

MEDIA RELEASE

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Deborah Colton Gallery
Mapping Strife: Perception and Reality

September 20th, 2014 through November 8th, 2014
Opening Reception: Saturday, September 20th, from 7:30 to 10:00 pm

Deborah Colton Gallery is pleased to present *Mapping Strife: Perception and Reality*, a provocative conceptual exhibition that introduces to a diverse American audience multimedia artworks from the perspective of 3 lauded Arab-world artists. The exhibition features paintings, photography, works on paper, video works and installations. The exhibition opens Saturday, September 20th, 2014, with a reception for the artists from 7:30 until 10:00pm.

Mapping Strife, as indicated by its title, checks the pulse of the charged geopolitical, sociopolitical, and humanitarian crises proximate to the three exhibiting artists, Khaled Hafez (Egypt), Ferhat Özgür (Istanbul), and Mahmoud Obaidi (Iraq), and highlights the great divide between the public perception and the “reality” of represented social climates, as influenced by the global politico-media complex.

These artists, through a variety of conventions of representation, present works that are unfiltered, if not uninfluenced, by the media-propagated agenda that shapes public awareness and reinforces popular opinion. While their works ever allude to the traumatic events that have defined their respective artistic orientations, their artworks ultimately suggest, under the guises of nostalgia, humor or irony, transformation and link the past to the present in a thoroughly contemporary fashion.

Mapping Strife encourages its audience to consider the indeterminate boundaries of perception and reality as well as mass-media influence upon collective consciousness. This exhibition insinuates that, if perception is reality, alternate realities exist... and some are manufactured.

Khaled Hafez was born in Cairo, Egypt in 1963 where he currently lives and works. His practice spans the mediums of painting, video, photography, installation and interdisciplinary approaches. In the 80s he studied medicine but also closely followed the development of the fine arts scene in Cairo. After attaining a medical degree in 1987 and M.Sc. as a medical specialist in 1992, he gave up medical practices in the early nineties for a career in the arts. He later obtained an MFA in New Media and Digital Arts from Transart Institute in New York, USA and Danube University Krems in Austria.

Of his own work, Hafez elucidates:

“I am interested in movement, an element that was indispensable in ancient Egyptian painting, where all painted elements were in *motion*, as opposed to Egyptian sculpture that always caught the protagonists in a “pose”, nearly always *static*. In contemporary culture dominated by a century of film and animation, the similarity between the ancient and the current contemporary forms of *the kinetic* is intriguing to me, and a focal aspect of my research. I link imagery of the ancient iconography with *deja-vu* contemporary advertising elements; the icons/images are manipulated to insinuate metamorphosis. I believe that we are at a point in history where there is cultural recycling: visual, conceptual, beliefs among other aspects.”

Hafez’s work has been exhibited extensively worldwide, including in Biennales and film festivals in Venice, Santorini, Havana, Manifesta, Bamako, Mercosul, Guangzhou, Sharjah, Singapore, Dakar, London and Sarajevo, among others. He has been featured three times in the Dubai Art Fair and the Abu Dhabi Art Fair, twice in the Marakesh Art Fair in

Morocco, the MENASA Art Fair in Beirut, and Paris Photo in Paris France. He has also been a featured artist at Art Basel Miami in the convention center. Solo presentations of his artwork have been hosted in numerous countries worldwide including in Egypt, Germany, Switzerland, Spain, the United Arab Emirates, Italy, Cameroon, and France. He has also participated in group exhibitions in the United States, Sweden, Turkey, Bosnia Herzegovina, France, Italy, Greece, Belgium, the United Kingdom, Russia, Japan and the Netherlands in addition to many more presentations of artwork in various metropolises worldwide.

Hafez has received various awards and fellowships for his work, including a Fulbright in 2005, the Rockefeller Bellagio Fellowship in 2009, the Francophonie Prize in 2004 and the Foundation Blachere Prize in 2011. His artwork is currently included in such public collections worldwide as the Saatchi Collection in London, the MuHKA Museum of Contemporary Art in Antwerp, the Mali National Museum, and the State Museum of Art in Thessaloniki, Greece.

Ferhat Özgür grew up in Ankara and lives and works in Istanbul where he teaches at the Yeditepe University, Fine Arts Faculty. His recent solo shows were held in MoMA PS1 New York and Marabouparken Sweden in 2013. Özgür's work has been presented at numerous international institutions, biennials and galleries all over the world, including the 6th Berlin Biennial; 10th International Istanbul Biennial; 1st Tirana Biennial; 3rd Örebro Open Art Biennial; 1st Mardin Biennial; 1st & 3rd Sinopale; Centre Georges Pompidou-Paris; Istanbul Modern, Artium-Basque Museum-Centre of Contemporary Art-Vitoria, Museum of Contemporary Art-Belgrade, Haus der Kulturen der Welt-Berlin; Museum der Moderne-Salzburg; MUMOK-Vienna; Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo-Turin; Ludwig Forum-Aachen; Mattress Factory Art Museum-Pittsburgh; Marian Goodman Gallery-Paris etc. Kunsthalle Winterthur-Switzerland; Magazin4, Bregenz; Casino Luxembourg-Forum d'art Contemporain-Luxembourg. Özgür's works have been included in many institutional significant collections such as ARTER-Istanbul, George Pompidou-Paris, FRAC-Bordeaux, Sandretto Re Rebaudengo-Turin, Zabudowicz Foundation-London etc.

Ferhat Özgür's works often emerge through performative staging of certain scenes that are sometimes explicit in their intention, but sometimes metaphorical, ironical, surrealistic and absurd. In his works on paper and site-specific mural, his anti-militarist approach functions as a metaphor against violence which is associated globally with economical, cultural, social and political traumas as a masculine power. Issues about militarism and political that he tries to highlight ironically in his works on paper enter a curious dialogue with the scenes in his performative video *Remains of the Day*.

Mahmoud Obaidi, born in 1966 in Baghdad, is an Iraqi-Canadian contemporary artist. After leaving Iraq in 1991, he obtained his Masters of Fine Arts at the University of Guelph in Canada, and completed diplomas in New Media and Film in Toronto and Los Angeles. Since his first international solo exhibition in 1995, his work has been exhibited in a number of museums and galleries around the world, including the National Museum of Bahrain, Manama; Musée de l'Institut du Monde Arabe, Paris; Mathaf: Arab Museum of Modern Art, Doha; Jordan National Gallery of Fine Arts, Amman; Station Museum of Contemporary Art, Houston, Texas; and Musée d'Art Contemporain de Baie-Saint-Paul, Quebec, among others. His work is part of the permanent collection of a number of significant museums, foundations and private collections.

In his multi-media series *The Replacement*, Obaidi explores the visual construction and commodification of authoritarian power. A heretofore unrealized political campaign employs iconographic visual strategy and the propagandist methods employed in political campaigns for Joseph Stalin, Benito Mussolini, and Adolf Hitler and shows the direct influence of state graphics used in the DDR and in the Soviet Union. In effect, this series considers the exchange of leadership and the influence of calculated media representation as Obaidi very cleverly establishes the connections between power, propaganda and art.

Deborah Colton Gallery is founded on being an innovative showcase for ongoing presentation and promotion of strong historical and visionary contemporary artists world-wide, whose diverse practices include painting, works on paper, sculpture, video, photography, performance, conceptual future media and public space installations. The gallery aspires to provide a forum through connecting Texas, national and international artists to make positive change.