

INTERVIEW WITH JANANNE AL ANI

1/ Disappearance of the body

CBF- You seem to be very much interested in the notion of the disappearance of the body, and somehow the denial of the ground that existed in the way of speaking about the Iraq war.

JAA- One of the most powerful events to occur in the immediate aftermath of the 2003 war in Iraq was the uncovering of mass-graves of those who had disappeared during 35 years of dictatorship. Although the loss of civilian life in times of conflict is a universal phenomenon, the war in Iraq reminded me of so many events in the region in which people had disappeared on a scale that is hard to comprehend. From the Armenian genocide of 1915 to the depopulation of over 400 Palestinian villages after the formation of the state of Israel in 1948, and the disappearance of thousands during the brutal reign of the Baathist regime in Syria, to the missing victims of the bloody civil war in Lebanon. It also made me question what happens to the physical evidence of atrocity and genocide, how might one begin to search for the traces of the disappeared, and how this affects our understanding of the often beautiful landscapes into which the bodies of victims disappear.

CBF-Here I would like to mention the story you introduced me to of the forensic anthropologist Margaret Cox who was working in Kosovo in the late 1990s to identify victims of genocide carried out by Serbian forces. The story begins with her going into the countryside, in search of blue butterflies that feed exclusively on the wild flower *Artemisia Vulgaris*. However, there's no joy when she finds them for they are the by-products of what she terms a "geophysical anomaly". We know it by its common name: a mass grave.

JAA- Yes, I came across an article on Cox's work in 2004 because she was working on mass graves in Iraq at that time. What was most striking about her work in Kosovo was the way in which nature had revealed the evidence of atrocity in such a subtle and beautiful way, for wherever the soil had been disturbed and the nutrient levels increased as a result of decomposing bodies, the flowers and the butterflies could be found in abundance.

It brought to mind the way in which the landscape of northern Europe had 'healed' itself after the end of the First World War. For hundreds of miles along the Western Front the landscape had been utterly devastated but, in a relatively short time, the land was rehabilitated, either naturally with trees, grasses and wild flowers growing again or later still, with the return to farming and the rebuilding of towns and villages. The analogy of scars on the body with those in the landscapes made me look again at Sophie Ristelhueber's work *Every One* (1994), which consists of monumental black and white photographs of post-operative bodies, in contrast with *Fait* (1992), a series of photographs she took from the air and on the ground in the immediate aftermath of the 1991 Gulf War. It was as if the images of Iraqi trenches dug in

the desert were echoed in the bodies of people who had undergone major surgery.

I'm interested in the tension between the physical body, what real damage can be done to it in a war situation, and the virtual way in which the body can be made to disappear in the landscape through the technologies of image making. That is why I became interested in Virilio's work on the relationship between war and cinema and of course Baudrillard's provocation, in response to the extreme control of the media by the allies, by questioning whether the war had really taken place or was it simply a fictional media event?

Also, the 1991 Gulf War was the first war viewed almost exclusively from the air; the perspective of the coalition forces and not that of the Iraqis on the ground. In stark contrast with the trench warfare of the early 20th century, when combatants faced each other across a battlefield, the sophistication of aerial warfare, including the use of remotely guided missiles and other unmanned aerial vehicles by the end of the century, created a watershed, not only the way war was to be fought in the future but also how it was represented. Looking at Ristelhueber's photographs of the Iraqi trenches, deserted and littered with the detritus of daily life left behind by the fleeing soldiers, one is struck by how pathetic a gesture it must have been to dig such useless defences when faced with the extraordinary air power that passed overhead.

One of the most striking effects an aerial view offers is the possibility of flattening and abstracting any standing structures on the ground, including the human body. When used in war, the privileged perspective of those in the air can reduce the visibility of the population on the ground: the image of the landscape becomes like a two dimensional cartographic illustration.

CBF- That perfection is also very attractive somehow?

JAA- Absolutely, it makes war appear to be clean, efficient and accurate. It becomes like a game, reduced to targets on a screen. So it matters less if you fail, because it is just a game.

CBF- I'd like to stay with the notion of war games, and how they infiltrate our lives, by letting our children play them at home without even questioning ourselves about the use of them?

