

## Sylvia Safdie

August 22 – October 5, 2013

### *Amzrou / Morocco*

**Reception with the artist:**

Video, photography, drawing

Thursday, September 12, 5pm – 7:30pm

The Gallery will exceptionally be closed on  
Thursday, September 5 and Saturday, September 14, 2013



Sylvia Safdie, *Dust*, 2009. (Video still / detail)  
Video, 4:50 minutes

Through her paintings, drawings, sculptures and installations, and by the use of natural materials such as sand, earth and dust, Sylvia Safdie's work is both poetic and meditative.

Her video art, begun in 2001, can be seen as a natural extension of her previous work in static media; these videos become a moving canvas on which to explore ideas of space and time, stasis and movement, embodiment and nature.

"With the Morocco series Sylvia Safdie set out to investigate what happens when a community long identified with a particular location is displaced. [...] Her interest and sensitivity to the issue of displacement as transformation is due in no small part to her own [experience]."

"Safdie travelled to Amzrou, a Kasbah in the Draa valley, on the edge of the Sahara desert in southern Morocco. For 2,500 years it was home to a relatively large Jewish community who lived [in the mellah (the Jewish quarter)] in peace with their Berber neighbours." Since the last remaining families emigrated in 1958, memories of this community are now preserved by the elderly, and by the spaces they once occupied.

"This sense of absence pervades the videos Safdie shot in the [...] abandoned synagogue of Amzrou, which she sees as 'a poetic evocation of a place which marks the dispersion of a society from its home.'"

"This series manages to pay homage to an absent community without romanticizing it. On one hand the videos are direct about what remains – almost nothing, just dust in a once vibrant place [...]. However, by presenting the dust as spirit and by giving it breath, Safdie makes clear that both individuals and communities have a felt presence that often can outlive their corporeal presence. [...] Transformation implies not only change, but continuity; whatever transforms exists both before and after, just altered."

Excerpts from Eric Lewis, *The Video Art of Sylvia Safdie*, McGill – Queen's University Press, 2013, p. 66, 70.

### Biography

Sylvia Safdie was born in Aley, Lebanon in 1942, grew up in Israel, and moved to Canada in 1953. She lives and works in Montreal. She obtained a BFA from Concordia University in 1975. Her work has been shown in Canada, the United States, South America, Europe, and Asia; at Leonard & Bina Ellen Art Gallery, Montreal (2010, 2003); at Galerie de la Porte d'Italie, Toulon, France (2010); at LENTOS Kunstmuseum Linz, Austria (2008); at the Prague Biennale (2008); at the Festival International du Film sur l'Art / FIFA, Montreal (2008, 2005); at Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal (2006); at Canadian Cultural Centre, Paris (2000), and at Wan Fung Art Gallery, Beijing, China (1996). Her work has been the subject of a film –*Earth Marks* (2000), by Doina Harap – and of several publications, most recently *The Video Art of Sylvia Safdie* (2013), by Eric Lewis.

Sylvia Safdie is represented by Joyce Yahouda Gallery in Montreal.