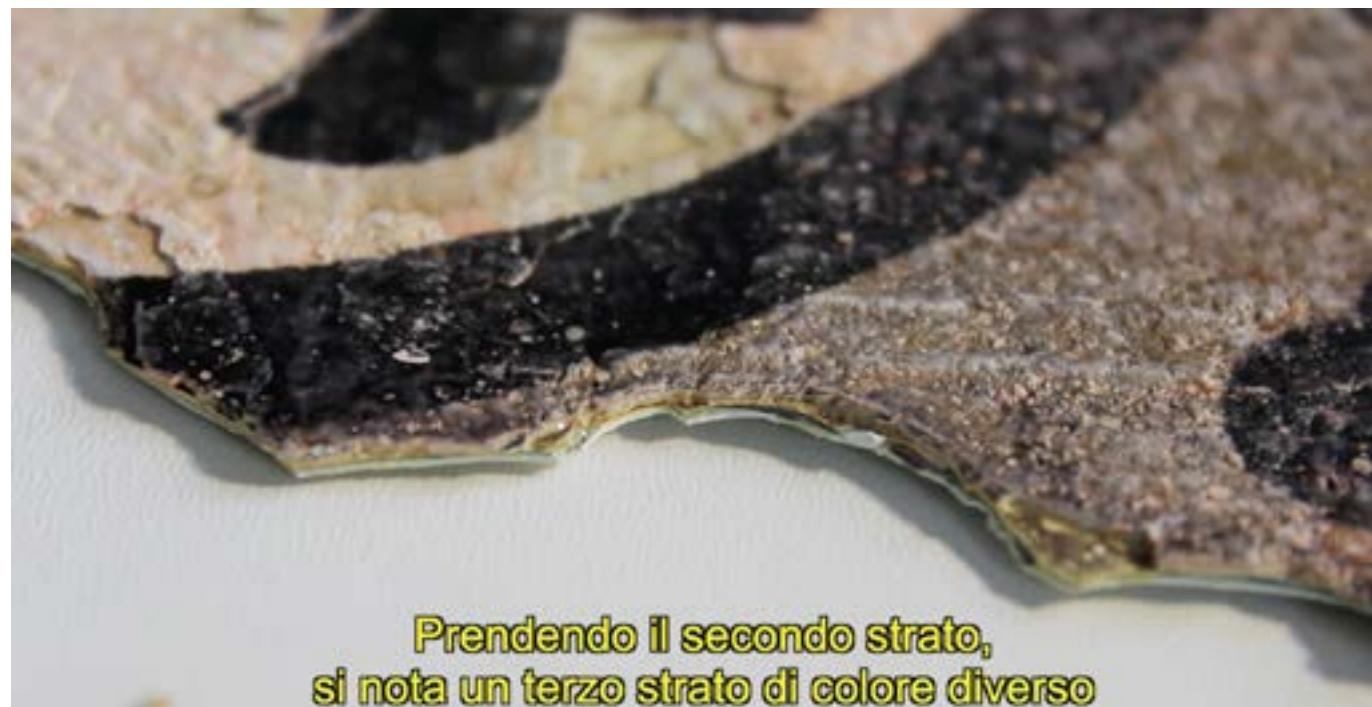
IN THE DARKROOM WITH STEVE SABELLA

NADIA JOHANNE KABALAN

In the Darkroom with Steve Sabella is a 15 minute short documentary that gives an insider's view of the artist's practice, in which photographic technique and material experiments become a necessary tool of introspection and visual investigation of the past. While the series *Metamorphosis* (2012) reveals Sabella's transformation after an inner and outer conflict based on his experience of occupation, *38 Days of Re-Collection* (2014) documents the excavation of a forgotten and re-imagined history of Jerusalem. In dark, fluid and deliberate images, personal narratives come to light in the darkroom - the womb that brings images and imaginations to life.

«When you are in the darkroom, you don't speak with anyone. The only thing you speak with is ... art».

STEVE SABELLA



**REPRTI DI
UN VIAGGIO MENTALE**
BEATRICE BENEDETTI

Il Centro Internazionale di Fotografia Scavi Scaligeri ospita Steve *Sabella. Archaeology of the Future*, prima personale dell'artista di origine palestinese in un museo italiano.

La ricerca di *Sabella* s'incentra sul principio che lega l'immagine all'immaginazione, vera sfida della fotografia ai giorni nostri.

La rassegna, supportata da Boxart (Verona) e in collaborazione con Berloni (Londra), è resa possibile anche grazie all'ausilio critico della storica d'arte islamica Karin Adrian von Roques, che arricchisce il catalogo con un testo generoso e profondo.

La mostra si colloca, inoltre, tra gli eventi di ArtVerona - nella sezione PhotoArtVerona - facendo coincidere l'inaugurazione ufficiale, sabato 11 ottobre, con il weekend della manifestazione, al suo decennale, e con la X edizione della Giornata del Contemporaneo indetta da AMACI, Associazione dei Musei Italiani d'Arte Contemporanea.

Perché dunque un'archeologia del futuro? Il titolo della mostra è un evidente paradosso, ma soprattutto è un Manifesto programmatico: solo scavando in ciò che Bergson definiva "flusso vitale", ovvero nell'esiguo passato di un'esistenza umana, si possono rinvenire con maggiore probabilità le basi di un singolo domani, per molti aspetti condiviso.

E se il piacere di questo scavo, della *recherche* - annotava Proust - consiste, non nel cercare nuovi paesaggi, ma nel viaggiare con nuovi occhi, *Sabella* è un viaggiatore vero. Dai suoi occhi s'intavvede infatti l'esilio da Gerusalemme - dove è nato nel 1975 - verso l'Europa; ma lo sguardo di Steve, al pari della quarta dimensione cubista, porta alla luce anche una visione interiore dello spazio e del succedersi degli accadimenti.

**DISCOVERIES OF A MENTAL
JOURNEY**
BEATRICE BENEDETTI

The Scavi Scaligeri International Centre for Photography is hosting *Steve Sabella: Archaeology of the Future*, the first solo exhibition by this artist of Palestinian origin in an Italian museum. *Sabella*'s artistic research takes up the real challenge facing photography today, which is the principle that links the image to the imagination.

The exhibition, supported by Boxart (Verona) and in collaboration with Berloni (London), has also been made possible by the critical assistance of the Islamic Art historian Karin Adrian von Roques, who has enriched the catalogue with a generously in-depth essay.

As one of the events of Art Verona, the exhibition is being held in the PhotoArtVerona section, with the official opening, on Saturday, 11 October, coinciding with the weekend of the fair and with the tenth Giornata del Contemporaneo, organised by AMACI (the Association of Italian Contemporary Art Museums).

