

apexart opens 'Occupational Hazards' organized by Alexandra Stock



Occupational Hazards curated by Alexandra Stock, Installation view. Image courtesy apexart.

NEW YORK, NY.- Art transcends borders—until it doesn't. In 2016, Ahmad Hammoud's artwork *Passport for the Stateless* traveled from an exhibition in Dubai to its origin in Cairo. But before it was allowed back into the country, Egyptian customs officials drew deep lines of red ballpoint pen across the booklet's 32 pages and nearly tore it in half. This happened despite the fact that, while the artwork resembles a passport, it is obviously not a valid travel document.

Occupational Hazards is an exhibition dedicated to artworks that have been lost, damaged or destroyed when shipped throughout the Middle East. While items can become ruined or lost without ill intent, this is also happening as governments become increasingly wary of subversive movements to the point of scrutinizing anything that looks unusual or unfamiliar. And like everything else that crosses borders, the circulation of art can also fall under intense inspection when the works in question are misinterpreted as possessing a definitive message or an inherent influence, especially when art's esoteric qualities elude a standard interpretation of value and meaning.

Presenting a range of works by artists with deep connections to Egypt, Jordan, Iran, Kuwait, Palestine, and Tunisia, as well as other artists with works marked by travels through the Middle East/North Africa region, the project addresses how and why artworks become subject to overzealous vetting systems—whether by deliberate force or through passive negligence—and in some cases, how artists are able to reclaim agency despite these circumstances.

In addition to works damaged or destroyed while going through customs, the exhibition shows examples of works which, though forbidden or mired by bureaucratic hurdles, have made it across borders; works that incorporate incidental or intentional damages as a conceptual underpinning; and works which have been reformatted post-incident to incorporate and accommodate such damages. The project thus illustrates ways that artists are enduring, responding to, and circumventing the consequences of contemporary cross-border travel.

Alexandra Stock is a Swiss/American curator and artist based mainly in Cairo since 2007. She holds a BFA from the Zurich University of the Arts, participated in De Appel's Curatorial Program, and has held curatorial and/or managerial positions at three leading contemporary art institutions in the MENA region. She has co-/curated exhibitions and festivals in Alexandria, Amsterdam, Bahrain, and Cairo and has exhibited or screened her own work in Amsterdam, Belgrade, Brussels, Cairo, Dahab, Kampala, Lomé, Maastricht, Paris, Winterthur, and Zurich. Stock is currently developing a project with support of the FfAI and is pursuing a MA in Diplomacy at SOAS.

apexart's program supporters past and present include The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, The Buhl Foundation, Bloomberg Philanthropies, The Greenwich Collection Ltd., William Talbott Hillman Foundation/Affirmation Arts Fund, Spencer Brownstone, the Milton and Sally Avery Arts Foundation, the Fifth Floor Foundation, the Consulate General of Israel in New York, the Kenneth A. Cowin Foundation, the Trust for Mutual Understanding, and public funds from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the City Council and the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of Governor Andrew M. Cuomo and the New York State Legislature.