

Marianne Fahmy

Remnants from a Distant Storm

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Lisbon

In their culminating book *What is Philosophy?* (1991), the duo of French philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari sought to claim a new philosophy to shape a future yet to exist, envisioning a new earth for new people to come¹. According to the authors, through the act of creation, the artist would infuse the work with the “nonhuman becoming” of humankind, conceiving a fabulation project that would outline a new reality into the world. In a similar vein, though through a vastly different political lens², the work of Egyptian artist Marianne Fahmy draws from this parafictional framework³ to evoke a vision of an inevitable future fate, amidst the nostalgic longing for a past yet to attain.

Between fact and fiction, Fahmy creates ambiguous beliefs emerging from the intertwining of true stories and make-believe narratives. *Remnants from a Distant Storm*, her new and first exhibition at Pedro Cera, delves into how memory and the anticipation of a possible future may fold into one another, bridging myth, prophecy, and political reality to offer a speculative vision of a new city born from marginalized stories waiting to be uncovered.

Part of a series of works exploring the water in the Mediterranean, Fahmy’s short film *Laws of Ruins* (2024) envisions Alexandria’s gradual submergence beneath rising seas – a mythic future not far from reality, haunted by the partial submersion of the city and the imminent projections of its immersion. Alexandria’s ancient cisterns, of which only twenty have endured out of hundreds once documented, serve as symbols of resistance against a vanishing past, as echoes of long-forgotten floods and lives rise from silence.

Summoning a future that doesn’t seem so remote, amidst fragments of the past, the video unfolds as a ritual of remembrance and prophecy, mingling contemporary footage and Fahmy’s voice with archival images and rearranged fragments from the diaries of activist student Arwa Saleh (b.1951-d.1997). Proclaiming both a collective history and a subjective resilience, *Laws of Ruins* poetically aligns with Saleh’s revolutionary ideals and her critique of the Egyptian communist movement’s decline, suggesting that all things aspiring to permanence (whether cities, ideologies, or movements) carry the seeds to their own decay – to be destructed, to be forgotten, to be claimed by time’s relentless current.

The quiet acceptance of Alexandria’s fate, paired with a reclaiming of its past, inspires Fahmy’s new tapestry series presented at the gallery. As woven embodiments of memory, the tapestries translate the film’s layered storytelling into a tactile form, creating tangible portraits of ancient structures paired with narratives of a latent future. Interlacing the lived and forgotten stories that Fahmy seeks to preserve, each tapestry connects myth and reality to materially preserve a heritage awaiting inevitable perish.

1. “The creation of concepts in itself calls for a future form, for a new earth and people that do not exist.” DELEUZE, G., GUATTARI, F., *What is Philosophy?* (1991), Columbia University Press, 1994: p. 108.

2. Deleuze and Guattari believed that populism and democracy would be the death of creation. The task should, instead, be delivered to aristocracy.

3. Defined by art historian Carrie Lambert-Beatty in “Make Believe: Parafiction and Plausibility”, *October* 2009. Issue 129: pp. 51-84.

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In a parallel gesture, Fahmy's new engravings draw inspiration from the ancient Roman map *Forma Urbis Romae*, carved in the early third century C.E. Once a grand marble plan of the Roman *urbis*, the map was gradually destroyed during the Middle Ages, with stones repurposed as building materials. Though fragments were found during the XVI century, little interest was elicited. Yet to be fully discovered, the map unfolds through its own fragmented nature, mirroring the narrative of a city in the process of perpetual becoming – just as Alexandria's submerged cisterns carry forward incomplete memories, Fahmy's new engravings speak to the constant rediscovery of History and anticipation of its future, where what is remembered and what is lost hinge on an uncertain balance.

Through water and ruins, *Remnants from a Distant Storm* merges fabrication and reality to create a speculative vision of a future city born from submersion, oblivion and resistance. Saleh's reflections on fractured revolutionary dreams resonate in Fahmy's attention to marginalized voices, often dismissed yet essential. Crafting a spectral presence of collective dreams that never came to be, the exhibition rests on the ghosts of the past lingering at the threshold of their own fate.

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Marianne Fahmy (b. 1992) lives and works in Alexandria, Egypt. Her practice spans diverse mediums, including film and installation. Fahmy earned her BA degree in Painting from the Faculty of Fine Arts at Alexandria University, joining the MASS Alexandria Independent Art Program in 2016. Since then, her work has been exhibited in numerous venues, including Dak'Art Biennale, Dakar, Senegal (2018), 7th Yokohama Triennale, Yokohama, Japan (2020), Manifesta 13, Marseille, France (2020), Sharjah Biennial, USA (2023), Bozar-Centre for Fine Arts, Brussels (2023), Art Basel Statement Section, Basel, Switzerland (2024), Art Explora Festival, Venice, Italy (2024), and Cairo Fine Arts Museum, Cairo, Egypt (2017), to name a few. Her films have been screened at the Kino der Kunst Film Festival (2017), Nurnberg Contemporary Art Museum (2017), and Sharjah Film Festival (2021), among others. In 2021, Fahmy was awarded the Prince Claus Fund Seed award, and has received several grants to support her artistic practice through the last years.