So why "archaeology of the future"? The title of the exhibition is clearly a paradox, but more than anything it is a manifesto of intent. It is only by digging into what Bergson called the «stream of life», which is to say into the meagre past of a human existence, that it is possible to get closer to the bases for a single tomorrow, which in many respects is shared.

And if the pleasure of this excavation - of this *recherche*, as Proust pointed out - is not in searching for new landscapes but in travelling with new eyes, then *Steve Sabella* is an authentic traveller. Through his eyes we can glimpse his exile from Jerusalem - where he was born in 1975 - to Europe, but, like the fourth dimension of Cubism, his view also opens up an inner vision of space and of a sequence of events. It could indeed be said that many of the works

INDEPENDENCE

2013

Stampa lambda sotto diasec
con bordo di alluminio di 3.5 cm
Lambda print on diasec,
3.5-cm aluminum box edge
Edizione di 6 + 2 PA
Edition of 6 + 2 AP
81 x 45 cm (ognuno_each)



on display in Verona are in a sense derived from Jerusalem, in some cases mimicking age-old archaeological fragments. There are stones from the Old City and plaster detached from the houses occupied during the war of 1947-48 - from which some 700,000 Palestinians were forced to flee. A bitter conflict that has still not been resolved. Every trace left by the artist is thus a fragment of history stuck in the present, an instant which sums up the premises for the future.

The mere facts and biography of the artist - who moved to London in 2007 and who has been in Berlin since 2010 - are therefore insufficient to retrace the steps of a journey that is

Si può affermare che molte opere esposte a Verona "derivino" da Gerusalemme, mimando, alcune, frammenti archeologici millenari. Vi sono le pietre della Città Vecchia e gli intonaci staccati dalle case occupate da Israele nella guerra del 1947/1948, da cui fuggirono più di 700.000 palestinesi. Un conflitto aspro, oggi tutt'altro che risolto. Ogni traccia lasciata dall'artista è dunque una scheggia di Storia conficcata nell'attualità, un istante in cui sono compendiate le premesse e l'avvenire.

Conoscere i fatti e la biografia di Sabella - trasferitosi a Londra nel 2007 e dal 2010 a Berlino - non basta quindi a ripercorrere le tappe di un viaggio chiaramente non cronologico né

clearly neither chronological nor geographical, but existential. For visitors to the Scavi Scaligeri, the artist thus recreates a truly authentic and complete map of his experience, in six stations and one "free zone", combining his experience and his mental reformulation of it, as well as a symbolic place for humanity: Palestine.

To quote the titles of two of the seven cycles on show, Sabella goes from his exile all the way to independence, through an equal number of stops he has made - as both man and artist - from 2004 to 2014. As we have seen, these six stages are accompanied by a transitional area called *In Transition*. The places portrayed are not real, but rooted in memory, onto which



geografico, bensì esistenziale. Per il pubblico degli Scavi Scaligeri, l'artista riscrive pertanto una mappatura più autentica e totale della sua esperienza, in sei stazioni più una "zona franca", rimpastando il suo vissuto e la rielaborazione mentale di esso, nonché di un luogo simbolo per l'umanità: la Palestina.

Citando i titoli di due dei sette cicli esposti, si parte dall'esilio per giungere all'indipendenza, attraverso un pari numero di soste, effettuate da Sabella uomo, e dall'artista, tra 2004 e 2014. A queste sei tappe, come preannunciato, si somma un'area di passaggio denominata *In Transition*. I luoghi ritratti non sono reali, ma radicati nella memoria, su cui si innesta l'immaginazione, senza più alcuna aderenza con l'oggettività o con il passato. Allo stesso modo, dicevamo, lo sviluppo temporale degli spostamenti da un luogo A a B viene meno, rendendo possibile far convivere, all'inizio del percorso espositivo, i due estremi del viaggio.

Cinque opere della serie *In Exile* del 2008 si trovano infatti esposte nel primo corridoio del museo, a fianco di quella che può essere vista come la tappa finale dell'itinerario di Sabella, ovvero *Independence* (2013), ciclo fotografico risalente soltanto a un anno fa.

Nel primo caso si tratta di paesaggi della reminiscenza, collage fotografici nati dall'assemblaggio di porzioni di spazio: pezzi di abitazioni, finestre, cornicioni e terrazze. La ripetizione di una o più immagini, da angolature diverse, ricompone i ricordi scaturiti dalla frequentazione di quei luoghi e ricrea un paese mentale, diverso ma non meno caleidoscopico di quello reale. I collage di Sabella possono apparire simili a immagini cubiste, scomposte e ricomposte, dalla tridimensionalità del "reale" alla bidimensionalità della fotografia. Ecco, dunque, tornare Bergson, non a caso teorico del Cubismo, per il quale il reale applicato al tempo non coincide con la misurazione scientifica di esso, ma con un flusso soggettivo in cui cade la netta

he grafts his imagination, with no link to objectivity or the past. Similarly, the chronological development of his physical journeys from A to B is dropped, making it possible for the two extremes to coexist at the beginning of the exhibition.

Five works from the *In Exile* series of 2008 are on display in the first corridor of the museum, next to the one that also constitutes the final leg of Sabella's journey. This is *Independence* (2013), a photographic cycle from just last year. In the first case, the landscapes are those of his reminiscences, with photo collages created by assembling portions of space: pieces of houses, windows, cornices and terraces. The repetition of one or two images from different angles reassembles memories of places he knew, creating a mental landscape that is different from but no less kaleidoscopic than the real one. Sabella's collages may appear like Cubist images, deconstructed and reconstructed, from the three-dimensionality of the "real" to the two-dimensionality of photography. And this takes us back to Bergson, not coincidentally the theoretician of Cubism, for whom the "real" as applied to time does not coincide with scientific measurement of it, but rather with a subjective stream in which any clear distinction between past and present is lost.

Whether or not Sabella is aware of this is of little importance. It is true that individual ages and territories overlap, just as the ancestral idols of Africa and Picasso's research into the fourth dimension can be seen in the angular features of the *Demoiselles d'Avignon*.

