



SAFE SOUNDS

ZIAD ANTAR

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Exhibition

From 13 December 2013 to 16 February 2014

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Curator

Sophie Kaplan

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Opening

Friday 13 December 2013, 6:30pm

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Production

La Criée centre for contemporary art

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Meeting with Ziad Antar

Saturday 14 December 2013, 3pm

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Ziad Antar is represented in France by Almine Rech gallery, Paris / Brussels.

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Guided tour

Thursday 19 December 2013, 5:30pm

La Criée, European Higher School of Art of Brittany-Rennes (EESAB), the Brittany Region Contemporary Art Collection and the Rennes Art Museum are joining forces to promote the local art scene through the City of Rennes Studios Open Days. Their openings and press briefings are scheduled for 13 December 2013.

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Green Flashes

Charbel Haber concert

Thursday 12 December 2013, 9pm

« Famagusta, Tripoli, Beyrouth, Rio : récits suspendus »

Illustrated / told conference

Jan Kopp, Daniel Lê, Françoise Parfait
and Eric Valette from the collective

«Suspended Spaces»

Thursday 23 January 2014, 8:30pm

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Press release

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Scheduled for La Criée from 13 December 2013 to 16 February 2014, the exhibition «Safe Sounds» is a selection of films and videos by Lebanese artist Ziad Antar, covering the period 2006–2013. Often brief, these sequences illustrate an approach governed by economy of means and «the image as idea¹».

The image, moving or still, is the core of Ziad Antar's oeuvre, for which various photographic and cinematic media provide the raw material.

His way of filming combines the rudimentary with a concept of urgency: basic or well-worn equipment, brevity, single subjects, continuous or static shots, absence of editing, etc. His subjects come from his everyday environment and the financial and technical limitations he works within mean an «instant» rendering of his ideas.

Sound and music loom large in almost all his videos, with music in some cases the actual subject of the work. The videos making up the *Night of Love* series, begun in 2009 – two new ones have been made specially for the exhibition – are interpretations of songs by Oum Kalthoum, the most popular in the Arabic world. Static shots of musicians of different backgrounds playing in different styles convey the paradoxical richness of a music at once extremely culturally distinctive and absolutely universal.

The conflicts in Lebanon and the Middle East generally are never directly addressed in Ziad Antar's work, but they are very much present as an ongoing state of affairs. In the video *Safe Sound* he films his family's everyday life during the 30-day Israel-Hezbollah war in 2006: we see no dead and nothing of the fighting, but we sense the reality of the war through the dragging passage of time, people's boredom, and the sound of bombs and firing in the distance.

Ziad Antar adopts a direct approach to the reality of the world. And out of this reality – so multifaceted, complex and shifting – he draws images that speak for themselves. With brio.

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1 Barbara Coffy, «A video is an idea – Ziad Antar», in <http://libalel.wordpress.com>, February 1st, 2011

Around the exhibition

Green Flashes

Charbel Haber Concert
Thursday 12 December 2013, 9pm
An invitation by Ziad Antar

Charbel Haber is a young guitarist, composer and electronics experimenter very active on the Libanese music scene. Based on Beirut, he's the co-founder of the post-punk band *Scrambled Eggs*. He's also very involved in improvised music movement (member of *Free Improvised Music in Lebanon*, *BAO* trio, *Moukhtabar Ensemble* and *Grendizer Trio*) and he initiated labels as *Those Kids Must Choke* and *Johnny Kafta's Kids Menu*.

At La Criée, in relation to Ziad Antar's sound experiments, he's proposing an experimental and melodic performance.

« Famagusta, Tripoli, Beyrouth, Rio : récits suspendus »

Illustrated conference
Jan Kopp, Daniel Lê, Françoise Parfait and Eric Valette
from *Suspended Spaces* collective.
Thursday 23 January 2014, 8:30pm

Suspended Spaces project started in Cyprus in 2007 and is continuing in Lebanon since 2011. The eponymous collective brings together around fifty international artists and researchers.

«We believe in the necessity of displacement as a method, and in looking at things from a different standpoint. Becoming off-centered both symbolically and geographically. An approach linked with a real situation, a physical confrontation, and a common experience, shared in the field.

We do not target a place, a territory or a suspended space; we are invited there out of our encounters. In our turn, we entrust this experimentation and displacement to individuals: artists and researchers.».

«Conversation Pieces»

Suspended Spaces collective, Basma Alsharif, Marwa Arsanios, François Bellenger, Yasmine Eid-Sabbagh, Maïder Fortuné, Hatem Imam, Lamia Joreige, Valérie Jouve, Ghassan Maasri, Mira Sanders

7 November - 20 December 2013
Opening: Wednesday 6 November 2013, 6:30pm

Conversation Pieces exhibition starting point is the last step of *Suspended Spaces* project, which took place in Spring 2013 in Lebanon. With residencies and an international symposium, it was envisaging libanese reality through a place which is resonating with our shared modern History: the unfinished Niemeyer's Tripoli Fairgrounds.

Ziad Antar is part of *Suspended Spaces* project since 2007. Jan Kopp, associated artist of La Criée's 2013-2014 season *Courir les Rues*, is one of the five member of the collective who brings the *Suspended Spaces* adventure.

