

## THOMAS DANE GALLERY

“Akram Zaatari: On Photography People and Modern Times at Thomas Dane Gallery, Private view Tuesday 26<sup>th</sup> November”, *FAD*, 25 November 2013

Thomas Dane Gallery are to present for the first time an exhibition by celebrated Lebanese artist Akram Zaatari (b. Saida, Lebanon, 1966).

Zaatari is amongst the most influential artists of his generation and has played a critical role in developing the formal, intellectual and institutional infrastructure of Beirut's contemporary art scene. He is co-founder of the groundbreaking Arab Image Foundation (AIF) (1997) – an expanding collection of over 600,000 images – with a mission to preserve and study vernacular and studio photography from the Middle East, North Africa and the Arab diaspora.

Zaatari is widely known for his expansive practice in photography and filmmaking which reflects on the collecting, archiving and dissemination of such images and the performative role they play in the formation of individual and communal identities and histories. This sensibility was formed in the course of living through fifteen years of war in Lebanon, watching it unfold and recording it as a teenager. He has spent much of the last decade excavating the archive of Studio Sheherazade, established in 1953 by Hashem al-Madani in Saida, South Lebanon, Zaatari's city of origin.

The exhibition at Thomas Dane Gallery will include two important installations that forensically examine Studio Sheherazade and other archival material held in the AIF. Both bridge geographic and temporal boundaries and probe the nature of representation.

At 3 Duke Street, *On Photography, People and Modern Times*, 2010 is a 38 minute projection installed in a cinema-like environment. This structurally complex work includes three different temporal logics – that of the photograph, the video, and the time-lapse video. It is a masterful meditation on the photographic archive, on the intimate moments captured within and the technical apparatus that now ensures its preservation. This work was recently shown at MoMA, NY as part of Projects 100.

The second installation *28 Nights and a Poem* 2010, occupies the entire space at 11 Duke Street and is articulated by video monitors, LCD screens, ipad videos, wall-based photography, photographic cabinets, and projected super 8 film. Zaatari deploys this arsenal to engage the viewer at every level with his evocation of Studio Sheherazade. Cameras, lenses, flashbulbs, celluloid reels, archive boxes, negatives, developing agents, tools for retouching, colouring, cropping, sealing, postcards of film stars for inspiration, test prints, final portraits of notables and not so notables – Hashem al-Madani's universe is brought to life by Zaatari with both scientific precision and the empathy that makes his work so universally engaging.