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Films of the Year 2008

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PORTRAIT

Nadia Hotait (Cinestesias, Spain)

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If your path crosses Nadia's, it's sure that you won't forget her. It could be due to her essentially Mediterranean character (she was born in Madrid to a Lebanese father and a Spanish mother), or her free soul. A video artist who had her first solo exhibition this October in Chicago, she's also one of the oldest members of Cinestesias - not because of her age but because of the time she has been involved.

I met her at University, in the corridors. We were both holding a BA in Audiovisuals and were looking forward to going into the action. We began to work on collective artistic projects, a series of documentaries about the city, about ideas, more concerned with politics than cinema. She loved the experience with video and didn't stop working with it. In a very short time she made documentaries in Spain, Morocco, Japan and Lebanon.

In these documentaries we began to see Nadia's artistic spark. It was like a bomb on the verge of exploding. Some of the topics apparent in these pieces, such as an interest for the place in which she was living, and for the place where her family was from, are obsessions still present in her mature work.

Nadia comes from many countries, and maybe it's because of this that she has an adventurous spirit and can't stop travelling. But her love for freedom does not end there. The relationship with her environment, with the land, the irony (but never cynicism), the abstraction in the forms… All this creates her own style, but she's always looking for new supports to express herself. Nadia went further and passed from cinema to break out of the four margins of the screen.

This artistic spirit is combined with a personal strength capable of motivating others. Nadia renewed Cinestesias by joining enough people in the organization of the meeting of the Festival in Alcala de Henares and putting Spanish artists in touch with the NISI MASA Network. It was the perfect opportunity for her and her latest work to be mixed with so many people of different cultures and origins in this informal school of cinema.

One day Nadia left Madrid to go live in Tokyo, leaving a hollow space – which was never actually empty because she continued helping and giving strength from the distance. Then she went to Chicago, where she is currently an MFA candidate at the School of the Art Institute. I follow her work and remain amazed at how far she has come in all the aspects that she is exploring, without losing her critical and tender touch. We miss Nadia in Cinestesias but we are proud she's following her own path, taking her own risks.

She tells me that she's been working on different video installations, one of them called 'Filming underwater in Beirut': "*In Lebanon the different wars have established the importance of archiving or documenting what is lost… different people are videotaped underwater, they are dressed and keep doing ordinary actions in an extraordinary context (underwater). These images emulate the idea of a laboratory of conservation. The Lebanese find themselves in a state of permanent incertitude, in which their daily lives are always vulnerable to local and regional politics. It is about the murdered witnessing and waiting. It addresses the ones who remain after a catastrophe.*"

The exhibition this October, called 'Friction', was made up of two channel video installations displayed on LCD screens integrated into a fake architectural structure imitating an already existing one in the place: "*Friction deals with the concept of the unattainable [possibility] of a communication process. The attraction and repulsion of a magnetic field expressed by a cut in the architecture where two characters struggle to reach the other side. The viewer finds himself in an uncomfortable space where taking part in the conversation flux demands attention.*"

If you have the chance to go to Chicago and see one of her exhibitions, and there's a black haired woman entering in the place like an explosion, this is Nadia Hotait.

www.nadiahotait.com

Julia Sabina Gutiérrez