

THE FIGURE OF THE THIRD-WORLD TRAVELER HAS COME TO BE A PROFOUNDLY DISTURBING BODY FOR THE WEST. AS SUCH, IMMIGRANTS ARE UNDER THE CONSTANT THREAT OF BEING DESCRIBED INTO MORE MANAGEABLE ENTITIES IN ORDER TO ALLOW FOR EASY DESIGNATION, AND POLICED SO THAT THEY MAY NOT SHIFT OR REPOSITION THEMSELVES AS UNRESERVEDLY AS BEFORE. IF THESE DESIGNATED BOUNDARIES AND IDENTITIES PROVE TO BE POROUS - OR IF THE BORDERS LIMITING MOBILITY OF THE MIGRANT ARE ACTIVELY RESISTED - THE DISRUPTIVE IMMIGRANT IS DISCIPLINED THROUGH A VARIETY OF PUNITIVE MEASURES, INCLUDING SEQUESTERATION IN ARTIFICIALLY CREATED BARRIER ISLANDS, WHERE IDENTITY OF THE PRISONER IS DEFINED BY THE DESIRES OF THE EMPIRE. AT THE SAME TIME, FIRST-WORLD NATIONS CONSTANTLY ALTER THE RULES OF ENGAGEMENT IN ORDER TO COMBAT THE SHIFTING NATURE OF THE THIRD-WORLD MIGRANT: A RULE IMPOSED TODAY MAY NOT BE THE RULE TOMORROW; THE LAW THAT ALLOWED ONE PAST A BORDER IN OCTOBER MAY BE CHANGED TO DENY ENTRY BY NOVEMBER. THE ENORMITY OF THE POWER AT THESE LINES OF DEMARCATION IS MANIFESTED IN THE BODIES OF BORDER OFFICIALS: THE LACONIC SMILES, THE ARBITRARY GESTURES INDICATING INCLUSION OF EXCLUSION, THE SHEER BOREDOM - THESE 'BODIES BIOLOGICAL' WHO REPRESENT THE 'BODY POLITIC' OF POWERFUL NATIONS ARE AS ERRATIC AND OUT OF PLACE AS THE MIGRANT, USING AN IRREGULAR SET OF RULES TO METE OUT ARBITRARY PUNITIVE MEASURES.

SAMA ALSHAIBI & ROZALINDA BORCILA ARE ENGAGED IN THE PRODUCTION OF A RECORD OF THEIR PERSONAL ENCOUNTERS WITH THESE BORDERS, DOCUMENTING THE ENCOUNTERS WITH PHYSICAL - AND HUMAN - BARRIERS ENGAGED IN COMPOSING, ERECTING, AND PATROLLING THESE MARGINS.

Borcila documents instances in which she actively "denaturalises" the borders erected to police the "naturalisation" processes imposed on immigrants who attempt to enter nations with privileged political statuses. The works presented focus on the border as a crucial site: while some operate as acts of transgression (the erasure of the border), others force borders into visibility, in an otherwise apparently "undifferentiated" geography. Her videos attempt to denormalise the ubiquitous nature of airports around the world: locations that are identical and site-specific at the same time, confusing the migratory body with simultaneous messages of inclusion and exclusion. Her work also regards the troubling relationship of capital in officiating between physical access and symbolic access at these border-locations: Amsterdam's Schiphol Airport, for example, bombards the migratory body with "See Buy Fly" messages as it traverses towards customs and immigration. While Schiphol advertises that its Plaza, located before Passport Control, allows "winkelen voor iedereen" - shopping for everyone - Borcila was sequestered in a location between passport control and the shopping plaza, able only to film the signs - created by the prolific Dutch art-design movement - once she told airport officials that the film was for "art". The shifting border here is multifaceted: art becomes part of capital, and a medium not of contestation, but of the establishment. Furthermore, Borcila's Schiphol video reveals that we consume this "art" not to be fed by it alone, but to be fed into another thing - other *things*.

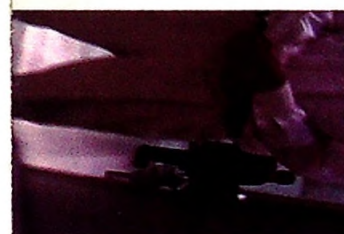
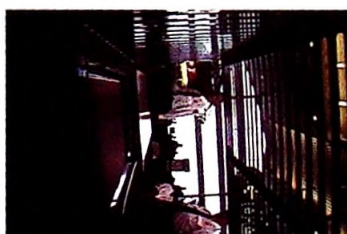
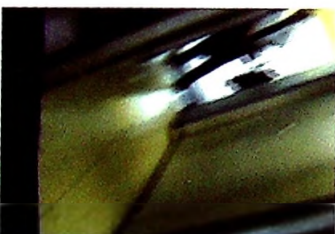
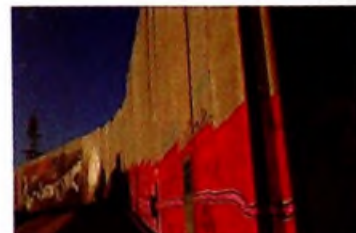
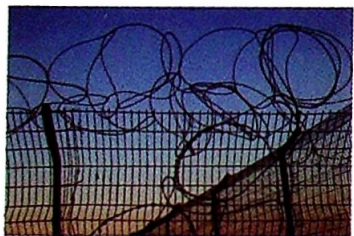
Sama Alshaibi's visual work, as well as her writing, presents history as multiplicitious and contested, with the pictorial, oral and written histories overlapping - and sometimes overwhelming - each other as national and revolutionary narratives vie for most-favoured status. For an artist unable to have a living connection with a homeland, any representations of identity connected to that homeland are also representations of death: a homeland from which one is long "unhoused" means that one's memory of it remains mummified. Alshaibi's travels back to Palestine have been, literally, attempts to breathe life back into an identity from which she was exiled, an effort to revive a homeland that lay in state. Her representations of Palestine are much like Borcila's images of airports: it is a location that is not a location, a contested space in which power and resistance are being negotiated and performed daily, but a position from which one never proceeds beyond interminable internment. The apartheid state in which occupied Palestine exists is revealed by the inhabitants' inability to have neither the right of entry nor exit: to be Palestinian means being sequestered in a barrier island in which one can remark upon the access that others have, but in which others cannot observe one's predicament. Alshaibi's return to Palestine was, also, part of the struggle to reconcile some of the dissonances in the list that constitutes her identity: Iraqi by birth, Palestinian by birthright, and American by naturalisation. Alshaibi embodies the figure of the shifting migrant, using her multiplicitious identities to negotiate for access to forbidding and forbidden territories, the language of exile her shiftless companion aiding her passage. Alshaibi's work is her own intafada: resistance as an antidote to forgetting and being forgotten, creation in the face of annihilation.

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OPENS JULY 10, 2006 IN CONJUNCTION WITH AUESTA CONFERENCE

SAMA ALSHAIBI



ROZALINDA BORCILA