

Elkoussy's new photographic installation is an addition to the *Peripheral* exhibition. Photographs portraying many of the cheap objects of desire to be found in Cairo's open-air markets are arranged in a grid and mounted in a large scale light box. The piece blinks erratically on and off in blues, greens and reds like the rented strings of colored lights signaling festivities in Cairo streets. Shot individually and with careful lighting, the objects are portrayed in the language of sophisticated commercial product-shots. In some cases the objects are intended to facilitate a desired change in the buyer, i.e. clip-on hair extensions. In others, they are simulacra of desired identities that are themselves a kind of social currency, i.e. Barbie-style dolls, a child's officer's cap. Often they are both. At the same time, the installation repeats the assumption underlying these objects' existence; these objects are desirable in and of themselves as inauthentic objects.

Extract from text by Clare Davies for Stedelijk Museum Bureau exhibition, 2006:

Hala Elkoussy

Peripheral and Other Stories

Cairo yesterday, a 36 year old man was run by a car when he got off the footpath on Abbas El Akkad Street.

The car driver claimed the man stepped into the busy road without looking at the oncoming traffic and was apparently talking into a mobile phone.

When the man was taken to the hospital, it was revealed that the phone was a toy.

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