

Regina Mamou
Unfortunately, It Was Paradise

September 16 - October 29, 2016

Opening Reception:
Friday, September 16, 7-10PM



Fog is: vapor condensed to fine particles of water. It is not, however, to be confused with clouds, which hover in the upper atmosphere, as fog graces earth's lower echelons with its presence.

Fog is a murky condition, a state of bewilderment—or, to be thoroughly led astray.

Fog, that fragile solid, is the unnamed narrator of Regina Mamou's series entitled *Unfortunately, It Was Paradise*. The photographs in this body of work document landmarks from fallen Edens, historical sites found in the Midwest, that latitude of American wholesomeness and stopping-off point of a progression to westward individualism. Apropos to titles such as *LDS Temple, Twilight (Icarian Town Plat)*, each of these emboldened communities was subsequently disbanded for reasons both amicable and not, their idealism, perhaps, aimed a little too high. Titles such as *Lustgarten* say it all, that as humans we are born from a longing, a lusting for pleasure, an abstraction that is never universal, and, therefore, can never unify us.

With puritanical composure and lighting, Mamou's photographs are objects of reverence to the great sublime: nature. Mamou pairs several of the representational photographs with scenes obfuscated by foggy environmental conditions (the *Fieldwork* images), a nod to the dissolution of form as a potential pathway to ecstasy. The photographs in *Unfortunately, It Was Paradise* are altars before which we stand to contemplate the human condition and the only certainties in life: death and regeneration—fates in which we are all made equal. The burial ground is, after all, level.

Whether portraying a New Harmonist cemetery in Indiana, a humanist idyll in Illinois, or the guideposts to Richard Meier's Atheneum (*Richard Meier's Vision for Athene, Night #2*), Mamou's photographs regenerate dormant communities in one last stab at maintaining hope. The sites are reborn as environmental paradises that appear untouched but for a distant, and brief past. In *Unfortunately, It Was Paradise*, Mamou photographs the dead and gives us what is living: the vines that twist around rail and fence posts, or the moss that climbs up a brick meeting house, to remind us that life really does go on.

These are contemplative photographs shot at the most contemplative of hours—dusk and dawn. The hours in which the quality of light is most pure. The hours in which the strange most often emerges. The hours in which one takes solitary walks to and from destinations, with a sense of an impending *Something* lurking behind. In these photographs, a real, or latent, fog curls around the crumbling structures, implications of a once-was human body, casting a vignette to the dramatic, and very romantic, scene. These are photographs straight from the moors of *Wuthering Heights*, or the bogs of *Frankenstein*. One half expects to see a disjointed creature, an Adam assembled from the parts of various corpses that could not be made to cohere, bowing at a river, his head lifting to the sound of a branch breaking at the edge of the woods. But no, here is only nature in all its godliness, devoid of Man, the earth abiding forever.

In an act of historical dredging, or an architectural séance, Mamou steeps her photographs in the haunting holiness of nature, perhaps the only thing from which we can know true and frightening beauty. Here are traces of attempted Utopias being swallowed by the earth, the ideals of peace in concert with the chaos of life.

Fog asks of us: integrate, for I will integrate with you anyway.

- Text by Meg Whiteford

ADDITIONAL PROGRAMMING FOR UNFORTUNATELY, IT WAS PARADISE

Thursday, October 6, 7:30 – 8:30pm

Art Talk with Regina Mamou in collaboration with Art Muse Los Angeles

RSVP: hello@showandtellprojects.com

Monday, October 10, 7:30pm

Art + Meditation: A guided meditation with special guest teacher

RSVP: hello@showandtellprojects.com

Saturday, October 29, 6:30 – 9:30pm

Unfortunately, It Was Paradise book release party

RSVP: hello@showandtellprojects.com

ABOUT REGINA MAMOU

Mamou is a Los Angeles based artist. Via mixed media, she creates work that explores the diversity of cultural aesthetics. She has exhibited internationally at the Makan Art Space in Amman, Jordan; Action Field Kodra Contemporary Art Festival in Thessaloniki, Greece; the Historic Water Tower Gallery in Chicago, Illinois; the Elizabeth Foundation for the Arts in New York, New York; and Purdue University in West Lafayette, Indiana, among others. Her work has been written about in Artforum.com, Newcity Art, Culturehall, Afterimage, Contemporaneity, and Fabrik. She holds an MFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, a BFA from the Rhode Island School of Design, and was a Fulbright fellow to Jordan.

Image credit: Regina Mamou, *St. Francis of Assisi*, 2012, Digital C-print, 40 x 50 inches

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Hours: Wednesday - Saturday, 12 - 6 PM

For more information, contact us at hello@showandtellprojects.com