

# Footnotes

Sabella's practice is noted for its on-going investigations of the exilic condition. Questions of identity and belonging juxtaposed to, what he calls, the 'toxic' political realities of East Jerusalem engendered the chronicling of the artists psychological agonies as a mounting sense of alienation threatened to disconnect him from his physical environment, from self and from others. This state of 'mental exile' culminated in the iconic 2008 series *In Exile* created in London shortly after the artist's departure from Jerusalem. There, duplicate fragments of architectural details and windows are obsessively layered and reassembled to compose tapestries of geometric abstracts, urban simulacra or labyrinthine cognitive maps. The dialectic of place and mental state runs like a thread through Sabella's work.

This seems underpinned by the desire for recognition, a desire, in the Hegelian sense, with the transformative power from the I to the We, a process doomed to failure unless coercive force is renounced – an unlikely scenario if the status quo persists. Euphoria (2010) heralds a lifting of the state of 'mental exile', the realisation that identity is liquid and situational and that choice of context is an option. It is perhaps not surprising that it was created in physical exile. Montaged from hundreds of shots of trees the resulting image of organic fluidity signifies cathartic relief, emanating a sense of the ecstatic and the sublime. Anthropomorphised shapes dance against the softly pattered background forming ever new aesthetic possibilities in the promise of limitless expansion. Steve Sabella is holder of the coveted Ellen Auerbach Price from the Academy of the Arts in Berlin and was

one of the artists commissioned to create work for the inauguration of the Arab Museum of Modern Art in Doha earlier this year. Words provided by Christa Paula.

Steve Sabella, (Palestinian, born 1975)

Euphoria, 2010

Lambda print and diasec mount. Signed. Number 2 in an edition of 6 + 2 APs.

*155 x 127cm (61 x 50in).*

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