JAA- I am not surprised that our children play games that involve so much virtual killing. I grew up in Iraq and left in 1980 as a teenager so, like most people living in the western world, I witnessed the first Gulf War from a safe distance. It was a real shock to see how a place I knew so well, in all its geographic, historic and social richness, was so easily flattened and emptied out, reduced to somewhere utterly anonymous, with no complexity and no detail. An old Orientalist trick, which in the modern world, helped to give the impression that the war was happening in a faraway place, an utterly barren environment, with no history and no population to speak of. Just like the spaces generated in gaming environments.

The fact that most of the allied forces involved in the war were professional armies, and the soldiers were not forced to fight through conscription, meant that the general populations of the countries involved were able to take a more distanced view of the conflict. If this detachment is how the majority of the adult population respond to conflicts that are subsidised by the taxes we are paying, then it's hardly surprising that our children are not engaged with the world but prefer to inhabit the virtual space of gaming.

CBF-Would you say that your methods includes all these different tools, the abstract images and these narrations?

JAA- Interestingly, while the images from the Gulf War were so powerful, the official narrative was often utterly banal. Listening to the American General, Norman Schwarzkopf, during his frequent media briefings, he often joked to journalists about air strikes, most famously laughing at “the luckiest man in Iraq” while showing footage of a truck which had just passed through the cross hairs of a cruise missile seconds before the bridge it was travelling on was blown apart. Considering the degree to which the infrastructure of Iraq was targeted and destroyed during the Desert Storm campaign, from the collapse of the telecommunications systems, the destruction of roads, railway lines and bridges, to the targeting of dams and sewage treatment plants, there was no debate whatsoever in the western press about the implication this had for the civilian population.

CBF- You were mentioning the implications it had in your country?

JAA- Just imagine what would happen if France suffered the same fate? Overnight there would be no telephone or radio communication with the outside world, all transport in and out of the country would be halted, no trains, planes or cars able to move, no clean running water, no electricity... it's the stuff of nightmares!

CBF-You've mentioned on a number of occasions how large format cameras were used during WWI to photograph the battlefields from the air. When shooting your films *Shadow Sites I* and *II* you also worked in this way.

JAA- I think it's very important to place current discussions around aerial surveillance and the use of drones in a wider historic context. Personally, I wanted to go back to the early 20th century and investigate in more depth the circumstances that first brought the technologies of photography and flight together. So, during the development of the work, I carried out research in a number of institutions, which was really important in relation to the form and content of my films. I visited a number of photographic archives among them the Air and Space Museum in Washington DC, where I discovered the unpublished reconnaissance photographs of the Western Front, taken by a unit established by Edward Steichen while working for the Aerial Expeditionary Force during WWI. This was the first instance of a really systematic and strategic use of aerial photography, which resulted in striking images of landscapes obliterated by shelling and criss-crossed by trenches, but abstracted to such a degree as to have become like exquisite and minimalist

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works of art. This new perspective had a truly radical impact on our relationship to landscape and in some sense Google Earth and the all-seeing drone are not new phenomena, just the logical refinement of this early technology.

Obviously being able to fly over enemy territory provided the perfect opportunity to deliver weapons from above. Interestingly, some of the earliest experiments in aerial bombardment were carried out by the British Air Force in the north of Iraq in the early 1920s, after the end of the First World War and the collapse of the Ottoman Empire.

Of course the marriage of flight and photography had an impact in areas other than the military, and one of the most significant outcomes of this period of research was the revelation that the discipline of aerial archaeology had developed as a direct result of the discovery of previously unknown sites during aerial operations carried out in the course of the First and Second World Wars. For at certain times of the day, when the sun is low in the sky, the outlines of archaeological features on the ground are thrown into relief. Searching for such 'shadow sites' is one of the simplest methods of identifying archaeological ruins, which normally remain undetected when seen at ground level.

CBF- WWI had a dramatic impact on the Middle East with both allied and German forces establishing outposts in the region. In your work you made them tangible, reappear, can you speak about this?

JAA- It's common knowledge that the end of the First World War and the collapse of the Ottoman Empire marked the birth of the modern Middle East, with nation states established under French and British Mandate, which remain to this day. However, until I started looking at contemporary aerial photographs of the region to research locations, I hadn't realized how many traces from WWI still remained visible. There is a trench system that appears in *Shadow Sites I*, in the south of Jordan, that was dug by an Ottoman garrison stationed around the town of Ma'an, which was of strategic importance because the Hejaz Railway ran through it. The central Powers were using the railway to move supplies and it was under constant attack from British and Arab forces, so the trenches were dug in the high ground surrounding the town in order to defend it.

