

***Making Revolution: Collective Histories, Desired Futures***

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***At those terrifying frontiers where the existence and disappearance of people fade into each other***

**Basel Abbas and Ruanne Abou-Rahme**

**2019**

Single channel video, 2-channel sound

10:54 minutes

« *And so our need for a new consciousness at those terrifying frontiers where the existence and disappearance of people fade into each other.* »

-Edward Said, *After the Last Sky*

Fragments from Edward Said's most personal and poetic work *After the Last Sky* are repurposed to create a new script that reflects on what it means now to be constructed as an 'illegal' person, body or entity. The script is turned into a song sung by the artists as multiple avatars. Using a software that generates avatars from a single image the avatars in the video are all people who participated in the 'March of Return' that continue to take place on the seamline in Gaza an area that has been under physical siege since 2006. The relationship between fugitivity, fragility and futurity become manifest in this field. The project uses low resolution images that were circulated online, the avatar software renders the missing data and information in the original image as scars, glitches and incomplete features on the characters faces.

### **Artist biographies**

Basel Abbas and Ruanne Abou-Rahme work together across a range of sound, image, text, installation and performance practices. Their practice is engaged in the intersections between performativity, political imaginaries, the body and virtuality. Across their works they probe a contemporary landscape marked by a seemingly perpetual crisis and an endless 'present', one that is shaped by a politics of desire and disaster. They have been developing a body of work that questions this suspension of the present and searches for ways in which an altogether different imaginary and language can emerge that is not bound within colonial/capitalist narrative and discourse. In their projects, they find themselves excavating, activating and inventing incidental narratives, figures, gestures and sites as material for re-imagining the possibilities of the present. Often reflecting on ideas of non-linearity in the form of returns, amnesia and *deja vu*, and in the process unfolding the slippages between actuality and projection (fiction, myth, wish), what is and what could be. Largely their approach has been one of sampling materials both existing and self-authored in the form of sound, image, text, objects and recasting them into altogether new 'scripts'. The result is a practice that investigates the political, visceral, material possibilities of sound, image, text and site, taking on the form of multi-media installations and live sound/image performances.

## ***Have You Ever Killed a Bear or Becoming Jamila***

**Marwa Arsanios**

**2013-2014**

HD video, color, sound

26:19 min

*Have You Ever Killed a Bear or Becoming Jamila* is a video made after a performance whose starting point is an inquiry into Jamila Bouhired, the Algerian freedom fighter. The research focuses on the different representations of Jamila in the cinema, and on her assimilation and promotion during the 1960's and 1970's in the Egyptian magazine Al-Hilal [the crescent] which used to be a major Arab cultural magazine. The performance attempts to look at the history of the Egyptian socialist projects, the Algerian anti-colonial wars, and the way they have promoted and marginalized feminist projects.

Indeed, the clear gender division used to marginalize women from the public sphere was overcome for a short moment during the Algerian war of independence-with Jamila becoming its icon. The project raises the issue of what it means to play the role of the freedom fighter. What does it mean to become an icon? Between role playing and political projects, how does the constitution of the subject serve certain political purposes?

### **Artist biography**

Marwa Arsanios was born in Washington DC, USA in 1978. She currently lives and works in Beirut, Lebanon. Marwa Arsanios is an artist, filmmaker and researcher who reconsiders politics of the mid-twentieth century from a contemporary perspective, with a particular focus on gender relations, urbanism and industrialisation. She approaches research collaboratively and seeks to work across disciplines.

Arsanios has been the subject of solo exhibitions at the Beirut Art Center (2017); Hammer Museum, Los Angeles (2016); Witte de With, Rotterdam (2016); Kunsthalle Lissabon, Lisbon (2015) and Art in General, New York (2015). Her work has also been shown in a number of group exhibitions, at SF Moma (2019), Sharjah Biennial 14 (2019), Nottingham Contemporary, UK (2017), Maxxi Museum, Rome (2017), Sursock Museum, Beirut (2016), Ludwig Museum, Cologne (2016), Thessaloniki Biennial (2015); *Home Works Forum*, Ashkal Alwan, Beirut (2010, 2013, 2015), New Museum, New York (2014), 55th Venice Biennale (2013), M HKA, Antwerp (2013), In Other Words, nGbK, Berlin (2012) and 12th Istanbul Biennial (2011), among others. Screenings of her videos have taken place at FID Marseille (2019), tiff Toronto (2019), Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris (2011, 2017), Berlin International Film Festival (2010, 2015) and e-flux storefront, New York (2009). She was awarded 'Prix Georges de Beauregard International', FID Marseille (2019), Special Prize of the Pinchuk Future Generation Art Prize (2012) and nominated for the Paulo Cunha e Silva Art Prize (2017) and for the Han Nefkens Foundation award (2014). She was also a fellow at Akademie Schloss Solitude, Stuttgart, Germany (2014) and Tokyo Wonder Site, Tokyo Arts and Space (2010). She is the co-founder of *98weeks Research Project*.

