



Press Release

Inside Sajja | A Labor of Light

Photography Exhibition

January 18, 2012 – February 16, 2012

(Dubai, United Arab Emirates – December 21, 2011)

Gulf Photo Plus and Adopt-a-Camp are pleased to announce the exhibition *Inside Sajja | A Labor of Light*. The exhibition is a visual exploration by a group of abandoned laborers, of their living environment in Sajja, an industrial area in Sharjah, as photographed by themselves.

As a result of the economic downturn, a labor supply company's owners absconded and fled the country leaving their employees stranded. The workers were owed numerous months in back wages and without access to their passports, were left to struggle in a camp void of basic necessities, lacking running water, and electricity.

Saher Shaikh, the founder of Adopt-a-Camp, discovered their plight two and a half years ago and "adopted them". Since then, Adopt-a-Camp has been feeding them and their families back home, providing medical aid, English classes, help in recovering their passports, tickets home, new employment opportunities as well as emotional support and encouragement.

Karen Dias, a documentary photographer based at the time in the UAE, became aware of the Sajja abandoned laborers after the efforts of Adopt-a-Camp brought their story to light. Dias approached Shaikh with a proposal to share her photography skills with the Sajja laborers, through donated cameras and workshops offering the basics of photography.

Following multiple visits and further encouragement, the photos captured by the laborers progressed from posed snapshots to compelling story-telling images of their everyday lives. Dias aimed to share these images with the public, in a way that would also serve to generate income for the men in Sajja.

Gulf Photo Plus became involved in the project by organizing the exhibition, where prints and postcards featuring the photographs taken by the laborers of Sajja will be on display and available for sale within the Gulf Photo Plus gallery space. Each 57 x 38 cm print will be available for 400 AED, with postcard-sized prints also available for 20 AED. All proceeds from the print sales will be distributed directly and evenly to the workers involved in the project.

The Gulf Photo Plus team has also collaborated with Shaikh to arrange a photography session capturing the portraits of the workers involved in the project. These prints will be gifted to the workers, and also exhibited within the gallery space, offering the laborers a visual presence next to the photographs they have created.

The exhibition opens on January 18, at 7:30pm where the laborers themselves will be present to connect with visitors and encourage further dialogue about the project.

The exhibition *Inside Sajja: A Labor of Light* runs January 18, through to February 16, 2012.



About Adopt-a-camp

A non-profit organization based in the UAE that began 6 years ago, with Saher Shaikh and her motivation to care for those in need. With the help of volunteers and sponsors Adopt-a-camp provides everything from basic necessities to emotional support and encouragement. Adopt a camp looks after both abandoned camps as well as functioning camps, currently with over 22 000 men in their care. With each program, numerous sponsors and volunteers arranged by Shaikh make these things possible. More information is available on the Adopt-a-Camp Facebook page.

About Gulf Photo Plus

Gulf Photo Plus is a photography organization whose aim is to nurture and develop the photography community here in the UAE and through out the region. With a primarily focus to offer workshops, seminars, and events that encourage learning and skill development, Gulf Photo Plus has garnered a reputation as the leader in photography events with the annual Gulf Photo Plus Event every March and the FotoWeekend event each November as highlights on the annual calendar. GPPs central program is coupled with additional events including photography exhibitions, movie nights, and Slidefest evenings where creative individuals can share ideas and find further inspiration.

The new Gulf Photo Plus premises can be found amidst the art community of Al Quoz in Alserkal Avenue Space D36. For more information about classes, workshops and directions to the new premises, please visit www.gulfphotoplus.com or telephone +971 4 380 8545.

Gulf Photo Plus is open from 10am to 7pm from Sunday – Thursday, open 10am – 6pm on Saturdays.

About Karen Dias

Karen Dias is a documentary photographer who was based in Dubai for the past four years, currently based in Istanbul and will soon be traveling through the Asian continent for the next two years. She has produced a number of photographic essays including images about the life of camel jockeys in the UAE among others. More information about her work can be found at www.karendiasphotography.com

About our sponsors

Johnson & Johnson and Epson have graciously supported this exhibition by offering sponsorship.

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About Epson

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High res images are available, as well as interview opportunities with Saher Shaikh from Adopt-a-Camp, Karen Dias, and the organizers from Gulf Photo Plus.

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