

# PORTRAIT REDUX

## Group show

Preview opening | Saturday February 8 2014 at 5pm

Exhibition dates | February 9 > March 30 2014

From February 9 to March 30, 2014, Selma Feriani Gallery will host Portrait Redux, an exhibition that gathers works by local and international artists on the theme of portrait.

Portrait Redux<sup>1</sup> explores the resurgence of a traditional genre and the modes of its reinvention through an original selection of modern contemporary portraits and self-portraits represented in different forms: painting, sculpture, drawing, ceramics, photography, video and other mixed modes.

Portrait is considered to be an absolute kind of image as it refers in its broadest sense to the representation of an individual - or a group – and oscillates between mimesis and likeness to the model.

With the advent of photography and the Impressionist revolution, Portrait has been deeply renewed. It became the favourite genre of photographic practice as evidenced by the records of the first studios that opened in Europe, Africa and the Middle East.

Portraits were gradually freed from the restraints of resemblance in visual arts. Artists did not hesitate to distort, stylize or abuse the figures in a desire to challenge reality.

The trend was pursued and asserted with determination throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. The subject represented, has nearly become a pretext for experimenting with various mediums whose nature calls for new interpretations of the Portrait.

In this exhibition, eighteen artists from different nationalities and generations deploy a large assortment of artistic intermingled practices. The staging does not impose a specific course. Visitors are invited to browse amidst the works and weave a sense to their own readings.

1. Redux is an adjective derived from latin *reducere* meaning "bring back", "restore", "reinstate". It refers here to the resurgence of portrait.



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## LIST OF ARTISTS

### **Farhad Ahrarnia (Iran, 1971)**

Farhad Ahrarnia is an Iranian artist based in England. He became known for his work on *Found Pictures*, that relate to the history and current events in Iran and the Middle East. These images, often portraits of celebrities, collected from local and international media, have been made into digital prints on cotton that the artist has embellished with colourful embroidery. This technique, which combines artisan craft and technology, adds texture and substance to the original images that the artist examines and deconstructs down the needle.

### **Aninat & Swinburn (Chile, 1973 | 1979)**

Teresa Aninat and Catalina Swinburn form a group of Chilean artists who, since 2002, made photographs, videos and performance installations based on rituals and symbolic acts, often memorialised on materials as diverse as marble, metal or paper. These performances always depict the artists seeking to interrogate the image in its relationship with religion and consumer society.

### **Ziad Antar (Lebanon, 1978)**

Ziad Antar is a photographer and a video artist who explores conflicts, urban and social mutations in a rudimentary poetic approach.

*Portrait Redux* presents his portraits of Haifa Wehbe and Hashem El Madani drawn from out dated films that the artist collected in Madani's Scheherazade studio, a Lebanese photographer who was active since the 40s in the city of Sidon. The poor quality of material - most of which are films that have expired at the beginning of the civil war - allowed the artist to obtain images almost unreal and evanescent where we hardly perceive traits of the characters.

### **Bellagha Ali (Tunisia, 1924-2006)**

Member of the art School of Tunis, Ali Bellagha distinguished himself in many art forms: painting, drawing, printmaking, sculpture, ceramics. Inspired by the national heritage, the artist has developed a large gallery of portraits throughout his career that reflects the quests of identity and freedom in the era.

### **Yesmine Ben Khelil (Tunisia, 1986)**

Through drawing, Yesmine develops a wide range of fictional or real characters that suggest a sense of confusion, violence and absurdity. Her work is mainly based on ink interventions, using correctors and glittery gel on a series of portraits taken from the media and popular imagery.

In *Portrait Redux*, she revisits old photographs extracted from the private archives of Beit Bennani. Habib Bourguiba, Lamine Bey, Ali Riahi, Hassiba Rochdi and other major figures of the Tunisian political, religious and cultural history, which appear here in a new and unforeseen light.

### **Ymen Berhouma (Tunisia, 1976)**

Ymen Berhouma works within a mixed technique that combines acrylic collage and newsprint or tissue paper wet painted on canvas.

Since 2007, she exhibited large format portraits of children or androgynous characters with a melancholy gaze, heightened with bright, vibrant colours.

### **Bernard Buffet (France, 1928-1999)**

Bernard Buffet is an expressionist painter, he imposed his style from the late 40s through *nature morte*, genre scenes and portraits of hieratic figures with elongated forms, gaunt and angular features. These were performed in a limited palette consisting mostly of grey, black, green and sepia.

In most of his portraits, the characters have frail bodies, clenched hands and wrinkled faces with melancholic expressions.

Buffet's works are immediately recognizable, they are striking by their bare and poignant style that reflects the anguish and trauma of the artist marked by memories from World War II.

### **Jean Cocteau (France, 1889-1963)**

Jean Cocteau is a Poet, playwright and filmmaker who marked his century. He also distinguished himself in the art of drawing and ceramics, depicting scenes of everyday life and portraits of artist friends or mythological and imaginary characters that revealed his genuine talent in drawing.

*Portrait Redux* shows a ceramics that Cocteau executed at the end of the 50s in the pottery of Madeline-Jolly couple in Villefranche-sur-Mer, as well as a drawing of a portrait of writer and friend of the artist, Jean Desbordes, sketched in the position of the sleeper, considered by Cocteau as the model of models.

#### **Georges Dorignac (France, 1879-1925)**

Georges Durignac is a former student of portraitist Léon Bonnat. He took part in the activities of the National Society of Fine Arts and the 1922 Salon d'Automne in Paris.

A Painter, ceramist and poster designer, close to members of the School of Paris, he was known for his large charcoal drawings of nudes, dancers, farmers and maternity with sculptural and expressive faces imbued with symbolism.

