

Tarek Al-Ghoussein

Tarek Al-Ghoussein is a prominent photographer known for combining elements of landscape and portrait photography. This exhibition features a selection of landscape images from the artist's *K Files* series, as well as a sampling of new works from his *Al Sawaber* series, both focused on his experience in his native Kuwait.

From a Palestinian-Kuwaiti family, Al-Ghoussein was born in 1962 and raised in Kuwait. His father, a journalist, newspaper editor, and diplomat, served as the Kuwait ambassador to the United States in the 1960s. In 1980, Al-Ghoussein attended New York University, earning his bachelor's degree in photography before completing his master's degree in Fine Arts at University of New Mexico. He planned to return to Kuwait in the 1990s, but the Gulf War made this impossible. Instead, he settled in the United Arab Emirates and taught photography at the American University of Sharjah for fifteen years. He is now a professor of visual art at New York University's Abu Dhabi campus.

The *K Files* came about when Al-Ghoussein was invited to represent Kuwait at the 55th Venice Biennale in 2013. To prepare for the exhibition, he traveled around Kuwait to research the country's history. The resulting images feature familiar Kuwaiti landmarks, and reveal how development has transformed the landscape. Al-Ghoussein appears in each image as a distant figure clothed in black, adding an element of theatricality to his topographical documentation. His work is influenced by late twentieth-century photographers such as Robert Adams and Frank Gohlke, whose work documented the relationship between man and nature through industrial interventions in the landscape.

The exhibition also includes a sample of works from the artist's new series, *Al Sawaber*. *Al Sawaber* was a housing complex in Kuwait slated for demolition. Due to deteriorating conditions, the residents were forced to evacuate within seventy-two hours. Al-Ghoussein documented the empty spaces that people once called their homes, and also collected several objects which he brought home and photographed as relics of the former community.