**GARAGE MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART PRESENTS:**

Sophia Al-Maria. *Beast Type Song*

July 5–August 15 2021

LAB

Garage Museum of Contemporary Art presents the first solo exhibition by Sophia Al-Maria in Russia. It is the last in a series of exhibitions exploring the language of contemporary video art, following presentations of work by David Claerbout and Rodney Graham.

Sophia Al-Maria (b. 1983) is a Qatari-American artist, writer, and filmmaker. She has had numerous solo exhibitions, including at the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, The Third Line, Dubai, and Tate Britain, London. She initially became known for her memoir *The Girl Who Fell To Earth* (2012), the story of her upbringing in the vastly different cultures of her father’s Bedouin family in Qatar and her mother’s house in the Pacific Northwest of the USA. Shortly afterwards, Al-Maria switched to filmmaking, video art, and installation, producing a wide variety of works about cultural and personal displacement in the context of the rapidly modernizing societies of the Arabian Gulf.

Together with musician Fatima Al-Qadiri she coined the term “Gulf Futurism,” which describes the effects of the acceleration of wealth in Qatar and neighboring countries. Unlike other non-European futurisms, this one has a decidedly pessimistic bent, as the Gulf will most likely become the site of an ecological meltdown in the next three or four decades. This profound pessimism toward neocolonial extraction informs Al-Maria’s work across all media. In a recent text, she even describes herself as an “extinction emo.”

In keeping with her stated personal goal “to contain multitudes,” Al-Maria’s work is based on a variety of inspirations, facts, and (im)probable scenarios. Following trailblazing sci-fi novelist Ursula Le Guin’s “carrier bag theory of fiction,” she gathers together the awareness that is the result of her cross-cultural upbringing and a life spent navigating and negating stereotypes, while also transforming this personal sensitivity to address pressing issues of anti-colonial struggle, corporate destruction of nature, and patriarchal violence.

The two works exhibited at Garage display the range of Al-Maria’s visual language and unending thirst for experimenting with form and narrative. *Mothership* (2017) is a video installation that depicts a possible encounter with extraterrestrial life in the vast darkness of the desert. *Beast Type Song* (2019) is a large-scale video installation shot in the elegantly derelict former campus of Central Saint Martins School of Art in London. The video features filmmaker Yumna Marwan, actress Elizabeth Peace, and performance artist Tosh Basco, and serves as both a network of personal histories of colonial erasure and a call to arms, conveyed through monologue, conversation, and dance. Parts of the video are separated by an asterisk, a typographic sign that denotes a link to a source or a correction. The asterisk might well be called Al-Maria’s weapon of choice: through a relentless series of detours she presents an argument against complicity in the mainstream narratives of history.

This project is implemented with the support of Cultural Creative Agency and the Embassy of the State of Qatar to the Russian Federation.

Curator: Valentin Diaconov

**GARAGE MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART**

Garage Museum of Contemporary Art is a place for people, art, and ideas to create history. Through an extensive program of exhibitions, events, education, research, and publishing, the institution reflects on current developments in Russian and international culture, creating opportunities for public dialogue, as well as the production of new work and ideas in Moscow. At the center of all these activities is the Museum’s collection, which is the first archive in the country related to the development of Russian contemporary art from the 1950s through the present. Founded in 2008 by Dasha Zhukova and Roman Abramovich, Garage is the first philanthropic organization in Russia to create a comprehensive public mandate for contemporary art and culture. Open seven days a week, it was initially housed in the renowned Bakhmetevsky Bus Garage in Moscow, designed by the Constructivist architect [Konstantin Melnikov](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Konstantin_Melnikov). In 2012 Garage relocated to a temporary pavilion in Gorky Park, specifically commissioned from award-winning architect Shigeru Ban. A year later, a purpose-built Education Center was opened next to the Pavilion. On June 12, 2015, Garage welcomed visitors to its first permanent home. Designed by Rem Koolhaas and his OMA studio, this groundbreaking preservation project transformed the famous Vremena Goda (Seasons of the Year) Soviet Modernist restaurant, built in 1968 in Gorky Park, into a contemporary museum.

Garage is a non-profit project of The IRIS Foundation.

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