

I Saved My Belly Dancer

Youssef Nabil

February 3 – March 5, 2016

I Saved My Belly Dancer | 12 minutes | Cast: Salma Hayek and Tahar Rahim

After months of intense planning, filming and production, New York-based Egyptian artist Youssef Nabil's second video, *I Saved My Belly Dancer*, is premiering in the Middle East at The Third Line's new space at Alserkal Avenue.



Youssef Nabil, *I Saved My Belly Dancer #XIII* (detail), 2015, Hand coloured gelatin silver print

I Saved My Belly Dancer is a poetic depiction of Youssef's fascination with belly dancers, and his anxiety over the disappearance of the art form that is unique to the Middle East. The 12-minute video is visually inspired by the 50s golden age cinema of Egypt and touches upon Youssef's fraught relationship with his home country – both elements that inform a large aspect of his practice.

A sleeping man (Tahar Rahim) dreams of his old glamorous Egypt, which is disappearing. A last remaining belly dancer (Salma Hayek) comes to comfort him and tell him that his world has not vanished. She dances for him a last dance before he takes her with him to the American desert where he now lives. The video progresses without any dialogue, and the imagery is ubiquitous with surrealism and symbolism that makes Youssef's work much more than unassuming reminiscence. Loss, displacement, memory, exile, new beginnings and rebirth continue to be a recurring theme in Youssef's work. The video is a self-portrait of his history and relationship with Egypt – and his separation from it – as well as what is left of the past within memory; even if it is no longer a part of reality. The video also explores shifting perceptions of the position of women in the region, with the amplified sexualisation of their bodies a growing problem in the new social constructs. It is this, and the fear of losing an indigenous art form to time and changing ideologies, that inspired Youssef to work on *I Saved My Belly Dancer*, the second video in his career.

The photographic work produced from this video is done in Youssef's characteristic technique of hand colouring black and white photographs – one that finds inspiration in the movie posters and billboards of the Egyptian cinema of the mid twentieth century.

About Youssef Nabil

Youssef Nabil was born in Egypt in 1972, and lives and works in New York. Three monographs have been published on Youssef's work – *Sleep in My Arms* (Autograph ABP

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and Michael Stevenson, 2007), *I won't let you die* (Hatje Cantz, 2008) and most recently, a self-titled monograph *Youssef Nabil* published by Flammarion (2013). In 2010, the artist known for his work combining photography and painting presented his first video *You Never Left*, an 8-minute piece with the actors Fanny Ardant and Tahar Rahim. *I Saved My Belly Dancer* is the second video in his career.

Youssef's work has been presented in numerous solo and group exhibitions at venues including The Villa Medici, Rome; La Maison Rouge, Paris; The British Museum, London; Galleria dell'Accademia, Florence; MMK Museum für Modern Kunst, Frankfurt; Centro de la Imagen, Mexico City; North Carolina Museum of Art, North Carolina; BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art, Newcastle; Michael Stevenson Gallery, Cape Town; Galeria Leme, São Paulo; Gemäldegalerie, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin; Centre de Cultura Contemporànea de Barcelona, MACBA, Barcelona; Victoria & Albert Museum, London; Institut du Monde Arabe, Paris; Kunstmuseum, Bonn; Smithsonian National Museum of African Art, Washington, D.C; The Third Line, Dubai; The Kennedy Center, Washington DC; Centro Andaluz de Arte Contemporáneo, Sevilla; and Aperture Foundation, New York. He is part of various international collections including LACMA Museum, Los Angeles, The Louis Vuitton Foundation, Paris, Sindika Dokolo Foundation, Luanda, Maison Européenne de la Photographie, Paris; the joint collection of The British Museum and The Victoria & Albert Museum, London; Centro de la Imagen, Mexico City; Mathaf Arab Museum of Modern Art, Doha; and most recently the Guggenheim Museum, Abu Dhabi and The Studio Museum in Harlem, New York.

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 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 Ebtekar, 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, Lamya Gargash, Monir Shahroudy Farmanfarman, 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.

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