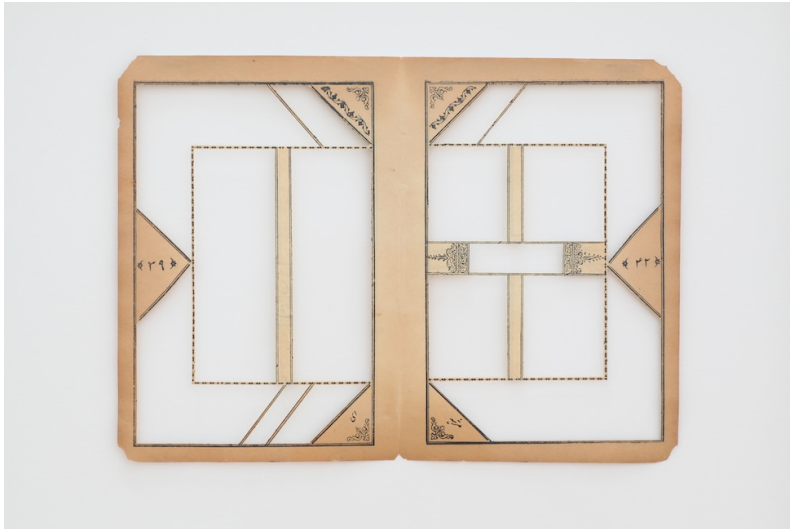


# Nowheresville \ 'nä-kōja,-abäd \

## Ala Ebtakar

March 16 – April 18, 2015

The Third Line is pleased to open its Spring 2015 program with Ala Ebtakar's *Nowheresville \ 'nä-kōja,-abäd \*. Working with ideas of the celestial, home to planetary and spiritual configurations that have fascinated humanity since the beginning of time, the artist combines early 12<sup>th</sup> Century traditions of Persian cosmic philosophy with modern-day scientific imaging of the heavens. His explorations over the years, into the union of both spectrums, and a search for the portals into imagined futures, culminate in this mystical homage to Light.



Ala Ebtakar, *Untitled*, 2013, Manuscript, 32 x 42 cm

In the Illuminationist cosmogony of the twelfth century mystical philosopher Shahabuddin Suhrawardi, the Light of Lights, unlocated in *Nowheresville*, radiates the Universe into being, dispersed into Nine Spheres. Man, who lives on the Ninth Sphere (furthest from the Light), still gazes upon the stars. Some just see the sapphire sea of stars; others see the stars with an astrologer's eye, but do not see the skies. There are a few though, who know that seeing is a journey: the first step is shutting the eyes and the final destination is *Nowheresville \ 'nä-kōja,-abäd \* – the abode of *Simurgh*, the benevolent, mythical flying creature, atop the cosmic mountain *Qaf* – untouched by time and space.

Inspired by this cosmogony, Ala imagines this journey to/through Light, where every space – silent or clamorous, bright or opaque – can be used as a portal to *Na-Koja Abad*. Each opening hidden in clusters of symbolism gazes back at the audience, waiting to be discovered. The artist invites the viewer to make the journey to the symbolic *Qaf*, and perhaps catch a fleeting glimpse of *Nowheresville*.

Continuing his investigation into traditional and popular depictions of space and time, Ala is presenting a new body of work where the cosmos are used as a metaphor for exploring transcendence. He moves fluidly between mediums – working together with traditional methods such as drawing and painting and new-media platforms such as digital interventions, and sound and light installations – to create a dialogue that is reiterated in the choice of medium and the process itself. Through the visual juxtaposition, Ala interlaces a narrative of the collective histories, theories and archetypes that tie our past in with the visions of the future.

Exploring this direction, the artist has also produced new works through the distinct *Cyanotype* technique – a photographic printing process invented in 1842 by Sir John Herschel, a scientist and experimental photographer who made significant contributions to photography. The cyanotype process includes a surface being treated with potassium ferricyanide and ferric ammonium citrate, and then exposed to the sun or other source of UV light. The result is dependent purely on the relation between the treated surface and light, with the final bleached marking on the transforming natural indigo base looking remarkably similar to a starry sky. In doing so, Ala is able to use light as both technique and medium.

## About Ala Ebtekar

Ala Ebtekar was born in Berkeley in 1978 and obtained a Bachelor of Fine Arts from San Francisco Art Institute in 2002 followed by a Masters of Fine Arts from Stanford University in 2006. He is currently a visiting lecturer in the Department of Art & Art History at Stanford University.

Ala's work has been widely exhibited internationally. His solo shows include Parallax, Gallery Paule Anglim, San Francisco, USA (2014); Absent Arrival, Gallery Paule Anglim, San Francisco, USA (2012); Elsewhen, The Third Line, Dubai, UAE (2012); Indelible Whispers of the Sun, Charlie James Gallery, Los Angeles, USA (2010); 1388, The Third Line, Dubai UAE (2009); Hampah, Charlie James Gallery, Los Angeles, USA (2009); Emergence, Richmond Art Center, Richmond, California, USA (2006).

His work has also been featured in numerous group exhibitions, including The Vastness is Bearable, Museum of Contemporary Art, Santa Barbara, California, CA (2013); The Beginning of Thinking is Geometric, Maraya Art Centre, Sharjah, UAE (2013); Migrating Identities, Yerba Buena Centre for the Arts, San Francisco Proximities//What Time Is It There?, Asian Art Museum, San Francisco, CA, USA (2013); Art World After 1989, Museum of Contemporary Art, Lorenzstrasse, Germany (2012); The Global Contemporary: Art Worlds after 1989, ZKM - Museum of Contemporary Art, Karlsruhe, Germany (2011); Iran Inside Out, Chelsea Art Museum, New York, USA (2009); and One Way of Another: Asian American Art Now, Asia Society Museum, New York. Ala's works are part of several notable public and private collections including the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, USA; Berkeley Art Museum, CA, USA; Deutsche Bank, Frankfurt, Germany; de Young Fine Arts Museum, San Francisco, USA; and Farjam Collection, UAE.

Ala currently lives and works in California, USA.

## 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 also publishes books by associated artists from the region. Books published to date include *Presence* by photographer Lamya Gargash (2008), *In Absentia* by Tarek Al-Ghoussein (2009), *Cosmic Geometry*, an extensive monograph on Monir Shahroudy Farmanfarmaian, 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 Ebtekar, Amir H. Fallah, Arwa Abouon, Babak Golkar, Ebtisam Abdulaziz, Farhad Moshiri, Fouad Elkoury, Golnaz Fathi, Hassan Hajjaj, Hayy Kahraman, Huda Lutfi, Joana Hadjithomas & Khalil Joreige, Laleh Khorramian, Lamya Gargash, Monir Shahroudy Farmanfarmaian, Pouran 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.

## Media Contact

Saira Ansari, PR & Media Manager

[saira@thethirdline.com](mailto:saira@thethirdline.com) | +9714 3411 367