As the title suggests, the *Independence* series expresses liberation from a previous state of exile. The recovery of this freedom is represented by a large installation consisting of 6 screens measuring over two metres, suspended in space. A number of grainy, watery images, which can nevertheless be seen to be human figures, float dramatically on these large contemporary canvases in the room. The silhou-

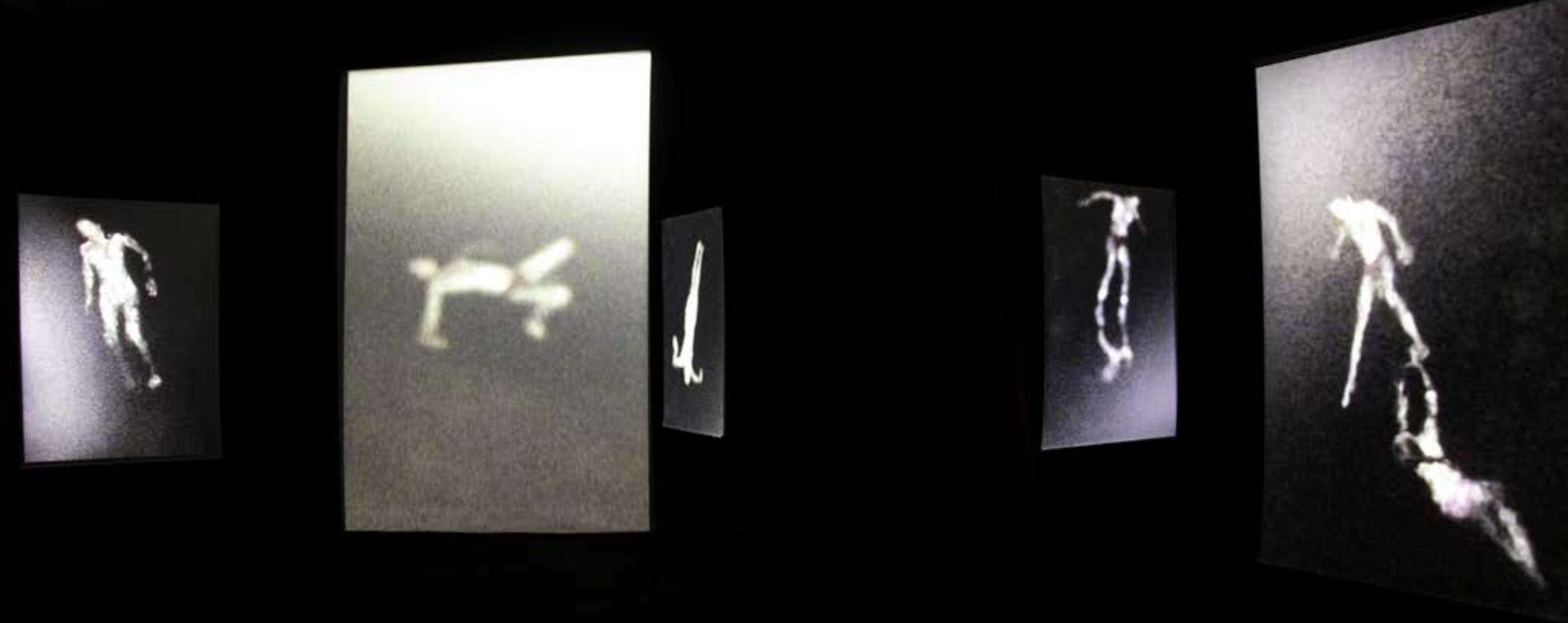


distinzione tra passato e presente. Che Sabella sia consapevole di tale matrice importa relativamente. Di certo, nelle sue opere, epoche e territori distinti si sovrappongono, come nelle angolosità delle *Demoiselles d'Avignon* si ritrovano gli idoli ancestrali africani e le ricerche coeve a Picasso sulla quarta dimensione.

Nella serie *Independence* si può individuare, fin dal titolo, l'espressione di una liberazione dal precedente stato di esilio. La riconquista di questa libertà è rappresentata da una grande installazione composta da sei schermi di circa due metri sospesi nel vuoto. Su questi telier contemporanei, all'interno del salone, fluttuano

ettes hanging from the ceiling, like acrobats on a trapeze, convey a sense of peace and of harmony reconquered, which - one might add - would be so desirable for all of Palestine, for decades fighting for the same ideal.

Although the cyclical nature of existence does not seem to escape Sabella, the borderline between past and present can be seen in the *Till the End* (2004) series. Here a group of stones, gathered in Jerusalem and placed in showcases between the entrance corridor and the first room of the Scavi Scaligeri, appear as archaeological finds. Each rock bears an image, a fragment of memory, which spills over from histor-



L'Installazione *Independence* come apparsa nella mostra *Layers*.
Courtesy dell'immagine Contemporary Art Platform, Kuwait. Foto di Tony Santos.

Independence Installation as part of the *Layers* exhibition.
Image courtesy of the Contemporary Art Platform, Kuwait. Photo by Tony Santos.

teatralmente alcune immagini acquose, in cui si riconosce tuttavia la figura umana. Le silhouette, agganciate al soffitto al pari di acrobati al trapezio, trasmettono un senso di pacificazione, di riconquistata armonia, più che auspicabile - verrebbe da aggiungere - per l'intera Palestina, da decenni in lotta per lo stesso obiettivo.

La linea di confine tra le due condizioni, passata e presente - non sembra tuttavia sfuggire a Sabella la ciclicità dell'esistenza - è rappresentata dalla serie **Till the End** (2004), un gruppo di pietre raccolte a Gerusalemme e collocate nelle teche degli Scavi tra il corridoio d'ingresso e la prima sala, al pari di reperti antichi. Su

ical reality into hyper-reality, which is the real place of the artist's research.

At this point in the narrative, in Steve Sabella's epic journey from the Middle East to Europe, it would not be unreasonable to see the theme of uprooting and the converse idea of belonging and integration, which are so much a part of the constant migration towards the Mediterranean shores, intersecting in Italy and Europe. The inevitable abandonment of one's country and the consequences illustrated by Sabella in his own individual story here bring out the full metaphorical value of art: managing to bind the artist's experience to a broader collective exodus, such as the one brought about by the

ciascuna roccia è impressa un'immagine, un frammento di memoria, che sconfina dalla realtà "accaduta" all'iperrealità, vero territorio di ricerca dell'artista.

