



NEW RELEASE

## Vladimir Antaki *The Guardians*

Texts by Vladimir Antaki, Edward Burtynsky

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and Kehrer Design (Vanessa Böhme)

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**Intimate portraits of Mom and Pop shops in the UK, France, Lebanon, Mexico, Germany, Canada, and USA**

For his series *The Guardians*, Vladimir Antaki traveled across Europe, the Middle East and America, photographing and interviewing shopkeepers or »Guardians«.

These *Guardians* are keepers of what Antaki terms »urban temples«, unique spaces which, in an age of cookie-cutter, corporate shops, harken back to an earlier time and mode of urban life. Antaki creates visually arresting portraits of the *Guardians* that make the viewer connect to the beauty of these often forgotten spaces. Antaki believes that these temples are the heart and soul of every city; they are what give the urban center its uniqueness in time and place. There is also a duty of memory associated with these spaces. As so many of them are closing, it falls to artists such as Antaki to preserve their memory and pay them tribute.

The book includes portraits and statements from 45 shopkeepers and artisans from Beirut, Berlin, Bordeaux, Istanbul, London, Mexico City, Miami, Montréal, New York, Paris, Philadelphia, Toronto, and Venice Beach.

From the preface by Edward Burtynsky:

*»Through his photographic survey, Antaki addresses the social value and fragile nature of individualized work in an increasingly homogenized, consumerist society. In our highly technological era, where the past is quickly forsaken by a lust for the newest, latest, and greatest, the economic conditions supporting those purveyors of our quirky cultural 'heirlooms' are gradually becoming more tenuous. Work places themselves are increasingly democratized, depersonalized and scaled-up for the sake of commercial efficiency. The artist sees this, and he responds.*

*The sitters tell their stories, but also implicit in these images is the close association of each person to the articles they have surrounded themselves with, which prompts us to consider the psychological relationship between each subject and their created environment. Antaki steps deeply into the treasured realms of these individuals. With his acute perception of the present moment and a gentle curiosity he eloquently takes stock, allowing us privileged access to the idiosyncratic wealth of the Guardians.*

**Vladimir Antaki** (born 1980 in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia) grew up in Paris and studied art history and film studies at La Sorbonne. In 2003, Antaki moved to Montréal, where he graduated with a Bachelor of Fine Arts in visual and media arts from UQAM in 2007. Antaki specializes in intimate portraits and stories with an uncanny ability to get to his subjects' core.

*The Guardians* has been exhibited in public places across France and North America. It won an Infopresse Lux prize in 2013, and was selected to represent Canada in *The Other Hundred*, a photobook curated by the Global Institute For Tomorrow. In the fall of 2016, Antaki participated in Toronto's Nuit Blanche and told the story of eight Guardians in the heart of the Financial District. In 2018, *The Guardians* were exhibited at The Alternative in Beirut, Lebanon, and at the French Institute of Lebanon.

### Exhibition

Blue Sky Gallery, Portland, Oregon, USA

02.05.– 02.06.2019

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