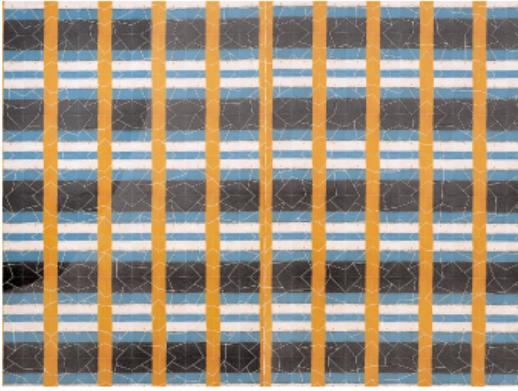


M E D I A R E L E A S E



Camille Zakharia: *Division Lines*

9 September (**NEW DATE**) – 15 October 2006

Opening reception: Friday 8 September at 8 pm

Camille Zakharia talk: Wednesday 6 September, 8 pm
Lecture Theatre 265, Sobey Bldg, 903 Robie Street

Photo-collage workshop:

Saturday 9 September 9 am - 5 pm

Sunday 10 September 9 am - 5 pm

Side Gallery, Free: call 420-5445 to register

While the world's attention is focused anxiously on Lebanon, Saint Mary's University Art Gallery launches its fall season with a major solo exhibition by a Lebanese-Canadian artist who has a long association with Halifax. *Camille Zakharia: Division Lines* features boldly patterned abstractions, documentary photographs and dreamlike collages by this photo-based artist.

The exhibition is a home-coming of sorts for Zakharia, who had a solo exhibition at the Dalhousie Faculty of Architecture in 1999. Born in Lebanon in 1962, Zakharia became a Canadian citizen in 1998. He received his Bachelor of Fine Arts from the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design (now NSCAD University) in 1997. He also works as a civil engineer, most recently in Bahrain.

The title series, *Division Lines* (2002-05), comprises twelve abstract, symmetrical compositions that dominate the newly renovated gallery space, hung on the wall like Persian carpets and echoing the repetitive patterning of Islamic tile work. Collaged from irregularly shaped photographic fragments of pavement markings, the works straddle the contemporary and the traditional, reflecting on cultural conditions in the region with the oldest urban civilisation on the planet.

Another series of recent work, *Distorted Memories* (2005) consists of ten works that the artist calls photomontages: each a composite from different negatives, digitally collaged from photos taken over a six-year period in the Middle East. "In these montages," says the artist, "I have tried to recreate the living experience and the way I remember it by selecting different images from different places."

Canadian Artists of Arab Origin (1999) is a series of portraits created for the Canadian Museum of Civilization in Gatineau, Québec. A dozen images from another series, *Stories from the Alley* (1999), offer a poetic description of a journey through a Middle Eastern village that is experiencing change as a part of globalisation. A fictional narrative accompanies the series, based on incidents from different times and places and set in 1991, the time of the earlier Iraq war, Desert Storm. Into the collages themselves, images of older urban streetscapes, the artist has inserted human figures and Arabic texts. The texts are mostly extracts from songs for the famous Egyptian singer Oum Koulthoum. "I enjoy listening to her when I am working on my art," writes Zakharia. "She lifts my spirit high. I forget who I am, where I am, my age, my sex, my worries...."

In both form and content," notes Saint Mary's Director/Curator, Robin Metcalfe, "Zakharia's collages comment on diaspora and fragmented identity. This reflects not only the experience of the artist and of (over) the contemporary Middle East, but of the many of us dislocated by recent historical conditions."

A forthcoming catalogue will include a curatorial text by Metcalfe as well as one by guest essayist Jamal al Moosawi-Hassanovich, Regional Arts Projects Manager for the Middle East, British Council, Oman. The Council recently commissioned Zakharia to do a photographic project about the Sultanate of Oman, similar to *Distorted Memories*.

The exhibition is the first in the Saint Mary's University Art Gallery since renovations to remove an aging carpet and expose the resurfaced concrete floor. The new floor surface will provide a cleaner, more contemporary context, particularly well suited for the exhibition of sculpture and larger wall works such as Zakharia's.

Camille Zakharia will give a public talk on his work on Wednesday, 6 September at 8:00 pm in Lecture Theatre 265, Sobey Building, 903 Robie Street. A public reception will take place at the Art Gallery on Friday, 8 September at 8:00 pm.

The artist will also offer a two-day photo-collage workshop, of particular interest to architecture students and photo-based artists, on Saturday and Sunday, 9-10 September, from 9:00 am to 5:00 pm, in the Side Gallery. Registration is limited to 12, so prospective participants are advised to call the gallery at 420-5445 no later than 6 September to register.

All events are free of charge and open to the public. Saint Mary's University Art Gallery is in the Loyola Building, 5865 Gorsebrook Avenue. This exhibition and associated activities are supported by programme funding from The Canada Council for the Arts.

-30-

Contact: 902 420-5444

Email: gallery@smu.ca

Website: www.smuartgallery.ca

Digitised image files/slides/photos available