



Lara Zankoul, *Triangle*, As Cold as a White Stone series, 2016, photography on archival cotton paper, 130 x 160 cm, edition of 5

LARA ZANKOUL AS COLD AS A WHITE STONE

20 September – 17 November 2016

Opening reception: Tuesday, 20 September from 7.00 to 9.00 pm

Ayyam Gallery Dubai (DIFC) is pleased to announce *As Cold as a White Stone*, the solo exhibition of Lebanese artist Lara Zankoul.

About the Show

Ayyam Gallery Dubai (DIFC) is pleased to announce *As Cold as a White Stone*, the solo exhibition of Lebanese artist Lara Zankoul. Highlighting an eponymous body of work, *As Cold as a White Stone* explores what the artist describes as 'the coldness, resistance, and numbness of human relationships nowadays.'

During a recent artist residency in Italy, where she studied the local development of art, Zankoul discovered the marble quarries of Carrara through the surrealist images of Matteo Basiles. In Basiles' *Pietra Santa* series, this stark background creates an otherworldly environment in which dystopian nightmares unfold. Drawn to the ravaged setting of the quarries, Zankoul uses the white marble backdrop to construct sparse scenes in which withdrawn figures represent 'the nature of human interactions in a world dominated by individualism, virtual life, and ego/selfishness.' Her characters are anonymous, their faces mostly hidden from view as they languish in isolation or stand frozen in a state of confusion. Zankoul allows the setting to inform the mood of her characters. Sharp edges and lines that are man-made define the stone, a feature that articulates the alienation of a plugged-in society: a constructed (virtual) environment stripped of direct interaction and devoid of humanity.

Zankoul's adaptation of the Carrara quarries also evokes the legacy of white marble in Italian art, particularly Renaissance sculpture as seen in Michelangelo's *David*. With such works, idealised renderings of the human form based on recovered Roman examples served as the artistic embodiment of a dynamic era. Science, art, architecture, literature, and politics developed at a rapid pace, indicating a collective interest in cultivating culture. Although related to this historical narrative, Zankoul views the quarries as the quintessential representation of our descent into an emotionless state of being, as we have lost a sense of warmth and connectivity. Whereas Michelangelo focused on the human figure, constructing it according to a philosophical take on its proportions, Zankoul deconstructs the body as an abstracted void (demonstrated in the stark clothing of her characters), a dehumanised subject that is on the verge of disappearance, passive and numb in a world deprived of its natural form.

About the Artist

The dreamlike compositions of conceptual photographer Lara Zankoul explore the human psyche within the context of social experience. Many of Zankoul's whimsical images demonstrate an attempt to invent new worlds, to push against the boundaries of reality in order to escape the monotony of ordinary life. At the same time, Zankoul offers subtle critiques of modern society, fixing her figures in settings that often reflect the taxing psychology of everyday interactions or scenarios as her subjects navigate its various dimensions. The characters portrayed in Zankoul's works are anonymous and timeless, universal subjects existing within metaphoric landscapes, where the senses are heightened and exaggerated facets reveal affecting details that otherwise remain obscured.

Born in Lebanon in 1987, Lara Zankoul lives and works in the country's capital, where she earned a graduate degree in Economics from the American University of Beirut. Since beginning her artistic practice in 2008, she has participated in exhibitions and workshops throughout the Middle East and Europe. In 2011, she was an award recipient at the first ever Shabab Ayyam Photography Competition. Zankoul held her first (2013) and second (2014) solo exhibitions at Ayyam Gallery Beirut. Recent group shows for the artist include *ArtxDesign*, Guy Hepner Gallery (2016); *The Road to Elysium*, HEIST Gallery, United Kingdom (2014); the third edition of the *Festival Photomed*, France (2013); and *Women's Art*, Art Lounge (2011), Lebanon.

In addition to Amin's noteworthy career as a visual artist, she is a widely published, Pushcart Prize nominated poet, and holds a doctorate in Creative Writing and Ekphrasis from Warnborough College, England.

About Ayyam Gallery

Founded in 2006, Ayyam Gallery is a leading arts organisation that manages the careers of diverse established and emerging artists. Blue-chip art spaces in Beirut and Dubai, a series of collaborative projects in the United States, Europe, and Asia, and a multinational non-profit arts programme have furthered the gallery's mandate of expanding the parameters of international art. With its widely respected multilingual publishing division and a custodianship programme that manages the estates of pioneering artists, Ayyam Gallery has also contributed to recent efforts that document underrepresented facets of global art history.

Exhibition Facts

Exhibition Dates: 20 September – 17 November 2016

Opening Reception: Tuesday, 20 September from 7.00 to 9.00 pm

Regular Hours: Sun-Thu: 10.00am-8.00pm

Location: Ayyam Gallery, Gate Village 3, DIFC, Dubai

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