Funnily enough while I was doing research in the Imperial War Museum collection, I came across a painting from 1918 by Richard Carline, an aerial view of the Somme, a sea of mud in a scene of utter destruction, which looks uncannily like the trenches around Ma'an. After the end of the war Carline travelled to the Middle East with his brother Sydney, who was also an artist, and they produced aerial paintings of towns and cities, including Gaza and Baghdad, in bright sunlight and surrounded by fertile agricultural land. If asked to identify the locations in the paintings, I'm certain most contemporary observers would mistake these Middle Eastern landscapes for somewhere in Europe and vice versa.

CBF- Your position as an artist then is to reveal something different to us. Can you speak about this?

JAA- I'm interested in the shifting and complex ways in which we understand and interpret visual material, be it historic or contemporary. So, when the Carline brothers made those paintings, I'm certain they would have considered them to be a pretty accurate record of how those two landscapes looked at the time. In the 100 years since the painting were made however, so much has changed, both in terms of the political landscape and the way in which place itself is represented, that the paintings seem to present a startling contrast to what might be expected now. The Carline paintings undermine our perceptions of what a European or a Middle Eastern landscape might look like, and it's that disruption of visual conventions that I'm hoping to achieve in my work too. Whether it's to show how intensively populated the desert landscape is, or how there is more in common between the Middle Eastern landscape and the American landscape, or even to review the way we think about the impact of WWI on a global rather than just a European scale.

2/ Archaeology/landscapes

CBF-Archaeology, where / how did this interest come up to you? In your work it seems that you are working with archaeology, like a geologist would do to reveal the potentiality of the image, be it from 3000 years before Christ or from the modern Middle East today.

JAA- Although the origins of archaeology date back to the enlightenment in Europe, it became an established science in the 19th century, as did the related fields of anthropology and ethnography. From the beginning, all three disciplines developed an intimate relationship with the new and revolutionary technology of photography. Within a decade of the birth of photography, European enthusiasts were heading for the Middle East, mainly in search of Pharaonic sites in Egypt and those relating to biblical tales in 'The Holy Land'. By the end of the 19th century large numbers of French, German and British-led archaeological digs had sprung up across the region, and some of the most spectacular Mesopotamian and ancient Persian sites, such as Babylon in modern day Iraq and Persepolis in Iran, were excavated. The history of archaeology in the Middle East is very interesting because it mirrors the complex and growing pressure on political, ideological and economic relations between the Ottoman administration and European powers in the run up to WWI.

One of the things that struck me about the story of Margaret Cox was the parallel between the work of forensic anthropologists and that of archaeologists: through the delicate and painstaking deconstruction of a site, digging in the dirt, photographing and recording every scrap of evidence and eventually reconstructing the events leading to the formation of a given site. Obviously the objectives are quite different, the job of the forensic anthropologist is to repatriate the remains of victims and to gather enough evidence to prosecute the perpetrators, but there seemed to be so much in common in terms of process.

I also wanted to look at the differences between photographs taken by archaeologists working at ground level and those taken from the air. While doing research in the library of the Arab Image Foundation in Beirut, I came across a number of publications on the work of early pioneers of aerial photography in the region. These included the French archaeologist and Jesuit missionary Antoine Poidebard, who produced the most stunning aerial photographs of Roman sites in Syria in the mid 1930s, some of which look startlingly similar to contemporary images made of cities that have suffered intense aerial bombardment.

While in Washington, I also had the opportunity to carry out research in the archives of the Freer and Sackler Galleries where I came across the extraordinary landscape photographs of the German archaeologist, Ernst Herzfeld. From 1903 to 1934 he carried out fieldwork across the Middle East and his beautiful sepia-toned panoramic prints show the vast and often bleak landscapes in which the sites he was excavating were situated. I was particularly interested in a pair of photographs printed from the same negative, showing the great arch at Ctesiphon (in modern day Iraq). In the first print, Herzfeld's shadow appears quite clearly in the foreground and in the second image, he has retouched the print and removed all trace of it. I was impressed by the way in which this simple intervention could transform our understanding of the image by magically removing the evidence of his presence as the photographer. It reminded me of the story Virilio recounts in his essay *The Aesthetics of Disappearance* (the title of which I have borrowed for this body of work) about the film pioneer George Méliès. While filming in the street one day, Méliès' camera jammed unexpectedly for a short time and through this happy accident, he discovered how to make people disappear.

