

Time and Place - Orientalism Revisited: an Artistic Redefinition of the Orientalist Imagery

In this artistic research project I question the representation of the Middle East in the West. Its connotation with violence and threat on the one hand and with exotic fantasies on the other makes the Orient unpopular in contemporary western art. I reconsider Orientalism as an artistic genre by representing the sensory and narrative aspects of my experiences in the Orient. In this paper I will present the general background of my PhD research as I shortly mentioned above, and an artistic case study. For a recent exposition I made an image series about Egypt entitled "Desert Still Lives." The perception of this country is shifting through the images of riots and violence, unemployment, poverty and corruption. In "Desert Still Lives" however, I focus on Egypt's overwhelming landscapes, domestic scenes, monuments in decay and so on. I revise the Orientalist iconography with its exuberant colours by using a powerful monochrome visual language, consistent of drawings and photographs. These images offer a form of knowledge about the Orient that can nuance and broaden the current western view. They can serve as a subtle but necessary counterpart of the explicit, stereotypical images of the Middle East on television or in touristic brochures.

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