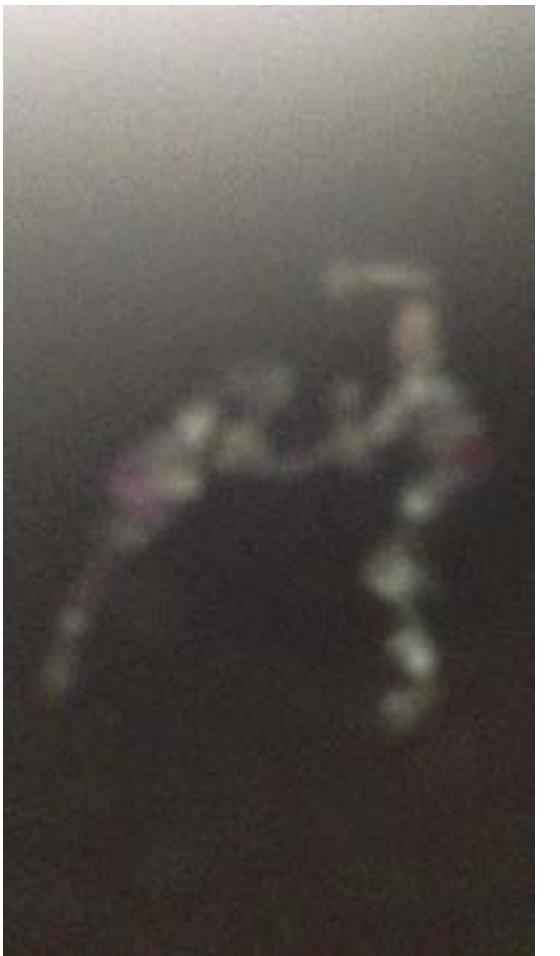
A questo punto della narrazione, nell'epopea di Steve Sabella dal Medio Oriente all'Europa non è illegittimo, a nostro avviso, leggere il tema dello sradicamento e la speculare idea di appartenenza e integrazione sperimentati dai costanti flussi migratori verso le sponde del Mediterraneo, che incrociano l'Italia e il Continente Europeo. L'allontanamento inevitabile dal proprio Paese e le conseguenze illustrate da Sabella nel suo percorso individuale compiono qui a pieno il valore metaforico dell'arte: giungere a saldare l'esperienza dell'artista a un più ampio esodo collettivo, quello, ad esempio, collaterale al fenomeno delle recenti Primavere Arabe e agli sviluppi successivi nelle province nordafricane e mediorientali. Quelle pietre rassomigliano a immediati "souvenir" di chi lascia frettolosamente la patria, semplici rocce che, tuttavia, una volta istoriate di memoria condivisa, divengono oggetti preziosi da custodire.

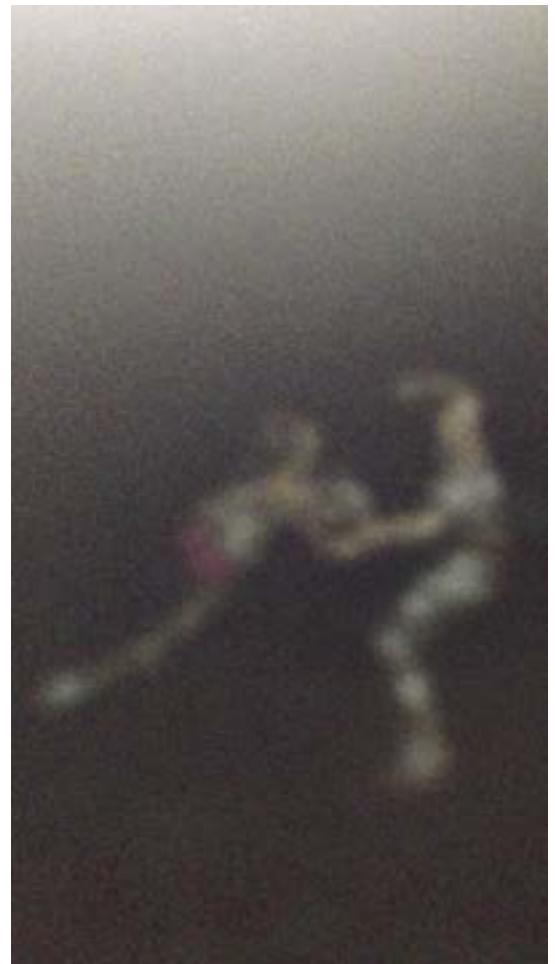
Le serie fotografiche esposte nelle sale successive sembrano trasmettere un maggiore senso di speranza circa i rivolgimenti epocali degli anni Duemila. In primis compare il trittico **In Transition** (2010), ovvero tre fotogrammi instabili, seguito da sei grandi opere intitolate **Metamorphosis** (2012) che sfilano lungo il corridoio antistante le cantine dei Palazzi Scaligeri. In queste ultime, la realtà dell'oggetto diviene ancor più simbolica che nei collage di *In Exile*: il filo spinato, emblema della costrizione fisica, sembra qui ricucire le ferite causate. Allo stesso modo, il muro dei territori palestinesi occupati diventa permeabile come il suo vibrante riflesso nell'acqua. Superando i confini dell'immagine fotografica, sia verso l'antica pratica del mosaico che in direzione della frontiera multimediale, Sabella ritrova dunque il proprio posto nel mondo, quello attuale, privo di un centro. Scrive l'artista: «Il duro lavoro è stato

recent Arab Springs and subsequent developments in the provinces of North Africa and the Middle East. The stones are like instant "souvenirs" of those forced to leave their homeland in haste. When they are decorated with shared memories, these simple rocks become precious objects to be preserved.

The series of photographs in the next rooms appear to convey a sense of greater hope about the epochal changes of the new millennium. First there is the **In Transition** triptych (2010) of unstable photographic frames, followed by six large works titled **Metamorphosis** (2012), arranged along the corridor opposite the cellars of the Palazzi Scaligeri. In the latter, the reality of the object is even more symbolic than in the *In Exile* collages: barbed wire, a symbol of physical coercion, here seems to heal the wounds it causes. Similarly, the wall around the occupied Palestinian territories becomes as permeable as its shimmering reflection in the water. Going beyond the boundaries of the photographic image, both to the ancient art of mosaic and to the new world of multimedia, Sabella thus finds a place of his own in today's acentric world. The artist writes: «The hard thing was to find a way to allow for a new transformation, while also realising that my DNA will always be the same». It was by examining his condition as an exile, which involved much self-questioning and introspection, that Sabella - as he himself says - was able to delve deeper into the relationship between images and the reality they create.

Time collapses, as do places, as we have seen. «Everything is a mental state, the place itself doesn't exist», says Sabella. Jerusalem, which the artist exile refers to as the capital of his imagination, is divided not into cubes but into the grids of the four quarters - Muslim, Jewish, Christian, Armenian - just as the wall that divides the occupied territories is a physical geometric line. The wall that attempts to confine the unconfinable remains, becoming unreal and





trovare il modo per consentire una nuova trasformazione, pur ammettendo che il mio DNA rimarrà sempre lo stesso». E' stato attraverso l'indagine del suo stato di esilio, tramite un processo di auto-interrogazione e introspezione, che Sabella è stato in grado - dichiara egli stesso - di scavare più in profondità il rapporto tra le immagini e la realtà che creano.