« Safe Sounds » - Ziad Antar

Visuals for the press

Please, respect captions and copyrights



Ziad Antar, *Safe Sound*, 2006
9', video, sound
Courtesy Almine Rech Gallery, Paris / Brussels



Ziad Antar, *Safe Sound*, 2006
9', video, sound
Courtesy Almine Rech Gallery, Paris / Brussels

« Safe Sounds » - Ziad Antar

Visuals for the press

Please, respect captions and copyrights



Ziad Antar, *Night of Love 1*, 2009
30", video, sound
Courtesy Almine Rech Gallery, Paris / Brussels



Ziad Antar, *Le Radar*, 2007
3', video, sound
Courtesy Almine Rech Gallery, Paris / Brussels

« Safe Sounds » - Ziad Antar

Visuals for the press

Please, respect captions and copyrights



Ziad Antar, *Saïda*, 2013
3', 8mm film, color, mute
Courtesy Almine Rech Gallery, Paris / Brussels



Ziad Antar, *Saïda*, 2013
3', 8mm film, color, mute
Courtesy Almine Rech Gallery, Paris / Brussels

Works exhibited

Safe Sounds

Night of Love 1, 2009

30", video, color, sound

Courtesy Almine Rech Gallery, Paris / Brussels

Night of Love 2, 2013

40", video, color, sound

Production La Criée centre for contemporary art

Courtesy Almine Rech Gallery, Paris / Brussels

Saïda, 2013

3', 8mm film, color, mute

Production La Criée centre for contemporary art

Courtesy Almine Rech Gallery, Paris / Brussels

Des Oliviers, 2013

3', film 8 mm, B&W, mute

Production La Criée centre for contemporary art

Courtesy Almine Rech Gallery, Paris / Bruxelles

La Souris, 2006

video, color, sound

Courtesy Almine Rech Gallery, Paris / Brussels

La Marche Turque, 2006

3', video, B&W, sound

Courtesy Almine Rech Gallery, Paris / Brussels

Tambourro, 2004

2:30", video, color, sound

Courtesy Almine Rech Gallery, Paris / Brussels

Safe Sound, 2006

9', video, color, sound

Courtesy Almine Rech Gallery, Paris / Brussels

Biography and Bibliography

ZIAD ANTAR

Born in 1978 in Saida, Lebanon

Lives and works between Saida, Lebanon and Paris, France

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SOLO EXHIBITIONS (selection)

2014

Sculpture de Jeddah, Jeddah, Saudi Arabia

Expired, Musée Nicéphore Niepce, Chalon sur Saône, France

2013

Safe Sounds, La Criée center for contemporary art, Rennes, France

2012

Expired, Almine Rech Gallery, Paris, France

Portrait of a Territory, Sharjah Art Foundation, Sharjah, U.A.E.

2011

Expired, Selma Feriani Gallery, London, U.K.

2009

Terres de pommes de terre, Almine Rech Gallery, Paris, France

2008

Projection of WA, Tate Modern, London, U.K.

2007

Sweet Eye, Ein Al Hilwé Refugee Camp, Saida, Lebanon

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GROUP EXHIBITIONS (selection)

2013

19 rue de Saintonge, Almine Rech Gallery, Paris, France

Ici, Ailleurs (Here, Elsewhere), La Friche la Belle de Mai, Marseille, France

2012

Une approche méditerranéenne, MAC, Marseille, France

Art is the answer, Boghossian Foundation – Villa Empain, Brussels, Belgium

La Triennale – Intense Proximité, Palais de Tokyo, Paris, France

Chkoun Ahna, Carthage Museum, Tunis, Tunisia

2011

Blockbuster. Cinema for Exhibitions, MARCO, Mexico City, Mexico

Collector, Centre National des Arts Plastiques, Lille, France

Big Brother. L'artiste face aux tyrans, Palais des Arts et du Festival, Dinard, France

Towards the Social Landscape, Lianzhou International Photo Festival, Lianzhou, China

Une approche méditerranéenne, 54th Venice Biennale, Palazzo Zenobio, Venice, Italy

The Future Generation Art Prize, Victor Pinchuk Foundation, Pinchuk Art Centre, Venice, Italy

The Future of a Promise, Contemporary Art from the Arab World, Collateral Event of the 54th Biennale di Venezia, Magazzini del Sale, Venice, Italy

Sharjah Biennial 10, Sharjah Art Foundation, Sharjah, U.A.E.

Live Cinema/In the Round, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia, U.S.A.

Suspended Spaces, Pompidou Centre, Paris, France

2010

Morality – Act VI: Remember Humanity, Witter de With, Rotterdam, The Netherlands

Trust Media City Seoul, Seoul Museum of Art, Seoul, South Korea

Biography and Bibliography

GROUP EXHIBITIONS (selection)

2010

Nulle Part est Un Endroit, Centre Photographique d'Ile-de-France, Paris, France

Listen to your eyes, École Supérieure d'Art, Metz, France

Act V: Power Alone, Witte de With, Rotterdam, The Netherlands

Future Generation Art Prize 2010, Pinchuk Art Centre, Kiev, Ukraine

2009

America, Beirut Art Centre, Beirut, Lebanon

Where Everything is Yet to Happen. Spaport Biennial, Banja-Luka, Bosnia Herzegovina

5x5Castelló09. The Premi Internacional d'art contemporani Diputació de Castelló EACC, Castello, Spain

Place Beyond Borders, Cittadellarte, Pistoletto Foundation, Biella, Italy

The Third Eye, Selma Feriani Gallery, London, U.K.

Beirut Berefit: The Architecture of the Forsaken and Map of the Derelict, Sharjah Biennial, Sharjah, U.A.E.

The Generational: Younger than Jesus, New Museum, New York, NY, U.S.A.

2008

Hiroshima Art Fair, Hiroshima, Japan

Taipei Biennial, Taipei, Taiwan

Homeworks, Galerie Sfeir-Semler, Beirut, Lebanon

Lieux de vie. mémoire et fantasmes de l'enracinement, The Abbey of St André, Centre for Contemporary Art, Meymac, France

DI/VISIONS. The House of World Cultures, Berlin, Germany

New Ends, Old Beginnings. Bluecoat Gallery, Liverpool, UK

She Doesn't Think So But She's Dressed For The H-Bomb, Sunday 21 September 2008, Tate Modern, London, U.K.

