

**LA CAJA BLANCA PRESENTS: LEAVE TO REMAIN**

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**La Caja Blanca** is pleased to present two solo exhibitions running concomitantly under the title "Leave to Remain" (Original title in Spanish: "Permiso de Residencia"). The two exhibitions bring together a collection of site-specific works developed in the context of artist residency programmes in Europe throughout 2012 at The Hayward Gallery and Victoria & Albert Museum in the UK, ZKM | Center for Art and Media in Germany, and La Caja Blanca gallery in Spain.

**Murad Khan Mumtaz's** body of work comprises five pieces created in Mallorca during La Caja Blanca's international visiting artist programme. **Yara El-Sherbini's** exhibition brings together six works by created in the UK and Germany, as a direct response to the cultural, geographic and political contexts she encountered with during her participation in curated residency programmes.

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**Artists:** Murad Khan Mumtaz (1980, Pakistan), Yara El-Sherbini (1978, Egypt)

**Private View:** March 6th 2013 from 11.00 to 14.00 hrs.

**Location:** La Caja Blanca, Calle Can Verí 9, Palma de Mallorca 07001

**Produced by:** La Caja Blanca with the kind collaboration of Tracy Williams Ltd.

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**Collaborators:** Asociación Art Palma Contemporani, Tracy Williams Ltd.

Catering courtesy of Opio Restaurant, Puro Hotel.

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## Exhibition I

Murad Khan Mumtaz (Lahore, 1980) is a Pakistani artist trained in the traditional art of Indian miniature painting. As small acts of remembrance, his paintings meditate on traces of traditional culture that are disappearing in the materialistic landscape of contemporary life.

In 2012, he was invited to participate in La Caja Blanca's residency program for international artists in Palma de Mallorca (Spain). During his research on the island, he discovered the cartographer Jefuda Cresqués<sup>1</sup> (one of the most sought after European maritime cartographers in the middle ages), his *Atlas Catalá*, and the architectural vestiges of "Medina Mayurqa"<sup>2</sup>.

The works produced during the residency as a response to the island's unique heritage at the crossroads of some of the world's greatest civilizations (Roman, Phoenician, Byzantine, Islamic, Jewish and Christian), reflect the fragility of memory and the fractures of cultural identity as historic narratives come head to head with geo-political forces.

### Artworks:

*Litanies* comprises three works on paper, which evoke enigmatic scenes from the island-city's distant past, re-imagined by the artist following the interviews he conducted with historians during his residency. Using natural pigments and watercolour, two of these ("Litany I" and "Litany II") have been painted on Spanish peseta bank notes. The third, "Litany III: Saint Sebastian", has been painted on prepared Wasli paper, one of the last examples produced by the master paper maker Kagzi.

These immaculate paintings are largely inspired by the conversations with academics and researchers, but also draw from the abundant sketches made and photographs taken by the artist as he discovered architectural features which remain embedded in the buildings situated in the Jewish, Arab and Christian quarters within the city's medieval walls.

For the two first *litanies*, the artist made a conscious decision to use Spanish currency which is currently out of circulation (*peseta* versus *euro*), for several intentions in mind: Firstly, currencies issued by countries contain a wealth of visual information which reveal the prism with which the nation wishes others to see itself. It depicts scenes, monuments, symbols and messages it wishes to show proudly and seeks to be remembered by. In the midst of societal, economic and political changes of historical proportions, which are currently under way in Spain, the act of re-appropriating the disused peseta currency is a poignant reminder of the transformations taking place, the malleability of collective memory and the fractures in historic narratives during periods of profound change. Secondly, the tradition of miniature painting requires what we today refer to as "archival paper" – paper which stands the test of time and has a surface which is sufficiently impervious to allow extremely fine lines to be painted on the surface. Traditionally trained miniaturists either produce their own paper (Wasli paper) or source this type of hand made paper from master paper makers who learn

<sup>1</sup> Also known as "el jueu de les bruixoles"; the compass Jew.

<sup>2</sup> *Medina Mayurqa* was the Muslim name given to the island between 902 and 1229, when it had blossomed into one of the major ports for trading goods in and out of the Caliphate of Córdoba in Al-Andalus.

this artform through the traditional Ustad-Shagerd relationship, passing it on from generation to generation. One of the last living masters of this artform was ustad Kagzi. In Europe, and within the context of an artist residency programme, Murad chose to source alternative materials, which shared the key qualities of Wasli paper in terms of texture and durability. The paper used to produce currency and official documents such as passports provided an appealing and valid alternative.



