

PRESS RELEASE

SABAH NAIM

**Opening Tuesday March 20, 7.00 pm
Lia Rumma Gallery, Naples**

The new project by the Egyptian artist Sabah Naim has been designed specially for this exhibition. Her new work goes beyond the mere limits of the walls and, with its physical presence, occupies the space of the gallery. The installation consists of delicate transparent canvases suspended from the ceiling on which life-size figures of the inhabitants of Cairo are printed. The viewer is lost in a maze intended to recreate the chaotic atmosphere of the streets of Cairo, while the fragility and transparency of the fabric recalls the expressive and formal delicacy of Islamic art. The photos, which were taken directly by the artist or selected from local newspaper and her family albums, provide a variegated view of the local population. Soldiers, elderly people, young boys and women summarise the vast cultural and social range of the passers-by. Sabah Naim seeks to highlight the relationships between individuals while emphasising the difficulty of making contact in the hustle and bustle of daily life. The transparency of the materials creates a state of ambiguity between reality and fiction and forces the viewer into a direct relationship with the individuals. The viewer is thus made to feel an integral part of the work.

Sabah Naim's work can be considered a kind of visual reporting whose subject matter ranges from personal and family events to the cultural origins of her land. Her works derive from a combination of photography, painting and collage. The photos are almost always black and white and are often accompanied by decorative features which, in terms of their motifs and colours, evoke the aniconic linear style of the Islamic artistic tradition. The realism of the human figures, who are bearers of their individual experience, thus contrasts with the abstraction of the sign. In some of her works, this contrast between abstraction and figuration is accentuated by the presence of newspapers or fragments of paper which are rolled up or crumpled in orderly fashion on the canvas and are placed beside the photos, giving the base a tactile consistency.

Sabah Naim (Il Cairo, 1967) has shown her work at Lia Rumma's gallery in Milan, in 2004. The artist has taken part in important international events and has participated in collective exhibitions at prestigious venues, ranging from the *50th Venice Biennial* in 2003, to *Africa Remix - Contemporary Art of a Continent* held at Museum Kunst Palast of Düsseldorf, Hayward Gallery of London, Centre Georges Pompidou of Paris, the Mori Art Museum of Tokyo. Among the most recent exhibitions to include her works, we would like to highlight *Napoli presente. Posizioni e prospettive dell'arte contemporanea* held at the PAN Museum in Naples. Her works have also been purchased for the permanent collections of the British Art Museum in London, the Museum of Modern Egyptian Art and the Egyptian Ministry of Culture.

The artist lives in Cairo where she was born in 1967.