

Contemporary photography is essentially more than fine art. The proliferation of digital imagery - and therefore, of digital memories and archives, has shifted the photographic process towards a certain introspection that resembles the modest proposals of abstract painting.

It seems as if it had become very difficult for photography to see, to locate objects, and the choice instead was a type of psychological portrait. The photographic object, by all means unstable, reappears time and again as the site for both re-inventing and questioning, which is what is at work now in [Tanya Traboulsi's](#) new body of work, where it is the artist herself who inverts the dynamics of this process, moving away from the semi-abstract topographies of her on-going project with Caroline Tabet and her engagement documenting and producing visuals for Beirut's alternative music scene.

The exhibit, "[Lost Strange Things: On Not Finding Home](#)" is a search for a familiarity of an unexpected kind; it is not simply an invasive journey into memory and archives, too commonplace in Lebanese art, or the mere reconstruction of a personal narrative in historical terms, for the sake of remembrance or disruption.



The Austrian-Lebanese photographer, preoccupied with her own personal identity between two different sets of cultural grammars and experiences, in Vienna and Beirut, sets out to investigate notions of belonging, not through grand historical narratives but through quotidian surveys of objects and experiences. The dislocation is felt so strong that it requires an effort of the eye to take notice of the strangeness. This is probably the result of both process and chance: Alienation being a condition so notorious in this photography that it becomes almost identical with reality.

Furthermore: It is possible that it even doubles reality rather than imitate it. Awkward positions and backward glances, characterize landscapes often fraught with internal divisions that are not always of the emotional kind; they can be also compositional and aesthetic. Why is that object there? One would ask at first, only to realize later that subjects are also concealed, or put in other words, revealed only partially, obscured in broad day light and brought forward only in a state of suspension.

A study of objects that is narratively inspired, animates the exhibition through an installation of personal memorabilia that through being showcased in a glass display, museum-like, acquire a certain distance, turning them into elements of both fantasy and fiction, yet belonging to the objective realities deployed as a larger theme in this exhibition of apparently aimless exiles.



While the theme of memory is obviously recurrent in this exhibition, there might be more than meets the eye: The mechanism of seeing and remembering that we encounter in the show is not that of recovering a lost past - though certain glimpses of nostalgia are doubtless invoked here - but something far more interesting, concerning the possibility of imagining (or re-imagining) a future tense for which our current condition of alienation and post-history is an immediate referent and past. How is it possible to have a longing for the future in our present situation? There are just too many images surrounding us, too many immediate presents, so that the transition from one tense into another becomes vague and imperceptible. Split identities, like Traboulsi's, remind of the necessity to firmly hold time, to stare into it, to pause and look over, as if it was something fixed, a part of us, not something vague and transient.

The exhibition - [which runs until April 11](#) - coincides with the launching of an eponymous book published by Triton in collaboration with Art Factum gallery. It includes texts by Bariaa Mourad, Najla Said and Rayya Badran.