*Litany I*, 2012 (front)  
Natural pigments and opaque watercolour on peseta.  
7.8 x 13.4 cm  
Unique Piece



*Litany II*, 2012  
Natural pigments and opaque watercolour on peseta.  
7.8 x 13.4 cm  
Unique Piece



*Litany I*, 2012 (reverse)  
Peseta  
7.8 x 13.4 cm  
Unique Piece

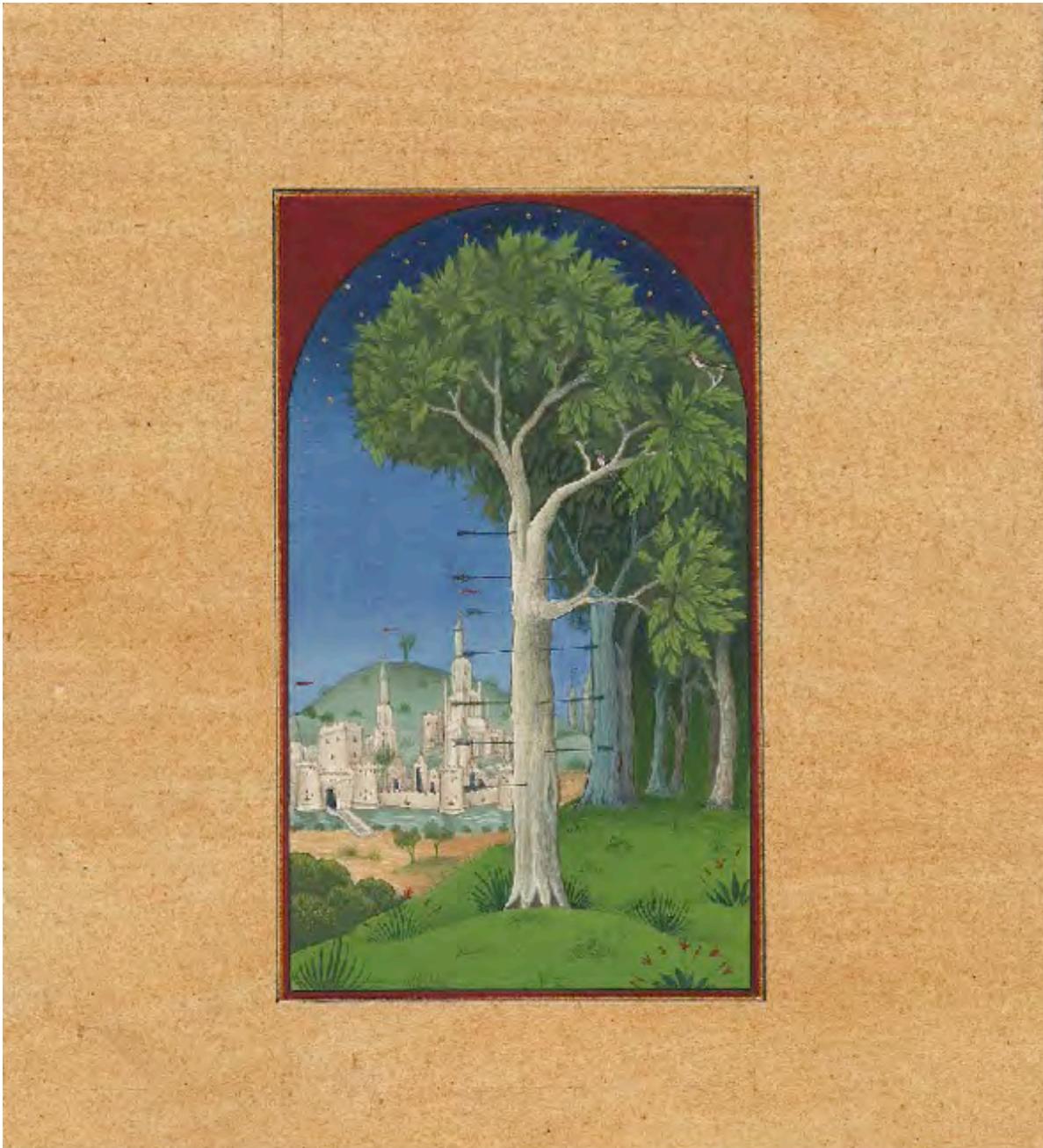


*Litany II*, 2012 (reverse)  
Peseta  
7.8 x 13.4 cm  
Unique Piece

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The third litany was painted on a piece of traditional Wasli paper, one of the last specimens produced by the master paper maker Kagzi.



