



ATENEUM

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Adel Abidin's exhibition *History Wipes* to be held at the Ateneum

From 14 March to 22 April 2018, the Ateneum Art Museum will host *History Wipes*, a major solo exhibition by the contemporary artist Adel Abidin (born 1973, Baghdad, Iraq). The exhibition will present video installations and sculptures by the internationally recognised artist, many of which will be completed especially for the exhibition. The works deal with the painful aspects of our history and human existence in an increasingly unstable world.

Works emerging in interaction with the museum's architecture

History Wipes challenges us to look at what is happening around us right now – and what has happened over the previous decades and centuries. The exhibition deals with uncomfortable issues that we prefer to shut out from our minds. The subjects include ethnic cleansing, war, refugees, and manipulation exercised by the machinery of power. The artist is interested in what is being wiped from sight: what we seek to blot out and what we keep quiet about.

The works will be on display in different parts of the museum, including the main staircase and the exhibition galleries on the second and third floors. Many of the new works in the exhibition have emerged in interaction with the museum's architecture. The Ateneum is one of the key memory institutions in Finland, and it has shaped the image of Finnishness and country's common history ever since 1888. Issues related to identity and memory are also central in Adel Abidin's art.

The exhibition produced by the Ateneum is curated by the director of the Ateneum Art Museum, **Susanna Pettersson**, Ph.D., and the chief curator **Sointu Fritze**. Concurrently with Abidin's exhibition, the *Stories of Finnish Art* exhibition will feature a selection of works by **Henry Ericsson** (1898–1933) that deal with the Finnish Civil War, curated by the special researcher **Erkki Anttonen**.

Whose stories and history are we telling – and with what voice?

Adel Abidin's works are often rooted in the traumas of history, which is the case with one of the key works in the exhibition, the video installation *History Wipes* (2018). This emerged from the artist acquainting himself with the darkest period in Finnish history, the Finnish Civil War in 1918. Abidin felt strongly that the events of the war still cast their dark shadows on the Finnish society, even after a hundred years. During its creation process, the work evolved into a more general commentary on the instability and ambiguity of memories. Whose stories and history are we telling – or are we told – and with what voice? Manipulating facts and erasing undesirable and embarrassing political events, or persons from photographs, does not change history, but only buries them deeper in the archives of history.

The large-scale installation *Archive* (2018) is based on Abidin's experience of applying for a residence permit at a police station in Amman. Inside a huge archive shelf with its colourful cardboard folders were hidden the lives of thousands of ordinary people, including that of the artist. This eerie graveyard of information began to live and move in the artist's mind: it conveyed



ATENEUM

stories of real people, controlled and monitored by the authorities. The fragility of existence, fear, hope, and uncertainty about the future are recurring themes in Abidin's art.

Adel Abidin lives and works in both Helsinki and Amman, Jordan. Abidin's work is characterised by a strong social ethos. Through his art, he deals with difficult topics, often using light humour and sarcasm. However, in the end, his works come across as profound, serious and even gloomy.

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Opening hours: Tue, Fri 10–18 | Wed, Thu 10–20 | Sat, Sun 10–17 | Mon closed

Admission fees: Normal admission fee €15 | Concessions €13 | Under 18-year-olds free of charge | S-Etukortti loyalty card holders €14

The Ateneum's main corporate partners are Helsingin Sanomat, HOK-Elanto and KPMG. The Promotion Centre for Audiovisual Culture AVEK has supported the realization of the exhibition. The Ateneum Art Museum is part of the Finnish National Gallery, together with the Museum of Contemporary Art Kiasma, and the Sinebrychoff Art Museum. www.kansallisgalleria.fi