Arsanios received a Master of Fine Art, University of the Arts London (2007) and was a researcher in the Fine Art Department, Jan Van Eyck Academie, Maastricht, The Netherlands (2011–2012). She is currently a Ph.D candidate at the Akademie der bildenden Kunst in Vienna. In 2019, Marwa Arsanios participated in the 1st edition of Sharjah Architecture Triennial.

## ***Pipe Dreams***

**Ali Cherri**

**2011**

2-channel video installation

5-minute loop

A memorable phone call between the Syrian cosmonaut Muhammed Faris (part of a Russian space mission) and the late president Hafez al-Assad. In a face-to-face between a PVM monitor and a pocket projector, the installation combines archival images, images from the current Syrian uprising and constructed images. Two moments in the history of contemporary Syria that echo the situation across all Arab countries: a memorable phone call between the Syrian cosmonaut Muhammed Faris who was part of the Russian mission to the Mir Space Station and the late president Hafez al-Assad, and the removal of the statue of Assad by the Syrian government to prevent its destruction by the demonstrators.

### **Artist biography**

1976 Beirut, Lebanon. Ali Cherri is a video and visual artist. His recent work looks at the role historical objects play in the construction of national narratives. His recent exhibitions include *Minds Rising*, *Spirits Tuning*, 13th Gwangju Biennale, South Korea, *The Gatekeepers*, Musée des Beaux-Arts de Marseille - Manifesta, France, *Trembling Landscapes*, Eye Film Museum, Amsterdam, The Netherlands, *Comme un parfum d'aventure*, Musée d'art Contemporain de Lyon, France. He is currently the Artist in Residence at the National Gallery in London.

## ***And on a Different Note***

**Mohammad Shawky Hassan**

**2015**

Digital cinema

24 minutes

Today in this house nothing happens, nor does it in the homes of others. Time and place stand on parallel lines, refuting the coordinates of existence. The chronology of events is obscured, subversive noise is obliterated, elucidation impossible and language futile. All that remains is a soundscape perpetually occupied by self-proclaimed patriots, and scattered spaces carved by the rhythm of everyday life, all conspiring to maintain the status quo while hiding the humming background noise of the world.

*And on a Different Note* is a navigation of an attempt to carve out a personal space amid an inescapable sonic shield created primarily by prime time political talk shows with their indistinguishable, absurd, and at times undecipherable rhetoric/ noises. Equally repulsive and addictive, these noises travel across geographies gradually constituting an integral part of a self-created map of exile.

### **Artist biography**

Mohammad Shawky Hassan is a filmmaker and video artist living and working between Cairo and Berlin. He studied philosophy, film directing and cinema studies at the American University in Cairo, The Academy of Cinematic Arts & Sciences and Columbia University. His films include *it was related to me* (2011), *On a Day like Today* (2012), *Compos Mentis* (2016) and *And on a Different Note* (2015), which premiered at the Berlinale Forum Expanded, and was acquired by the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York in 2016 as part of its permanent collection.

## ***Nothing matters***

**Ali Kays**

**2005**

MiniDV

11 minutes

Mohammad gives up his passion for music, his sister, his two friends Helmi and Taoufic, the faculty of architecture, his despaired mother, and then later his first love Marie... He leaves everything, obsessed by the idea of him having the duty to fight in his society. The video portrays political and social shifts from Egypt to Saudi Arabia, the Proselytizing of Islam in far eastern countries during the 80's fall of the soviet union and the re-rise of radical Islam. The narrative is written using Egyptian pocket novels, videos from Saddam Hussein's music birthday clips on national television and an "Internationale" anthem polyphonic ringtone.

### **Artist biography:**

Born in 1978, lives and works in Montreal. Ali is a visual artist working with textual, analog, computer, digital and virtual narrative media. He is a Multimedia creative director and co-founder at The Council, a creative studio that takes a deep interest in art, visual technologies and design. Ali's artworks has been exhibited and screened at festivals and galleries including Oberhausen film festival-Germany, Le Tarmac-Paris, Goethe institut-Istanbul, The Second Riwaq Biennale-Palestine, Tokyo Wonder Site-Shibuya, La Marechalerie contemporary art center-Paris, 16 Beaver Group-NewYork, AlmostReal Ashkal Alwan-Beirut and the Sursock Museum in Beirut.

## ***Prayer of Fear***

**Mosireen**

**2013-2014**

Digital video

04:25 minutes

After Rabaa nobody knew what to do. The brutality of the attack was astonishing, but it was the reaction of some parts of the public that was truly paralyzing. The worst massacre in modern history had been committed in broad daylight, in Cairo, live on television and there were people celebrating.