Il tempo collassa, si è detto, e così i luoghi. «Everything is a mental state, the place itself doesn't exist», afferma Sabella. Gerusalemme, che l'artista esule definisce «la capitale della sua immaginazione», è suddivisa in realtà, non in cubi, ma nelle griglie dei quattro quartieri: musulmano, ebreo, cristiano, armeno, mentre il

ineffective, just as Bergson's clock fails to restore the reality of time. Only the imagination has a chance in this undertaking: its creative power can, for example, reunite the stories of Palestinian families with their abandoned homes, where, even though the protagonists are no longer there, the events remain present in the ensuing decades.

The mosaics of shots bring about a dialogue with the rooms of the Roman *domus*, while in terms of form the **38 Days of Re-Collection** cycle, like *Till the End* before it, recalls artefacts consistent with those of the Scavi Scaligeri archaeological site. In showcases on tall white bases, the artist places fragments of plaster removed from the house where he was born and from other

muro che divide i territori occupati è una linea geometrica fisica. Il muro dunque persiste nella capitale, pur divenendo irreale e inefficace nel suo tentativo di confinare l'inconfinabile, come l'orologio di Bergson che non riesce a restituire la "realtà" del tempo.

In questo compito solo l'immaginazione ha qualche chance: la forza creatrice può ricongiungere, ad esempio, le storie delle famiglie palestinesi con le proprie case abbandonate, in cui, pur in assenza dei protagonisti, le vicende restano "presenti" nei decenni successivi.

E come i mosaici di scatti innescano un dialogo con gli ambienti delle domus romane, il ciclo **38 Days of Re-Collection** richiama formalmente - dopo il precedente di *Till the End* - ritrovamenti coerenti con il sito archeologico degli Scavi Scaligeri. Sotto teca su alte basi bianche, l'artista colloca frammenti di intonaco staccati dalla casa natia e da altre limitrofe.

Questo progetto ha coinvolto Sabella per diversi anni, fino al recente risultato in mostra a Verona. Dopo aver affittato una casa occupata da Israele, l'artista vi è rimasto 38 giorni - da cui il titolo della serie - fotografando quegli interni domestici esattamente come gli apparivano. Una volta rientrato a Londra, le immagini digitali a colori sono state convertite in negativo fotografico bianco e nero, ovvero nelle gradazioni della memoria. Un successivo viaggio a Gerusalemme si è trasformato poi in una nuova spedizione archeologica, questa volta anche fisica. Quelle porzioni di spazio visivo sono state fatte corrispondere a frammenti di pittura muraria, staccati da Sabella in diverse abitazioni della Città Vecchia. L'emulsione su intonaco delle immagini collezionate in precedenza ha dato vita a questi reperti del passato prossimo di Steve Sabella - e dei suoi concittadini - a cui l'artista ha restituito, infine, i colori originari in camera oscura.

Il viaggio di Steve, si potrebbe dire, non è stato altro che una spedizione archeologica con ritrovamenti e restauri. L'unica differenza con-



neighbouring houses. Sabella has worked on this project for many years, right up to this exhibition in Verona. The artist rented a house occupied by Israel and remained there for 38 days - hence the title of the series - photographing domestic interiors exactly as they appeared to him. When he returned to London, he converted the digital colour images into black-and-white photographic negatives, creating gradations of memory. Another trip to Jerusalem became a new archaeological expedition, this time also physical in nature. The portions of visual space were then made to correspond to fragments of painted walls that Sabella removed from a number of houses in the Old City. The emul-

siste nel valore essenziale di quegli oggetti trovati: non si tratta del recupero di un tempo perduto, ma della scoperta di un pensiero originale, tesaurizzato per i giorni a venire.

Lo "scavo" in cui Sabella ha riportato alla luce la sua storia immaginata della Città Eterna è narrato dall'intenso documentario ***In The Darkroom with Steve Sabella***, diretto e prodotto da Nadia Johanne Kabalan.

A concludere il cortocircuito site-specific di spazio e tempo è ***Exit***, ultima serie del percorso, datata però 2006. Dalla via d'uscita si procede con tutta probabilità verso un nuovo inizio, indicato da mani anziane e ricurve, proiettate in dissolvenza l'una nell'altra, che raccontano ancora una volta il cammino senza sosta dell'esistenza, dalla corruzione del corpo e degli edifici, fino al rafforzamento della percezione umana.

Le mani contorte dei vecchi, sono asimmetrie su fondo nero, senza tratti etnici né di genere evidenti, difficile anche rintracciarne l'epoca, se non quella, comune a tutti, della fragilità senile. La stessa fragilità dei piccoli "affreschi" contemporanei di Steve Sabella, creati ex novo con velature di emulsioni.

Mentre l'esilio mentale dà l'illusione di restrizioni laddove non ci sono, ovvero nella Berlino del dopo-muro, Steve esorcizza un po' alla volta i propri ostacoli alla libertà. Grazie a continui, irreggimentati sconfinamenti - come si è cercato di evidenziare - è un artista che punta all'Universale, consapevole che l'indeterminatezza della condizione umana sfugge alle geometrie, compresa la sua. Sabella conserva così, nelle sue opere, quell'ambiguità che rende l'arte necessariamente sconfinata.

sion on the plaster in the images already collected gave rise to these archaeological finds from Steve Sabella's recent past and from that of his fellow citizens. Here the artist eventually restored their original colours using a complex darkroom process. Steve's trip, it could be said, was simply an expedition, with discoveries and restoration, the only difference being that the key value of the objects he found is not the rediscovery of a lost time, but rather the discovery of an original idea that is preserved for the days to come.

The way Sabella has brought to light his imagined story of the Eternal City is told in the intense documentary ***In The Darkroom with Steve Sabella***, directed and produced by Nadia Johanne Kabalan.

The site-specific short-circuiting of space and time ends with ***Exit***, the most recent series in the show, even though it is dated 2006. The way out quite probably leads towards a new beginning, pointed out by elderly, curved hands that fade one into the other, once again telling of the never-ending march of existence, which corrupts both body and buildings but strengthens human perception.

The contorted hands of old people appear as asymmetries on a black background, with no clear ethnic or gender features, and it is hard to pinpoint them in time, other than in a senile fragility that is common to all of us. This fragility is the same that we find in Steve Sabella's little contemporary "frescoes", made not with a brush but with a veiling of emulsions.