Re-Reading the Future, International Triennial of Contemporary (ITCA), Prague, Czech Republic

2007

Ziad Antar/Xavier Veilhan, Blank, Paris, France

Safe Sound, Tambourro, Wa, Paris Cinéma 2007, Paris, France

Images du Moyen orient, Festival d'Automne, Jeu de Paume, Paris, France

Rencontres Internationales Paris Berlin, Jeu de Paume, Paris, France

2006

Pawel Althamer, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, France

La Cabane, Palais de Tokyo, Paris, France

Radical Closure, Oberhausen Film Festival, Oberhausen, Germany

2005

Video Brazil, Video Festival, Sao Paulo, Brasil

Mémoires vives, The Platform gallery, Berlin, Germany

2004

Tokyo Tonight, Palais de Tokyo, Paris, France

President Saddam Hussein, Palais De Tokyo, Paris, France

Code Unknown, Palais de Tokyo, Paris, France

The Parking, Centre d'Art Contemporain de Brétigny, Brétigny Sur Orge, France

The building, The Former Bank of Hiroshima, Hiroshima, Japan

2003

Jean Luc Moulène, Musée Nicéphore Niepce, Chalon sur Saône, France

Le Grand Tour, Musée Nicéphore Niepce, Chalon sur Saône, France

ESEC mon Amour, Festival De Bourges, Bourges, France

Biography and Bibliography

PUBLIC COLLECTIONS

Centre George Pompidou, Paris, France
FRAC Alsace, France
Nadour Collection, Germany
Kamel Lazaar Foundation, Zurich, Switzerland

MONOGRAPHS

Ziad Antar, Portrait of a Territory, Sharjah: Sharjah Art Foundation, Arles: Actes Sud, 2012

CATALOGS

Blockbuster. Cinema for Exhibitions, Mexico City: Marco, 2011

Au Centre Pompidou, Paris: Édition Centre George Pompidou, 2006

Performing Images, Lebanon: Edition Group Med 2005

12345678, Paris: Edition Palais De Tokyo, 2004

PRESS

2012

Isabelle Bernini, William Massey and Viviana Birolli « Les invités », in *L'Officiel art*, n°3, sept-oct-nov 2012

William Massey, « Ziad Antar / Maya et Ramzy Rasamny : l'artiste et les collectionneurs », in *L'Officiel art*, n°3, sept-oct-nov 2012

Christine Macel, « Ziad Antar - Tout à part », in *Flash Art*, November-December 2012

Scott Indrisek, « Reviews: SHARJAH, Ziad Antar », in *Modern Painters*, June 2012

Angela Darby, « Humanising A Modernist Icon », in *Aesthetica Magazine*, June 2012

Ghalya Saadawi, « Ziad Antar et la fascination du hasard », in *Diptyk Magazine*, n°10, April-May 2012

« La Méditerranée expose ses créateurs au Mac », in *La Provence*, February 23th, 2012

« Ziad Antar: la marche turque », in *Art-Press Cahiers*, 2010

Francesca Di Nardo, « Radical Approach », in *Mousse magazine*, n°25, September 2010

Colette Khalaf, « L'Amérique s'affiche au Beirut Art Center », in *L'Orient-Le Jour*, December 2009

Lucy Fielder, « Exploring America », in *www.nowlebanon.com*, December 2009

Pamela M. Lee, « Sharjah Biennial 9 », in *Artforum International*, Summer 2009

Sharmila Devi, « New York showcases Mid East art », in *The National*, April 2009

November Paynter, Taipei Biennial, Bidoun, Winter 2009

Simon Rees, « 6th Taipei Biennial », in *Frieze*, n°120, January-February 2009

« Meet the millennials, The Generational: Younger than Jesus », in *New Museum Review*, 2009

Alice Pfeiffer, « Painting a Picture of Exile », in *The New York Times*, November 2008

Kaelen Wilson-Goldie, « Ain al-Hilweh steps out of character to host photo exhibition », in *Ain al-Hilweh Daily Star*, September 2007

Text:

Barbara Coffy, «A video is an idea – Ziad Antar»,
in <http://libalel.wordpress.com>, February 1st, 2011

Video director Ziad Antar was born in Saïda in 1978 and has developed a bold approach through his unnervingly simple videos and his razor-sharp voice.

The belief that IMAGE IS AN IDEA is the foundation of his work. He has sought ever since to «translate» effectively this transfer from the initial idea to the video. He is not interested in how to transform ideas into images but in the product of a process by which every video is an idea.

His work as a whole is led by the relationship to the material – the video is the material of the idea. QUESTIONNING THE VIDEO ITSELF Ziad Antar claims to have «no specific subject; his chief concern is the video as a medium ¹». He has developed a particular work method: according to him the creative process is not triggered by simply shooting with a camera. The creative act has to be set off and the medium questioned.

Ziad Antar imposes CONSTRAINTS upon himself, which are part of the technical field of video and photography: A static shot, a sequence shot, no editing etc. As a result a reflection, an image and an idea emerge: «I use restrictions to transform very simple facts into videos» Shooting and the act of filming itself are more essential than the subject.

Made in 2003 and one of his first videos, *Tokyo Tonight* is a perfect illustration of this approach. First a methodology was set: a three-minute duration at the most, no or very little camera movement, one single sequence and sometimes one single shot. After a residency in Japan that same year, the title was established as another constraint. As in a road-movie he takes us to the southern Lebanese pastures to meet three shepherds addressing us with one single word «Tokyo». To put it simply, three sequences put one after the other.

Ziad Antar favours AN ECONOMY OF MEANS and does a minimal amount of editing. To him the aim of post-production is to gather the bulk and the structure of the work. As only a small production budget is required he usually produces his videos himself.

MUSIC plays a particularly important role in his work. Ziad Antar uses songs or the repetition of sounds in all his videos and sometimes seeks to put music into image. In *Turkish March* (2006) Mozart's famous composition is played on a stringless piano and the tapping of fingers on the keys sound like a military march. The delightful *WA* (2004) features his niece and nephew singing a self-written song. In *Tambourro* (2004) Arab music plays in a kitchen and a bathroom on surprising instruments.

