



Larissa Sansour, image still from *A Space Exodus*, 2008

## Larissa Sansour

The artist Larissa Sansour is something of a creation herself. Born in Jerusalem, (1973), to a Russian mother and a Palestinian father, she was educated in New York, and London, and now lives and works in Copenhagen.

Long attracted to popular culture as an antidote to the grim and somewhat grisly depictions of Palestinians, and equally weary of representations of the Palestinian people in the international media, Sansour's work has tended towards the examination of issues as personally particular as they are globally resonant.

In her latest exhibition, *A Space Exodus*, she gives us a meticulously fabricated alternative to a present reality, offering a carefully constructed alternate paradigm that is as charmingly mischievous as it is whimsical. On entering the exhibition space, visitors encounter her video *A Space Exodus*—in which we watch her landing

on the moon—along with five large photographs of the event and one hundred toy-like 'Palestinaut' sculptures.

As the viewer witnesses Sansour, a Palestinian, a woman, take her first step on the moon, she references both Neil Armstrong, 1969, and Stanley Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey*, proclaiming, "One small step for a Palestinian, one giant leap for mankind."

It is the playful artistry of this work that gives it its power as a work with lasting effect, but it is also in the context of the moon and its glimmering neighborhood solar system of stars and others planets that we are drawn visually with the eye, reminded, in many ways, of freedom, of context, of perspective, and of a time and place and possibility, far from the political and cultural woes of the here and now. A conception several years in the making, *A Space Exodus*, is eloquently shot,

meticulously choreographed, and mischievously clever in the way Sansour's expression most often is.

This exhibit crowns an already impressive career that includes exhibits at the Tate Modern, the Arken Museum of Modern Art in Denmark, the Third Guangzhou Triennial in China, the Contemporary Art Biennale in Nîmes France, the 11th International Istanbul Biennial and the Busan Biennale in South Korea. *A Space Exodus* was nominated for the Muhr Awards for short film at the Dubai International Film Festival.



Courtesy of the Artist

### ***The Novel of Nonel and Vovel***

Published by Charta 2009, 188 pages with colour illustrations throughout.

***Nonel and Vovel*** is a multidisciplinary project run by the artists Oreet Ashery and Larissa Sansour. Israeli born Ashery, and Palestinian born Sansour, have started their collaboration in 2007, culminated in the publication of their highly experimental political graphic novel, ***The Novel of Nonel and Vovel***.

This special graphic novel raises questions on the nature of artistic practice, agency, authority and authorship, and offers an eye-opening take on Palestine.

Nonel and Vovel are the artists' alter egos, compromised superheroes who contract a virus during an art opening, resulting in a chain of encounters that leads them to save Palestine with extensive help from local ninja women.

***The Novel of Nonel and Vovel*** presents a bold mixture of art, politics, graphics, games, sci-fi, story telling and other experiments. Two essays by the curators Reem Fadda and Nat Muller have been specially commissioned for the book.

## Raeda Saadeh

*By Juliet Cestar*

*Threatened, therefore living,  
Wounded, therefore being  
Fearful, therefore frightening,  
Erect, therefore a flame tree.  
Who will make me real?!*

This poem, written over thirty years ago, has inspired one of Raeda Saadeh's best-known works, *Who Will Make Me Real*. In this photographic self-portrait, the artist reclines defiantly, like a present-day odalisque, wrapped in a copy of *Al Quds* – the Palestinian daily newspaper. The work comments on the interplay between women and politics, issues that are important for Saadeh in her daily life and that run throughout her work. For Saadeh, woman is tied to the reality of her place and time, and aspires to another and better world.

Saadeh was born in Umm Al-Fahem, Palestine, and educated at the Bezalel Academy of Arts and Design in Jerusalem, where she now teaches. Her life in Jerusalem is one of several states of occupation and contradiction: a concrete wall, fences, checkpoints, curfews, stone barriers and also a home, a language and cultural and social expectations. She is a Palestinian with an Israeli passport, and also an artist and therefore an unconventional, even rebellious woman living in a traditional Middle Eastern society. Through installation, performance and photography she focuses on her own body, like a Cindy Sherman of the Middle East, to address her concerns and frustrations and bring them to a wider audience.

For example, *Crossroads* is a photographic self-portrait of the artist standing in front of her house with a suitcase, ready to leave were it not for the large block of concrete

<sup>1</sup> From: Nadia Tueni, *A Bilingual Anthology, Lebanon, Poems of Love and War* (Syracuse University Press, 2006 New York)