*Litany III: Saint Sebastian*, 2012

Natural pigments and opaque watercolour on vintage Indian wasli paper produced by the master Kagzi.

5 1/4 x 3 inches

Unique Piece

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*Litany III: Saint Sebastian* , 2012 (fragment)

Natural pigments and opaque watercolour on vintage Indian wasli paper produced by the master Kagzi.

5 1/4 x 3 inches

Unique Piece

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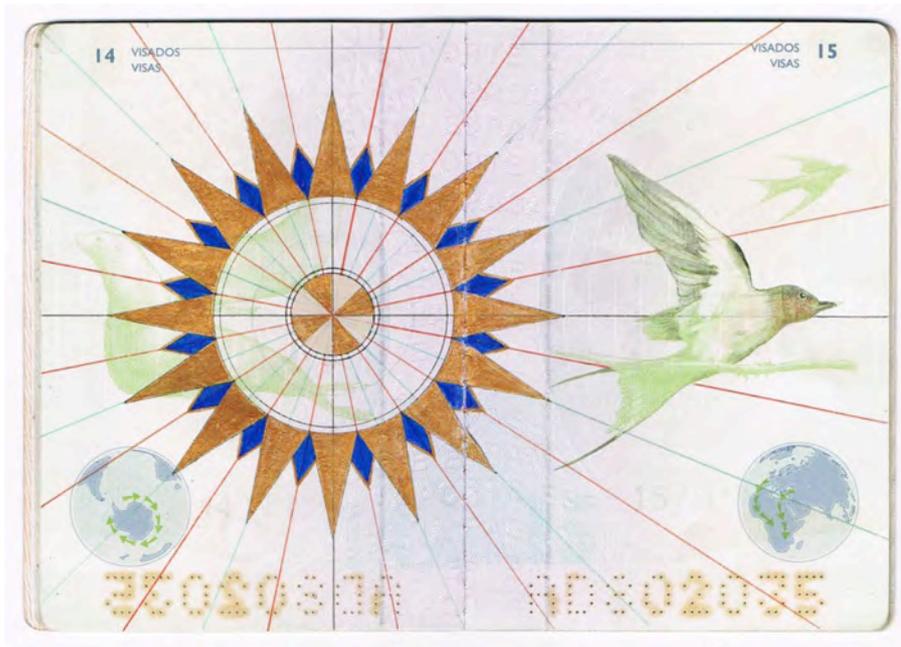
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“Al Gharb hu Gharib” (The Weird West) is a modern Spanish passport, which depicts contemporary *politically correct* self-representations of Spanish national identity, appropriated by the artist and intervened using traditional miniature painting techniques inspired by antique maritime maps drawn by the Spanish cartographers (the school of Jehudà Cresqués) and the Ottoman empire. The documents used to inform the drawings are held in the Fundación Juan March Collection (Spain) and the Metropolitan Museum’s collection (US). Some of the land and seascapes are artists’ recreations of the island of Mallorca, inspired by poetic accounts of travellers in the Mediterranean. The resulting work includes miniature paintings produced using natural pigments and opaque watercolour, which work as independent illustrations representing what the artist refers to as “A view of the Mediterranean from the East”.



*Al Gharb hu Gharib* (The Weird West) , 2012  
 Natural pigments and opaque watercolour on passport.  
 Unique Piece  
 Image of first two pages



*Al Gharb hu Gharib* (The Weird West) , 2012  
 Natural pigments and opaque watercolour on passport.  
 Unique Piece  
 Image of pages 14 and 15