Méliès is often referred to as the first 'cinemagician' and in addition to the 'stop trick', he went on to experiment with time lapse, dissolves and multiple exposures, all technical interventions, like those of the photographic retoucher, which are simple but extremely powerful.

But to go back to the subject of archaeology, while I was doing my research I discovered a book that had a big impact on my thinking. In *Shadow Sites: Photography, Archaeology & the British Landscape 1927 - 1955*, the historian Kitty Hauser provides a wonderful account of the development of aerial photography, the impact it had on archaeology and the way it influenced artists' relationship to landscape. As I mentioned earlier, aerial archaeology, as a specialism, developed as a direct result of the discovery of previously unknown sites during aerial operations carried out in the course of the First and Second World Wars.

Hauser describes how pilots who were flying missions at dawn or dusk discovered new sites because, in the short window of time when the sun was at its lowest, the shadows cast by the slightest undulations on the ground created fleeting apparitions, only visible from above.

For Hauser, aerial archaeology, like film and photography, rests upon the idea that the past is recoverable and she refers to Freud's book *Moses and Monotheism* (1939), in which he compares early experiences embedded in the

subconscious with a photographic exposure, to be processed at some time in the future, presumably by undergoing psychoanalysis. For me, Hauser takes this analogy in a more interesting direction in her suggestion that the ground itself might act as a photographic plate where a latent image (the foundations of a building, for example) is periodically revealed as the sun rises and sets over the site.

CBF- Is this how you came to choose the title for your films *Shadow Sites I* and *Shadow Sites II*?

Yes, it is. The term 'shadow site' is the technical definition in aerial archaeology for a site that only appears when the sun is low in the sky and casting long shadows. So, in 2010, I travelled to Jordan, hired an aerial film specialist and a light aircraft and took this as my guiding principal when shooting, working only in the first hour or two after sunrise. I chose to work in Jordan because it sits at the centre of a number of highly contentious and contested sites – just east of Israel and occupied Palestine, and sharing borders with Iraq, Saudi Arabia and Syria. Although it is a relatively young nation state, historically it has been a major crossroads for both trade and warring empires, and it is incredibly rich in archaeological sites, ranging from the prehistoric to the modern including Nabatean, Roman, Islamic, Crusader, Ottoman and British sites from the mandate period.

Shadow Sites I (2010) was shot on 16mm film and is made up of a succession of vertical aerial shots, which dissolve one into the other in a rather hypnotic way. Replicating the point-of-view of a military aircraft or an unmanned surveillance drone, it scans the rich and varied traces imprinted on the landscape by agricultural, industrial and military activity ranging from the ancient to the contemporary. Sites appear in roughly chronological order, reflecting the way the land has been occupied and put to use, including bronze age copper mines, Nabataean settlements, Roman forts and the trenches I mentioned earlier, which were dug by Ottoman troops to defend the Hejaz railway line.

Focusing on a similar range of sites but including many more ambiguous and abstracted images, *Shadow Sites II* (2011) is made from a series of high-resolution aerial photographs, which dissolve from one image to the next in one long, continuous zoom. The film suggests the vantage point of a Predator drone or a cruise missile and replicates the action of locking on to a target in anticipation of a strike. Its point of view moves into, rather than across, the plane of the image: zooming in, as if the camera itself is boring into the landscape.

CBF- More recently with *Groundworks*, conceptually you seem to be linking the US (industrial zones) with the Middle East (war zones). Can you talk a bit about this?

JAA- Yes, *Groundworks I-V* (2013) is a five channel video installation, which focuses on the landscape of the southwestern United States. The work consists of four subtly animated aerial photographs shot on flights over the Sonoran desert in Arizona in 2008, including open cast mines, industrial farms and

abandoned World War II airfields. The fifth element is a 16mm film featuring a colony of ants building a nest in the sand.

In contrast with the large scale projections of *Shadow Sites I* and *II*, each of the five *Groundworks* films is shown on a small scale and cropped, using a series of bespoke frames, in a range of geometric shapes including a square, circle and triangle, which reflect the outline of the sites featured in the films while creating a further layer of abstraction. I included the film of the ants for a number of reasons, firstly to address the ambiguity of scale in the films and to accentuate the juxtaposition between the still and moving image. I also wanted to create a tension in the installation between the 'microscopic' view on the ground and the long-distanced cartographic view from the air, by recalling the kind of footage shot by fighter pilots in action, which dehumanizes their targets by reducing those on the ground to an insect-like scale.

