

September 10 – October 15, 2016

NIDAA BADWAN

100 Days of Solitude

Postmasters Gallery is pleased to present Nidaa Badwan: *100 Days of Solitude*. Showing in the US for the first time. Palestinian artist Nidaa Badwan's photographs are from Gaza but not of Gaza.

For 20 months, Nidaa Badwan did not leave her 100 square foot room to face the outside world. Inside, in her war-imposed withdrawal and isolation, she created—and photographed—an immersive world of her own. Safe and free in this small oasis, she produced a series of stunning self-portraits, a project she calls 100 Days of Solitude, an homage to the landmark novel of magical realism by Gabriel García Márquez.



She is alone. She becomes a cook, a seamstress, a dancer, an artist. Mental space creating a bulwark against the world outside, then transcending it, a peaceful new world.

During the first year of the project Badwan composed and photographed 14 tableaux. Each took weeks, or even a month, to realize, given the severe resource constraints and violence of the outside world. As the privations in Gaza continued, so has Badwan's production; an additional ten images date from the post-bombardment period of 2015-6.

The materials available to construct her tableaux are understandably limited—painted newspapers, a patchwork bedspread, pieces of salvaged wood, household utensils—but Badwan transforms them completely. "Time was the single element that I used to recover a reality that was as clear as possible, in the midst of this city's racket," Badwan says. "A city drowned in its own misery, where values are overwhelmed by a vile surrealism, and that knows neither colors nor peace." Then, as Badwan told *The New York Times* in 2015, "I wait for the light." Time and light, the fundamental medium of the photographer.

Badwan's 100 Days of Solitude is far more than psychological escapism in the face of violence and uncertainty. Like García Márquez' utopian city of Macondo, Badwan realizes vistas of a world created and preserved within her mind. It is a willful convergence of fiction and reality. Her conjurings are also a fight for survival through creation, a contemporary embodiment of Scheherazade's spinning a thousand and one nights' worth of stories to stave off her own death.

Considered in an art context, Badwan's images evoke references as far afield as the various staged photo practices of Jeff Wall, Cindy Sherman, and Thomas Demand, and Alyse Emdur's photos of escapist photo backdrops painted on the walls of prison visiting rooms. It is the transformative power of art, the resolve to create even in the direst conditions, that distinguishes Badwan's works, and which gives them resonance far beyond her Gaza walls. It's as if Badwan took the title of Harald Szeemann's landmark 1969 exhibition literally, to "Live in Your Head: When Attitudes Become Form," transmuting mental space into physical space, and then into images. Art that, as Gerhard Richter said, "is the highest form of hope."

Born in 1987 in Abu Dhabi (UAE), Nidaa Badwan has been living in Gaza since 1998 and graduated in 2009 from the Fine Arts Department of Gaza's Al-Aqsa University. Her first exhibition was inaugurated that same year in the ruins of the Palestinian Red Crescent Society's theater, after the Cast Lead operation launched by the Israeli army. Between 2009 and 2012, she worked for the Tamer Institute for Community Education, as a trainer in the fields of plastic arts, artistic expression and photography. Nidaa Badwan has also exhibited in Palestine, Jordan, France, Germany, Denmark, Italy and the Republic of San Marino.