



# NO MAN'S LAND

NADIA AL ISSA

Opening 17 april 2014 h. 18.00

Curated by Giuseppe Ruffo and Pietro Tatafiore

from 17 april to 13 may

*IOpera* presents *No Man's Land (8km – A Tribute to Danis Tanović)*, the first solo exhibition by researcher and cultural practitioner Nadia Al Issa, from April 17 to 13 of May, 2014. The exhibition features the first in a series of intervention works that depart from Al Issa's personal experiences of being at odds with nationalist ideology and thought. Through her proposed intervention for *No Man's Land (8km – A Tribute to Danis Tanović)*, set in no man's land - a site of national exception, Al Issa strove to slightly disrupt and challenge the nation state order, raising questions about its relevance and the possibility of existing beyond it.

8 kilometers of no man's land stretches between Lebanon (Masnaa) and Syria (Jdeidet Yabous), connecting and disconnecting two nations to which Al Issa has a complex relationship. Having grown up as a Syrian citizen in Lebanon, deemed a foreigner, but experiencing Syria only as an outsider, she arrived at the unrealistic yet very real definition of herself as someone who does not belong. Complicating this experience further and deepening her sense of exclusion is the brotherly but also tense relations, both historically and currently, between these countries.

Inspired by Danis Tanović's 2001 film *No Man's Land*, in which absurd events unfold as three soldiers become trapped in the no man's land between the two sides of the Bosnia and Herzegovina War (1992-1995), in 2011, Al Issa willfully endeavored to head to and camp out for two days in the no man's land between Lebanon and Syria.

What would happen when such an anomaly was attempted? Who would the authorities implicated be, how would they react, and on what basis? What impact would the specific conditions of Lebanese-Syrian relations have? And what would the experience of existing outside the nation state be, that is if such an existence were even realizable?

In the current installation of *No Man's Land (8km – A Tribute to Danis Tanović)* at *IOpera*, Al Issa presents documentation of research she conducted along the Lebanon-Syria border. She sheds light on her efforts to comprehend nations, borders, and no man's lands and her experiences so far of the possibilities and impossibilities inherent within them, underscoring, along the way, the intricacies and absurdities of the nation state, nationalism, national identity, belonging, and exclusion in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

**Nadia Al Issa** is a Syrian, Palestinian, and Greek researcher and cultural practitioner based in New York, NY. Al Issa is currently a graduate student in Historical Studies at the New School for Social Research. *No Man's Land (8 km – A Tribute to Danis Tanović)* was previously exhibited in *Exposure*, Beirut Art Center, Lebanon (2011) and partially in *Segrete*, Castel dell'Ovo, Naples (2014).

Chiara Minieri

