



Karam Natour | Body following Spirit

Curator: Maya Frenkel Tene | 15.11.18 - 22.12.18

In one of the scenes in the video art piece *Repeat After Me*, the artist, Karam Natour, and three of his cousins are seen performing an amusing act of filling their mouths with colorful water and spraying it at one another, as if they were human fountains. The playful, childish sequence and the pseudo-simple homestyle photography are some of the means Natour uses to convey a multi-layered, complex message.

The scene references the iconic work of American artist Bruce Nauman, *Self-Portrait as a Fountain*. Nauman used his own body as an instrument for examining Man's place in a world in which behavior is defined by codes that are subject to the rules of language. Karam Natour uses his body and image as means for investigating the boundaries of the cultural, social, and geographical space in which he lives and operates.

Natour's artistic practice operates in three overlapping routs. The first relates to his physical image and concrete identity. Natour leads a performative act, to which he harnesses his extended family. He asks of them-and of us- "repeat after me", dare to break the mold. Language plays a central role in Natour's occupation with culture and tradition. Using text as an idea and an image in three languages-Arabic, Hebrew, and English-indicates a complex identity and multicultural political affiliation: Arab, Western, Israeli. In his works Natour often references works of art as means for renewed observation on the culture from which he emerged, and for breaking taboos.

The second route is dedicated to the metaphysical dimension: the journey through time and dream. The digital drawings were inspired

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by the image of the jester, a medieval court-clown embodying the wild, dark, and erotic. The artist's animated double—mostly naked, uninhibited, and free from social conventions—juggles between spirit and matter; science and imagination; history and humanities; legend and mythology. On the one hand, blunt and critical; on the other, delicate and vulnerable.

The third route deals with the spiritual and heavenly. Inspired by the sage, the wise teacher who represents patience, love, and beauty, Natour created the three planets: Sun (Karam's planet), Saturn (the jester's planet), and Venus (the sage's Planet). The drawings, laden with references drawn from old civilizations, literature, science, and the arts, reveal Natour's Sources of inspiration. Unlike his other works, here he is not present. It seems as if the exciting adventure through the depths of human history has ended; he has left his impression and is now ready to embark on another journey.

Karam Natour (1992) holds a B.A. and M.A from Bezalel Academy of Arts and Design and lives and works in Tel Aviv. He has exhibited in various spaces both internationally and in Israel, including the Tel Aviv Museum of Art and The Israel Museum, Jerusalem. This exhibition acts as a direct continuation of the solo exhibition *Repeat After Me*, curated by Irena Gordon and presented this year at the Umm el-Fahem Art Gallery.

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