

LAXART

NIRA PEREG: *I Can't Believe it's Not Battle! Melt Away Before You*

March 30 — April 7, 2018

Opening Reception, Saturday, March 3, 4-7pm, with a walk-through with the artist at 5pm.

LAXART is pleased to present the premier of *I Can't Believe it's Not Battle! Melt Away Before You*, a new multi-channel video installation by Israeli artist, Nira Pereg. This new body of work revolves around the site of Fort Irwin National Training Center, a major training area for the United States Military located in the Mojave Desert in northern San Bernardino County, California. Fort Irwin is a simulation of another place—a fake Middle Eastern town—that becomes a subject of investigation into the nature of authenticity, simulation, fiction, and the theater of war. As America's embedment in the Middle East has become increasingly entrenched, complicated, and violent, the Armed Forces are looking to theater and performance as new counter strategies to keep apace with the shifting specificities of war. The army has constructed vast simulations of wartime Iraq and Afghanistan to train troops for unconventional tactics and to make them aware that they are under the media's gaze.

The work "*Melt Away Before You*" or "*I Can't Believe It's Not Battle*," is the second part of Pereg's "Redemption" trilogy, a body of work that deals with the heritage of ideology—the religious/political/economic representations. As the artist has explained, "I think of the exhibition space at a 'total institution' (to quote sociologist Erving Goffman), incorporating different scenes and elements from 'real' and 'staged' events, and blurring the boundaries between the two. In this work, we see a performance staged in a realistic mock-up of a generic Middle Eastern village, with real soldiers depicting civilians; real Iraqi-American immigrants depicting real Iraqi citizens; shipping containers depicting Middle Eastern bazaar streets; and finally, real soldiers firing fake ammunition. For me, it was a rare opportunity to peer through a performative crack into the army's ideological structure, masquerading as entertainment at Fort Irwin."

Nira Pereg, born in Tel Aviv in 1969, spent the 90s in New York where she received her B.F.A. from Cooper Union in New York, USA. Upon her return to Israel, she graduated from the Bezalel M.F.A. studio program in Jerusalem, and has been teaching internationally since. Pereg's works have been collected and exhibited at Centre Pompidou Paris, PS 1 New York, the Hirshhorn Museum, HDK Berlin, KW Berlin, ZKM Karlsruhe, The Israeli Museum of Art in Jerusalem, Haus Der Kunst München, Edith-Ruß- Haus für Medienkunst, Kunsthalle Dusseldorf, and The Tel Aviv Museum of Art, and recently, the Tate Modern.

About LAXART:

Founded in 2005, LAXART is one of Los Angeles' premiere alternative venues. A platform for emerging and under recognized talent, its mission has expanded to encompass thematic exhibitions that engage with key issues of our time.

