

NEARCH**Imagining : Artists in residence – Paris
Ali Cherri**

Ali Cherri
(Video / Installation)

Born in 1976 in Beirut, Lebanon.
Lives and works in Paris and Beirut.

In his videos, drawings and sculptural installations, Ali Cherri dissects the geopolitical situation in Lebanon and its neighbouring countries with a distanced as well as involved look. Fragile basements and a history of earthquakes in the region seem to reflect the perpetual crises. Digital manipulations create an intense and distressing confusion between the real and the virtual. Cherri seeks new perspectives, different points of analysis between fall and rise, archaeology and the conquest of space – from *Pipe Dreams* to *Bird's Eye View*.

In 2014-2015, Cherri is in residence at the CENTQUATRE, in Paris. A production bursary from the Sharjah Art Foundation is allowing him to develop his research on the various approaches to archaeology in the Middle East and Central Asia, in partnership with Inrap and the Deutsch Archaeological Institute

« My research focuses on the construction of identity, the nation-state within the realm of museology and archaeological artefacts. Archaeology as a discipline of the social (soft) sciences at once fashions the ideological imagination and founding mythologies of a people, it unearths genealogical history and commends the past, life, thoughts, and the physicality of forefathers onto the present, but it also provides the spatial and demographic contours of nationhood, institutionalized in the state. In modernity, history, substantiated by archaeological evidence, replaces religion. Archaeology as a discipline emerged at the crossroads of contested political rights, territorial battlefields, or the bursting of a people onto the human stage as a nation, asserting itself as natural, always, and already been there. Scrutinizing this discipline - the collection of artefacts, the interpretation of what these facts convey or erase in terms of narrative and history, the displays and segmentation in museums, and the discursive invocation of archaeological

objects and sites in political struggles - elucidates the micro dynamics, paradigms, and arguments out of which geography, landscapes, histories, and historicities have all been made.

For the first chapter of my project, I have shot a film in the desert of Sharjah and Abu Dhabi on a Neolithic necropolis. The Gulf countries are living a hype of archaeological excavations, trying to reconnect with a pre-nomadic past, defending a national identity that was constructed around cities and commerce for many millennia. This seems like a missed opportunity of writing an alternative modernity that is not based on the trace, the artefacts, the ruins, but that is in constant erasure under the desert sand.

Currently I am in residency at the 104, in the framework of the NEARCH, I will be accompanying the archaeologists of the Deutsch archaeological Institute on their mission in Sudan. »