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# Getting To Know the Artists: Lina Dib at Day for Night



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Dec 7, 2017 7:54PM

There is a long view of a beach; the gulf shore to be exact. The time is set to just before sunset, at the pinkish cusp of the sun about to go down. “With this piece, I want to create a sense of place at the festival, somewhere people can dwell,” says Houston artist [Lina Dib](#) of her new site-specific work, *Threshold*, her upcoming new media installation she created for the Day for Night festival, which takes place next weekend. Invoking tranquility and urgency, the installation works with viewers in creating the experience according to their attendance. Pulling all the stops, Dib creates a solid foundation for Day for Night’s curated environmental pieces and sets the bar high for the festival’s arts programming.

Dib, who is French Canadian and Lebanese, is a multidisciplinary artist and anthropologist. Having moved here more than 10 years ago, Dib dove deep into technology, sound, and media to elevate her ideas into a new realm of experience. Her installations and compositions range from the experimental to the ethnographic and investigate socio-technical and ecological change. Dib is an affiliate artist at the Topological Media Lab at Concordia University in Montreal and [TXRX Labs](#) in Houston, and research fellow at the Center for Energy and Environmental Research in the Humanities and Social Sciences at Rice University, where she also teaches. She is the co-founder of [Fossilized Houston](#) and the [Solar](#)

[Studios](#), which are located at Rice University, but feature projects extending outside the campus. She travels and collaborates globally and her works have been exhibited at institutions such as [Lawndale Art Center](#), [Yerba Buena Gardens](#) in San Francisco, [MOP Projects](#) in Sydney, [The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston](#), the [Whitney Biennial 2017](#), and [NASA's Johnson Space Center](#).

Dib is the type of artist that will make it happen. Much in the realm of the art world's celebrated mad scientist Olafur Eliasson, Dib envisions means to make the impossible possible. Through her intricate knowledge of new media and technology, she creates playful, mind-warping artworks to tap all the senses. She is passionate about her ideas, jumping out of her chair and grabbing your arm as though she is about to drag you to the location she is trying vividly to describe. Her studio is a laboratory filled with animal bones, concealed soundscapes, tangles of wire, and lost components of scientific know-how. I staggered around these complexities as I was tugged along to find our destination. This was years ago, and ended up standing in the main gallery at Lawndale Art Center where Dib had just completed her residency. She was supposed to be moving that day, but was so excited to show another curious creative the inner dialog she maintains. She wandered into a bright blue circle on the ground, grinning from ear to ear and twirling. I stepped inside a lit blue circle, projected onto the ground, and directed to join in the twirling and movements. "It's water!" she exclaimed. "We are in the water!" The piece, *Pool of Sound*, is a circle of light where sound becomes substance. As we moved, the sound of water followed. A trickle and light splash if we moved slow, and loud and bass-filled as we kicked our legs hard into the imaginary pond. It was fascinating to me, and this is the environment in which Dib thrives.



Lina Dib, "Threshold," 2017

Here, works are more than objects and hold deeper meaning than even she leads on. She is an artists from nature working within an urban landscape. Dib overflows with the knowledge she collects, builds, and imagines in her laboratory. With her Day for Night piece *Threshold*, it is nothing shy of her visions. “The ocean or gulf shore features largely in my work,” she states. “I love its infinitely poetic qualities, a constant ebb and flow, a collision of bodies, land and sea. This piece is a kind of homage to Thierry Kuntzel’s *The Wave* and to Andy Warhol’s *Sunset*.” Dib continues on, stating that she uses the gulf and her getaways there as a hard reset at times and the ocean serves as a muse for many of her projects. Harnessing the energy of science and nature are the sweet spots in many of her previous installations, whether it is a room of song birds, a video-mapped installation, or an elaborate deer stand for viewers to explore. When asked what makes this new installation stand alone from her other works, she had this to say: “Mostly, it is a tribute, a meditation, on the specificities of place and on our relationship to natural systems. This particular shot of the gulf shore is important to me after Hurricane Harvey. It is part of a larger series of toxic and luring landscapes. The video slows down and desaturates as viewers get closer to the piece, and when the video is at a near standstill, viewers can ‘liquify’ the image with their bodies. In a sense, the piece gestures to our clumsy attempts to push back nature and to presume we can control things so large they border on the unfathomable.”

*Threshold* serves almost as a sobering memorial of the beauty that is now lost along the Gulf shore in post-Harvey times. “I saw the damage firsthand during one of my excursions,” she says. Dib, along with a few collaborators, traveled out to the Golden Triangle of Texas, an area of Southeast Texas between the cities of Beaumont, Port Arthur, and Orange surrounded by refineries and chemical plants. “The damage from the hurricane was horrendous,” she recalls. “The smell was maddening. The soil soaked with sludge, and dead cattle for as far as the eye could see. And all of this only miles from the shores. These are only a few of the sites we saw and more of what we read about.” Standing within the new installation brings the body back to reset and brings peace to the viewer. A way to connect with a moment, perhaps now, perhaps the past. Together the audience works the 3D space to create the movement within nature once again. Like a modern day interpretation of a landscape painting by the Old Masters, there is a weight within the image. Viewers can lose themselves within the imagery and return back to the basics of life and creation.

Dib manages to create and present a topic without it being heavy-handed or even noticed. Hidden within its workings is the devil in the details. She works as an architect of sound and image, often times pulling from and collaborating with other creatives from around the world. For the interactive design, she worked with local programmer and visual artist Taylor Knapps. As of recent she has worked with Knapps on several occasions, including her pet project The Solar Studios, a self-sustaining set of decked-out shipping containers focusing on all realms of media and mediums. Dib says she often times obsesses with her ideas and places. It is the toxicity, beauty, and fragility of the Gulf shore that drives her obsession within her piece. As if stepping into a distant corner of her mind, you, too, will be engulfed in Dib’s upcoming new media installation, premiering next weekend at Day for Night.

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