

# NOHRA HAIME GALLERY 500 W 21<sup>st</sup> STREET

## VALERIE HIRD

### What *Did* Happen to Alice; My Avatar

March 3 – April 3, 2021

Guided tour by the artist: Saturday, March 6th at 12pm and 4pm

Valerie Hird's newest exhibition, *What Did Happen to Alice; My Avatar*, highlights her award-winning video animation with its interactive stage sets and multi-media paintings. This series explores complex questions of identity as it follows Hird's fictional avatar "Alice" through a landscape of personal and political influences and experiences from 1960's America all the way to the current day in the Middle East.



*FLIGHT, 2020, Watercolor, Arches paper, 23 x 46 in. 58.4 x 116.8 cm.*

The featured 12-minute video, using works by the artist, is digitally mastered into a soaring animation. It follows Alice, a white paper cutout representing her artist, creator, and real-life traveler Valerie Hird, as she embarks on a chaotic journey beginning with her naïve youth. Young Alice believes in the American movie fantasy of the Middle East, and we watch as her illusions meet reality among wildly patterned landscapes and the shifting winds of social media. In a melodic interplay between past and present, the harmonies and storytelling come together to tell a fractured fairytale.

The exhibition includes four interactive wall-mounted stage sets used in the video. Wrapped in culturally diverse literature, movie posters, and hand-painted landscapes, these sets are embedded with visual vocabulary found in nomadic textiles. The first three sets have a wooden crank mechanism to operate stage lighting and moving parts. Darting origami birds represent the flight of Social Media, which grew to be the dominant means of communication during the later years of Hird's travels. The stripped down version of the fourth set relies on a simple crank to operate lights, a metaphor for the artist's limited comprehension of society's newfound interaction.

Accompanying the stage sets are oil, watercolor and mixed media paintings. These works discard Hird's understanding of temporal measurement in order to reconnect with her memory of place. In an acknowledgement that time moves both ways, each painting looks for balance by simultaneously reaching forward and backward in history, linking time and events within a geography of place. Together, they create a structure for temporal measurements independent of the daily noise.

*What Did Happen to Alice; My Avatar* is a rich visual and cultural experience that engages the viewer. It is a fusion of the personal with the communal, innocence with intellect, and allows memories of place and time to form new identities that constantly evolve.

Valerie Hird graduated with a BFA from the Rhode Island School of Design and an MFA from Vermont College. In 2008 she was granted an award from the Community Foundation of Vermont. Hird has worked and travelled throughout the Middle East, Central Asia, and South America. Likewise, she has exhibited widely in the United States and abroad. Her work belongs to such public and corporate collections as The Rhode Island School of Design, Providence RI, The Fleming Museum, Burlington VT, The Exxon Corporation, Dallas, TX, and Pfizer Inc., among others. Born in Massachusetts in 1955, Hird Moved to Vermont in 1979, where she currently lives and works



NEW MEDIA, 2020, wood, screws, foamcore, paper, watercolor, ink, electrical wire, LEDs, batteries, 28 x 14 x 6 1/2 in. 71.1 x 35.6 x 16.5 cm.

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**For more information:** Leslie Garrett at 212-888-3550 or [gallery@nohrahaimgallery.com](mailto:gallery@nohrahaimgallery.com)