By shifting the focus from the Middle Eastern to the American landscape in *Groundworks I-V* I wanted to draw on the similarities rather than the differences between these territories. The 20th century sites in the Sonoran Desert echo a number of the ancient sites that appear in *Shadow Sites I* and *Shadow Sites II*, such as copper mines, arable field systems and military sites, some redundant and disappearing and others still in use. So, by linking signs of similar activities in the landscape, my intention was to pull the North American and Middle Eastern territories closer together, both literally and metaphorically.

I am currently working on the third and final chapter of this work, which will focus on the British landscape and, by implication, Britain's historic role in the formation of both the United States of America and the modern Middle East.

3/ Displaced objects

CBF-Often artists and curators collaborate on the idea of intervening within a collection or in a museum. Here I am thinking of exemplary projects of Marie Laure Bernadac at the Louvre in Paris (with Walid Raad), or Clémentine Deliss in Frankfurt at the Weltkulturen Museum (with Otobong Nkanga). Recently you were invited by the Courtauld Institute to engage with one of the masterpieces from the collection, the Courtauld metal 'bag'. Could you tell me a bit about this project?

JAA- About 18 months ago, Dr Sussan Babaie took up post as the first historian of Islamic Art at the Courtauld. It was a strategic appointment designed to expand the institute's curriculum beyond the Western tradition, part of its stated aim to engage with 'world' art history. At that time the Courtauld Gallery was preparing an exhibition titled *Court and Craft: a Masterpiece from Northern Iraq*, focusing on the Courtauld metal 'bag', one of the most important objects in the collection. Dr Babaie is very keen for contemporary artists to engage with objects in the collection and, along with the curator Dr. Alexandra Gerstein, she invited me to think about working with the bag in some way.

The Courtauld bag is unique, no object like it is known to exist in any other collection. Made of brass and intricately inlaid with gold and silver, it is

thought to have been made in the early 14th century in the city of Mosul, in the north of modern day Iraq, during the Mongol Ilkhanid dynasty. In 1966 it was donated to the Courtauld Collection by the grandson of the Victorian collector, Thomas Gambier Parry, who bought the bag in Venice in 1858.

I was lucky enough to have a number of encounters with the bag in the run up to the opening of the exhibition. I was able to handle and examine it closely on a number of occasions, and to be present while the curators of the exhibition, and Islamic art historians and metalwork specialists from other museums and institutions, were debating the origin and function of the bag. Most interesting was the speculative nature of this process. Although based on a great deal of knowledge and expertise, the piecing together of the story of the bag still involved a level of subjective guesswork that was really fascinating. After all, this was an object that had effectively gone missing for 550 years, from the time of its making to the moment it was acquired by Gambier Parry in Venice, nothing at all is known about its travels.

I was also present to witness the bag being cleaned by the conservator, in preparation for the exhibition, a process which involved working on it under the microscope. Being able to examine the surface of the object in this way was extraordinary. With the sudden change in scale, the bag shifted from being a functional three-dimensional object to an abstracted, topographical representation of a new kind of 'landscape'. The repeat patterns on the surface of the bag were suddenly transformed into what looked like an aerial photograph of the Grand Canyon!

After the bag was cleaned it was then photographed using specialist equipment to create a 3D imaging model. An animated film of this virtual model was included in the exhibition to allow visitors to see fine details on the surface of the bag, which could not be appreciated by looking at the object itself once it was behind glass in a display case. What was most inspiring about the process was the possibility of using this technology to photograph an object such as the bag, with a highly decorated, engraved surface, in a way that replicated aerial photography but on a microscopic scale. It would even be possible to restage the movement of the sun across the sky in order to create artificial shadow sites and generate new 'micro-topographies' that would bring the surface of the object to life.

This brought me back to Chris Marker's iconic film *La Jetée*, a work that has greatly influenced my use of the still moving image, in particular the moment towards the end of the film, when the protagonist is finally propelled into the future. The film runs through a very short sequence of three stills, which dissolve one into the other (a movement I used when editing *Shadow Sites II*) The first two images look like cellular structures under the microscope, as if we are inside his body as it travels through time and space, until it reaches the third image which looks like a satellite image of a vast city. The voice-over suggests that what we are seeing is Paris in the future, a megalopolis built on a massive grid system.

