

**Mahmoud Khaled**  
When Meanings Face Glossy Surfaces

Curated by Aleya Hamza  
14 December 2010 – 8 January 2011

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CIC / Contemporary Image collective  
4th Floor,  
22 Abdel Khalek Tharwat  
Downtown Cairo



*When Meanings Face Glossy Surfaces* brings together five artworks produced in the last three years and shown for the first time in the institutional context of Cairo at CIC.

The exhibition builds on Mahmoud Khaled's context-responsive practice, which has primarily been inspired by an episodic mobility in the international artist residency circuit and the rhetoric of multicultural exchange that drives it. It methodically stages, references and borrows from forms, conventions, styles and aesthetics associated with the sphere of art in its virtual, domestic or institutional capacities. More specifically, *When Meanings Face Glossy Surfaces* composes a dynamic space for reflection on some basic questions about society's complicated relationship to art forms and the construct of the artist.

**Niche, 2009-10**

15 photographs (20x15x3.5 cm each), digital print, wood and glass cabinet.



*Niche* (2009-10) concerns itself with the *objet d'art* and its display. An ornate vitrine characteristic of bourgeois households showcases a set of small-scale framed photographs, abstracted crops of wild but lush landscapes. Taken by Khaled during an artist residency, the images are depictions of Montjuic Park, a cruising spot in Barcelona and a site for stranger intimacy in public space. This tension between ambiguity and familiarity in the photo-installation redefines our relationship to an artwork, the value assigned to it and the context that informs its meaning.



**Google Me / Duplicate Self-portrait, 2010**

Two framed photographs (105x75x7 cm each), digital print.

*Google Me / Duplicate Self-portrait* (2010) presents us with two images as objects. Each image is of a black screen shot displaying a single frame pulled from a video of a public performance at precisely the same moment. A command bar enabling the original viewer of the online video to play, pause, maximize or mute splits each image. *Google Me* began in 2008 as a response to a predetermined institutional art form (the artist talk) in an international context (the artist residency) for articulating the professional identity of an artist and his practice. Since then it has evolved into a work in multiple renditions that on one level explores the search for and the enactment of an artistic self and its duplicates in the public domain.



### **This Show Is My Business, 2008**

Video Installation (single channel DVD, 15:50 min, loop, sound).

*This Show is my Business* (2008) is a single channel video that borrows from the classical genre of portraiture in its frontal figurative presentation of a heroic protagonist, and from the contemporary form of the media interview of a celebrity. In a public projection of an intimate encounter with a stranger, it forms a candid yet guarded exploration of gender, profession and ethnic questions, and an artist's quest for portraying another artist. Khaled takes an interest in belly-dance performers as artists confronting issues related to gender identity and notions of cultural 'authenticity' in a field located outside the boundaries typically claimed by contemporary art. The project takes as its point of departure Khaled's accidental discovery of Khaled Mahmoud, a popular London-based belly dancer born in Cairo, who the artist found after trying to 'google' his own name.



The *Studio as a Work of Art* (2010) is composed of a modular minimalist sculpture that sits on a red carpet. The monumental sculpture itself is formed of 200 blank canvases precariously stacked over each other. In this act of reconfiguration and replacement of the formal function of a classical artistic material lies a poetic and elusive rumination on the process of building an artwork.

### **The Studio as a Work of Art, 2010**

200 stacked blank canvases (35x50 cm each), red carpet (310x400)



**Safety Zoom, 2008-9**

Video Installation (single channel DVD, 7:13 min., loop, sound, wall paint, wallpaper, two life jackets, fishing hooks, painted plywood, photographic paper collage).



*Safety Zoom* (2008-9) uses footage spontaneously and voyeuristically shot by the artist during his London residency. Avoiding easy, documentary-style dichotomies of commentary and condemnation, Khaled opts instead for a productive ambiguity. Profoundly engaging the act of visual presentation, *Safety Zoom's* politicized liminality, part stage-set, part installation, invests the material with the power to go beyond mere judgment to that of reflection. This meditation on the power of spectacle, race relations and the camera's ability to directly affect its subject is a continuation of the artist's research into forms of presentation as well as the way society orders itself in relation to its members.



In Mahmoud Khaled's work we are subjected to the conceptual effects of an observant gaze that is primarily concerned with the boundaries and in-between zones of public life and its personal counterparts. Subjectivity is made objective and objectivity is subjectified to create an encounter with both the public and private domains at the very same instance.

Born in 1982, Alexandria, Egypt. Lives and works in Alexandria. Khaled has shown his works in solo and group exhibitions in Europe and the Middle East including BALTIC Center for Contemporary Art, Gateshead, UK (2010); Manifesta 8: European Biennale for Contemporary Art, (2010); *Overtime Work*, AAS/SM, Izmir, Turkey (2010); *A New Formalism*, Art Dubai 2010; *Indicated By Signs*, Bonner Kunstverein, Bonn, Germany (2009); *Trapped in Amber*, UKS, Oslo, Norway (2009); *PhotoCairo 4: The Long Shortcut*, Townhouse Gallery, Cairo, Egypt (2008); *MKMAEL Stories – An Image Passionate*, Makan, Amman, Jordan (2008); *Biacs 3*, Seville Biennale, Spain (2008); *All Clear*, Salzburger Kunstverein, Salzburg, Austria (2007); *Out of Place*, Sfeir-Semler Gallery, Beirut, Lebanon (2008); and 1<sup>st</sup> Canary Islands Biennale, Spain (2006).

Aleya Hamza is an independent curator based in Cairo. She is a partner in the curatorial collective HAMZAMOLNAR ([hamzamolnar.wordpress.com](http://hamzamolnar.wordpress.com)).

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