

# BERLONI

63 MARGARET STREET, LONDON, W1W 8SW



## Steve SABELLA **fragments**

7 MARCH - 10 MAY

Berloni Gallery is proud to present the first UK solo exhibition of Berlin-based Palestinian artist Steve Sabella. From March 7 - May 10, 2014, *Cecile Elise Sabella* (2008), *In Exile* (2008), *Metamorphosis* (2012) and *38 Days of Re-Collection* (2014) will be on display.

Hubertus Von Amelunxen, writer of Sabella's upcoming monograph to be published by Hatje Cantz and the Academy of the Arts (Sept 2014), cites how his collages, "form a dazzling tableau of possible transitions and detachment processes between world and image, image and world. Sabella uses photography as an artistic language of existential exile. His relationship with the medium is penetrating."

Sabella came to terms with his exile preferring to remain in transition. As Vilém Flusser writes, "Emigres become free, not when they deny their lost homeland, but when they come to terms with it". In his works, *In Exile*, he gives form to the symptoms or side effects of exile, where as in *Cecile Elise Sabella*, photographs of his daughter's clothing are stitched to canvas mirroring the duality of exile—a simultaneous presence and absence. But, in *Metamorphosis*, he confronts the core components that shaped his feeling of alienation. As he writes, "The hard work was finding how to allow for a new transformation, while accepting that my DNA will always stay the same." It was through the investigation of his state of exile, a process of self-interrogation and introspection, that Sabella was able to dig deeper into the relationship between images and the reality they create.

Sabella is a visual investigator, researching the origin and function of images. He explores the visual components of the world by looking into the image itself—much like in scientific research. He studies images, their characteristics, the connections between them, and their origin by looking at them directly and not in comparison with reality. This has allowed him to discover the infinite realities that are hidden in images. In his work, he photographs from several different angles, after which he creates or reveals new forms. Akin to an archeologist who is intrigued to find fragments from the past in order to make sense of history, Sabella engages in a process of positioning images, like in a visual puzzle, to decode the origin of the image and the question of what existed first: the image or the world?

In *38 Days of Re-Collection* Sabella lived for 38 days in a Palestinian home occupied by Israelis since 1948. Feeling unsettled, he tried to make sense of the space by photographing it thoroughly, then collected fragments of paint that were peeling off the walls of the home he was born in, and other houses in the Old City of Jerusalem. He painted light sensitive B&W photo emulsion on the fragments, and printed the images he had taken on them. The work explores the relationship between two realities—one being Israeli colonization and the other being the Palestinian Right of Return. This is the story that emerges on the surface of the work. But the visual palimpsest that unfolds explores, not just the history of the house in Jerusalem, but more profoundly the history of the image itself. As Sabella writes, "I found myself exploring the genealogy of the image."

Steven Sabella, born in Jerusalem in 1975, uses photography and photographic installation as his principle modes of expression. He holds two MAs, one from the University of Westminster and one from Sotheby's Institute of Art in London. He was nominated for and awarded the Ellen Auerbach Award (2008) by the Akademie der Künste in Berlin and was one of the commissioned artists for the inauguration of MATHAF Arab Museum of Modern Art in Doha where he presented a critical installation entitled *Settlement - Six Israelis & One Palestinian*. His artworks were shown in *Les Rencontres d'Arles 2013* and *FotoFest 2014* biennales.

Sabella's artworks and life have triggered much media attention. He has been featured in several documentary films and was 'Artist of the Month' on *IkonTV* in 2011 and 2013. Sabella was invited as a speaker for *TEDx Marrakech* in 2012.

Steve Sabella's artworks have been collected by the British Museum in London, Mathaf: Arab Museum of Modern Art in Doha, Ars Aevi Museum in Sarajevo and leading collectors in the Middle East including The Samawi Collection, Cuadro Fine Art (Dubai), Salsali Private Museum (Dubai) and Barjeel Art Foundation (Sharjah).

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