

Press release

Dor Guez | *Between Wind and Water*

06.05.2022 – 04.06.2022

Opening: Thursday, 5 May 2022, 6–9 pm

carlier | gebauer is pleased to announce *Between Wind and Water*, Dor Guez's fifth solo exhibition with the gallery and his first at carlier | gebauer, Madrid. Guez was born in Jerusalem into a Christian Palestinian family on his mother's side and a Sephardic-Jewish immigrants' family on his father's side. The exhibition presents three series of archival inkjet prints conceptually engaging with the personal and historical dimensions of migration and pilgrimage.

The artists most recent body of work, *Letters from the Greater Maghreb* consists of two series of archival inkjet prints recently commissioned by the Jewish Museum in New York City.

The first is a series of enlarged images capturing thin layers of folded parchment papers which were used by Guez's grandmother as patterns for costumes adorned at the Jewish-Tunisian theatre. The patterns are based on Burda magazine designs which were spread from Europe internationally. Guez found the folded parchments, with the additional decorative elements drawn on by his grandmother. He photographed them on a paper-made lightbox, revealing different layers of the transparent material. Each image represents different body parts such as the torso, arms, etc. The second series shows washed-out blue inkjet prints which are enlarged fragments of the theatre plays written by his grandfather.

Furthermore, the exhibition includes one work from Guez's series *Lilies of the Field* which mines the rich historical and mythological dimensions of Jerusalem as a site of religious and political projection. The photographic series comprises luminous prints of pressed floral and plant arrangements that the artist discovered in his research of the American Colony archives that represent a diversity of flora indigenous to the holy land, and the areas surrounding the Old City.

Between Wind and Water is a nautical metaphor designating the part of a ship close to the waterline, a vulnerable point particularly prone to damage. This phrase was first documented in its literal sense at the time of the Spanish Armada (1588): 'One of the shots was between the wind and water, whereof they thought she would have sunk.' By the mid-17th century, the term was also applied to people—a fitting descriptor for the precarity of lives on the move.

Darsie Alexander, the Chief Curator at the Jewish Museum New York wrote the following on his most recent series:

"Dor Guez's artistic practice is at once forensic and personal. It culminates in installations of found objects and deeply textured "scanograms," a term he uses to describe a unique digital imaging process. Born into a blended family of Palestinians and Tunisian Jews, Guez explores chapters of his layered history to expose the hidden connections, subversive undercurrents, and present-day contexts of his family's unique story and that of the region he comes from. Oftentimes the point of departure is a seemingly modest treasure from the family archive—a vintage wedding photograph, a dressmaker's pattern, or a notebook written in an ancient Judeo-Arabic dialect. Yet, for Guez such relics are the stuff of expansive possibility.

Guez's work plays on the tension between what one inherits—a language, a name, a place of origin—and what one reinvents over time. Stories are told and retold, and traces of the past are rediscovered, shedding light on little-known facts and familial chapters.

One recent work, *Letters from the Greater Maghreb*, reflects a pivotal moment in Guez's family history when his grandparents—who both worked in theater—escaped from labour camps in Nazi-occupied Tunisia and later in 1951, immigrated to Israel. The journey was arduous as key personal documents were damaged by water during the trip. One of these was a manuscript written by his grandfather in Judeo-Tunisian Arabic, using what looks like a mix of Hebrew and Arabic characters. Taking the fragile pages of the surviving document and creating enlarged scans of the single sheets and sections, Guez intensifies themes of blurring and loss in the resultant prints, bringing the viewer closer to and farther away from the meaning of the original words.

This visualization of disappearance evokes several cultural shifts simultaneously, particularly relating to language; Tunisian Jews adopted Hebrew as their language when they moved to Israel, and Judeo-Tunisian Arabic has begun to disappear. Duplication and fragmentation thus reify the immigrant experience of doubling and absence. Speaking of the visual devices at play in his work, Guez writes, “The words are engulfed in abstract spots and these become a metaphor for the harmonious conjunction between two Semitic languages, between one mother tongue and another, and between homeland and a new country.” Operating on multiple levels at once, Guez finds and resituates objects to reveal not only what has been lost from the past, but what has been largely forgotten or even consciously suppressed; the Nazi occupation of Tunisia, for example, is rarely addressed or publicly acknowledged. Yet his work allows these connections to emerge so poignantly because he cleaves so closely to the people whose lives they affected. His work quite literally fills negative space, as evidenced in his colorization and scanning techniques. Guez also uses lightboxes to exaggerate overlooked relics, heightening their graphic presence. Adapting the clean, sterile casework of museum display, he puts personal objects on view while drawing attention to their intricacy and fragility while also highlighting the powerful hybridity of displaced cultural artifacts and postwar readymades. In this blurred, unclassifiable realm—between the personal and the social, the found and fabricated, the seen and obscured—that Guez's work gathers its force.”

Darsie Alexander

The Susan and Elihu Rose Chief Curator at the Jewish Museum New York
Text from the exhibition catalog: *Afterlives: Recovering the Lost Stories of Looted Art*,
August 20, 2021 - January 9, 2022, Published by Yale University Press

Dor Guez is the founder of the CPA (Christian-Palestinian Archive), the co-director of Seaport: Mediterranean Curatorial Residency, and the Head of the MFA Program at Bezalel Academy of Arts and Design, Jerusalem. Guez lives and works in Jaffa. To date, eight catalogues have been published internationally about Guez's practice. Publishers include Distanz, New England Press, and A.M Qattan Foundation.

Guez has had over 45 solo exhibitions worldwide at venues such as Kunst im Kreuzgang, Bielefeld (2021); Futura Gallery, Prague, (2020); American Colony Archive, Jerusalem (2019); MAN Museum, Nuoro (2018); DEPO, Istanbul (2017); the Museum for Islamic Art, Jerusalem (2017); the Museum of Contemporary Art, Detroit (2016); the Institute of Contemporary Arts, London (2015); the Center for Contemporary Art, Tel Aviv (2015); the Rose Art Museum, Brandeis University, Massachusetts (2013); Artpace, San Antonio (2013); the Mosaic Rooms, Centre for Contemporary Arab Culture & Art, London (2013); the KW Institute for Contemporary Art, Berlin (2010); and Petach Tikva Museum of Art, (2009). His work has been included in numerous international exhibitions and biennials including the 12th Istanbul Biennial, Istanbul; 17th, 18th, and 19th International Contemporary Art Festival, Videobrasil, São Paulo; 3rd Moscow International Biennale, Moscow; Biennale Bénin, Cotonou; Palais de Tokyo, Paris; Tokyo Metropolitan Museum of Photography; and MAXXI Museum, Rome.