



NEW YORK

Katrin Sigurdardóttir, Theresa Himmer, Mounira Al Solh

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LIKE CHILDREN SHARING a treat, the three artists in this exhibition parceled the non-profit's building into separate exhibition spaces for their new commissions. As a result, each work is seen in completely different circumstances and refers to the venue in a distinct way. There is no need to search for a common thread between the pieces on view here—their true link is in how each artist reconsiders the very idea of the exhibition space, making for a challenging experience in which the visitor is constantly catching up with the pace of the works.

It starts in the street. The storefront project room is the location for Sigurdardóttir's *Stage*. The Icelandic artist, who will be representing her country at the Venice Biennale in 2013, built a miniature stage, almost an architectural model, and suspended it from the ceiling of the empty, unlit room. It's easy to miss—the

work is inaccessible and can only be seen from the street—and it turns our thoughts to the act of looking at art: from a distance, or standing in front of a piece in quiet contemplation. The rendering of the theater space also appropriates its system of viewing.

Moving up is the Musée Miniscule, the locale of Himmer's site-specific sound installation *All State*. With her collaborator Kristján Eggertsson, Himmer created a palindromic recording in the building's elevator. For this six-hour composition, which corresponded with the institution's open hours, the artist recorded the sounds of the elevator's switchboard, phone, bells, doors, and other odd squeaks to create a score tying form and function in infinite variations. Each of the bars in the score corresponds with the movement of the elevator, generating a real

sense of suspense. The sounds react to the machinery in a way that can't be explained, leaving the viewer to fill the voids: What is the artwork and what is the thing itself? Why do the bells signaling each floor suddenly sound ominous? Where exactly does the work start and end? The confusion is part of Himmer's witty and thoughtful reconstruction of what a show can be.

A video installation on four white walls of the sixth floor may seem unexciting compared with the storefront object and the sonic experience of riding the elevator, but Al Solh's first solo presentation in New York could convince anyone of its merits. Film buffs may appreciate the quotations from a number of John Cassavetes movies in her new work, *Dinosaurs*, while others will be impressed with the translation between contexts and specificities: The

videos mirror the American filmmaker's works, but the actors are Lebanese and the locations characteristically Middle Eastern. Al Solh's characters drink, smoke, talk, and dance—but more than emulating scenes from *Opening Night* or *The Killing of a Chinese Bookie*, they are exposing a certain fragility of their situation. The multichannel installation is visually striking, with projectors and computers placed on the floor, revealing the means of making the exhibition. But cinematic tradition is the bloodline of the work, and Al Solh masters its form in cuts that pause at the height of drama. Still, the work remains elegant and personal in the way it links Al Solh's biography and her reflections on the culture of her home country with a larger artistic practice and tradition.

—Orit Gat

Mounira Al Solh  
Film still from  
*Dinosaurs*, 2012.

MOUNIRA AL SOLH, ART IN GENERAL, NEW YORK, AND SFEIR-SEMLER GALLERY, BEIRUT AND HAMBURG