



Berlin, 10th February 2010

Dear Colleagues,

We are happy to invite you to the opening of the following exhibition:

WAFAE AHALOUCH EL KERIASTI
The Greatest Show in the World

19th February – 7th March 2010

Tue – Sun, 2 – 7 pm, Studio 2

Opening: Thursday, 18th February, from 7 pm

Performance: A Small Show in the Greatest Show in the World, ca. 8 pm

Wafae Ahalouch el Keriasti's works may be characterised as alienated portrayals of her view of the world. Her main sources of inspiration are history, religion, fairy-tales, family life and the media. While Ahalouch's earlier works centred primarily on the family and strategies in connection with it, recently she has turned to more universal and rather politically oriented content.

She often creates series of pictures in which she merges different stories and so conjures completely new images that reveal a story's true complexity. In her works the artist aims to visualise the contradictions and structures of dependency that lie behind all our social interaction: power – impotence, guilt – innocence, man – woman.

Ahalouch's *The Greatest Show in the World* transforms the exhibition space into the abstracted image of a circus incorporating its own small universe. The exhibition encompasses mural works, painting and installations as well as performance elements and is based on Ahalouch's research into the infamous "Salon Kitty", a high-class brothel in Berlin. It was frequented by prominent Nazis, local eminence and foreign diplomats from the 1930s onwards, and its Jewish

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“madam” Kitty Schmidt was forced to spy for the Nazis. Ahalouch employs the setting of “Circus Kitty”, which she presents by contrast to the splendid colours of a real circus using cold black and white optics, as a universally valid metaphor for the many harmless and attractive facades that conceal an endlessly complex world full of the lust for power, manipulation and abuse.

The artist herself is working with abstraction for the first time here and playfully combines its constructs with the figurative characters in her paintings. The backgrounds to her new paintings define a story in their turn, which is expressed in the mural works.

On the opening evening, at ca. 8 pm, we hear “Roll up! Step inside the wonderful world of Circus Kitty!” as Ahalouch el Keriasti presents the performance A Small Show in the Greatest Show in the World with Dolly Duster as Marlene Dietrich, a burlesque dancer and circus artiste.

Wafae Ahalouch el Keriasti, born in Tangier (Morocco) in 1978, lives and works in Amsterdam. She studied at the Hogeschool voor de Kunsten in Utrecht and was resident at De Ateliers and the Rijksakademie van beeldende Kunsten in Amsterdam. After taking part in a number of international group and individual exhibitions, Ahalouch will also be represented at the exhibition XVII. Rohkunstbau (curator: Mark Gisbourne) taking place in Potsdam in summer 2010.

Wafae Ahalouch el Keriasti holds a fellowship from the Fonds voor beeldende kunsten, vormgeving en bouwkunst, Amsterdam and is currently a guest at Künstlerhaus Bethanien in the context of our International Studio Programme.

The press office of Künstlerhaus Bethanien is happy to provide further information and picture material on request.

Best regards,
Künstlerhaus Bethanien