



Open Source Gallery, Inc - 501(c)(3) Organization
306 17th street, Brooklyn, NY 11215, contact@opensourcegallery.org 646 279 3969 opensourcegallery.org
Gallery Hours: Wednesday - Saturday: 2pm - 7pm

RAWIYA: IN HER ABSENCE I CREATED HER IMAGE

May 7-28, 2016

Opening Reception: May 7, 7-9pm

Panel Discussion: May 12, 7-9pm

Rawiya presents *In Her Absence I Created Her Image*, an exhibit of documentary photography at Open Source Gallery.

In Her Absence I Created Her Image will explore the lives of communities and individuals in the Middle East through documentary photography, focusing on social, political, and human rights issues across Arab countries. At a time when Islamophobia in the U.S. runs rampant and many view the Middle East with suspicion, efforts to create understanding are of the utmost importance. This exhibit, the title of which is inspired by a poem by Mahmoud Darwish, includes work by photographers Laura Boushnak, Tanya Habjouqa, Myriam Abdelaziz, and Tamara Abdul Hadi, members of the Rawiya photography collective. Rawiya aims to dispel stereotypes about this often misunderstood and underrepresented region by shining a light on the everyday hardships and shared experiences of its inhabitants, thereby encouraging a more compassionate and empathetic worldview. Within *In Her Absence I Created Her Image*, individual projects and varied themes contribute to an overarching theme of humanity, dignity, and empowerment.



Laura Boushnak: From the series *I Read I Write*

In *I Read I Write*, Boushnak delves into issues surrounding access to education, exploring the role of literacy in improving the lives of Arab women. Her photographs span across Tunisia, Yemen, Jordan, Egypt, and Kuwait, capturing arresting portraits of young women for whom education is the first step in improving their lives. In *Occupied Pleasures*, Habjouqa explores the everyday existence of Palestinians who, with the threat of violence often overhead, seek out simple joys. Pain and pleasure are often opposite signs of the same coin and Habjouqa explores the paradoxes and humor resulting from everyday existence within a 47-year occupation. Abdelaziz strives to expose harsh child labor conditions as a result of the Egyptian economic crisis in *Menya's Kids*. Her young subjects emerge in a white haze of dust from the limestone quarries that they must cut with dangerous machinery, often prone to premature death from electrocution or injury. Finally, Abdul Hadi's *Picture an Arab Man* seeks to fight hypermasculine stereotypes surrounding the Arab male. Abdul Hadi provides the viewer with a portrayal of sensual beauty and vulnerability, defying the violent narrative that afflicts these men. The artists of Rawiya come together to show the world what it cannot always see: people not as caricatured victims, but intensely human, with an entire spectrum of vulnerabilities and intricacies they hold wholly their own.

Rawiya, meaning "she who tells a story," is the first all-female photography collective from the Middle East. Members of the group include New York- and Cairo-based photographer Myriam Abdelaziz, Beirut-based photographer Tamara Abdul Hadi, Sarajevo-based photographer Laura Boushnak, and East Jerusalem-based photographer Tanya Habjouqa. As a group, Rawiya has exhibited at places such as the Empty Quarter Gallery (Lebanon), Contemporary Art Platform (Kuwait), Ernest G. Welch Gallery (USA), Bildmuseet Museum (Sweden), Modern Museum (Hungary), New Art Exchange (UK) and the Louisiana Museum (Denmark).

This exhibit is supported by the National Endowment for the Arts.

