

TRUTH IS BLACK, WRITE OVER IT WITH A MIRAGE'S LIGHT Darat al Funun, Amman, Jordan

Darat al Funun in Amman is something of a sleeping giant in the Arab arts scene. It grew out of the efforts of the Khalid Shoman Foundation, which began investing in contemporary Arab art in the early 1980s. Darat al Funun opened in 1988 after the artist Suha Shoman sought to establish a 'home for the arts', focusing on artistic networks as an alternative to commercial gallery and museum models in the region. 'Truth is black, write over it with a mirage's light' is the second of three shows celebrating its 30th anniversary and pioneering support of arts in the region. Taking its title from Mahmoud Darwish's poem 'To a Young Poet' (2010), the show considers art's role in overwriting narratives that narrowly frame the region through its discontents.

The exhibition brings together works by over 30 artists, including new commissions. Several works speculate on art's potential to imagine new political outcomes. Yazan Khalili's *I, the Artwork* (2016), for example, is a large-scale photographic print of a three-page legal contract. The work draws on recent debates around cultural boycotts to consider the legal and ethical limits of safeguarding artistic production from complicity with violence and oppression. The contract stipulates how art should circulate and who cannot buy it, such as states occupying other states. Similar concerns inform Basel Abbas and Ruanne Abou-Rahme's five-screen video installation, *And Yet My Mask Is Powerful, Part 1* (2016), which documents a group of Palestinian youths returning to their indigenous villages. As they travel across overgrown landscapes, their faces covered by copies of Neolithic masks – the originals of which were found in the West Bank and are now in private Israeli museums – the ritualistic journey is punctuated with text from Adrienne Rich's 1972 poem 'Diving into the Wreck', which comes to stand for Israel's depopulation and dispossession of these sites. The overlapping projections are bathed in a horror-show green light, alluding to the untamed layers of fragmented histories, myth-making and temporal dissonance that disrupt narratives about Palestine.

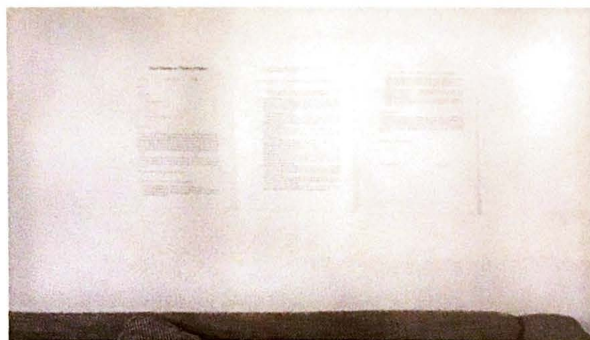
A reflection on buried material histories, Jananne Al-Ani's video *Shadow Sites II* (2011), presents an aerial journey that reveals archaeological sites and contemporary human constructions. In a nearby bunker space, Rayyane Tabet's new sculptural installation, *Sugar Cane/Salt*

Flats (2018), explores historical links between Jordan and Palestine. Large-scale and pungent, the composition comprises sugarcane stalks atop salt compounds, looking at the contemporary production and economics of these materials through their historic trade routes across the Dead Sea.

Darat al Funun's rich archival collection comes together in Beit al Beiruti: a 1930s former residence where a display of printed exhibition banners charts the centre's artistic and regional institutional partnerships, such as a 2004 photography exhibition produced in collaboration with the Anti-Apartheid Wall campaign. These reference points inform Ala Younis's *The Past of a Temporal Universe* (2018–ongoing). Composed of hung sketches and small-scale sculptural pieces, the installation maps Younis's personal relationship to Darat al Funun through the affective resonances of notable events on her artistic practice: the audience's response to Amal Kenawy's video installation *The Purple Artificial Forest* (2005) or the animated film *Stop – You Will Be Killed* (2006), which left several visitors too afraid to enter.

The focus on personal histories as they converge with artistic production is at the heart of Darat al Funun's endeavour. In today's hyper-eventified art world, which sees the region increasingly abiding by a go-big-or-go-home logic, the centre's institutional approach points to a less-trodden path. The show adds poignancy to Darwish's opening lines in 'To a Young Poet': 'Don't believe our outlines / forget them and begin from your own words.'

Reema Salha Fadda



REE MORTON ICA Philadelphia, USA

As a nurse and housewife, Ree Morton began taking art classes in the mid-1950s in Virginia, before separating from her husband a decade later and eventually leaving her three children with him to pursue an art career in New York. She exhibited throughout the US and died tragically in a car accident a day before the opening of her solo show at Walter Kelly Gallery in Chicago. For 'The Plant That Heals May Also Poison', an exhibition of the artist's work at ICA Philadelphia, curator Kate Krazon has chosen not to highlight that narrative in hopes of avoiding the biography-centred reading to which the practices of so many women artists are consigned. Instead, the show focuses on Morton's development as an artist in the context of changing discourses in contemporary art at the time, from postminimalism to feminism, bringing together drawings, sculptures, installations and archival materials to provide an in-depth account of her brief practice.

Structured chronologically, the exhibition moves from Morton's early works – 16 small 'wood drawings' marked with paint, pen and hardware (the gridded surfaces of some recall tiny Hanne Darboven works) – to the exuberant Celastic pieces for which she is best known. A number of these works, sculpted from the plastic-infused fabric and sometimes accentuated with small light bulbs, dot the walls of a large gallery, where their twee forms (bows, ribbons) and scattered installation give the sense of a young girl's bedroom. *Let Us Celebrate While Youth Lingers and Ideas Flow and Don't Worry, I'll Only Read You the Good Parts* (both 1975) encapsulate Morton's cheerful, almost childlike style: both feature their titles' messages in handwritten letters, on pink ribbons against a bright-blue sky and on a gathered cloth decorated with a big yellow flower, respectively. On the opposite side of the gallery, *Signs of Love* (1976) extends across two walls in a scrapbook-like display of Celastic roses, sweet portraits in floral painted frames, brightly coloured ladders and individual words – 'MOMENTS', 'SYMBOLS', 'GESTURES', 'PLEASURES' – that evoke both the mechanics and the joys of art-making.

Other works hint at less unequivocally positive sentiments. *Terminal Clusters* (1974), written on a banner stretching across a large, lit-up horseshoe installed to look like a headstone, bring to mind cancerous cells. Even *Maternal Instincts* (1974), with its title written on a large Celastic banner and smaller ones

This page
Yazan Khalili, *I, the Artwork*, 2016, installation view

Walid Raad (The Atlas Group), *I Only Wish That I Could Weep*, 2003, video still

Opposite page
Above
Ree Morton, *Don't Worry, I'll Only Read You the Good Parts*, 1975, oil on celastic, 137 × 66 cm

Below
Zhang Xiaogang, *Jump No. 1*, 2018, oil on paper, collage, 194 × 86 cm