La Jetée is set in a post apocalyptic moment, a time in the near future after the civilised world has been all but destroyed. The Courtauld bag was itself made

in the wake of great unrest and violence in the Islamic World, following waves of attack by Mongol forces, which began with the sacking of Baghdad in 1258 and ended with what became known as the Golden Age of Islam. It is thought that the Courtauld bag was made some time between 1300 and 1330. The fact that such fine metalwork continued to be made in the workshops of Mosul after the city was conquered in 1262, points to a narrative which the curators of the exhibition have suggested runs counter to the popular image of Mongol armies destroying everything in their wake.

Although there is no doubt the levels of violence were extreme, those with special skills or talents were often spared, and it could be argued that the Courtauld bag represents a kind of hybrid object, born out of great destruction while displaying characteristics from both its 'parent' cultures and iconography. The combination of highly skilled traditional Islamic metalwork, juxtaposed with a decorative ground inspired by Chinese textiles, showing scenes of hunting and banqueting which includes characters from the Mongol court, all point to the object itself as the bearer of a narrative that reflects the complex and difficult geopolitical circumstances surrounding its own birth.

CBF- Can you say a bit about the tray you are also interested in, which is in the V&A metalwork collection?

Yes, as luck would have it I did a talk at the V&A soon after I had first seen the Courtauld bag, and I showed some of the research material I've already talked about in relation to aerial photography and conflict. After the talk, I was approached by the curator Tim Stanley, who works at the museum. He told me about a tray in the collection that had been donated by a retiring museum guard many years before, and which he came across by chance while browsing in the extraordinary museum stores. Just like the Courtauld bag, the tray is made from highly decorated engraved brass and illustrates events on Armistice Day, 1918, in the Iraqi town of al-Hindiyyah. The town is shown, from a bird's eye view, on either bank of the River Euphrates, which cuts horizontally across the centre of the tray. Amongst the crush of bodies depicted, including highly stylized Arab men and women and British soldiers in uniform, is the execution by hanging of a man named as Sadiq Efendi, apparently for the murder of a British army major. There are also two RAF biplanes flying over the scene. There's an inscription on the tray in crudely written Arabic describing the events illustrated.

CBF- Do you think the tray was a piece of propaganda?

Well there's no information about who made it or why, but I do think it's propagandist in the sense that it's like a folkloric history painting or a photograph documenting a particular historic event. It has a hybrid quality about it, like the Courtauld bag, that makes its function hard to pin down. Perhaps it was made for local consumption as a celebration of the Arab revolt and the death of a British army major, or maybe it was made with the British market in mind and it is celebrating the defeat of the Germans and the crushing of the Arab rebellion. Personally I think the latter is most likely, because I don't think the quality of the calligraphic element would have impressed most Arabic readers!

So, as with the Courtauld bag, this object is made at a time of great violence and change. The production of the bag marks the collision between the Mongol and Islamic empires, and the tray, which is made at the close of the First World War, illustrates the dying days of the Ottoman Empire and the start of European rule in the Middle East. Born of the same material and made in the same place, but separated by 600 years, both the bag and the tray provide an extraordinary snapshot of the moment of their own production.

CBF- The other day, I met a curator from the Musée du Quai Branly, who is preparing an exhibition on the manipulation of objects that have a life beyond their form. That notion of function seems to finally have some interest in conservation, doesn't it?

JAA- But these are not ordinary objects with obvious practical functions. In fact, for them to have survived in such good condition suggests that they were never in fact put to practical use. What's really interesting for me as an artist, is how the curators of these collections are inviting others to engage with the objects in their care, because they are genuinely interested in generating new thinking around their function and value. And by that I don't mean monetary value. Although the Courtauld bag is priceless, the V&A tray is more of a curio yet despite that, I think Tim Stanley recognizes that it has the potential to tell us something important about the situation in the Middle East today.

CBF- I know you are planning to make a series of new films using these objects as your starting point. Will you be looking at any other objects in addition to the bag and the tray?

Yes, I've begun to look for other 'time travelling' objects that originate in the Middle East but have found their way into important western collections. So, just like the protagonist in *La Jetée*, they have arrived among us unexpectedly and we need to try to understand what they are trying to tell us about the time they have come from, and how it might affect our future.