While mental exile gives the illusion of restrictions where there are none - in other words, in post-Wall Berlin - Steve gradually exorcises his own obstacles to freedom. Through his continuous, regimented encroachments, as we have seen, he is an artist who aims for the Universal, well aware that the indeterminateness of the human condition eludes all geometries, including his own. In his works, Sabella thus maintains the ambiguity that makes art necessarily infinite.

▼

EXIT, 2006

Stampa lambda sotto diasec

Lambda print on diasec

Edizione di 6 + 2 PA

Edition of 6 + 2 AP

70 x 62 cm

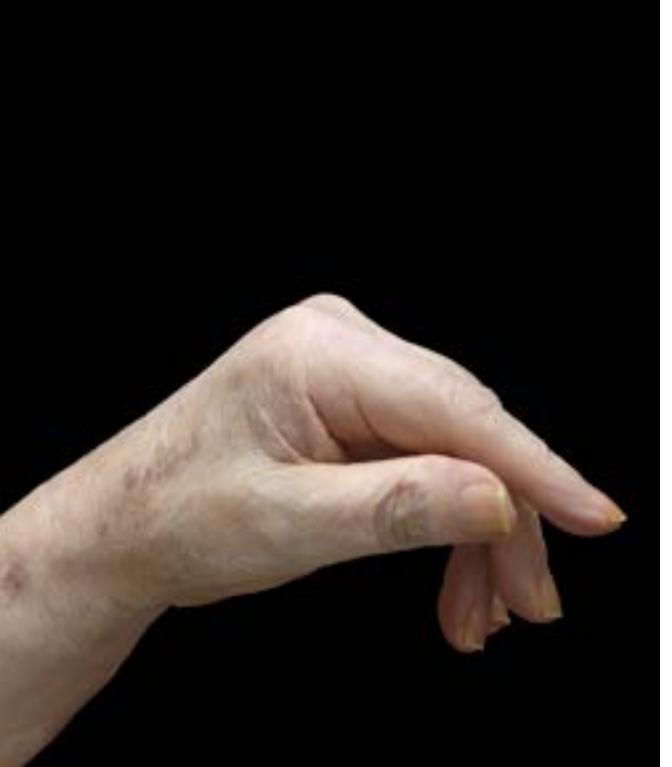


78



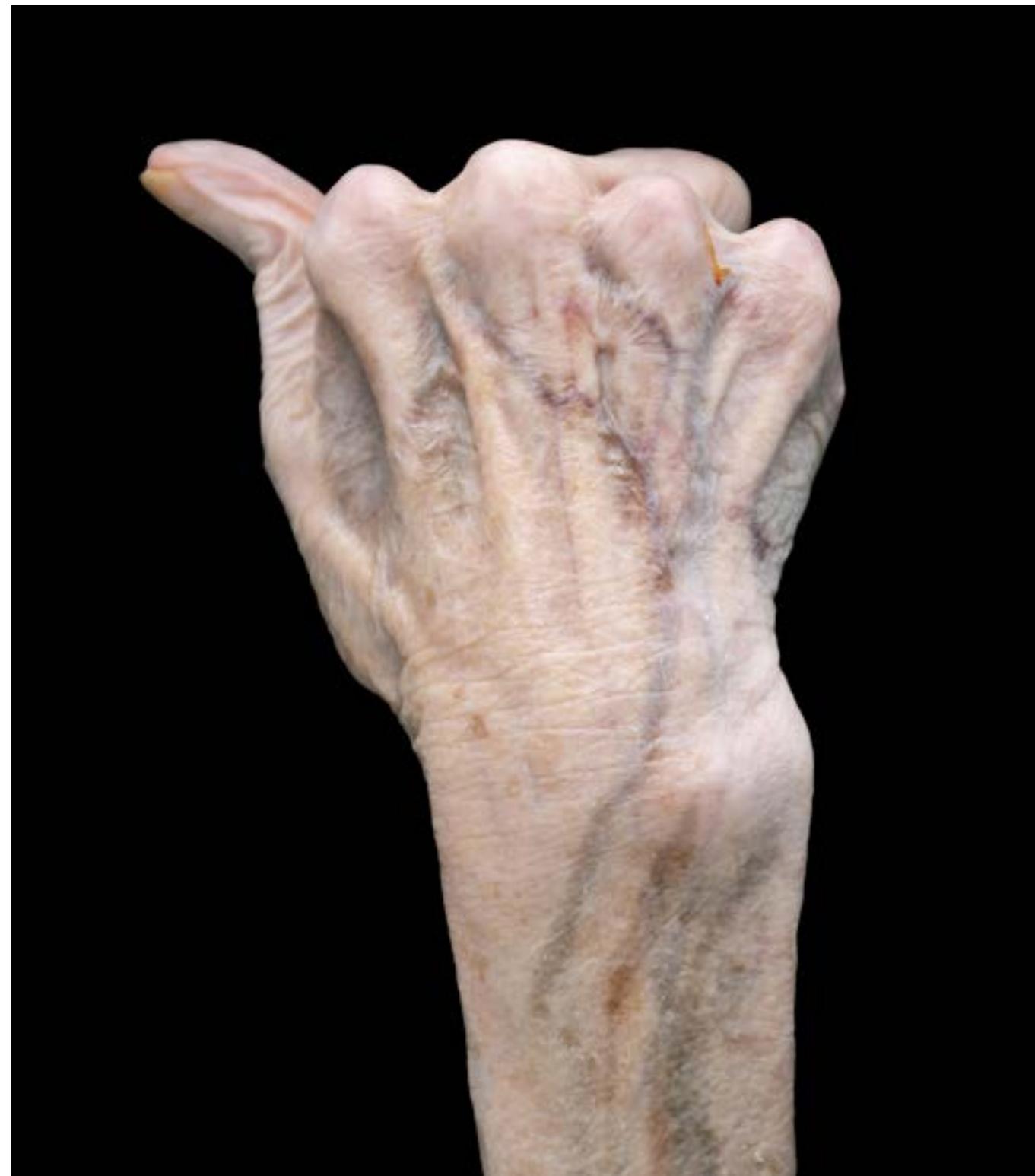
79







84



85



EXIT, 2006

Video animazione di 15 immagini
Video consisting of 15 images
15 minuti | minutes



BIOGRAFIA

Steve Sabella, nato a Gerusalemme, Palestina, nel 1975, è un artista basato a Berlino che usa la fotografia e l'installazione fotografica come suo principale mezzo espressivo.