He is strongly influenced by DAILY LIFE: «I have made about fifty videos and they are all linked to things I have experienced» Through videos of a few seconds long and of sometimes one single shot, little things are picked up with the common goal of questioning the language of video In the surprising video *Mdardara* (2007), he films lentils cooking with a super 8 camera. According to him, this video is «a told documentary (...) with an educational purpose (...) close to culinary art ²». The context of this video is particular: Ziad Antar was commissioned by the European Commission to make a video about his experiences during the 2006 war. He described how large dishes of lentils and rice «which are easy to make and provide energy» were made in besieged areas. Nonetheless, these simple, short, light and funny videos provide AN OUTLOOK ON WAR. In *Safe Sound* (2006), he filmed the daily life of a Lebanese family shaken by war. *Tokyo Tonight* provides a glimpse of a reflection of the distance between Lebanese shepherds and life in the Tokyo megalopolis. Ziad Antar basically sets a particular look on political questions; all the same he puts them into perspective.

1. Interview de Ziad Antar by Fatos Üstek, Zenith Magazine

2. Interview audio by Radiodiction, 9/11/2009

Text:

François Salmeron, «Ziad Antar - Expired»,
in www.parisart.com, December 2012

Ziad Antar
Expired
17 nov.-22 déc. 2012
Paris 3e. Galerie Almine Rech

«Expired» présente trente photographies noir et blanc parcourant les métropoles occidentales et le Moyen-Orient, au gré des pérégrinations de Ziad Antar. Apparemment documentaire, sa photographie se passionne pour du matériel «vintage», voire carrément défectueux, donnant un grain si particulier à ses œuvres

Par François Salmeron

Le projet de Ziad Antar naît en 2000 lorsque le jeune homme, alors âgé de vingt-et-un ans et assistant du photographe Hashem El Madani, découvre dans le studio Scheherazade des pellicules photo périmées («expired» en anglais) depuis 1976. Influencé par la démarche documentaire que suit son maître et qu'il pratique lui-même assidûment, notamment pour la réalisation de films, Ziad Antar pratique une photographie d'abord intime, qui va peu à peu s'ouvrir au monde. Le portrait qu'il fait de son maître, où Hachem El Madani pose dans son atelier, témoigne du lancement de Ziad Antar dans la photographie, et apparaît même comme son geste fondateur.



Du portrait intime, l'artiste passe à un style que l'on apparenterait volontiers à du documentaire. En effet, l'exposition «Expired» pose un regard original sur les réalités sociales, économiques et urbaines du Moyen Orient. Photographiant sa ville natale, Saïda, Ziad Antar ne tarde pas à élargir ses horizons. Il s'interroge sur l'identité de son pays natal, le Liban.

Des petits ports de pêche à la modernisation et à l'urbanisation ultra-moderne, le Liban connaît une extension fulgurante. La Murr Tower de Beyrouth symbolise d'ailleurs cette croissance que Ziad Antar photographie dans une impressionnante vue en contre-plongée. Pourtant, on sait que la tour de 140 mètres amorcée en 1974 n'a jamais été achevée à cause de la guerre civile. Dès lors, plutôt que de représenter l'ascension d'un pays, cette tour inachevée, qui finira par servir de base de tirs, apparaît comme un mémorial de la guerre.

Text:

François Salmeron, «Ziad Antar - Expired»,
in www.parisart.com, December 2012

Ziad Antar voyage par la suite au Caire, à Dubaï ou La Mecque, notamment pour accomplir la série Portrait of a Territory, qui relate son road trip dans les pays des émirats. Ses pérégrinations s'achèvent en Arabie Saoudite, pays d'origine de Hachem El Madani, et «cœur névralgique» du monde arabe.



C'est en effet là où Ziad Antar termine sa dernière pellicule périmée. Car c'est bien cette particularité qui, d'un point de vue esthétique, démarque ses photos d'une simple démarche documentaire. Celles-ci s'ancrent bien dans des réalités contemporaines, en les interrogeant à partir de matériel ancien ou détérioré, notamment à partir d'un appareil Kodak Reflex datant de 1948. Avec les pellicules périmées, les tirages se trouvent tachetés. Et les contours des silhouettes ou des bâtiments sont souvent flous et imprécis. Par là, cela peut parfois conférer aux photos de Ziad Antar une connotation pictorialiste, romantique ou onirique, comme si l'on avait affaire à de vieilles cartes postales ou à des prises de vue datant du début du XXe siècle. Aussi, des stries verticales traversent les clichés, et tous les défauts inhérents à une pellicule périmée composent dans les ciels photographiés des sortes de pluies d'étoiles ou de faisceaux lumineux.

Narguilés, cactus, vendeurs de chaussures en pleine rue et mosquées, apparaissent finalement comme des symboles forts connectant directement notre imaginaire aux représentations que nous avons du Moyen-Orient. L'œuvre de Ziad Antar interroge alors nos préjugés et les clichés que nous avons sur les autres civilisations.

Mais ses photographies s'attardent également sur les mégapoles occidentales. Big Ben et la statue de Winston Churchill à Londres, les rues et les immeubles de New York. De même, Paris est vue depuis ce qui semblerait être le regard naïf d'un touriste: une vue sur la Seine et ses quais, avec des péniches accostées, le musée d'Orsay visible, ainsi que Notre Dame au loin.

En fait, ces photographies seront taxées de «clichées» en fonction de l'origine du spectateur: pour un Occidental, les vues de Paris, Londres ou New York pourront paraître banales, tandis que les vues du Liban ou de la Mecque sembleront plus originales. Tout est une question de point de vue finalement.

