

Catherine Gfeller - *Rhythms*

When a society changes as rapidly as the one we can observe in the city of Madinah, the photographic creation becomes a kind of visual seismograph that records the changes - the architecture, the public spaces, the population and its habits of life. But it can go further than the simple portrait and propose a representation of the new imaginary that is then put in place. The forms, the colors, the attitudes become then the translation of a new language, that of a historical mutation.

In Europe, the "painters of modern life" played this role in the 19th century. Today, modernity is played out on other territories, and other visual arts are needed to give an image of it. Catherine Gfeller's photographic and videographic installations respond to this challenge: the freedom she takes in superimposing images, in creating fictional and yet very real scenes, are like waking dreams that opens new dimensions of our perception of Saudi society.

The relationship between tradition and modernity is visible everywhere, and it is their combination through images that allows us to understand to what extent time is crossed by what comes from the past and by what draws the future. The visual creation becomes a meeting point where the imaginary of the Arab culture is offered to us in a dialogue with the rest of the world. It is an optical symphony that Catherine Gfeller offers us, a dreamlike way of expressing both the presence of traditions and the effervescence of the contemporary world. Madinah, which has also been called "the enlightened city", thus resembles a realized utopia.

Michel Poivert, *Feb.2023*