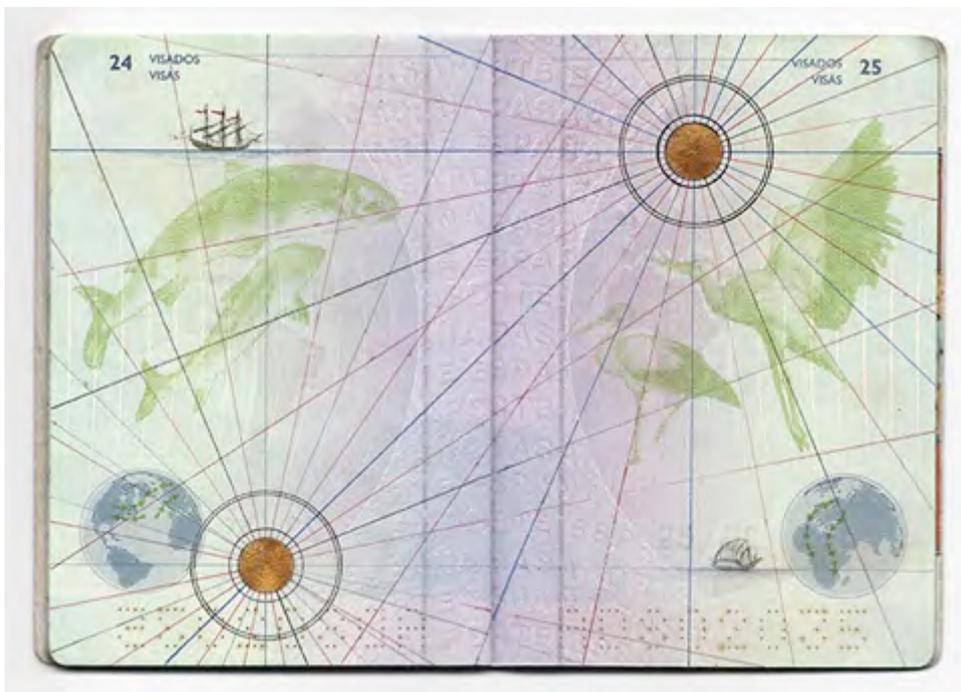
*Al Gharb hu Gharib* (The Weird West) , 2012  
 Natural pigments and opaque watercolour on passport.  
 Unique Piece  
 Image of pages 16 and 17

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*Al Gharb hu Gharib* (The Weird West) , 2012  
 Natural pigments and opaque watercolour on passport.  
 Unique Piece  
 Image of pages 21 and 22



*Al Gharb hu Gharib* (The Weird West) , 2012  
 Natural pigments and opaque watercolour on passport.  
 Unique Piece  
 Image of pages 24 and 25

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A further work titled "Disappearance" depicts a Native American tipi under a full moon. The materials used here are again natural pigments, and opaque watercolour, however, the paper used belongs to an American dollar bill. In contrast to the crescent form of the moon appearing in *Litanies*, the moon in this landscape reminds the viewer that this work emerges from a different story, belongs to a different cycle. It was the first piece created during the artists' residency on the island, and evokes the leitmotif central to his last residency project conducted in Santa Fe Art Institute (New Mexico).



*Disappearance*, 2012

Natural pigments and opaque watercolour on an American one dollar bill

6 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 2 <sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub> inches

Unique Piece

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**Murad Khan Mumtaz Artist Bio:**

A native of Lahore, Mumtaz was educated at Pakistan's National College of Arts and Columbia University in New York City, which he attended on a Fulbright fellowship. His work has been exhibited internationally, including recent solo presentations at Tracy Williams, Ltd. in New York and La Caja Blanca in Palma de Mallorca, Spain. In 2011 he was an artist in residence at the Santa Fe Art Institute. In 2012, he participated in La Caja Blanca's residency program for international artists.

An accomplished teacher, Mumtaz has taught at institutions including the National College of Arts, Beaconhouse National University, Punjab University and the College of Traditional Islamic Art in Amman, Jordan.

He is a co-founder of the Hast-o-Neest Center for Traditional Art and Culture in Lahore and has published numerous articles on the history of miniature painting. He is currently working toward a PhD in South Asian art history at the University of Virginia. He divides his time between Charlottesville, Virginia and Lahore.



*Murad Khan Mumtaz working in his temporary studio (Puerta de la Mar, Palma de Mallorca).*

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## Exhibition II

Yara El-Sherbini (UK, 1978), was born in the UK, to parents of Egyptian and Caribbean descent. She is currently based in London and Amsterdam. Her practice straddles a variety of artistic disciplines ranging from live participatory performances, to large-scale installations and sculptures, which are inspired by traditional game-playing and the rules of popular social interactions. Humour is a leitmotif, which she uses to challenge “politically incorrect” subjects, and compel audiences explore the invisible processes which shape individuals beliefs and behaviour in society at large. El-Sherbini’s work not only challenges social apathy and conformism, it takes a starkly defiant position with regards to traditional art world market-driven systems; which explains why her work is supported by some of the most reputed institutions despite appearing very rarely in the commercial art gallery scene. This show brings together three projects developed as a direct response to the cultural, geographic and political contexts she encountered with during her participation in curated residency programmes in the UK, and Germany.

