

Shadi Habib Allah Free Rein

Sat 20 April – Sun 2 June 2019

Tue-Sat: 11am-6pm // Sun: 12noon-6pm // Preview: Fri 19 April, 7pm-9pm // Free

Shadi Habib Allah's exhibition at CCA explores the legacies of government welfare policies, examining how local areas adapt and survive in response to changes of city planning and strategy over time. Taking place at a time when CCA's surrounding area is undergoing many physical and emotional transformations, Shadi's work resonates with a changing city and street – as well as a politics of austerity – as he explores the hidden economies that arise in these contexts.

Shadi works across film, sculpture, sound and installation following long term processes of research and discussion in specific locales. The works in this show respond to the welfare policies and re-zoning of Liberty City where the artist once resided, which resulted in so-called food deserts in the surrounds of Miami. The recent transformation of the area, in part caused by the proliferation of chain supermarkets, complex real estate interests and city planning strategies forced corner shops to adopt new and illicit forms of trade such as exchanging food stamps and welfare cards for cash. Formerly serving as hubs for local communities and centres for non-monetary forms of exchange, the corner shops now maintain an interdependent relationship with their customers by allowing people to buy goods on credit or exchange food stamps and digital vouchers for cash. Shadi's work responds to the aesthetics of these new economies, examining how the representation of these communities and objects relates to the violence, ineptitude or apathy of the state.

Two new works explore this specific corner shop economy – in the large space a vast floor tile piece is installed, called **70 days Behind Inventory** – a vinyl floor reclaimed from one of these stores - and in CCA1 a new series of sculptures **Measured Volumes**, which mimic the hollow forms of grocery wrapping as solid and ghostly objects. Playing with the marks, recesses and absences of the shop's tiled floor and its masquerading, rarely-sold stock, Shadi examines the shop's false representation of itself, an identity which hides its true activity. The dwindling stock remains only to hide the store's real dealings, objects which act as a facade for the community's increasing requirement to access cash by means of credit. In **70 days Behind Inventory**, only the heat and dirt marked floor remains, marking the absence of the shop's former infrastructure, the floor now repurposed again as a signifier of change.

Shadi's work often explores how people categorise and value one another when considering social dependencies. His work often explores how those who are forced to survive on welfare or low incomes are encouraged to blame or devalue themselves and others in similar positions, distracting from a conversation which holds structures of power to account. Shadi is interested in this politics of distraction - in which society focuses on how the recipients of welfare should appear, speak and act - and which nationality they should be - exploring what is deemed an acceptable person-in-need. These questions are present in **The King and the Jester** – a film shot in an auto repair and paint shop in Liberty City, exploring the hierarchies present between workers and employer, and the ways in which they speak about one another. Many moments in this work

are scripted: relations, language and tomfoolery between characters may be heightened and exaggerated, but the artist does not reveal in which instances. The viewer is left to question what might be real and provoked, and how the roles of King and Jester shifts.

The theme of welfare is also developed in a new sound work **Sound Appearance**, which departs from an interest in changes in welfare politics from the Reagan era. The work is an excerpt from a now infamous episode of the Oprah Winfrey show titled *Welfare Debate*, recorded in 1986. In the recording, the protagonists are heard to make judgments on which kind of body should be permitted to receive benefit payments, and discussing the ethics of welfare payments for those who 'refuse' poorly paid work. These kinds of discussions are familiar in a UK context too. Shadi aims to reveal how a politics of austerity functions precisely through the diversion of attention produced by media coverage which gives importance to discussions on the cultural acceptability of welfare.

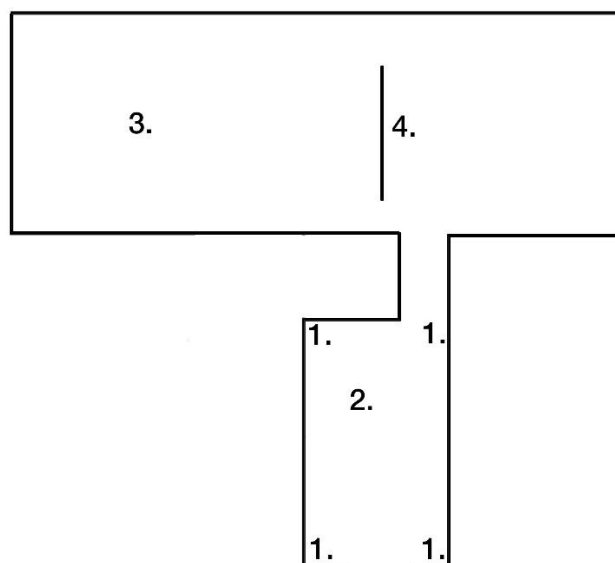
This exhibition is part of Mophradat's inaugural Consortium Commissions - a pioneering model for co-commissioning ambitious new artworks by emerging artists from the Arab world. Elements of the project were also on display at Hammer Museum LA until 20 January 2019.

Events:

Exhibition tour (quiet hour), Sat 25 May, 10am, Free but ticketed / All ages

Exhibition tour with BSL interpretation, Sat 25 May, 2pm, Free but ticketed / All ages

Gallery plan:



1. Sound Appearance, 2018. Single channel audio, 8 min 28 sec, looped
2. Measured Volumes, 2018. 33 plastic cases, resin, UV gel coat, UV clear coat
3. Days Behind Inventory, 2018. Vinyl floor tiles, raised wooden platform
4. The King and the Jester, 2010. Single channel HD video with audio, 26 min, looped