Œuvres

- Ziad Antar, Pont métal, Egypte, 2005. Tirage argentique. 125 x 125 cm
- Ziad Antar, La Mecque, 2012. Tirage argentique. 125 x 125 cm
- Ziad Antar, La roue de Londres, 2012. Tirage argentique. 125 x 125 cm
- Ziad Antar, Burj Khalifa II, 2010. Tirage argentique. 125 x 125 cm
- Ziad Antar, 15th May Bridge, Cairo, 2005. Tirage argentique. 125 x 125 cm
- Ziad Antar, La Tour Eiffel, 2011. Tirage argentique. 125 x 125 cm

Text:

Christine Macel, «Ziad Antar - Tout à part»,
in *Flash Art*, November-December 2012



Ziad Antar

TOUT A PART

Christine Macel

Text:

Christine Macel, «Ziad Antar - Tout à part»,
in *Flash Art*, November-December 2012

ZIAD ANTAR



CHRISTINE MACEL: *You started with short, single-shot videos such as Tokyo Tonight (2003), in which a Lebanese shepherd comes from a distance towards the camera pronouncing the word "Tokyo" — a work presented at Palais de Tokyo in Ange Leccia's Pavilion; Wa (2004), where two kids sing with a small electronic piano; or Famagusta, a short animation featuring two donkeys attached by their tails*

Ziad Antar: I work with mini DVD, an ordinary material that allows me to have a direct approach to my subject. I like to use the simplest means, as in photography: a tripod, a camera, a single shot. Those were ideas that I transformed into videos; sometimes I turned performance into video, other times music into video. Each idea comes from a short story, like *Banana* (2009), a back-to-front film made as an homage to Jean Eustache's movie *Le Monde à l'envers*.

To shoot my movie based on potato picking entitled *Terres de pomme de terre* (2009) — a family activity taking place in Lebanon among the Bekaa plains — I purposely decided to use silent 8mm in order to convey a sense of intimacy and archival aesthetics. This film is linked to a series of photographs I started in 2003, which document the journey of the potato from the farmlands in the

North of Europe to the transfer of seeds to Bekaa in Lebanon. The project also developed from my agricultural engineering studies and my observation of the agricultural economy. I documented the work in Europe using photography to express a "cold" look, in my opinion similar to the great European plains and to the huge fridges where potatoes are stored. While concluding my Lebanon journey, I looked for a contrast that could translate this atmosphere. I am interested in revealing the changes, the commercial alliances between North and South, differences and resemblances; this is why in the photos I did not specify whether it was Luxembourg, Belgium or Lebanon. These are issues I broadened afterwards with the series "Portrait of a Territory," realized in the United Arab Emirates.

CM: *Can we talk about Marche Turque (2006), a video installation that was widely exhibited, including in "Younger Than Jesus" at the New Museum in New York?*

ZA: I created a video projected on the wall, a fixed shot, a black-and-white aerial view of a pianist's hands. I had blocked the piano's strings; one could only hear the sound of the fingers on the keyboard, which create a per-

cussive music while she plays Mozart's *La Marche Turque*. The sound became brutal. The poetic dimension of the music disappeared and introduced a sort of military march. Mozart's *La Marche Turque*, one of his most famous compositions, evoked the elite of the infantry of the Ottoman army at an age when Austria had already retrieved Hungary from the Turkish Empire. It was still a relationship between North and South, between the Austro-Hungarian Empire and Turkey, which used to be neighbors at the time; it is also the idea of conflict and change, which is at the core of many of my projects, sometimes in a ironic way, like in *Famagusta*. I tried to detach myself from the direct representation of a conflict, so very present in the Lebanese context and the Arab world. I don't want to be narrative or stick to "once upon a time," because that would compromise my practice and I am more interested in the medium. It is often easy to surrender to history, and that is what

ZIAD ANTAR, *La marche turque*, 2006. Performer Matea Maras. Video still. Courtesy the artist and Almine Rech, Paris / Brussels. Opposite: Cote d'Azuro Hotel, Jnah Beirut, built 1973, 2007 (from the series "Beirut Beref"). C-Print, 123 x 123 cm. Courtesy Selma Feriani, London.

Text:

Christine Macel, «Ziad Antar - Tout à part»,
in *Flash Art*, November-December 2012

FLASH ART ASIA 3 • INTERVIEW



I work against. I have explored the possibilities of video, film and photography in relation to my ideas by refusing narration.

CM: “Me and My House” (2006) is a photographic series in black and white, made right after the Lebanon-Israel war on the South Lebanon border, where you photographed people in front of their destroyed houses. Then there is “Beyrouth Bereft” (2007-2009), a color series on some unfinished buildings in Lebanon, exhibited at the Seoul Biennale.

ZA: Two months before “Me and My House,” I made a series on the refugees from the South Lebanon war in the schools of Sidon; these are simple portraits of kids before an improvised white background. When the war ended, I took portraits of the owners in front of their homes. These two series deal with the theme of portrait, photography and identity. The human prevails over destruction. “Beyrouth Bereft” doesn’t document ruins, but abandoned and unfinished buildings, whose presence and number is so high that they remind me of a city’s monuments, gigantic and inaccessible sculptures, whose realization lies suspended, conveying ambiguity. Exactly like the Lebanese situation. There are no legal decisions to destroy them, finish them or use them; they’re simply “left there.”

CM: With “Portrait of a Territory” you exhibited a photo installation at the Sharjah Foundation in the Sharjah Museum, a series that you realized over several years on the

coast of the United Arab Emirates, a country born in the ’70s and whose influence developed around petrol and trade, following British domination.

ZA: I decided to work on the coast, which reveals the country’s evolution, its glories and failures. I photographed Saudi Arabia all the way to Oman, in a methodical way, by car, day after day. I was interested first of all in the people who work on site; I decided to stay, in order to abandon *a priori* prejudices. I wasn’t really interested in the country’s richness, but in the everyday life of the population, the emigrants coming from the Arab world, without necessarily photographing them. The process was typical of documentary photography; but the result doesn’t correspond to its most widespread aesthetics, nor do the pictures or the museological display. I obtained some light aberrations that I integrated into my work, and little by little I realized that I was also portraying the Gulf’s light. This allowed me to experiment with the photographic medium. I scanned all the images on site, using machines from the Gulf, industrial scans, not re-worked, which produce a particularly homogeneous look throughout the whole series. For example, the pink ambience of a certain picture depicting Sharjah could be caused by the scanner. The presentation of the project as one work, with 211 medium-format photos, color and black and white, in a line that follows a sort of small island, pushes my project towards its more conceptual dimension.

