

THOMAS DANE GALLERY

'Akram Zaatari: Decisive Acts', *Aesthetica Magazine*, 18 October 2016



Credits - Installation view, Thomas Dane Gallery, London.

For his latest exhibition, Akram Zaatari (b. 1966) shows an installation that draws upon a myth recounted to the artist as a child. In the summer of 1982, a rumour circulated in a small city in South Lebanon, which at the time was under Israeli occupation. The story describes an Israeli fighter pilot's decision to refuse an order to bomb a school on the outskirts of Saida, and instead opted to drop the ammunition in the sea. Following many elaborate versions of the tale, Zaatari retold the pilot's story in his own words, in collaboration with Israeli filmmaker Avi Mograbi. Turning the story into a fable and potentially truthful fiction, Zaatari raised its profile, ultimately attracting the attention of new audiences. In turn, after a transcript of the talk was published, the artist discovered that the tale and its protagonist were real. *Letter to a Refusing Pilot* at Thomas Dane reflects on the many complexities, ambiguities and consequences of refusal as a decisive and generative act. Taking as its title a nod to Albert Camus' four-part epistolary essay *Letters to a German Friend*, the work extends Zaatari's interest in excavated narratives and the circulation of images in times of war. Furthermore, the work raises crucial questions about national representation and perpetual crisis by reviving Camus's plea: "I should like to be able to love my country and still love justice." This is the first time the piece has been shown in the UK since its premiere at the Venice Biennial in 2013.

Akram Zaatari, *Letter to a Refusing Pilot*, until 5 November, Thomas Dane Gallery, London.

<http://www.aestheticamagazine.com/akram-zaatari-decisive-acts/>