

Magnetic Bodies: Imaging the Urban

Huda Lutfi

April 25 – June 4, 2016

The Third Line is pleased to present *Magnetic Bodies: Imaging the Urban*, Huda Lutfi's second solo show in Dubai. The exhibition, which includes photo-collage, sculpture, installation and video works, is part of an on-going exploration which cross-examines the urban sprawl of Cairo through the lens of Huda as an artist and an historian. New works are presented alongside seminal pieces to delineate the teeming, spilling multitudes that comprise the chaotic fabric of the city. The layered visuals, marked with elements such as plastic mannequins juxtaposed against blue skies and archaeological cross-sections of the megalopolis, create surreal landscapes – suspending the idiosyncrasies and impossibilities of urbanity in uncharted space and time.



Huda Lutfi, *The City Goes Pop*, 2015, photographs, acrylic and oil paint, 105 x 201 cm

The use of the doll iconography began early in Huda's career with her *Found in Cairo* (2006) and *Arayess* series (2006), which explored the effects of globalization on the production of local cultural objects and traditions. Since then, she has employed the figure of the doll repeatedly to explore the objectification and imposed modes of identity construction of the body. Her work *The Perfumed Garden* (2008) – where she appropriated portraits of female actresses, singers, family members and friends, and enclosed each in a bottle – suggests their restriction. Huda has similarly questioned the same socio-cultural conditioning in the masculine sphere. Placing found *en vogue* Gaultier perfume bottles in a dark room, the installation *Stripping off the Garments* (2010) is an invitation to reflect on how we define ourselves on a daily basis and what happens when we shed those preconceptions.

In the newer works, Huda explores the rich mannequin culture of Cairo and ties it to the personal and public politics that colonize a constantly evolving cityscape. Using photography as a medium of documentation, she creates bodily re-combinations through bricolage and photomontage techniques. Following 2011, Huda has incorporated more of her own photography into her collage works; inspired by the events in Cairo's Tahrir Square, the need to document became more urgent. Ever since then, Huda has employed the photographic medium to generate repeated copies of the mass-produced mannequins – an uncanny doubling that lends her work a surreal historicism.

Huda also blurs the lines between the mannequins and human, as in the video *Biyadaat* (2012), where she transforms photographs of soldiers' boots into animated legs that bear more of a resemblance to doll-like automatons than they do to humans. *The City*, which houses these ubiquitous connections, thereby reorganizes itself into a system of illusions.

About Huda Lutfi

Huda Lutfi, born in Cairo in 1947, is a cultural feminist historian by professional training whose work in the field of the visual arts translates these affiliations in multiple complex ways. In 1983, she received her PhD in Arab Muslim Cultural History from McGill University, Montreal, Canada. In 2012, a self-titled monograph on Huda Lutfi was published by The Third Line.

Huda's solo shows include: *Magnetic Bodies*, Townhouse Gallery, Cairo, Egypt (2015); *Cut and Paste*, Townhouse Gallery, Cairo, Egypt (2013); *Huda Lutfi: Twenty Years of Art*, Tache Art, Cairo, Egypt (2011); *Making a Man out of Him*, Townhouse Gallery, Cairo, Egypt (2010); *Zan'it al-Sittat*, The Third Line, Dubai, UAE (2008); *From Egypt with Love*; The Third Line, Dubai, UAE (2008). She has been part of important group presentations internationally including: *La Bienal del Sur*, Caracas, Venezuela (2015); *Fotofest: View from Inside Contemporary Arab Photography* Emirates Palace, Abu Dhabi, UAE (2015); *Homage to Moustapha Hasnaoui*, Frederic Moison Gallery, Paris, France (2013); *I am not there* Townhouse Gallery, Cairo, Egypt (2012); *Dak'Art-African Contemporary Art Biennale*, Dakar, Senegal (2010); *Icons Reloaded*, Elysee Arts Gallery, Liege, Belgium (2009). Huda's work is part of major collections including Barjeel Art Foundation, Sharjah, UAE; Jordan National Gallery of Fine Arts, Amman, Jordan; Museum of Modern Art, Hague, Netherlands; The American University in Cairo; Egypt and The British Museum, London, UK.

Huda lives and works in Cairo, Egypt.

About The Third Line

The Third Line is a Dubai-based art gallery that represents contemporary Middle Eastern artists locally, regionally and internationally. The Third Line also hosts non-profit, alternative programs to increase interest and dialogue in the region.

The Third Line's book wing *Works on Paper* publishes books by associated artists from the region. Books published to date include *Presence* by photographer Lamy Gargash (2008), *In Absentia* by Tarek Al-Ghoussein (2009), *Cosmic Geometry*, an extensive monograph on Monir Shahroudy Farmanfarman, edited by Hans Ulrich Obrist and Karen Marta (2011), and the self-titled treatise *Huda Lutfi* about the artist's Cairo based practice.

Represented artists include: Abbas Akhavan, Ala Ebtakar, Amir H. Fallah, Arwa Abouon, Babak Golkar, Ebtisam Abdulaziz, Farhad Moshiri, Fouad Elkoury, Golnaz Fathi, Hassan Hajjaj, Hayv Kahraman, Huda Lutfi, Joana Hadjithomas & Khalil Joreige, Laleh Khorramian, Lamy Gargash, Monir Shahroudy Farmanfarman, Poursan Jinchi, Rana Begum, Sahand Hesamiyan, Sara Naim, Sherin Guirguis, Shirin Aliabadi, Slavs and Tatars, Sophia Al-Maria, Tarek Al-Ghoussein, Youssef Nabil and Zineb Sedira.

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