ZIAD ANTAR, Portrait Of Foujaira, 2010 (from the series “Portrait d’un territoire”). C-print, 125 x 125 cm. Courtesy Selma Feriani, London.

CM: The series “Expired,” shown at the Triennale curated by Okwui Enwezor at Palais de Tokyo in Paris and soon to be exhibited at Almine Rech, uses a sort of time jamming. In fact, you have photographed many cities of the world and several personalities, from Michelangelo Pistoletto to Walid Jumblatt, using expired films that you found in the atelier of Hashem el Madani in Sidon, a Lebanese photographer who produced a large archive documenting Lebanese life from 1948.

ZA: I started this series in 2000, in an empirical way. With the expired film from 1976 I was aiming to photograph contemporary subjects with old cameras and means. The first picture was a portrait of Madani himself, who in my opinion embodies the documentary photography of the ancient generation. The atmosphere in his studio left a mark on the whole following series, as a sort of journal of different encounters. The images in “Expired” (made in Lebanon) form a very familiar *tout a part*. The Dubai and New York images made from the same context were less unexpected because I already knew the type of images I produced in Lebanon. In fact the outcome was like a double surprise, a double enigma.

Walid Jumblatt’s photograph is therefore a portrait, but it is “difficult” too; it’s sort of anti-archival. My photographic work breaks from the archival, typical of the previous generation of Lebanese artists. I got interested in him, the Druze head of the socialist-progressive party, after the assassination of Rafic Hariri in 2005. And he himself has survived an assassination attempt. I went there as if I was going to a fort. He looked at his watch and seemed bored. It was both the portrait of a man waiting in a suspended time and an out-of-date photograph, displaced in time. ■

Christine Macel is Chief Curator of Contemporary Art at the Centre Pompidou, Paris and the Curator of the French Pavillion at the 2013 Venice Biennale.

Ziad Antar was born in 1978 in Sidon, Lebanon. He lives and works in Sidon and Paris.

Selected solo shows: 2012: Almine Rech, Paris; Sharjah Art Foundation (UAE). 2011: Selma Feriani, London. 2010: Witte de With, Rotterdam (NL); Seoul Museum of Art; Centre Photographique d’Ile-de-France, Paris. 2009: Beirut Art Center; Almine Rech, Paris; Cittadellarte – Fondazione Pistoletto, Biella (IT).

Selected group shows: 2012: La Triennale, Palais de Tokyo, Paris. 2011: Sharjah Biennial (UAE). “Live Cinema/In the Round,” Philadelphia Museum of Art (US). 2010: “Act V: Power Alone,” Witte de With, Rotterdam; “Future Generation Art Prize 2010,” Pincuk Art Centre, Kiev. 2009: Sharjah Biennial; New Museum Triennial, New York.

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Humanising A Modernist Icon

Skyscraper: Art & Architecture Against Gravity

BRINGING THIS ICONIC BUILDING TO LIFE, *SKYSCRAPER* IS A RE-APPRAISAL OF THE MODERNIST STRUCTURE AND FEATURES OVER 50 ARTISTS WHOSE WORK RESPONDS TO ITS VARIETY AND COMPLEXITY.

In a passage in *The Tall Office Building Artistically Considered* (1896) the pioneering, influential architect Louis Henri Sullivan (1856-1924) stated: "This loftiness is to the artist-nature its thrilling aspect ... It must be in turn the dominant chord in his expression of it, the true excitant of his imagination ... It must be every inch a proud and soaring thing, rising in sheer exultation that from bottom to top it is a unit without a single dissenting line." A skyscraper can be sculpted and formed into an incredible towering edifice of steel and mirrored walls of glass; a colossus inherently capable of inspiring admiration and at the same time provoking a sense of insignificance.

Chicago has been acknowledged as one of the first cities to embrace the high rise building and it seems appropriate that the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago should play host to the exhibition *Skyscraper: Art and Architecture Against Gravity*. This thematic exhibition has been curated by Michael Darling, James W. Alsdorf Chief Curator, Joanna Szupinska, and Marjorie Susman Curatorial Fellow. It features works by over 50 artists such as Andy Warhol, Chris Burden, Catherine Yass, Erica Bohm, Vito Acconci, Fikret Atay, Claes Oldenburg, Ziad Antar and Enoc Perez. The exhibition also includes a specially commissioned sculpture by Polish artist Monika Sosnowska, installed in the vertical space of the museum's atrium, and the minimal paintings of the World Trade Center's Twin Towers by Robert Moskowitz are on display in the gallery for the first time since 9/11. Each work has been selected because of its response to this iconic structure; Darling considers that "artists have always looked at skyscrapers with a wary eye as well as with fascination." While the exhibition is dominated by a central cohesive theme, it is divided into five distinct sections: Verticality, Personification of Architecture, Urban Critique, Improvisation and The Vulnerability of Iconic Buildings.

