

Youssef Nabil

## *The Beautiful Voyage*

22<sup>nd</sup> September – 28<sup>th</sup> October 2022

The Third Line is pleased to announce a solo exhibition by internationally acclaimed artist Youssef Nabil. *The Beautiful Voyage* presents a curated selection of Nabil's works from 2016 to present and includes photographs of cinematic landscapes and imaginary self-portraits, as well as the regional debut of Nabil's fourth video, also called *The Beautiful Voyage*.



*The Visitor, Self-portrait 2021, Hand Coloured Gelatin Silver Print, 115 x 75cm, Edition of 5*

Youssef Nabil (b. Egypt, 1972) draws inspiration from the concept of memory and the cinematic universe he grew up admiring in his native country of Egypt. His works' ethereal aesthetics take from the hand colouring photography technique of the technicolour films. The artist hand-paints each of his black and white photographs, as editions become variations, each a unique version of the artist's labour.

Bob Colacello has written specially for this exhibition and comments that the uniqueness of Nabil's practice "*lies first in its technique: the superimposition by the artist's hand of gorgeous saturated colours over impeccably composed silver gelatin prints - of painting over photography, the human over the machine, the timeless over the immediate.*"

Taking inspiration from the poem Ithaka (1911) by Greek poet Constantine P. Cavafy (1863-1933), this exhibition explores themes of exile, fate and memory through self-portraits and images of melancholic landscapes, as well as Nabil's fourth video *The Beautiful Voyage* (2021). Much like the Greek poet, the works offer "*an unending voyage across the artist's imaginary*" remarks scholar and curator Dr. Layla S. Diba in her essay for the exhibition. Through this body of work, Nabil takes his viewers on an intimate endless journey; a voyage through the artist's psyche to places near and dear formed only from his memories of place.

Nabil uses composition to narrate these memories. By adopting split compositions in some of the photographs – *No one knows but the Sky*, 2019 and *Memory of a Happy Place*, 2021 – Nabil reveals how we often romanticise our memories and reconstruct them into idealised recollections of a time gone by. In the self-portraits such as *What the future holds*, 2021 and *Connected to you by every Sea*, 2021, Nabil has – for the first time – incorporated a layer of transparency into his work. By doing so, the images evoke the artist's observations on the fragility of life and our fleeting voyage through it.

There is a cinematic quality to Nabil's vision which is referenced throughout this body of work by the use of text, acting as subtitles. "*His enduring interest in film is visualised by a self-portrait inserted into the end credits of a film – as if Nabil's life was also only a movie*" observes Dr. Layla S. Diba.

The artist's most recent video *The Beautiful Voyage* (2021) features his muse, the actress Charlotte Rampling and is included in the exhibition. It is the first time the artist both directs and appears in front of the camera as an actor. It is profoundly intimate, as the voice of the artist's Mother recites Ithaka (1911) – a verse that she read to him as a boy growing up in Cairo and the very poem that inspired this body of work – over scenes of love, life, memory, death and exile. "*The verses sing of the importance of life's journey rather than of its end and set a hopeful tone. The poem is especially poignant since it evokes Nabil's childhood – a joyful and nostalgic memory of a lost time*" observes Dr. Layla S. Diba.

A metaphor for the Mother/Son relationship, the eight-minute autobiographical video also features a monologue delivered by Rampling that tells the artist's story. Dr. Layla S. Diba writes: "*The words are the artist's own, the first script he has written and published, and represent a moving summation of the wisdom he has acquired through the years as an outsider in an ever-changing and unsettled world, which resonates deeply with many viewers*". The monologue becomes the backdrop to a poignant scene of the artist sitting at the waters edge with the ocean lapping at his feet, facing his audience for the first time, whilst – in the words of Dr. Layla S Diba – "*Rampling reassures the artist that he never truly left his loved ones or his country, that life is a journey, a dream, that his true home is movement and that the dead are never truly lost to us.*"



The Beautiful Voyage, 2021, Video, 8 minutes, Edition of 5  
Cast: Charlotte Rampling and Youssef Nabil

### About Youssef Nabil

Youssef Nabil was born in 1972 in Cairo (Egypt). He lives and works in Paris (France).

Nabil's International solo and group exhibitions include: in the USA, at the Pérez Art Museum (PAMM) in Miami, the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA), the Studio Museum in Harlem and Aperture Foundation in New York, the Smithsonian National Museum of African Art and Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C., the Savannah College of Art and Design (SCAD) in Savannah and in Atlanta, and the North Carolina Museum of Art in Raleigh; in Canada, at the Aga Khan Museum of Art in Toronto; in France, at the Centre Pompidou, Maison Rouge – Fondation Antoine de Galbert, Institut du Monde Arabe and Maison Européenne de la Photographie in Paris, the Frac Normandie in Sotteville- lès-Rouen, the Friche Belle de Mai in Marseille, the Rencontres de la Photographie in Arles; in Belgium, at the Fondation Boghossian and Maison Particulière in Brussels; in the UK, at the British Museum and Victoria & Albert Museum in London, and the BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art in Newcastle; in Germany, at the Museum für Modern Kunst (MMK) in Frankfurt, the Kunstmuseum in Bonn, and the Gemäldegalerie Staatliche Museen in Berlin; in Spain, at the Museum of Contemporary Art (MACBA) in Barcelona, the Centro Andaluz de Arte Contemporáneo in Seville, and the Instituto d'Art Modern in Valencia (IVAM); in Italy, at the Villa Medici in Rome, the Galleria dell'Accademia in Florence, The Palazzo Grassi in Venice and the 53rd Venice Biennale, Unconditional Love; in Qatar, at the Mathaf Arab Museum of Modern Art in Doha; in Mexico, at the Centro de la Imagen in Mexico City; and in Mali, at the 5èmes Rencontres de la Photographie africaine in Bamako, during which he was awarded the Seydou Keïta Prize. In 2020/2021, Youssef Nabil had his first retrospective exhibition at the Palazzo Grassi in Venice, titled Once Upon A Dream.

