

Danish Pavilion

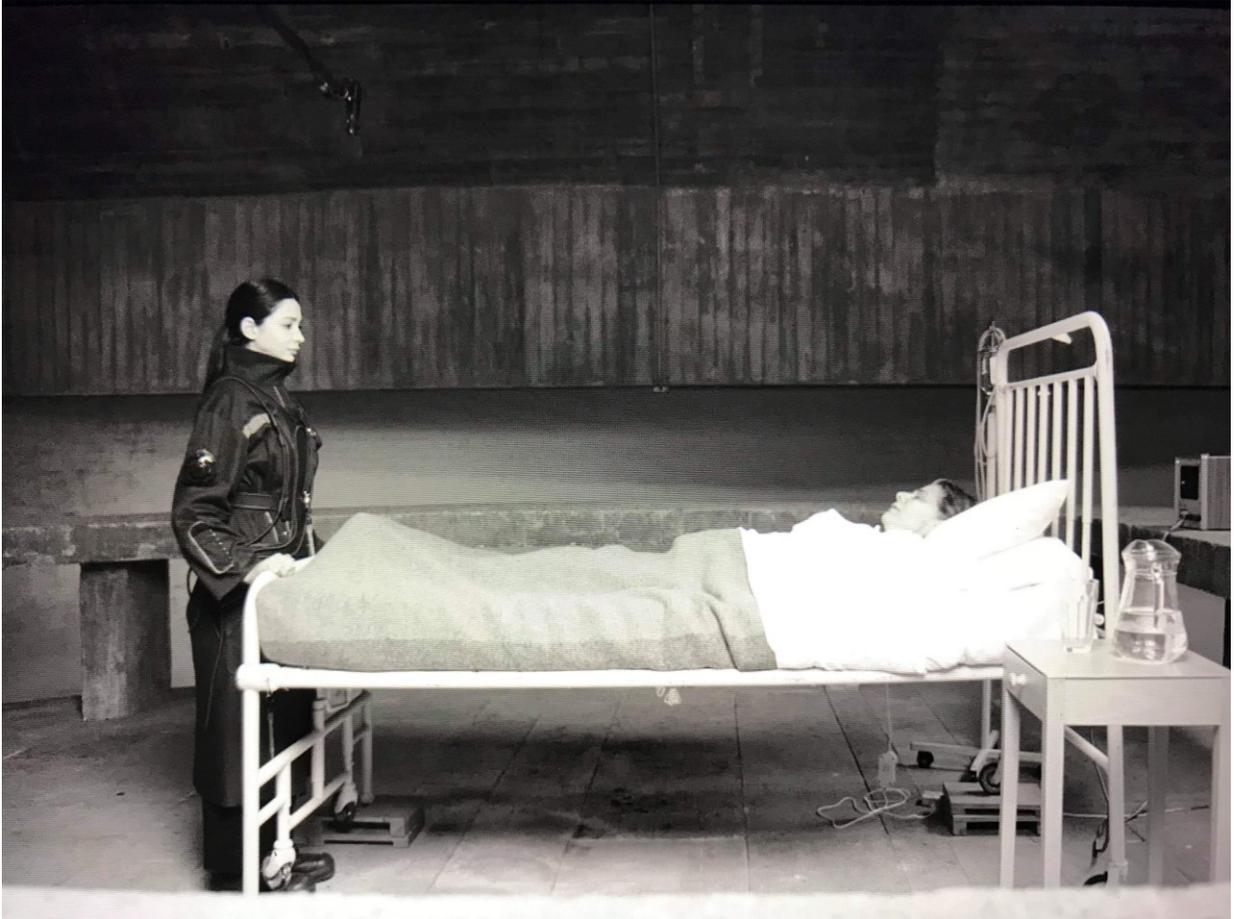
At the 58th International Art Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia

May 11 — November 24, 2019

Heirloom

Larissa Sansour

For the Danish Pavilion at the 58th International Art Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia, the Danish-Palestinian artist Larissa Sansour will present *Heirloom*, an otherworldly rumination on memory, history and identity. Curated by Nat Muller, the exhibition will comprise of a two-channel science-fiction film, a sculptural installation and an architectural intervention, inviting the viewer into a dark universe.



