

# Zineb Sedira: Seafaring

22 September – 4 November 2009

Exhibition Guide

Free

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A graveyard of ships; the dazzling light of Algiers; the melancholy of sea travel: Seafaring presents new and recent film and photographic works by London-based artist Zineb Sedira, set against the maritime backdrop of North Africa, the Mediterranean and the Atlantic. The exhibition brings together major film projects alongside photographic works, including a new, specially-commissioned lightbox installation.

Based in Southampton, the John Hansard Gallery shares its home with one of Europe's busiest deep water ports. This provides a striking context for Sedira's work, in which the sea – as a site of melancholy, longing, danger and survival – is interwoven through themes of travel and migration across cultures.

## Gallery 1

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### MiddleSea, 2008

Single screen projection shot on Super 16mm film (16:9)

16 minutes

MiddleSea is a mesmeric, filmed depiction of a sea voyage. The film traces the somnambulant movements of a lone male as he rambles the deserted corridors of a ship, crossing the Mediterranean between Marseilles and Algiers. Camera shots shift between the white decks, the immense horizon and the tiniest details, accumulating to form an almost

dream-like, cyclical journey that exists out of time. MiddleSea also features an extraordinary soundscape, created in collaboration with artist Mikhail Karikis, which interweaves, distorts and intensifies sound recorded on location with instrumental snippets and sound collages.

## Gallery 2

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### Remnants of a Scattered Vessel, 2009

15 lightboxes

Various sizes with black electrical cables

Seafaring showcases a new work, Remnants of a Scattered Vessel, commissioned by the John Hansard Gallery. Comprising fifteen photographic lightboxes of varying sizes, the work presents a fragmented, luminescent portrait of a ship's carcass on the desolate Mauritanian coastline, where the desert meets the sea. This multitude of glowing images focuses upon the boat's decayed, rusted surfaces and attains an almost hallucinatory presence within the darkened Gallery space.

The boat's rotted remains signify a deathly finality – not simply the death of a vessel, but the death of a journey. This is particularly significant given that the location, the harbour city of Nouadhibou, is today a perilous

embarkation route for would-be migrants. This metropolis is also Mauritania's economic capital and home to the world's largest ship graveyard, which has become both a shipping hazard and an ecological threat.

The lightboxes' bulk and trailing power cables add a physical aspect to the work that makes visible the fragile ecology implied within the imagery – the sun's sapping heat and the ocean's potential to both nourish and destroy. Remnants of a Scattered Vessel forms part of a prolific body of recent photographic and film works by the artist exploring this unique location.

## Gallery 3

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### Saphir, 2006

Video installation with two projections (16:9)

18 minutes

“[...] it seemed to me important to show an Algeria that’s little known in the West, free of the “politics” and exoticism so often attached to it.”

Zineb Sedira in conversation with Christine Van Assche in Saphir, 2006, published by The Photographers’ Gallery, London, Kamel Mennour and Paris Musees, France.

Saphir forms an earlier companion piece to MiddleSea and again features a maritime setting – in this instance, the port of Algiers. Comprising an evocative juxtaposition of two film sequences, the work contains a ‘germ of a narrative’ – two characters, a man and woman,

wandering, waiting and looking. Saphir focuses upon the crumbling art deco grandeur of the 1930s Hotel Es Safir and views of the Tariq Ibn Ziyad ferry, which travels to and from Marseille.

The work alludes to the desire for escape, belonging and to return, though is never explicitly political. Saphir instead represents an emotional – and strikingly visual – response to the city and its unique light, architecture and interior spaces.

## Gallery 4

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### Beyond the Sea, 2008

Four lightboxes

100 x 120cm each

This earlier lightbox installation comprises four stunningly realised images, each revealing a detail of a vessel – a bright red handle, a curve of white piping, a window seat – against the glowing immensity of the sky and sea.

These compositions transform the ship’s functional machinery and furniture into emphatic visual statements, placing surfaces you can almost touch against the infinity of the horizon.

## Artist’s Biography

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Born in Paris in 1963, Zineb Sedira has exhibited across Europe, the Middle East and the US, including the 49th Annual Art Exhibition at the Venice Biennale, 2001, The British Art Show 6, 2005, and the New Art Exchange, Nottingham, Iniva, London, and the Istanbul Biennial in 2009. She works between Paris, London and Algiers.

# Gallery Events

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Children's Workshop:

Pass Port... to the open waves

Tuesday 27 October / 11.30am – 2.30pm / Free

For participants ages 8+ / Booking required

Artist's Talk: Zineb Sedira

Thursday 8 October / 7 – 8.30pm

Part of Southampton Film Week, 2 – 11 October

Visit [www.hansardgallery.org.uk](http://www.hansardgallery.org.uk) for details.

## Associated Event

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Conference: Music and Migration

Turner Sims, University of Southampton

October 15 – 17 2009

Visit: [www.soton.ac.uk/ml/research/music\\_and\\_migration.html](http://www.soton.ac.uk/ml/research/music_and_migration.html) for full programme.

## Acknowledgements

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MiddleSea was produced by Artsadmin and funded by Arts Council England, The Henry Moore Foundation and Galerie Kamel Mennour, Paris.

Remnants of a Shattered Vessel was commissioned by the John Hansard Gallery.

Saphir was co-commissioned by The Photographers' Gallery and Film & Video Umbrella.

Beyond the Sea courtesy the artist and Galerie Kamel Mennour, Paris.



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