

HOOR AL QASIMI: OFF ROAD

September 22, 2012 to January 27, 2013 At the Nevada Museum of Art

“All voluntary travel is characterized by longing for some elusive element that lies out of reach in daily life.” –Lucy Lippard, art critic

In her “Off Road” series, photographer Hoor Al Qasimi (born 1980, United Arab Emirates) adopts travel as her subject matter. These images speak of physical displacement, of removing oneself from one’s customary environment, of seeking insight by looking beyond the obvious well-worn path’s familiar turns, and gazing into the territory that lies beyond. For Al Qasimi, driving across the United States offered her the opportunity to imagine the landscape from her personal vantage point. Moving through space and traveling down the “open road” serves as a metaphor for emotional passage. The works in this exhibition yield a new perspective on ideas about travel and identity in the modern world.

In these landscape photographs mood is conveyed by weather as the skies shift from bright and sunny, to gloomy and overcast, to blustery and dark. Telephone poles, road markers, and fences define boundaries and mark the presence of civilization, alluding to land ownership, government presence, and communications systems. The plowed fields and farmland which appear early in the “journey” are quickly replaced by vast plains, towering buttes, and arid desert. The final image in the series of a side-view mirror of Al Qasimi’s vehicle offers a reflected glimpse of the artist’s hand grasping the camera, recalling the work of photographers such as Lee Friedlander, Robert Flick, or Gary Winogrand, who traveled the same American highways generations before and documented the changing terrain.

Hoor Al Qasimi, *Untitled 17*, from the series “Off Road,” 2010. Lambda print, ed. 6. 39.4 x 55.1 inches. Courtesy of Gallerie Brigitte Schenk, Köln

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