

KUNSTVEREIN IN HAMBURG

PRESS RELEASE

RAYYANE TABET

BRUCHSTÜCKE / FRAGMENTS

11/25/2017 - 2/18/2018



Photo of Faek Borkhoche holding the snake he found in his tent while working as a secretary in Tell Halaf on the archaeological expedition of Max von Oppenheim. June, 1929.

Courtesy of Arlette Borkhoche Tabet and the artist.

PRESS CONFERENCE

11/24/2017, 11 am

Opening, 11/24/2017, 7 pm

Speakers

Sabine Bührich-Glasa, Bettina Steinbrügge

11/25/2017

3 pm

Reading by the artist: *Dear Victoria*

4 pm

Artist talk with Kim Benzel (Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York), Rayyane Tabet, and Bettina Steinbrügge

Free guided tours are offered at the Kunstverein in Hamburg each Thursday at 5 pm.

KUNSTVEREIN IN HAMBURG

In his primarily sculptural works, Rayyane Tabet (*1983 Achkout, lives and works in Beirut) explores the connection between minor histories and major events through form and material. He blends official accounts with personal stories to draw attention to unknown narratives. The exhibition *BRUCHSTÜCKE / FRAGMENTS*, for the first time, brings together works of a research and exhibition project that evolved via stops in Marrakesh, Paris, Berlin, Rotterdam and Beirut, and will come to a preliminary end in the Department of Near Eastern Art at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, in 2018.

It all begins with a spy story: In 1929 Tabet's great-grandfather, Faek Borkhoche, was appointed by the governing authorities of the French Mandate stationed in Beirut as Max von Oppenheim's secretary to gather information on the excavations von Oppenheim was conducting in the village of Tell Halaf in Syria. At the time, the German government needed detailed maps of North Africa and the Levant for a possible military attack there. Since these territories were under British and French rule, mapmaking had to be done covertly. Many intelligence officers were sent on mock ethnographic and archeological expeditions to acquire the needed information from the area of interest. Von Oppenheim was suspected to be one of these officers, as the French knew that he had been coming back to the same location on the border between Syria and Turkey for the past 30 years and were afraid that he was radicalizing the Bedouin tribes and preparing an undercover coup against the colonial powers.

In reality, von Oppenheim was more interested in Tell Halaf for its archeological remains since 1899 when he had accidentally discovered parts of a temple and had been coming back since then to uncover the entire complex. Following the division of finds with the French Mandate, the material that remained in Syria was transported to Aleppo and formed the foundational endowment of the National Museum of Aleppo, which opened its doors in 1931. Upon his return to Berlin, Oppenheim tried to secure a location for his portion of the finds in the Pergamon Museum but was unsuccessful in doing so. Undeterred by the news, he opened his own private Tell Halaf Museum in an abandoned factory building in Charlottenburg and started writing about his expeditions.

In 1943, during one of the nightly bombing raids on Berlin, the building and most of the objects were destroyed. Only the large statues made of basalt stone survived the fire. But after firefighters doused the flames, the sudden temperature change between the cold water and the hot stone shattered the artifacts. Despite logistical difficulties, the director of the Museum of the Ancient Near East in Berlin managed to get the shattered fragments crated up on behalf of von Oppenheim. In August 1944, 27,000 basalt fragments were brought to the cellars of the Pergamon Museum.

After reunification in 1990, a group of conservators were allowed to access the fragments and in 2001 they began reconstructing the façade of the temple of Tell Halaf based on von Oppenheim's notes.

When Tabet's great-grandfather died in 1981, he had nothing of value to leave behind, except a rug made from goat hair that had been given to him by the Bedouins of Tell Halaf back in 1929. His will was that the rug would be divided equally among his five children with the request that they, in turn, divide it among their children and so on and so forth until the rug eventually disappears. As of today, the rug has been divided into 23 pieces across 5 generations.

KUNSTVEREIN IN HAMBURG

Tabet's activities resemble those of an archaeologist, as he reconstructs the material remains of the Tell Halaf temple, makes rubbings of basalt stones, assembles carpet fragments and military tents. The theme of this project is to be read in parallel to the migration movements and the turmoil of war in present-day Syria. Against the background of a historical coincidence, Tabet abstracted and transformed personal memories to analyze complex geopolitical relations. Cultural exchange and trade are taken into account as much as past and present conflicts and entanglements.

In collaboration with the Berliner Künstlerprogramm – Artists-in-Berlin program – of the DAAD, a comprehensive publication on the project and the exhibition will be published by KAPH Books, Beirut, in April 2018.

Rayyane Tabet was born in Achkout, Lebanon, in 1983. He studied architecture at the American University of Beirut and the Cooper Union in New York before receiving a Master's degree in fine arts from the University of California in San Diego. He was awarded the Abraaj Group Art prize in 2013, the jury prize of the Future Generation Art Prize in 2012 and the Sharjah Biennial Artist Prize in 2011

The exhibition is made possible with the kind support of the principle sponsor Sal. Oppenheim and the Department of Culture and Media of the Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg.

SAL. OPPENHEIM

Privatbank seit 1789



Hamburg

Behörde für
Kultur und Medien



For further information please contact:

Dilara Kubitzki, Press and Public Relations
presse@kunstverein.de, T +49 40 32 21 58

Press material and images of the show can be downloaded from our website:

<http://www.kunstverein.de/presse/login/index.php>

Username: media

Password: kvhh

KUNSTVEREIN
IN
HAMBURG

Klosterwall 23
20095 Hamburg
www.kunstverein.de

Opening hours: Tuesday – Sunday 12 – 6 pm
Public guided tours: Each Thursday at 5 pm
Admission: 5 euros, reduced 3 euros