

ASIA // SHARJAH // ISTANBUL

AFRICA // MARRAKECH

EUROPE // LONDON

NORTH AMERICA // TORONTO // BOSTON // NEW YORK

REVIEWS



SHARJAH

Ziad Antar

Collections Building // March 16–May 16

Ziad Antar
*Portrait of a
Territory, Ajman,*
2010. C-print,
19½ x 19½ in.

A NUMBER OF EXHIBITIONS and performances were timed to coincide with this year's March Meeting, a three-day art conference held in the culture-loving emirate of Sharjah. They included *Visiting Tarab*, Tarek Atoui's reprise of his five-and-a-half-hour Performa 11 commission, in which viewers sprawled atop rugs and beanbag chairs in an open-air courtyard while basking in a cacophony of strings, drums, flutes, and electronic noise; the regional debut of *1395 Days Without Red*, a film project somewhat confoundingly

REVIEWS

rendered in two parallel versions by Sejla Kamberić and Anri Sala; and an exhibition of photographs of the United Arab Emirates' coastline taken by Lebanese artist Ziad Antar, titled "Portrait of a Territory."



Because of the context, one would be forgiven for thinking that Antar's series, shot over a period of eight years, might represent a form of tourist board boosterism for the region. Thankfully, "Portrait of a Territory" is far from an assortment of postcard images. In fact, there's very little of the paradisiacal in these photographs, and one is left wondering what Antar himself makes of the landscape he's capturing. One of the standout works here juxtaposes a line of juice-vending machines in the foreground with a similar line of skyscrapers in the background; a dejected metal can rests at the yellow-and-white-checked curb. Elsewhere we have semi-desolate beach vistas and dead fish. The overall effect is depopulated, vaguely postapocalyptic. Antar fixates on architecture, but the architecture ends up feeling useless—what's a building for if there's no one alive to live in it? The mix of black-and-white with color mostly serves Antar's purposes and helps to create a rhythm within the series, which is also marked by stylistic tics like blurring, sun flare, and darkened edges. As a portrait, it is conflicted. The artist's vision of the UAE coast comes across as intentionally barren, less a document of potential—of life being lived—than a record of locations recently and mysteriously abandoned, of non-places. —**Scott Indrisek**

Ziad Antar
Portrait of a Territory, Sharjah, Heritage Area, 2010. C-print, 19½ x 19½ in.