

PHOTO, MEDIA AND DIGITAL ART

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For Immediate Release (March 31, 2010)

ZINEB SEDIRA JOURNEYS ACROSS SHIFTING BORDERS AND CONTESTED SEAS IN NEW EXHIBITION AT PREFIX

(Toronto) – Wide expanses of the sea, indeterminate shipping ports and a sense of longing all inform Zineb Sedira's breathtaking video installation *MiddleSea*, a major work that anchors an exhibition of the same name at **Prefix Institute of Contemporary Art**. Using the sea as an allegory, Sedira's video and photographic works are meditations on the ideological contests of nations and the displacement of individuals. A North American premiere, this exhibition is curated by Scott McLeod and is accompanied by an interview with the erudite critic and curator Hans Ulrich Obrist in the spring issue of *Prefix Photo* magazine.

An **opening reception**, with the artist in attendance and in conjunction with the release of *Prefix Photo 21*, will be held on **Thursday, May 6th from 7 to 10 PM** at **Prefix**, located at 401 Richmond Street West, Suite 124, Toronto. The exhibition runs from **May 6th to July 24th, 2010** and is presented on the occasion of the Contact Toronto Photography Festival.

Set on a ferry traversing the Mediterranean between Algiers and Marseilles, *MiddleSea* unravels enigmatically, a visual meditation on the state of transit in a geographical no-man's land. The camera moves slowly about the ship's passages, its decks and interiors, with occasional but breathtaking views to the sea. Focusing intently on the tiniest, repetitive details – the wringing of hands, the plumes and swirls of water behind the ship, the unraveling of the rope that tethers ship to land – the viewer becomes acutely aware of an atmosphere tense with yearning and aspiration. The mesmerizing quality of the imagery captivates not only the viewer but the subject as well, as the lone passenger stares out to sea transfixed, watching and waiting. The soundtrack to the piece, composed by Mikhail Karikis, combines unnervingly high pitches with the deep, rumbling noises of the ship's engine, providing an uneasy soundscape that reinforces the discomfort and displacement of the journey.

As with much of Sedira's work, the pieces on exhibit here explore issues of identity, diaspora and movement between and across borders. Occurring in the culturally, historically and economically loaded site between the African and European coasts of the Mediterranean, the journey depicted in *MiddleSea* is one that both connects and separates two very distinct continents, referencing a history of trade, immigration and, for those with means, leisure. The images of the ports, however, are kept completely unidentifiable – they could exist anywhere. As such, Sedira's work offers a more universal, metaphorical exploration of the act of the journey itself, and of the experience of living in transit or transition.

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About the Artist

Zineb Sedira was born in 1963 to Algerian parents who had recently immigrated to France. She was raised in Paris and studied in London, graduating from the Slade School of Art and the Royal College of Art. In 2001, she was included in the African Pavilion of the Venice Biennale and was awarded the Prix AFAA, IV Rencontres de la Photographie Africaine de Bamako. Since then, she has received exhibitions of her work at the Centre Georges Pompidou (Paris), the Photographers Gallery (London), the Pori Museum (Finland), Bildmuseet (Sweden) and INIVA, the Institute of International Visual Arts (London), among others, and has participated in the biennial exhibitions of Alexandria, Sharjah, Valencia, and Le Mois de la Photo à Montréal. She lives in London and works in Algiers, Paris and London.

About the Curator

Scott McLeod is a writer, curator and arts administrator. His work focuses on contemporary practices, with a specialization in photography, media and digital art. Since 2000, he has been the director and curator of Prefix Institute of Contemporary Art, where he also serves as the editor and publisher of *Prefix Photo* magazine. McLeod is also the guest curator of Le Mois de la Photo à Montréal, a biennial contemporary art exhibition to be presented in September 2011.

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About Prefix

Prefix Institute of Contemporary Art is a public art gallery and arts publishing house based in Toronto. A registered charitable organization, Prefix fosters the appreciation and understanding of contemporary photography, media and digital art. Recently, Prefix launched a new division, Prefix Press, and released its first book, *Milk and Melancholy* by Kenneth Hayes.

Acknowledgements

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For more information, print-ready images or to schedule an interview with the artist or curator, please contact:

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