Nabil's work is part of various international collections, among which: the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA), the Pérez Art Museum in Miami (PAMM), the Studio Museum in Harlem, New York, and the Savannah College of Art and Design Museum of Art (SCAD) in Savannah; the Fondation Louis Vuitton, the Collection François Pinault, and the Maison Européenne de la Photographie in Paris; the Collection UBS Art in Zürich; the British Museum and the Victoria & Albert Museum in London; the Sindika Dokolo Foundation in Luanda; the Photography Museum in Thessaloniki; the Mathaf Arab Museum of Modern Art in Doha; the Guggenheim Museum in Abu Dhabi; the Centro de la Imagen in Mexico City.

Four monographs have been published on Youssef Nabil's work – Sleep in My Arms (Autograph ABP and Michael Stevenson, 2007), I Won't Let You Die (Hatje Cantz, 2008), Youssef Nabil (Flammarion, 2013), and Once Upon A Dream (Marsilio, 2020).

### About Bob Colacello

Bob Colacello was born in Brooklyn, NY, and raised on Long Island. He graduated from Georgetown School of Foreign Service in 1969, and Columbia Graduate School of the Arts in 1971 with an MFA in Film. By then he had been hired to run Andy Warhol's new magazine, Interview, a job he held for thirteen years, becoming one of the artist's closest creative collaborators. His memoir of that period, Holy Terror: Andy Warhol Close Up, was published in 1990.

From 1984 to 2017, Colacello was under exclusive contract to Vanity Fair, covering cultural, social, and political subjects. In 2004, he published a biography of the Reagans, Ronnie and Nancy: Their Path to the White House. He has published two books of his photographs from the 1970s and 1980s: Bob Colacello's OUT from 7L Steidl in 2007; and It Just Happened from Ivorypress in 2021.

Since 2015, Colacello has been a Senior Advisor at Vito Schnabel Gallery. Colacello was named Associate Director of the Peter Marino Art Foundation in Southampton, New York in 2021.

### **About Layla S. Diba**

Layla S. Diba is an independent art advisor, scholar and curator specialising in the art of 19th and 20th century Iran. She has been the Director and Chief Curator of the Negarestan Museum of 18th and 19th century Iranian Art in Tehran from 1975-78. She served as the Curator of Islamic Art at the Brooklyn Museum of Art from 1990-2000 where she organized the exhibition Royal Persian Paintings: The Qajar Epoch (1785-1925). In 2013, Dr. Diba co-curated Iran Modern at the Asia Society in New York, the first major exhibition of modern art from Iran that featured 26 artists and covered a period of time from 1948 through to 1977.

Dr. Diba has also collaborated with the Guggenheim Abu Dhabi Museum and the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York and sits on the Boards of the Soudavar Memorial Foundation and of The National Museum of Asian Art, Charles Lang Freer and Arthur M. Sackler Galleries, Washington. In 2009, Dr. Diba held the role of Scholar-in-Residence at Shangri La Museum of Islamic Art, Culture & Design.

Current projects include the publication of Art in Peril: The Case of the Negarestan Museum and its Collections of 18th and 19th century Iranian Art.

### **About The Third Line**

Founded in 2005, The Third Line is a Dubai-based gallery that represents contemporary Middle Eastern artists locally, regionally, and internationally. A pioneering platform for established talent and emerging voices from the region and its diaspora, The Third Line has built a dynamic program that explores the diversity of practice in the region.

In addition to its exhibitions, The Third Line engages in the production of art publications in English and Arabic and hosts numerous non-profit, alternative programs that add to the discourse on art, film, music and literature in the region.

Represented artists include: Abbas Akhavan, Ala Ebtekar, Amir H. Fallah, Farah Al Qasimi, Farhad Moshiri, Fouad Elkoury, Hassan Hajjaj, Hayv Kahraman, Huda Lutfi, Joana Hadjithomas & Khalil Joreige, Jordan Nassar, Laleh Khorramian, Lamyia Gargash, Monir Shahroudy Farmanfarmaian, Nima Nabavi, Poursan Jinchu, Rana Begum, Sahand Hesamiyan, Sara Naim, Shirin Aliabadi, Slavs and Tatars, Sophia Al-Maria, Tarek Al-Ghoussein, Yasiin bey, Youssef Nabil, and Zineb Sedira.

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