*Reproducing the Current Climate* is an updated traditional German *weather house*, where a man and woman exit a Doner Kebab Shop, dependant on weather conditions. Döner Kebabs were invented in Berlin in 1971 by Mahmut Aygün, a Turkish guest worker and have become Germany’s favourite fast food with over 15,500 establishments. This contemporary representation of German residential living; a multiple-storey post war modernist building above a Döner Kebabs shop, replaces the chalet as a national symbol, questioning national German culture and intercultural exchange, through a folk art device. The work was produced during an artist in residence programme in **Germany at ZKM Museum for Contemporary Art**.



*Reproducing The Current Climate* , 2011

Fully functioning Weather house, which measures humidity in the atmosphere. The object is a hand crafted wooden replica of the popular Döner Kebab shops, which are commonplace in Germany today and have transformed the Kebab into the country’s favourite fast food. When the sun is shining a model Turkish lady pops out and when its raining a middle eastern looking replica miniature man with a moustache pops out.

16 x 10 x 28 cm

Edition of 7

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*The End of Conflict in the Middle East* began as a participatory live art work, in which members of the public helped end Conflict in the Middle East by joining the artist in deconstructing the seminal book during a 2 hour long event framed as a series of artist led events entitled *Record, Reframe, Resist* in **London's Victoria And Albert Museum** during November 2012. The project was commissioned as part of the National Art Library's new initiative to archive contemporary and modern Arab, Turkish and Iranian art.



*The End of Conflict in the Middle East*, 2012  
40 x 40 x 30 cm  
Unique piece

Installation comprising paper fragments of the seminal book "The End of Conflict in the Middle East". The work was first created as a participatory live art performance, in which members of the public helped end Conflict in the Middle East by joining the artist in deconstructing the seminal book during a 2 hour long event. By hole punching every single page, cover-to-cover, during a live performance at the Victoria & Albert Museum in London, the artist gives physical presence to the abstract notion of destruction while probing into the processes involved in knowledge production. The work is presented in an acrylic case on a wooden surface, and is accompanied by a certificate of authenticity signed by the artist.

*Conflict Resolution* are a series of works on paper, which comprise extracts of the book *Conflict in the Middle East*.

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*Public Address* is a sound installation that playfully subverts PA Systems, which broadcast instructions and notifications to the public, revealing the invisible mechanisms, which govern the individual's behaviour in the public sphere. In the version produced for JustMad, the artist inverts the traditional hierarchy between the "public" and the "private" by broadcasting her intimate thoughts in the same way as representatives of authority relay instructions. It was first conceived during a residency at the **Hayward Gallery in London**, under the title "How to stop being friends with someone you no longer have anything in common with" as part of the *Wide Open School* programme and exhibition.

### **Yara El-Sherbini artist Bio:**

Yara El-Sherbini (1978) received her MA from the Slade School of Art, UCL (London). Recent artist in residency and commissions include the V&A, as part of the National Art Library's new initiative to archive contemporary & modern Arab, Turkish & Iranian art and design, the Hayward Gallery (UK), and ZKM (Germany), Delfina Foundation (UK), The Live Art Development Agency (UK), ArtHouse (Australia), IKON Gallery (UK), and the National Portrait Gallery (UK). Exhibitions include Hayward Gallery, ZKM, Modern Art Oxford (UK), Tate Britain (UK), Arnolfini (UK), Mostyn Art Gallery, (Wales), CCCB Museum (Barcelona), National Maritime Museum (UK), BALTIC (UK), Futersonic (UK), Centre d'Art Contemporain (Geneva) and Palazzo Papesse (Siena), The David Roberts Art Foundation (UK), and Lombard-Fried Projects (New York).

El-Sherbini's practice spans a variety of disciplines ranging from installations and interventions to live art and video. She frequently uses familiar frameworks, and recognisable formats, for social interaction (family games, pub quizzes, auctions and PA systems), in order to engage audiences in questioning the invisible processes of crowd control, social influence and knowledge production, used to shape individuals beliefs and behaviour in society at large. El-Sherbini is represented by La Caja Blanca gallery.



*Yara El-Sherbini, during the performance where she sold the weather houses which replicated popular Döner Kebab shops*

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