As a collective of filmmakers we had no response. We were not there, we had not risked our lives to film it. We had fallen out of the equation of power in the stand-off between the Army and the Brotherhood. We were powerless and yet we felt complicit. We were racked by confusion, guilt and impotence. We sat stunned in our office day after day, smoking, silenced.

Then Mahmoud Ezzat published his poem, *Prayer of Fear*. Within days we had this video. It was the last great collaborative video of the group and it remains one of our most important, most sincere works. We are still living in the shadow of that moment.

## ***A Daily Tribute to the Martyrs (part of the series *Martyrs of the Revolution*)***

**Mosireen**

**2012**

Digital video

01:18 minutes

## ***The Martyrs: Sameh Ezz (part of the series *Martyrs of the Revolution*)***

**Mosireen**

**2012**

Digital video

06:32 minutes

## **Collective biography**

Mosireen is a volunteer media activist collective that came together to document and transmit images of the Egyptian Revolution of 2011. Between 2011 and 2014 we produced and published over [250 videos](#) online, with a focus on street politics, state violence and labour rights. They have been watched over six million times on YouTube; re-broadcast and re-mixed countless more. As well as video production, we organised street screenings, educational workshops, production facilities and campaign support. After the military coup of 2013 our work as a collective has been narrowed to the organisation and publication of a large collection of video material from the revolution, fully under *Creative Commons*. *858: An Archive of Resistance* was published in January 2018.

## ***Prologue***

**Rania Rafei and Raed Rafei**

**2011**

Digital video

49 minutes

In March 1974, a group of Lebanese radical leftist students occupied the campus of the American University of Beirut (AUB). They were protesting against cultural and political imperialism and social injustices at a time when Lebanon was sliding into civil violence. *Prologue* revisits this emblematic incident in the history of the country through the eyes of young political activists. It explores the sequence of events that led to the occupation of AUB by students in 1974 in light of present-day Arab revolutions. The film meticulously deconstructs the themes pertaining to any revolution: what drives change? What mobilizes the masses? What is the place of revolutionary violence? How is individual consciousness inscribed in the collective will?

*Prologue* blurs the lines between reality and fiction, action and intention, past and present.

*Prologue* is the initial phase of a feature film, *74 (The Reconstitution of a Struggle)*.

## **Artist biographies**

### **Rania Rafei**

Rania Rafei is a Lebanese filmmaker and artist. She directed several documentaries covering social and political subjects. She also wrote and directed short fiction films, video essays, installations and the multiple award-winning, experimental-hybrid debut feature *74 (The Reconstitution of a Struggle)*.

In 2006/2007, two of her video art projects, *The Four Seasons: Summer 2006* and *Brain Cells*, screened at the Ashkal Alwan art venue in Beirut as part of their Video Works biennale. In 2010, she made the essay documentary *Notes on Love in Copenhagen*. In 2011, she directed the video art project *Prologue*, again an entrant in that year's edition of Video Works. In 2012, she wrote and directed her debut feature (*74*) which premiered at the FID Marseille International Film Festival and won a prize. The film later amassed more prizes at other international festivals and prestigious art venues like Centre Pompidou in Paris.

In 2014, she made *The Purgatory*, a video-installation about the city of Beirut as part of an exhibition for the Färgfabriken museum for Art and Architecture in Sweden. It also screened at the Tallinn Architecture Biennale.

In 2021, she made *City Rehearsals*, a film essay about the process of becoming in the midst of Lebanon's collapse.

She is currently making her second feature *The Day of Wrath- Tales from Tripoli*.

**Raed Rafei**

Raed Rafei is a Lebanese scholar, filmmaker and multimedia journalist. For over ten years, he worked as a Middle East reporter for national and international publications and researcher, producer and director of TV news reports and documentaries for channels like Al-Jazeera, CNN and ARTE. Since 2011, Rafei has been making independent hybrid films that screened at international film festivals and received several awards. His films include: *74 (The Reconstitution of a Struggle)* (2012), and *Here I am ... Here you are* (2016). Rafei is currently based in California where he is pursuing a PhD in *Film and Digital Media* at the University of California in Santa Cruz.

## ***untitled, part 1: everything and nothing***

**Jayce Salloum**

**1999 (2001)**

Original format DVM

40:40 minutes

The first installment from the ongoing tape, 'untitled'. An intimate dialogue that weaves back and forth between representations of a figure (of resistance) and subject with, \*Soha Bechara ex-Lebanese National Resistance fighter in her Paris dorm room taped (during the last year of the Israeli occupation) one year after her release from captivity in El-Khiam torture and interrogation centre (S. Lebanon) where she had been detained for 10 years, 6 years in isolation. Revising notions of resistance, survival and will, recounting to death, separation and closeness; the overexposed image and body of a surviving martyr speaking quietly and directly into the camera juxtaposed against her self and image, not speaking of the torture but of the distance between the subject and loss, of what is left behind and what remains.