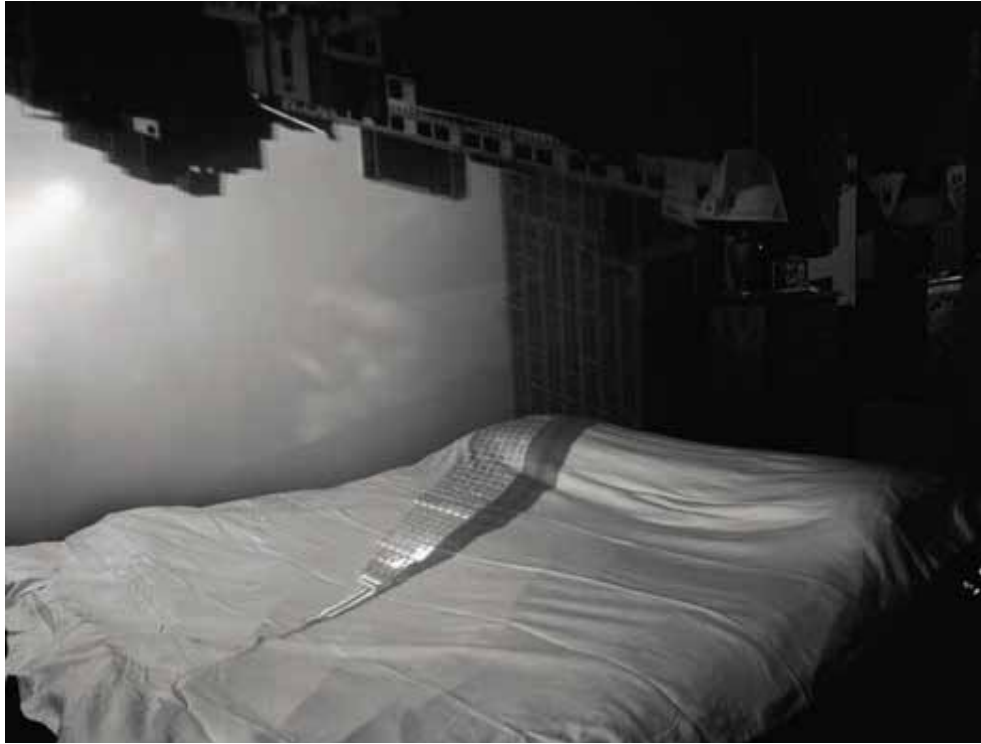
The defining structural feature of the skyscraper is its verticality, direct-

ing the eye from street to summit and, in doing so, instilling both awe and aspiration. The Verticality section of the exhibition explores both the formal configuration of these buildings and the psychological correlates of optimism and progress. Darling suggests: "It is an inescapable fact about how skyscrapers work; grouping these (pieces) together to establish rules regarding the theme – those pieces on their own will take you in all different directions." In the work *Chrysler Building* (2011) by Chris Burden, we experience a customary landmark one might expect in an exhibition of this nature. Burden's rendering has reduced the monumental Chrysler Building to a miniature construct assembled from a simple metal building kit, and this scale presents the viewer with an opportunity to relate to the building on a tangible level. In a similar response to Burden's appropriation, the artists Jeff Carter and Jennifer Bolande also intricately reconstruct models of iconic high rise buildings. With its curtain wall façade, New York's Lever House (1952) was one of the first glass-box skyscrapers, and exemplifies the design principle according to the Bauhaus master Ludwig Mies van der Rohe. In *Appliance House* (1998-9) Bolande's "curtain wall façade" consists of stainless steel light boxes with duratrans photos of washing machines displayed in shop windows at night. We become aware of the strong association that skyscrapers have with commerce and its capitalist ethos. This pristine, shiny edifice has been constructed from the financial success of selling cleaning appliances to the masses. The impressive panoramic vista captured from a Tokyo highrise by Roe Ethridge and the expressionistic utopian edifices of the *Cityscapes* series (2009) by Erica Bohm perfectly capture the metropolitan dream of an aspiring urban planner. Enoc Perez's oil on canvas painting of the *Marina Towers, Chicago* (2011) serves as a poignant reference to the exhibition's host city.

The destruction of The Tower of Babel reminded mortals that they were

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Abelardo Morell, *Camera Obscura Image of the Empire State Building in Bedroom* 1994. Image courtesy of the artist and Bonni Bennabi Gallery, New York.

lesser than their God. It took some time before secular constructions far exceeded religious structures in height. Less spiritual needs such as status can play a major part in the construction of a tall building and Personification of Architecture makes us aware of the relationship between the physical and the ego. Vito Acconci's kinetic sculpture *High Rise* (1980), Roger Brown's *Ablaze and Ajar* (1972) and H.C. Westermann's *Memorial to the Idea of Man If He Was an Idea* (1958) exemplify this dual implication. Darling testifies that "the anthropomorphising instincts of these artists is thinking of (the) buildings in a very phallic way, which of course, lends itself to the hubris of the skyscraper and the macho 'race to the sky' – there is something deeply human about that." Abelardo Morell's emotive and monochromatic *Camera Obscura Image of the Empire State Building in Bedroom* (1994) has captured a public icon and metaphorically invited it into a private, intimate space. A sense of the corporal

"The defining structural feature of the skyscraper is its verticality, directing the eye from street to summit and, in doing so, instilling both awe and aspiration. The Verticality section of the exhibition explores both the formal configuration of these buildings and psychological optimism."

is present in the packaged confectionary sculptures by Eliza Myrie entitled *Project Candy*. Through this concept the artist offers viewers the opportunity to purchase and then consume a memento from the show. Myrie says: "The work considers the food supply of the inner city and how we physically ingest and manifest the circumstances of the locations we dwell within."