Nel 1997 si è diplomato in Fotografia presso la Musrara School of Photography di Gerusalemme. Nel 2007 si è laureato in Visual Studies all'Empire State College of the State University of New York. Ha conseguito nel 2008 un master in Photographic Studies presso l'Università di Westminster, grazie al premio Caparo Award of Distinction. Attraverso una borsa di studio messa in palio dalla Saïd Foundation Scholarship ha completato il suo secondo master in Art Business nel 2009 presso il Sotheby's Institute of Art.

Sabella è stato uno dei vincitori del premio A. M. Qattan Foundation's Young Artist of the Year Award del 2002. È stato, nel 2008, tra i finalisti del concorso Independent Photographers Terry O'Neil Award e ha esposto, in quell'occasione, nel Regno Unito. Sempre nel 2008 è stato insignito dall'Accademia d'Arte (Akademie der Künste) di Berlino del premio Ellen Auerbach 2008, che includeva una parte della pubblicazione della monografia di Sabella edita nel 2014.

Dalla fine degli Anni '90 fino al 2007 Sabella è rimasto a Gerusalemme e ha esposto le sue opere in Palestina e in mostre internazionali, incluse undici rassegne personali. È stato tra gli artisti selezionati per la Istanbul Collection donata all'Ars Aevi Museum of Contemporary Art di Sarajevo. Nel 2009 gli è stata commissionata un'opera dal MATHAF - Arab Museum of Modern Art di Doha (Qatar). Durante la cerimonia d'apertura del museo, Steve Sabella ha presentato l'installazione fotografica dal titolo *Insediamento. Sei israeliani e un palestinese* (*Settlement—Six Israelis & One Palestinian*, 2010).

BIOGRAPHY

Steve Sabella, born 1975 in Jerusalem, Palestine, is a Berlin-based artist who uses photography and photographic installation as his principal modes of expression. In 1997 he earned a three-year art photography degree at the Musrara School of Photography in Jerusalem. In 2007 he received a BA in Visual Studies at Empire State College of the State University of New York. Through a Chevening Scholarship he earned an MA in Photographic Studies in 2008 at the University of Westminster with a Caparo Award of Distinction, and through a Saïd Foundation Scholarship he earned his second MA in art business in 2009 at Sotheby's Institute of Art. Sabella was one of the winners of the A. M. Qattan Foundation's Young Artist of the Year Award in 2002. He was a shortlisted and exhibited artist in the 2008 Independent Photographers Terry O'Neil Award in the United Kingdom. He received the 2008 Ellen Auerbach Award from the Akademie der Künste in Berlin, which included in part the publishing of Sabella's 2014 monograph.

From the late 1990s through 2007 Sabella was based in Jerusalem and exhibited internationally as well as extensively throughout Palestine, including eleven solos. He was one of the commissioned artists for the Istanbul Collection donated to the Ars Aevi Museum of Contemporary Art in Sarajevo. In 2009 he was one of the commissioned artists for the inauguration of Mathaf: Arab Museum of Modern Art in Doha, where he presented the installation *Settlement—Six Israelis & One Palestinian*. His work was included in the show *Keep Your Eyes on the Wall* as a part of Les rencontres d'Arles photographie, Edition 2013, and in 2014 he participated in the FotoFest Biennial exhibition *View from Inside*. In 2014 he was commissioned by the Bahrain National

La sua produzione è stata inclusa nella mostra *Tieni gli occhi al muro* (*Keep Your Eyes on the Wall*), parte dell'evento *Les rencontres d'Arles photographie*, edizione 2013, mentre nel 2014 ha partecipato alla FotoFest Biennial (Houston-USA) e alcuni suoi lavori sono stati esposti, in quell'occasione, alla rassegna *Una visione dall'interno* (*View from Inside*). Nello stesso 2014 il Bahrain National Museum gli ha commissionato la serie fotografica *Sinopia*, come sezione della mostra itinerante intitolata *Proposta di rifondazione* (*Recreational Purpose*).

Tra le collezioni in cui è presente il British Museum di Londra (Inghilterra), il Mathaf: Arab Museum of Modern Art di Doha (Qatar), la Contemporary Art Platform in Kuwait, l'Ars Aevi Museum of Contemporary Art di Sarajevo (Jugoslavia). A Dubai (EAU) è presente nella Cuadro Fine Art Gallery, al Salsali Private Museum e alla Samawi Collection. E' stato incluso nella Barjeel Art Foundation di Sharjah (EAU), oltre che acquisito da diverse collezioni private. Sabella è stato invitato a dibattiti e conferenze da vari istituzioni, quali l'Università di Cambridge, l'Università di Torino, dalla School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) di Londra, dalla University of East London, dall'Accademia Albertina Delle Belle Arti di Torino, dalla Contemporary Art Platform in Kuwait, oltre che dalla Rostock University, dall'Akademie der Künste di Berlino, dal British Museum di Londra e dal Museum of Fine Arts, Houston.

Tra i documentari TV e i cortometraggi sul lavoro di Sabella si ricordano: *Jerusalem in Exile* e *Kan Yama Kan*, due episodi di *Beyond Blue & Gray* by Eyes Infinite Films (2007); *Europe through Their Eyes* della Ma'an TV Productions (2010). E' stato eletto *Artist of the Month*, dall'emittente IkonoMENASA (2011) e di nuovo per IkonoTV nel 2013. Nel 2014 Ernie Manouse ha prodotto *Arts InSight: Who is Steve Sabella?* e infine Nadia J. Kabalan ha realizzato, nello stesso anno, *In the*

*Museum, where he presented his photographic series *Sinopia* as part of the touring exhibition *Recreational Purpose*.*

His works have been collected by the British Museum in London; Mathaf: Arab Museum of Modern Art in Doha; Contemporary Art Platform in Kuwait; Ars Aevi Museum of Contemporary Art in Sarajevo; Cuadro Fine Art Gallery in Dubai; the Salsali Private Museum in Dubai; the Barjeel Art Foundation in Sharjah; and the Samawi Collection in Dubai; as well as being acquired by several private collections.

Sabella has given art talks and presentations at various institutions, including the University of Cambridge; Turin University; the School of Oriental and African Studies in London; University of East London; Accademia Albertina di Belle Arti di Torino in Turin; Contemporary Art Platform in Kuwait; Rostock University; Akademie der Künste in Berlin; The British Museum; and The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston.

