

## Steve Sabella

MEEM GALLERY

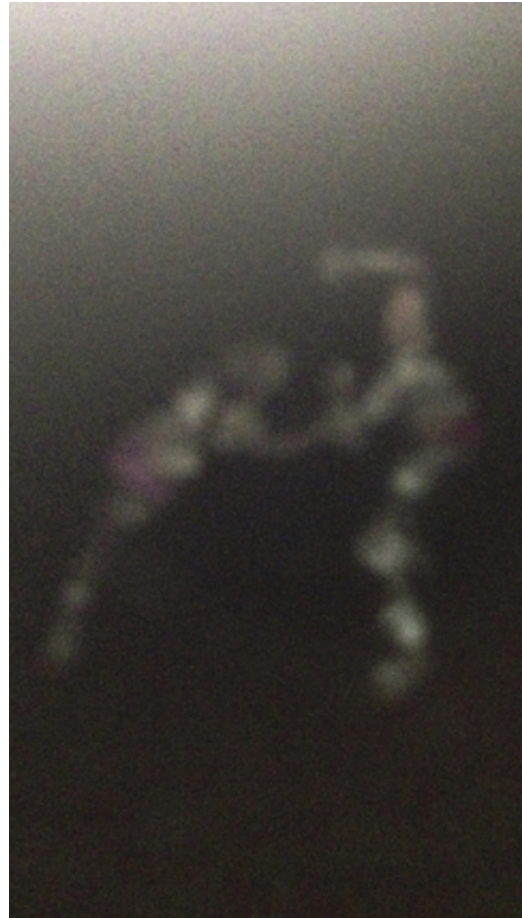
Umm Suqeim Road, PO Box 290

October 27, 2014–November 27, 2014

If Steve Sabella's 2013 series "Independence" were music, it would be trip-hop—a suave, steady beat wrapped in a sullen, ethereal pall, at once spirited and weighty. The eighteen photographs mounted on Diassec-coated panels in this exhibition draw us into the depths of a murky, uncertain realm, wherein faceless figures cavort in inky suspension, each composition lit from a corner or the side, revealing a mealy, moss-colored ground. The ambivalent, distended bodies depicted are themselves textured by scales of light and shown as if in free fall or blurred by nebulous fluid. The tug-of-war between two plump forms in *Independence 6* at once resembles a scene of rescue, a struggle, or some submerged dance. The liquid darkness cloaking the child in *Independence 12* forecloses any concrete read, leaving the viewer as uncertain as the figures are ambiguous.

Discerning the intent of these figures' actions, whether they be flight, frolic, or a scuffle, becomes the viewer's paramount task, as if it held the key to the meaning of both the images and their titles. Ultimately, this group of works recalls the portent of a sonogram—the image as harbinger of something yet to be fully realized. As a Palestinian artist whose work confronts questions of mobility, exile, and a certain bankruptcy of the image in light of political struggle, Sabella deftly reframes within this series a preoccupation recurring throughout his practice—fathoming freedom.

— Kevin Jones



Steve Sabella, *Independence 6*, 2013, lambda print on diassec, 32 x 18".