

A Baronian

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Tuesday > Saturday – 12:00 > 6:00 pm

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Press Release

« THE STORIES OF ALEPPO'S TREES » - 2010, Rajak Ohanian

Exhibition from 8 June until 14 July 2018

Opening 7 June, 6-9pm

The stories of Aleppo's trees is what resisted the erosion of time. Beyond appearances, Rajak Ohanian constrains the eye to dwell on silent beaches, chosen without concern for elegance or artifice. The surface is eroded, without magnificence. By staring at the incisions turned into a black, imprecise and vague entanglement, the eye gets lost. Nodes, buds, graffiti dissolved in the matter stand out of the ashen rectangular background, mostly processed horizontally. Are these blurred, uncertain writings the result of a natural process or is the human hand behind it? We look for the writing (...) And that is exactly what the artist wanted to capture. He chose to record what precedes writing and sculpture. (...) The wind and the rain erased the words carved on the wood. Rajak Ohanian's enigmatic pictures confront us with the idea that any sign written in sand, clay or on wood assumes the existence and the awareness of a trace, however subtle or tenuous it may be.

(...)

On the tree barks all sorts of vicissitudes are outlined (...) That offers no plausible explanation to the slow transformation that was irrevocably frozen on Rajak Ohanian's photographic paper. On the grey backgrounds a contrasting game of presence and absence is lined out. Absence when blackened surfaces with uncertain edges indicate they resisted and placed themselves upon the lack of matter. Presence when a recognizable shape stands out: a graffiti in a square, a heart... Interesting enough, on the paper the scarred shapes refer to some paintings of Willi Baumeister's Gilgamesh series, inspired by the Sumerian poem of the Epic of Gilgamesh, dating back to the early 2nd Millennium B.C. (...)

Excerpts from Martine Dancer-Mourès's essay, *The stories of Aleppo's trees*
Chief curator at the Musée d'Art Moderne et Contemporain of Saint-Etienne
(MAMC), France, April 2018

* Full text available on request