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Al Marhala Al Rabiaa

The Fourth Stage

Ahmad Ghossein

2015, DCP, color, 37 min., Arabic. **Producer** Ahmad Ghossein (Beirut, Lebanon). **Commissioned by** Sharjah Art Foundation. **Written and directed by** Ahmad Ghossein. **Director of photography** Karam Ghoussein. **Costumes** Ahmed Zein. **Sound** Makram Halabi. **Sound design** Nadim Mishlawi. **Editor** Vartan Avakian. **With** Mouhamad Wehbi (Chico), Hajj Akil (Al Muhandees), Ali Fahes (Horseman).

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المرحلة الرابعة

In *Al Marhala Al Rabiaa*, Ahmad Ghossein weaves a complex and unlikely union of illusion and myth between three concurrent worlds of which he is part: that of cinema, magic, and the changing landscape of southern Lebanon.

The film traces the motivations and implications of the disappearance of a famous magician and ventriloquist named Chico, whom Ghossein assisted as a child. The duo would tour villages in the south of Lebanon, performing captivating magic tricks to bewildered children. Over the years, the magician gradually began to retreat from the public sphere. *Al Marhala Al Rabiaa* also captures the apparition of monumental geometric sculptures in Lebanon's south. The majority of them are unmarked; they do not commemorate specific events or people, yet their vertical and futuristic forms extend majestically into the sky, as if to announce a time to come. Situated at the outskirts or entrances of towns, close to valleys and mountains, and in public squares, the sculptures perforate the rural and urban fabric and lead the artist to wonder: Have illusion and magic, as elements that are essential in shaping a country's collective imaginary, been replaced by other ideological and religious systems of fabulation forged by political parties and the nation state?

Ahmad Ghossein was born in 1981 in Beirut, Lebanon, where he also lives and works. He is an artist and filmmaker, whose work draws on political history through personal narrative. He graduated from the Lebanese University with a diploma in theatre, and has a masters degree in Visual Art from the National Academy of Art, Oslo. His work has been screened in different film festivals, galleries, and museums around the world. Currently he is preparing his first feature film.

Films

2004: *Operation Nb/amaleha rqm...* (30 min.). 2006: *Faux-raccord* (4 min.). 2007: *210 m* (11 min.). 2008: *An Arab Comes to Town* (54 min.), *Faces Applauding Alone/ujuh tusafeku le wahdeha* (8 min.). 2009: *What Does Dot Resemble Me Looks Exactly like Me* (30 min.). 2011: *Abi Ma Zala Shiueean/My Father Is Still a Communist* (Forum Expanded, 32 min.). 2012: *You have to Swim, You have no Choice* (10 min.). 2013: *Relocating the Past, Ruins for the Future, Part Two* (20 min.). 2015: *Al Marhala Al Rabiaa / The Fourth Stage*.