



The McIninch Art Gallery

At Southern New Hampshire University

A Source of Identity: Contrasting Personal Environments

September 11 – October 11, 2014

Southern
New Hampshire
University 



Rania Matar | Upper Left

Nursing, Bourj El Shemali Refugee Camp, Tyre, 2005, archival pigment print, 16 x 24 inches



Rania Matar | Upper Right

Bath Time Bourj El Shemali refugee Camp, Tyre, 2005, archival pigment print, 16 x 24 inches

All images, this page, courtesy of Carroll and Sons, Boston



Lebanese American **Rania Matar's** photographs illustrate the resilience of families getting on with their lives in the wake of conflict. We see how families lead ordinary lives and create homes in light of the societal and political challenges to which they are subjected. Children play, girls are concerned about their appearances, mothers care for their children.

In *Nursing, Bourj El Shemali Refugee Camp, Tyre*, we see a mother nursing her baby in a barren setting while her young daughter cradles her baby doll between her legs. In *Rocket Hole in the Kitchen, Eita El Chaab, Southern Lebanon*, a young mother is with her children, two little girls playing as all girls do, one admiring her doll, the other with her marker in hand. This could be an everyday scene, except for the jarring sight of a younger

sibling looking through the rocket hole in their kitchen wall to the view beyond.

Environments and experiences like those documented in Matar's images would seem to squelch the feeling of home and family. Yet, we see quite the contrary. What we see is an innate strength of families to maintain what comes naturally to them. We see that they have lost much in the way of the material world. We can postulate as to the personal losses as well, but the children still play, the mothers still love, and the family remains strong from deep within themselves. The home, physically disintegrating, is still spiritually and emotionally intact. It is the family unit and the individuals themselves that create the home.

Rania Matar | Left

Sisters, Beirut, 2007, archival pigment print, 16 x 24 inches

Rania Matar | Right

Rocket Hole in the Kitchen, Eita El Chaab, Southern Lebanon, 2006, archival pigment print, 16 x 24 inches

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In the series *9 Wellington*, **Shellburne Thurber** brings us into the world of Ralph, a “Renaissance Man.” Through his vast collection of books, he created a world that was both physically enveloping and intellectually far-reaching.

These are not collections that can be amassed in a short period of time, but instead develop over the span of a life. The home that he created richly reflects his personality through elaborate historical effects. In *Top Floor Library with Leather Upholstered Chairs*, we can tell much from the arrangements of books, both in the overstuffed shelves and overflowing into boxes partially

hidden behind furniture, and in the paintings and decorative objects carefully arranged to be “just so”.

Without knowing or seeing even a glimpse of the person himself, we are able to conjure up a clear impression of this strong personality. This is a home that functions as a visual substitute for its resident in visually telling his story through his possessions. Ralph lived in contemporary times, yet chose to surround himself with things from the past. Thurber’s photographs function as a memorial to this unique individual.

This exhibit conveys several different experiences of home. Each example is an expression of its residents, their physical surroundings, and in some cases a specific time in history. It is important to look beyond our own preconceived ideas of how a home functions and what the concept of home means to us.



Rania Matar

The Dead Mother, Bourj El Barajneh Refugee Camp, 2005, archival pigment print, 16 x 24 inches

Courtesy of Carroll and Sons, Boston

BETH YARNELLE EDWARDS received her M.F.A. from San Jose State University. She has photographed extensively in Silicon Valley and has been invited to photograph and expand her *Suburban Dreams* series in France, Germany, Iceland, Spain and the Netherlands. Her photographs have been shown extensively in both group and solo exhibitions in the U.S. and abroad. The solo exhibitions include the most recent at the Reykjavik Museum of Photography, Iceland, and those at The Oakland Museum of California and the Willhelm Hack Museum, Germany. Edwards' work is included in the collections of the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, and the Bibliothèque Nationale de France, to name a few. Her work is represented by Robert Klein Gallery in Boston.

RANIA MATAR was raised in Lebanon and moved to the United States when she was twenty years old. She studied architecture at the American University of Beirut and Cornell University, and then went on to study photography at the New England School of Photography and the Maine Photographic Workshops. Her work has been in many exhibitions both in the U.S. and abroad. Recent exhibitions have included those at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Sharjah Art Museum, UAE, Tsereteli Museum of Modern Art, Tbilisi, Georgia, and the Lehbruck Museum, Duisburg, Germany. A selection of honors and awards that she has received include Recipient of the Massachusetts Cultural Council Fellowship Award 2011, Finalist for the James and Audrey Foster Award 2008, Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston and the Art of the Lebanese Diaspora Award. Her photographs are in numerous private and public collections, including the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, Davis Museum at Wellesley College, Portland Art Museum, Oregon and Lehbruck Museum, Duisburg, Germany. Matar teaches at the Massachusetts College of Art and Design and regularly offers lectures and workshops in the U.S. and abroad. Locally, Matar's work is represented by Carroll and Sons in Boston.

BILL OWENS began pursuing photography while in the Peace Corps (1964-66). He was a newspaper photographer for the *Livermore Independent* from the late '60's into the early '70's, and it was at that time that he began photographing for his monograph of note, *Suburbia*. This publication was followed by six additional monographs, including *Working (I Do It for Money)* and *Leisure*. Owens has had several solo exhibits, including those at the San Jose Museum of Art, MOCA, Los Angeles, and the International Center for Photography, New York. His work is included in both public and private collections, including MoMA, New York, National Museum of American Art, Washington D.C., and Bibliothèque Nationale de Paris. He was awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship and two National Endowment for the Arts Awards. Owens' photographs are available through several galleries throughout the U.S. and abroad.

SHELLBURNE THURBER graduated from the School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, and Tufts University. Her work has been in numerous group and solo shows both here and abroad. Solo shows include those at the Boston Athenaeum, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, and the Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston. Her work is in several public and private collections including the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, the Addison Gallery of American Art, the Worcester Art Museum and the DeCordova Sculpture Park and Museum, to name a few. She has taught extensively throughout New England, most recently as visiting professor of photography at the Massachusetts College of Art and Design. Thurber has been the recipient of numerous grants and was recently awarded a fellowship from the Saint Gaudens National Historic Site. Her work is represented by Barbara Krakow Gallery in Boston.

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Gallery Hours

Monday through Saturday, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. • Thursdays, 5 p.m. to 8 p.m. • Closed Sundays and university holidays

Location

2500 North River Road, Robert Frost Hall • Manchester NH • 603.629.4622 • www.snhu.edu/art