#### **Hichem Driss (Tunisia, 1968)**

A graduate from the EFET School in Paris, Hichem Driss is a freelance photographer who has long worked with renowned photographers in the world of fashion, design, architecture and art photography. In 1998, he joined the Barguellig studio in Tunis dedicated to advertising photography, while continuing his own research on experimenting with different processing techniques of photographic imagery.

This exhibition reveals two recent works by the artist that document the official portraits of Ben Ali torn and thrown in the wake of the Tunisian revolution.

#### **Hatem El Mekki (Indonesia / Tunisia 1918-2003)**

As an absolute virtuoso of drawing, Hatem El Mekki made of Portrait his favoured subject. Writers, politicians, and other personalities of Tunisian history have been sketched by a prolific and proteiform adept of multi-faceted influences.

*Portrait Redux* presents four new works by Hatem El Mekki including two self-portraits displaying the resolute and mischievous face of the artist.

#### **Abdelaziz Gorgi (Tunisia, 1928-2008)**

Considered to be one of the leading figures of modern art in Tunisia, Abdelaziz Gorgi has made numerous sculptures of distorted and elongated characters caught in a free and airy movement. These three dimension portraits, not devoid of humour and poetry, are somewhat in continuity with the famous drawings of the artist.

#### **Kazim Ali (Pakistan, 1979)**

In his drawings and paintings, Ali Kazim depicts the flimsy and fragile bodies of men using a singular technique, based on repetitive and meticulous actions consisting in spreading several layers of pigments on paper and washing them successively with water so as to enhance the texture of the painting and to obtain a translucent effect. This technique is reminiscent of the religious rituals of purification; it reinforces the introspective and transcendental dimension in his work.

In *Portrait Redux*, the artist presents a self-portrait profile of striking intimacy and purity.

#### **Nicene Kossentini (Tunisia, 1976)**

A photographer and videographer, Nicene Kossentini interrogates Tunisian history and individual and collective memory. In *Portrait Redux*, she exhibits her video *Revenir* based on a family portrait.

"*Revenir* is an animated photograph, taken from the same family album where I drew the Boujmal portraits. This photograph was taken on a day in 1959 in front of a house in the medina, the old city of Sfax. In the foreground of the photo, my mother as a child, her cousins and her uncle. In the background, a little girl, hidden by the shadow of the wall, stands in the threshold of the door staring at the camera. I asked my mother who that girl was, but she did not know. So the little girl with the enigmatic face has been taken in the souvenir photo without being invited. There she stands on the photo, but her identity is now veiled, concealed like a ghost. *Revenir* is thus a return back to a distant childhood to explore the unnamed areas of memory. "Photography as a means of reminiscences". An interview by Marian Nur Goni with Nicène Kossentini, 2011

#### **Marie Laurencin (France, 1883-1956)**

Discovered by Picasso and Apollinaire, Marie Laurencin is distinguished by her paintings and watercolours depicting women and girls with elongated shapes and melancholy looks. Often attired in

pearls and flowers, the characters symbolize a certain lifestyle in the mundane reckless Paris of the Roaring Twenties.

In *Portrait Redux*, a study for a watercolour by Laurencin shows a round of costumed girls accompanied by a dog. Punctuated by delicate pastels, their graceful curves and sleek lines are reminiscent of the famous drawings by Jean Cocteau.

"My women are initially girls, then they all become princesses." (M. L.)

### **Mimmo Rotella (Italy, 1918-2006)**

Mimmo Rotella was part of the New Realists alongside Raymond Hains, Jacques Villeglé and Francois Dufrene. His first lacerated posters dating back to early 50's. At that time, he unglued leaflets from the streets of Rome before moving on to figurative posters pertaining to the circus, to Hollywood movies and to Cinecitta.

"Tearing off wall posters is the only compensation, the only way to protest against a society that has lost the taste for change and for great transformations. I glue posters, then I tear them: this is how new and unpredictable forms are born. This protest made me give up the easel painting." (M. R., Rome 1957)

### **Massinissa Selmani (Algeria, 1980)**

Massinissa Selmani is an Algerian artist who lives and works in France. His works are characterized by an economy of means and sobriety standing in counterpoint to the ubiquity of media images.

In *Portrait Redux*, two drawings by the artist re-examine media violence and the recent phenomenon of selfies, self-portraits taken with mobile phones and uploaded to social networks.

"My approach, while experimenting with drawing, has a particular interest in the news, their means of mediatization and the resulting production of images. I am trying an approach that takes up the codes of photojournalism, documentary, archive, and even press cartoons where a tension between comedy and tragedy is often at work. In the confrontation with reality, at times tragic, I privilege thought that opposes spectacular sensation, often satirical, reaching out to an economy of technical means." (M.S.)

### **Malick Sidibé (Mali, 1936)**

Nicknamed "the eye of Bamako," Malick Sidibé soon falls into the portrait tradition with the opening of his own photography studio in 1962, in the popular neighbourhood of Bagdadji. To this day, he works on ID photos are set alongside group or individual portraits immortalized in simple and funny "mise en scenes". His portraits which document fashion trends, customs and cults objects of different generations of Malians, have become in recent years an international appeal.

Malick Sidibé has been awarded the Hasselblad photography prize in 2003.

### **Raed Yassin (Lebanon, 1979)**

Raed Yassin works in a multidisciplinary approach, progressing between music, photography, video and performance art. His work essentially explores collective memory and Arab popular culture through an attempt at reclaiming images from the mass media or from the personal archives of the artist.

In the *Self-Portrait with Foreign Fruit and Vegetables* series, Raed revisits the classical genre of self-portraiture pausing shirtless with vegetables and fruits as a unique ornament. The idea of the series came to him while in Amsterdam, where he gained interest in the cultural differences between the Arab world and the Netherlands through food.