Larissa Sansour/Søren Lind, *In Vitro*, 2019, film, 2 channels, production still. Courtesy of the artist. Photographer: Lenka Rayn H

"The film, entitled 'In Vitro', is staged in the town of Bethlehem decades after an eco-disaster. The dying founder of a subterranean orchard is engaged in a dialogue with her young successor, who is born underground and has never seen the town she's destined to replant and repopulate. Inherited trauma, exile and collective memory are central themes.

"The younger woman struggles with her memories of the past, dismissing them as nothing but reductive patterns, tropes and iconography. This is a topic of great interest to me. In my recent work, the negotiation of identity markers and signifiers is a key focus. While these aim to erect the pillars of a shared understanding, they also tend to rid the notions they emphasise of any significance, eventually rendering them meaningless.

"The sculptural installation takes a psychological object from the film and recreates it as a large-scale monument. It further explores the protagonist's trauma and converts it to a physically imposing fact."

Larissa Sansour
February 2019

The interplay between fiction and reality, the ever-evolving merger of myth and history, is a recurring theme in Sansour's art. As curator Nat Muller explains: "Science fiction becomes a vehicle in which imaginaries and future scenarios can be challenged and tested, and in which individual narratives and personal experiences intertwine with collective ones; it becomes a place and time in which remembrance and forgetfulness compete, and where the past, the present, and even the future, might be dispossessed. Nevertheless it is also a realm of possibility, of alternative world-making, if not radical alterity."

The film 'In Vitro' is directed with Søren Lind and features the internationally-renowned Palestinian actors Hiam Abbass and Maisa Abd Elhadi. It was filmed in Bethlehem, London and Oxfordshire.

Larissa Sansour was born in 1973 in East Jerusalem. She studied Fine Art in Copenhagen, London and New York. Her work is interdisciplinary and uses film, photography, installation and sculpture. Sansour has had several major solo shows internationally – most recently at Dar El-Nimr in Beirut. Her work 'In the Future They Ate from the Finest Porcelain' has been shown in Liverpool, Rome, Cardiff, Copenhagen, Nottingham, Dubai, Madrid and London, while her 'Nation Estate' exhibition has been shown in Rome, Jerusalem, Copenhagen, Wolverhampton, Turku and Paris. Sansour lives and works in London.

Nat Muller is an independent curator and writer based between Birmingham and Amsterdam. She has published widely on the topic of contemporary art and has edited a variety of monographs. Recent exhibition projects include *Spectral Imprints* for the Abraaj Group Art Prize in Dubai (2012); *This is the Time. This is the Record of the Time* at Stedelijk Museum Bureau Amsterdam & American University of Beirut Gallery (2014/15); the A.M. Qattan 2016 Young Artist of the Year Award at *Qalandiya International* in Ramallah. She is an AHRC-funded PhD candidate at Birmingham City University researching science fiction in contemporary visual art from the Middle East.

For images and press information visit

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Notes to editors

Project publication

The volume *Heirloom* will be at the finissage of the Biennale, as part of the Research/Practice series (ed. Anthony Downey, Sternberg Press, 2019). Documenting Sansour's artistic research for the Danish Pavilion, its material has been collated in parallel with the project's one-year development, and explores what it means to produce work from within contested geographies.

Statement from Lisette Vind Ebbesen, Chair of the Danish Arts Foundation

"We have chosen Larissa Sansour, because her art addresses issues that are relevant, not only to people in Denmark but also to the rest of the world. She delves into current political issues as well as more universal aspects of the human condition associated with identity and sense of belonging. Good art functions as a trigger for conversations, and we believe that Larissa Sansour achieves precisely that in a deeply affecting way in her art."

The Danish Arts Foundation at the Venice Biennale

The Danish Arts Foundation is Commissioner of the Danish Pavilion at the Venice Biennale. Larissa Sansour was appointed by the Danish Arts Foundation's Committee for Visual Arts Project Funding. The committee consists of: Lisette Vind Ebbesen (chair), Peter Land, Charlotte Fogh, Jane Jin Kaisen and Søren Assenholt.

Funded by

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