*\*Soha Bechara is a heroine in Lebanon, pictures of her are seen in many houses in the South and posters of her were seen all around downtown Beirut when I was working there in the early 90's. She was captured in 1988 for trying to assassinate the general of the SLA, Antoine Lahad (the South Lebanese Army was a proxy militia set up & controlled by the Israeli forces to give a Lebanese façade to the occupation of South Lebanon). I didn't ask her anything specifically about the torture she underwent or the trauma of detention, she was being interviewed to death by the European and Arab press over the details of her captivity and the minutiae of her surviving it and the conditions in El-Khiam and the detainees and the resistance. I went to her small dorm room, not much bigger than her cell (she is presently studying international law at the Sorbonne), she sat on her bed and I asked her about the distance lived between Khiam and Paris, and Beirut and Paris, and what she left in Khiam and what she brought with her, a story about flowers and how she never puts them in water, how it felt for her now to be under such demand, and who she was, and what the title of the tape should be, and a few other things. This video material that I recorded of the time spent with her is not precious, just time and a conversation, and intense intimacy at a close and unbreachable distance.*

## **Artist biography**

As if an itinerant geographer of conflicted territories (most everywhere), Salloum observes the world and creates/collects images/texts to make meaning from or comment on. Since arriving here - by no means of his own volition - he tries to go only where he is invited or where there is an intrinsic affinity, his projects being rooted in an intimate engagement with place. A grandson of Syrian or Lebanese immigrants he was born and raised on others' land, the Sylix (Okanagan) territory. After 21 years living and working elsewhere he planted himself on the unceded stolen lands of the X<sup>w</sup>mæθk<sup>w</sup>eýəm, S<sup>k</sup>wxwú7mesh + Sæílwətaʔl. Recognizing and acting on this is an everyday practice, but let's face it, he could do a lot more. In/out of this context not that it really matters, Salloum has lectured and published pervasively and exhibited peripatetically at the widest range of local and international venues possible and most improbable, from the smallest

unnamed storefronts in his downtown eastside Vancouver neighbourhood to institutions such as the Musée du Louvre, Museum of Modern Art, Guggenheim Museum, Centre Georges Pompidou, National Gallery of Canada, Bienal De La Havana, Sharjah Biennial, Biennale of Sydney and the Rotterdam International Film Festival.

Instagram.com/jaycesalloum

<https://vimeo.com/salloum>

## ***Notes on Seeing Double***

**Sanaz Sohrabi**

**2018**

Video with sound

11:10 minutes

What is the anatomy of a revolution? Masses of bodies with a collective desire? “Notes on Seeing Double” takes the figure of speech of “temsaaal” in Farsi as its point of departure to unpack this question. By juxtaposing a documentary photograph taken in the February of 1979 in Tehran and a painting drawn by Rembrandt depicting the famous anatomy theatre of Amsterdam in 1632, *Notes on Seeing Double* analyzes the conditions of visibility within different systems of power/knowledge production. The film looks at the threshold of seeing and remembering; a gateway into unpacking the relationship between pre-existing images, language, and memory, and unravels the marginal histories and affective registers with which all images are charged.

## **Artist biography**

Sanaz Sohrabi (b. 1988, Tehran) is a research-based artist, filmmaker, and a Fonds de Recherche du Québec Société et Culture (FRQSC) doctoral fellow at the Center for Interdisciplinary Studies in Society and Culture in Montréal. Her doctoral artistic research is conceived as a series of essay film and documentary-based installation mapping an unlikely geopolitical calendar of political affinities, competing and contradictory national projects wherein oil was both the agent of imperial power and the catalyst for anticolonial political projects, examining the ways in which oil was tasked to navigate the political task of nation-building on the one hand and transnational solidarity during the global decolonization on the other. Her work has been screened and exhibited internationally at 50th International Film Festival Rotterdam (IFFR), Montréal International Documentary Film Festival (RIDM), Sheffield Doc/Fest, IndieLisboa, FICValdivia Chile, Videonale 16 Bonn, Kasseler Dokfest (nominated for Golden Key Award), Images Festival, Centre Clark Montréal, and Beirut Art Center, among others. Sohrabi has been supported by fellowships and artist residency awards such as Forum Transregionale Studien Berlin, Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture, RAW Académie, SOMA Summer School Ciudad de México, Est-Nord-Est résidence d’artistes, and Vermont Studio Center.