*Among the several TV documentaries and short films on Sabella's work are *Jerusalem in Exile* and *Kan Yama Kan*, two episodes in the documentary project "Beyond Blue & Gray" by Eyes Infinite Films (2007); *Europe through Their Eyes* by Ma'an TV Productions (2010); *Artist of the Month*, aired on IkonoMENASA (2011); *Artist of the Month* featured on IkonoTV (2013); *Arts InSight: Who is Steve Sabella?* produced by Ernie Manouse (2014); and *In the Darkroom with Steve Sabella* by Nadia J. Kabalan (2014). He also appeared as an invited speaker at TEDx Marrakech (2012).*

*Sabella has published numerous essays, including several as a regular contributor to *Contemporary Practices* journal, such as "Palestinian Conceptual Art, Emily Jacir Shifting to an Art that Engages the Mind of the Viewer" (2009), "Is the United Arab Emirates Constructing its Art History? The Mechanisms that Confer Value to Art" (2009), "'Valued' in the 'West' Sold in the 'East'" (2010), "Reconsidering the Value of Palestinian Art & Its*

Darkroom with Steve Sabella.

E' stato invitato Sabella come relatore ai TEDx di Marrakech nel 2012.

Sabella ha pubblicato numerosi saggi, inclusi i suoi regolari contributi per la rivista di arti visive in Medio-Oriente *Contemporary Practices*. Tra questi: *Palestinian Conceptual Art, Emily Jacir Shifting to an Art that Engages the Mind of the Viewer* (2009), *Is the United Arab Emirates Constructing its Art History? The Mechanisms that Confer Value to Art* (2009), *'Valued' in the 'West' Sold in the 'East'* (2010), *Reconsidering the Value of Palestinian Art & Its Journey to the Art Market* (Part 1, 2010; Part 2, 2011), *The Business of Looking* (2011), e *The Colonization of the Imagination* (2012). Il saggio di Sabella dal titolo *Hostage* (2014) è stato pubblicato nel volume di Stephen Shore edito da Phaidon *From Galilee to Negev* by Stephen Shore, and his autobiography, titled *The Artist's Curse*, is forthcoming.

Journey to the Art Market" (Part 1, 2010; Part 2, 2011), "The Business of Looking" (2011), and "The Colonization of the Imagination" (2012). Sabella's essay "Hostage" (2014) was published by Phaidon in *From Galilee to Negev* by Stephen Shore, and his autobiography, titled *The Artist's Curse*, is forthcoming.

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

1998

Moment of Truth, French Cultural Center, Jerusalem

2002

Search, Khalil Sakakini Cultural Center, Ramallah

Identity, Khalil Sakakini Cultural Center, Ramallah

Life is Splendid, Artothèque de Montreal Gallery, Montreal

2003

End of Days, French Cultural Center, Jerusalem

End of Days, French Cultural Center, Gaza

End of Days, Al-Hallaj Gallery, Ramallah

2004

End of Days, Al-Kahf Gallery, International Center of Bethlehem, Bethlehem

End of Days, Faculty of Fine Arts, Al Najah University, Nablus

2005

Kan Yama Kan & Till the End, French Cultural Center, Jerusalem

Kan Yama Kan & Till the End, Franco-German Cultural Center, Ramallah

2010

Steve Sabella: In Exile, Metroquadro Gallery, Rivoli

2011

Euphoria & Beyond, The Empty Quarter Gallery, Dubai

2014

Fragments, Berloni Gallery, London

Layers, Contemporary Art Platform, Kuwait City

Archeology of the Future, BOXART Galleria d'Arte at the Centro Internazionale Scavi Scaligeri, Verona

Independence, Meem Gallery, Dubai

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

1998

Search, Beit Ha'am Gallery, Tel Aviv

1999

Kick Off, The New Gallery, Jerusalem

2002

Homeland, Musrara School of Photography, Jerusalem

Hope and the Aesthetic Moment: Young Artist of the Year Award 2002, A. M. Qattan Foundation, Khalil Sakakini Cultural Center, Ramallah

Eyes from Jerusalem, Museo di Roma in Trastevere, Rome

2003

Mind, Body, & Soul, ARC Gallery, Chicago

2004

Frankfurt Book Fair as part of the Palestinian Ministry of Culture Exhibition, Frankfurt am Main

Preoccupying Zones: Young Artist of the Year Award 2004, A. M. Qattan Foundation, Khalil Sakakini Cultural Center, Ramallah

2005

At Home, Abrons Arts Center, New York

Shaping Communities in Times of Crisis: Narratives of Land, Peoples and Identities, International Center of Bethlehem, Bethlehem

2006

Art in a Social Context, Boomerang Theatre, Cork

2007

Neighbors in Dialogue, Istanbul Collection for Ars Aevi
Museum of Contemporary Art in Sarajevo, Istanbul
Challenging Walls, Walkscreen, projection on the Separation Wall, Jerusalem

2008

Gates of the Mediterranean, Palazzo Piozzo, Rivoli

SKIP INTRO, P3 Gallery, London

Neighbors in Dialogue, Istanbul Collection for Ars Aevi

Museum of Contemporary Art in Sarajevo, Collegium

Artisticum City Gallery, Sarajevo

The Independent Photographers Terry O'Neil Award Exhibition, Fulham Palace, London

2009

The Independent Photographers Terry O'Neil Award Exhibition, Independent Photographers Gallery, East Sussex

Deconstructing Myths & Realities, Galerie Caprice Horn, Berlin

Palestine: La création dans tous ses états, Institut du Monde Arabe, Paris

NOW: Art of the 21st Century, Phillips de Pury, London

2010

Palestine, La création dans tous ses états, National Museum of Bahrain, Manama

This is Not a Love Song, The Empty Quarter Gallery, Dubai

Young Academy, Akademie der Künste, Berlin

The Interrupted Image, Nicholas Robinson Gallery, New York

Borderlines, Deconstructing Exile, Green Art Gallery, Dubai

Residua, Barjeel Art Foundation, Sharjah

Told, Untold, Retold, Mathaf Arab Museum of Modern Art, Doha

2011

The Changing Room: Arab Reflections on Praxis and Times, Spazio Qubi, Turin

2012

The Changing Room, Arab Reflections on Praxis and Times, London 2012 Olympic Cultural Program, Hub Westminster, London

2013

Berlin, Israel/Palestine or How Will a New Mindset Be Possible, Sprechsaal, Berlin

Keep Your Eye on the Wall, Les rencontres Arles photographie, Arles

Keep Your Eye on the Wall, Photoquai 2013 Biennale, Espace Central Dupon, Paris

2014

Keep Your Eye on the Wall, Contemporary Art Platform CAP, Kuwait City

View from Inside: Contemporary Arab Video, Photography, and Mixed Media, FotoFest Biennial, Houston

Recreational Purpose, Bahrain National Museum, Manama

Bridge to Palestine, Mark Hachem Gallery at the Beirut Exhibition Center



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