Improvisation offers a look at the ways that people who inhabit it humanise modernist architecture. Wilfrid Almendra's sculptures stress the clash between individualism and standardisation. Yin Xiuzhen takes old clothing and transforms the fabric into soft sculpture cityscapes that dramatically unfold from suitcases. The act of travelling and the places visited become one complete whole. Marie Bovo's photographs of the sky centrally shot within courtyards gives viewers a sense of vertigo. Congo based artist Bodys Isek Kingelez began

building his brightly coloured maquettes of imagined buildings when he was made redundant. Although he has no formal training in architecture or art, his idiosyncratic structures such as *Palais d'lhunga* (1992) articulate a joy in conceiving and constructing. A similar pleasure in mark-making can be seen in the felt-pen drawings of Wesley Willis. Diagnosed with schizophrenia at 26, Willis used both music and drawing as means of expression. His depictions of the Dan Ryan Expressway and other Chicago street scenes reveal an effervescent personality in their repetitive marks. Kori Newkirk's *Glint* (2002) creates an equally colourful celebration of the city by rendering the silhouetted outline of skyscrapers using bright red plastic pony beads threaded onto artificial hair. Gabriel Orozco's photograph *Isla en la Isla (Island within an Island)* (1993) presents two cityscapes within one image. A bleak view of the Manhattan skyline seen from New Jersey is echoed by the placing of broken, discarded planks and detritus against a grey concrete wall in the foreground. The artist's makeshift reproduction of the cityscape seems like a scathing critique of the dominant role that New York plays within the art world.

Darling asserts that in the interest of balance it was important to recognise that "a large number of artists are critiquing the modernist idea of grouping hundreds of people together in a single tower." The Urban Critique section presents works that explore the more dystopian nature of urban development. The criticisms levelled by Jane Jacobs in her influential book *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (1961) are still relevant in most industrialised countries. In the drive for market-led efficiency human needs are subordinate to the machine of commerce, diversity is sacrificed for the specialisation of financial quarters, and shopping centres, link roads and bypasses rip through city neighbourhoods. This dehumanising tendency inevitably leads to alienation and this theme is picked up by artists such as Ziad Antar, Jeff Carter, gelitin, Jakob Kolding, Michael Wolf and Shizuka Yokomizo. Kolding engages directly with how town planning interferes with

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Michael Wolf, *Alight* #7, 2005. Courtesy of the artist and Robert Koeh Gallery, San Francisco.

human activity in his striking collages whilst Carter's questioning of Modernist theories by recreating famous structures through a process known as IKEA-hacking can be seen in his sculpture *Untitled #3 (Chicago Tribune Tower)* (2010).

Wolf's *The Transparent City* voyeuristically captures fragments of life within Chicago's high-rise towers. Office spaces and private accommodation are scrutinised through a telephoto lens or, as in *Transparent City #6* presented here, building facades are transformed into abstract compositions inhabited by city dwellers oblivious to Wolf's gaze. In contrast, Yokomizo's photographic project *Dear Stranger* 1998-2000 presents complicit night-shots of individuals framed within the brightly lit interiors of their homes. The artist wrote an anonymous letter to her subjects asking if they would stand at a particular window at a specific time of night so that she could photograph them from the street. The record of these encounters perfectly captures the uneasy relationship between self and other inherent in city living.

Ziad Antar's decision to take a photograph of the world's tallest free standing structure, the Burj Khalifa in Dubai, with out-of-date film using an obsolete camera immediately places this modern building into the prism of the historical archive. In this simple gesture he profoundly presents current grandstanding within a historical framework of fallen empires, inevitable decline and the transient nature of power. The future can also reframe historical actions. Austrian collective gelitin's "prankster" performance in which they installed a window balcony on the 96th floor of the World Trade Center to watch the sunrise is revealed in *The B-Thing, New York City* (2000-01). The archive relating to their intervention presented here is inevitably overshadowed by later events.

These later events, the 9/11 attacks and the resulting changing relationships to iconic structures of power, inform the works presented in *Vulnerability of Icons*. Included are Vera Lutters' spectral *Studies for Ground Zero* (2001-02) – gelatin silver prints captured by turning a room overlooking the site into a camera obscura. The means of recording and its impact on our understanding is also explored in Thomas Ruff's *jpeg ny05* (2004) in which the broken remnants of one tower are further fractured through the degraded quality of a digitally

captured image. The conclusion may be that binary approaches cannot meet the complexities of our times. Robert Moskowitz's minimal paintings of the World Trade Center's Twin Towers will be shown for the first time since 9/11. Moskowitz has drawn and painted the towers since 1974, engaging with them through his monochromatic, formal approach. It's impossible now to see these works as purely surface relationships between structure and rendition; a new narrative dominates. Aspects of this narrative are poignantly told in Hans-Peter Feldmann's installation *9/12 Frontpage* (2001). The artist displays the front page of 151 newspapers on 12 September 2001. Darling believes this piece "reminds us just how global the impact of those attacks was and how much of a shift it created in culture at large."

It could be argued that terrorists are using the efficiency-model philosophy behind such high-density buildings to create as much death and destruction as possible with the fewest resources. The Twin Towers were not the only high-rise buildings to be targeted by those wishing to pursue their cause violently. Ahmet Ögüt's *Exploded City* (2009) presents an imaginary metropolis of 22 scale-model buildings and architectural features that have suffered bomb attacks such as the Madimak Hotel, Sivas (attacked 2 July 1993), Europa Hotel, Belfast, (continually bombed between 1972-1994), HSBC Bank, Istanbul, (attacked 20 November 2003), Ferhadija Mosque, Banja Luka (attacked 7 May 1993) and Mostar Bridge, Mostar (destroyed 9 November 1993). By not including the Twin Towers in the cityscape Ögüt reminds viewers that the toll of victims from extreme acts of violence is vast.

In addition to the themed sections there will be presentations of work by Cyprien Gaillard, Pierre Huyghe and Jan Tichy. Darling and his fellow curators have brought together a dynamic collection of works that enable a multi-layered reappraisal of that most iconic modernist structure, the skyscraper. *Skyscraper: Art and Architecture Against Gravity* opens 30 June and continues until 23 September. www.mcchicago.org.

Angela Darby

Visiting information

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VISITS

INDIVIDUAL

A «visitor document» explaining the exhibition is at your disposal in the art center. Visitor assistants from La Criée are very pleased to answer to your questions and talk about exhibitions.

GROUPS

Groups are welcomed to visit La Criée either freely or with our Visitor Service professional. Only upon reservation - From Tuesday to Friday:
Children: from 10am to 12noon
Adults: from 2pm to 6pm

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