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A Marathon performance by Osama El-Siamant (SYR)

Vernissage: 21.10.2015, 18:00-22:00

Hours: 22.10 through 15.11.2015, daily 12 to 6 p.m.

Location: Jan Arnold Gallery, Museumsplatz 1, Electric Avenue, MuseumsQuartier, A-1070 Wien

From Oct. 21 to Nov. 15, Syrian artist Osama El-Siamant, who is renowned far beyond the Middle East, will set up a production facility and a communications office in the Jan Arnold Gallery of Vienna's MQ (Museum Quarter).

An agent and several refugees of his artists' collective will work there six hours a day, seven days a week producing Euro bills with crayons. After numeration and registration these bills will be mounted into a passe-partout and the works will be offered for sale at nominal value as a minimal donation. The complete proceeds go to Caritas and to internally displaced persons in the free northern part of Syria through the Austrian humanitarian organization Alpine Peace Crossing, which has been specializing in unbureaucratic direct aid for years. The bills can be obtained at the MQ or online from the website janarnoldgallery.com, as well as during the performances in the public space.

Osama's performance visualizes the essence of power structures and the economy of refugee movements. In a painfully subversive way he highlights the dilemma of labor bans on the one hand, and the economy of exploitation paradoxically longed for by the refugees.

The production of counterfeit money by people who, after the expulsion from their home countries and the hardships of flight, must now start from scratch in the receiving countries, thus becomes a scary metaphor: the labor market, which is hungry for new workforce, surrounds itself with a bubble of bureaucracy and xenophobia. The resulting illegality of work necessarily leads to the precarity of labor conditions.

Equally efficient is Osama's reference to the ambiguity of the helper. On the one hand, the proceeds benefit a charitable organization, on the other hand the commercialization within the rigid economy of the art market raises basic questions of human existence. Can we ransom ourselves that way, or does the encounter with refugees demand a more comprehensive effort?

Osama El-Siamant makes use of a wide range of esthetic techniques, from drawing and painting to multimedia installations, and, above all, the subversive strategies of performance art. In his structural criticism of socio-cultural and economic relationships of power and dependence he always includes the possibility of concrete action for humanitarian concerns. In his works, which have been exhibited in renowned galleries and exhibition spaces as well as in the public space in pre-war Syria, Lebanon, Jordan but also during his stays in France and the USA, he has always succeeded in relating distant connections in current crises with new audiences through integration and participation.

Recently Osama created a sensation at the Miami Art Fair, when he gathered his complete collective for interactive lounging in the Raleigh Hotel. For five days, the mostly Middle East-based artists mingled with the crème de la crème of the rich art collectors, who had been invited by top companies like Mercedes, Chanel, UBS, Shell, et al. Constructive irritation was guaranteed.

Concept: Osama El-Siamant
 Creative Director & Development: Walter Steinacher
 Art Director & Development: Sebastian Schager
 Curator: Andreas Stadler
 Project Management: Joseph Rudolf
 Technical Director: Andreas Nader
 Artistic Advisor: Olivier Hölzl
 Coordination of refugees: Verein Morgenland
 Coordination production: Imke Nachbauer

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&Du**



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ESTERHÁZY
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Jan Arnold
 GALLERY

Q21
 der kreative Schaffensort
 im MuseumsQuartier Wien

Morgenland
 Verein der HelferInnen