

Travel Agency Promoting Trips to Baghdad Comes To San Francisco

Visual Art Installation, *Abidin Travels*, Uses Humor and Irony to Communicate Realities of Life in Iraq

SARATOGA, Calif. – Imagine walking into a travel agency and finding promotions for vacation trips to Baghdad – what would your first thought be? Previously at the Venice Biennale and now in San Francisco's TripleBase Gallery by Montalvo Arts Center comes *Abidin Travels* - a new visual art installation by artist Adel Abidin. The art installation mimics a bare bones travel agency where the artist uses humor, sarcasm and irony, to invite visitors to explore the realities of life in Baghdad. *Abidin Travels* opens on Saturday, Nov. 17, with a public reception from 7 – 10 p.m.

Abidin Travels is part of Montalvo Arts Center's unprecedented program, IRAQ: REFRAME, a series of visual and performing arts and public programs now through April 2008. At a time when Iraq is primarily seen or thought of as a place of war and destruction, Montalvo taps the creative community to reframe perceptions of the country and its culture through programming that asks a myriad of internal and external questions.

Please see related press release for more information on IRAQ: REFRAME at ww.montalvoarts.org/press.

In *Abidin Travels* visitors can expect to see things such as posters and brochures for trips to Baghdad; a kiosk for making online reservations and printing tickets; and a bitterly sarcastic promotional video, where Abidin blends a cheerful, American-accented female voice, with disturbing video footage of conflict, destroyed buildings, looters and weeping women.

"Part of Abidin's unique approach is his ability to present intense subjects within visually arresting and highly accessible mediums," said Rijin Sahakian, curator of IRAQ: REFRAME. "The realities of life in Iraq are presented with honesty that Abidin's unique sense of humor makes all the more visible and ultimately heartbreaking."

"Abidin's work encapsulates what Montalvo is addressing with its IRAQ: REFRAME program," said Robert Sain, executive director of Montalvo. "*Abidin Travels* is a fascinating visual installation that undoubtedly reframes the conversation on Iraq and creates constructive dialogue."

Abidin was born in Baghdad, Iraq, in 1973 and now lives and works in Helsinki. He studied at the Academy of Fine Arts in both Baghdad and Helsinki. He is currently in-residence at Montalvo through November.

TripleBase Gallery:
Nov. 17 – Jan. 5, 2008
www.basebasebase.com
3041 24th Street
San Francisco, CA
415.643.3943

Gallery Hours:
Thurs. – Sun. Noon – 5 p.m.

www.abidintravels.com
www.adelabidin.com

About Montalvo Arts Center

Montalvo Arts Center is a nonprofit organization dedicated to forging meaningful connections between art, artists and the communities it serves through creation, presentation and education in extraordinary ways and settings. Located in Silicon Valley's Saratoga hills, Montalvo Arts Center occupies a Mediterranean-style villa on 175 stunning acres, including an international artist residency program. The historic Villa and grounds were left to the people of California by Senator James Phelan for the encouragement of art, music, literature and architecture. In January 2005, the organization changed its name from "Montalvo" to "Montalvo Arts Center" to commemorate its 75th year as an arts center and to better communicate its mission to expanding local, national and international audiences. For more information about Montalvo Arts Center, call (408) 961-5800 or visit <http://www.montalvoarts.org/>.

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